Millions of Europeans experienced war, occupation, and exile in the turbulent years between the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and the end of World War II in 1946. Well-known landmark events during this period include the bombing of Gernika; the mass exodus of Basques, Catalans, and other Spanish Republicans from Spain following the triumph of General Francisco Franco’s forces; France’s sudden defeat in 1940, its subsequent occupation by Germany, and the rise of French resistance; the Allied invasion of France and the difficult process of liberation. Set within the broader historical context of these events, the contributions to this volume focus on the experiences of ordinary people who endured those difficult times. The people who are at the heart of this book include Basque priests who supported their homeland against the Francoist “crusade”; ordinary British, German, and Free French soldiers; Basque and Catalan refugees; the American newspaper-reading public; foreign resisters to German occupation; Breton and French collaborationists and their accusers; German documentary filmmakers; the dispossessed Jews of Paris; and French housewives who adjusted to a brave new postwar world. Throughout the book, the authors explore the themes of dispossession, disillusionment with the liberation, divisiveness in postwar society, and the permanence of exile even after the exile’s return. The people of Western Europe showed immense resiliency, courage, and creativity during times of war, exile, and foreign occupation, as well as during the postwar years. They also experienced incredible hardship and suffering in their journeys. In very different ways, the chapters make an important, however modest, contribution to our understanding of everyday life in such traumatic times.
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Acknowledgments

This book is the product of an international conference, “War, Justice, Exile, and Everyday Life, 1936–1946,” organized by me with the invaluable assistance of Santiago de Pablo, who was the William A. Douglass Visiting Distinguished Scholar at the Center for Basque Studies in 2009–2010. The conference was held at the University of Nevada, Reno, on April 15–16, 2010. The Center is extremely grateful to the government of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country for having generously funded both the conference and the publication of this volume. I also wish to extend my personal thanks to all colleagues who participated in the conference and to those who contributed book chapters. They did a fantastic job in meeting our deadlines and responding to our editorial queries in a timely fashion. I also extend heartfelt thanks to my colleagues at the Center for Basque Studies (Kate Camino, Xabier Irujo, and Joseba Zulaika) for their kind assistance in making the conference a stimulating and enjoyable event. Special thanks are due to Daniel Montero, managing editor of the CBS Press, who devoted so much of his time, energy, and skills to the production of this book. I am also grateful to Jose Luis Agote for having done the layout and design, to Kim Hiscox and Joannes Zulaika for their editorial assistance, to Lisa Corcostegui for designing the publicity materials and conference web page, and to all others who assisted in the process of publishing this volume.
Introduction

Sandra Ott

This interdisciplinary collection of essays focuses on one of the most turbulent decades in contemporary world history—1936 to 1946—a period during which, in part of Western Europe alone, the Spanish Civil War, World War II, the German occupation of France, Nazism, and fascism displaced millions of civilians. Throughout these tumultuous times, people fled from invading armies and tyrannical regimes, were evacuated in the wake of aerial bombardments, and sought refuge from persecution and from both the threat and the reality of extermination. As several chapters in this volume show, thousands of Basques and Catalans fled the terror of war in the 1930s, created institutions and histories, only to face another wave of bloodshed in the 1940s. Across France, both foreigners and French citizens risked and gave their lives to defeat Nazism. Yet the vast majority of civilians, as well as many of the Germans in their midst, learned how to make the best of their wartime circumstances. As other chapters reveal, German soldiers sometimes created their own visions of history through postwar testimonies that constitute valuable works of memory, however fragmented and incomplete. In the many places and situations that provide the settings for this book, the contributors tell a wonderful variety of human stories as they explore the experiences of ordinary citizens and combatants during twentieth-century war, occupation, and exile. Several themes run throughout the collection: displacement, dispossession, disillusionment, pre- and postwar political, social, and religious divisiveness at the grassroots level, and disconnection between propaganda and the reality of everyday life.

1. See Burrin, France under the Germans, whose work alerted readers to the difficulties entailed in using the categories “resistance” and “collaboration,” and Gildea, Marianne in Chains.
This volume has its origins in the ninth annual international conference “War, Exile, Justice, and Everyday Life, 1936–1946,” held at the Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, Reno, in April 2010. The conference brought together a group of scholars (primarily historians) who specialize in many topics relating to the history, literature, cinema, and ethnography of different Western European people in twentieth-century wartime and postwar society: the Basques, the Catalans, the Bretons, the French, the Spanish, the Germans, and the British. The diversity of our special interests and our intellectual collaborations before, during, and after the conference have enriched our understanding of this extraordinary era. Owing to this diversity, the introduction seeks to provide a broad historical overview of the period that is necessarily incomplete but which will, I hope, orient the reader to the chapters that follow, place them in context, and enable the reader to see interconnecting themes more easily.

The Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) led to the death of more than half a million people and the displacement of another half million Republican refugees into southern France in 1939 alone, following the fall of Catalonia. With its roots in longstanding socioeconomic imbalances and political instability in Spain, the war began in mid-July 1936, when a group of generals (including Francisco Franco) led a military coup against the democratically elected government of the Second Spanish Republic. Backing Franco, the rebels supported the preservation of tradition, and the landowning, conservative elites who controlled much of Spain and who feared complete secularization of Spanish society by the Republic. The rebels also secured the backing of most of the Spanish bishops but struggled to gain the approval of the Vatican. By contrast, the Republicans called for socioeconomic reform and promoted the interests of poor, working-class citizens.

Initially, the military rebellion succeeded in some parts of Spain but was defeated in others, including Madrid and the industrial centers of Bilbao and Barcelona, which the Republicans successfully held in July 1936. Both sides recognized that access to war materials from external sources would be crucial. Franco’s personal approach to Hitler that same

3. I am very grateful to Peter Anderson and Ludger Mees for their helpful commentaries on the Civil War and the Catholic Church’s position.
5. Ibid., 27.
month resulted in German aid and greatly strengthened the rebels’ position as Franco’s Army of Africa moved north from Andalusia. From the start, the war attracted considerable international attention and foreign involvement, with the regimes of Stalin and Mussolini and the American, French, and British governments (among others) taking a close interest in its outcome. As Frances Lannon noted, this “civil war was ideological, as well as political and military” and “concerned issues that went far beyond Spain’s frontiers.” Hitler and Mussolini chose to back Franco, while Stalin supported the Republic, as did some thirty-five thousand volunteers in the International Brigades who came from more than sixty countries. Although France and the United States initially supported the Republicans, both governments changed positions following pressure from Great Britain. The British and the French worked together on a policy of nonintervention that, at least in theory, would keep all foreign powers out of the conflict and formally agreed to abide by the Non-Intervention Agreement, signed in late August, with the United States agreeing to unilateral nonintervention as well. The agreement had a serious impact on the Republicans, who desperately needed armaments and were forced to rely upon the Soviets for weapons.

The Basque city of Donostia-San Sebastián in Gipuzkoa (Guipúzcoa) fell to the rebels in mid-September 1936. In early October, the Basque Nationalist Party (EAJ-PNV) finally negotiated autonomy from Madrid for the Basque territories still under Republican control, following lengthy talks with the government of the Second Republic; and the first president of the Basque Autonomous Government of Euskadi, José Antonio Aguirre, took office in turbulent and highly uncertain times. Owing to Republican support for Basque autonomy, and despite the fact that most Basques were devout Catholics, Basque support for the Republican side concentrated in the coastal Basque provinces of Bizkaia (Vizcaya) and Gipuzkoa and part of inland Araba (Álava), the rest of which backed Franco, as did most of Navarre.

6. Ibid., 40.
7. Ibid., 7.
8. Ibid., 46.
9. Bowen, Spaniards and Nazi Germany, 24. See also Whealey, Hitler and Spain, 14–7.
10. Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, 375; and Lannon, The Spanish Civil War, 45.
11. Clark, The Basques, 63. President (or Lehendakari in Basque) Aguirre, mentioned above, is alternatively known as Jose Antonio Agirre (the Basque spelling of his name) in this book.
During the spring of 1937, Bizkaia became the main focus of the war effort for both sides. The Republicans’ Army of the North consisted of Basques, Asturians, and troops from Santander, among whom divisiveness reigned. The Basques particularly disliked the Asturians, primarily for ideological reasons, but also because they regularly stole cattle from local farms and made amorous advances on local Basque women. A corps of eighty-two Basque priests served the Basque nationalist Army of Euskadi to celebrate mass, to attend to fatally wounded soldiers, and “to form the minds of the conscripts in the Christian tradition.” The Army of Euskadi constituted the main Republican military organization in the north with some thirty thousand troops but few aircraft or ships with which to defend Bilbao. Of the forty-six infantry battalions raised by the Basques, twenty-seven were formed by Basque nationalists, known as gudaris in Basque. Strained internal relations between the dominant EAJ-PNV members and their socialist and communist colleagues made matters more difficult.

The rebels also had some thirty thousand soldiers on the Bizkaian/Araba border but had an important military advantage: they had the support of Hitler’s famed Condor Legion and Italian aircraft. Aiming to end the war in the north swiftly and to spread terror among the local population, Nationalist General Mola threatened to “raze all Vizcaya to the ground, beginning with the industries of war.” The rebels launched their campaign against Bizkaia in March 1937, when the Condor Legion bombed the Basque town of Durango and machine-gunned many civilians. On the same day the rebels bombarded the nearby town of Ochandiano, from which Basque troops withdrew, with heavy losses. In April, Franco’s rebels began a new advance on Bizkaia with extensive aerial and artillery bombardments that made a Basque defeat seem imminent. On April 26, Hitler’s Condor Legion struck again, razing the defenseless Basque market town of Gernika (Guernica) to the ground. As the home

13. Many Basques, particularly within the Basque Nationalist Party, regarded the Asturians as “Reds.” I am grateful to Peter Anderson for clarifying this point.
15. Ibid., 598; and Clark, *The Basques*, 67.
18. Ibid., 599.
19. Ibid., 605–6.
of the historic Basque liberties, the Basque parliament and its famous oak tree, Gernika had a special significance for the Basque people—as several chapters in this volume emphasize. The almost total destruction of the town by the German air force, the Nazis’ new techniques for aerial bombardments, and the loss of many civilian lives gave rise to an international controversy and panic, as Xabier Irujo shows in chapter 1, “The Impact of the Bombing of Gernika in the American Press.” More than seven thousand news articles about the bombing and massacre appeared in the American press between April 27 and July 12, 1937, the day on which Pablo Picasso’s Guernica was first shown at the World Exhibition in Paris. As Irujo argues, widespread interest in and concern about the bombing of the Basques’ “holy city” stemmed from international anxiety and fear over the Nazis’ demonstration of unparalleled brutality and destructive capabilities in modern warfare.

During the autumn of 1936, Francoist military authorities launched a bloody campaign against “traitorous” Basque priests in Gipuzkoa for their support of Basque nationalism and for having fought against Franco’s troops. By 1937, Francoist authorities had condemned some four hundred Basque priests to death. In chapter 2, “From the Pulpit to the Dock: Basque Priests in Franco’s Military Courts in 1937,” Peter Anderson fills a gap in the existing literature in his analysis of the EAJ-PNV–supporting priests who ended up in Francoist jails following the occupation of Bizkaia in June 1937. Significantly, a number of these Basque clergy went to prison following denunciations by fellow Basques to the rebel military authorities, were prosecuted by Francoist military courts, and in an important number of cases, also suffered Francoist violence. Significantly, the trial dossiers of these Basque clergy reveal the extent to which grassroots support for the rebels in the Basque Country contributed to Francoist repression and violence, which were not solely state-directed from the top-down, as so much of the literature suggests.

The 1937 spring offensive against the Basques in Bizkaia had other tragic consequences as well, for the military bombardments by the rebels, the Condor Legion, and Italian aircraft gave rise to the evacuation of some twenty-five thousand Basque children to France, Belgium, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union. In chapter 3, “Exile, Identity, and Education: The Evacuation of Basque Children to the French Basque

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Country, 1937–1939,” Virginia López de Maturana explores the complex logistical challenges such human displacement entailed and the problems to which it gave rise. Differences in ideology and identity divided the political parties that controlled the two Basque government departments responsible for organizing the evacuation, resettlement, and education of the children in camps, shelters, and with host families in Iparralde. Basque nationalists wanted their children to be educated in Basque with a curriculum that promoted Catholic morality and a distinctly Basque identity. By contrast, Basque socialists wished to adopt the policy of the Second Republic that favored non-Basque, secular education; they identified with Castilian rather than Basque culture. As a result, the political wrangling of the adults in charge prevented the development of any cohesive sense of collective identity in exile and perpetuated religious, political, and cultural divisiveness.

Forced exile, wartime suffering, the Basques’ resistance against the rebels, and Franco’s brutal repression of the Basque Country are themes that weave through the literary analysis by Mari Jose Olaziregi in chapter 4, “Basque Narrative about the Spanish Civil War and Its Contribution to the Deconstruction of Collective Political Memory.” The repression of Republican memory imposed by Franco and the “agreed upon” policy of “forgetting” the Republican experience during the transition to democracy dominated the period 1939–1975. Basque novels written after Franco’s death in 1975, however, sought to recuperate a collective memory of the war, and Olaziregi explores how sites of memory (such as Gernika) have been used to do so. Focusing primarily on the novels of Ramón Saizarbitoria, Bernardo Atxaga, and Jokin Muñoz, Olaziregi argues that the contemporary Basque narrative has contributed to a cultural, collective, and identity-based memory grounded in a “shared remembering” of a traumatic past. Literature, she observes, can tell those “other truths’ that history has banished from its epic discourse, those truths that are, ultimately, ours.” Furthermore, through the recovery of historical memory about the Civil War and harsh postwar era, contemporary Basque narrative also explores the historical causes underlying the emergence of ETA. According to Olaziregi, Basque fiction has taken tentative steps toward ridding terrorism of its fetishistic and ritualized elements.

Introduction

In chapter 5, “Allez, Allez! The 1939 Exodus from Catalonia and Internment in French Concentration Camps,” Joan Ramon Resina explores the status of historical truth in collective memory and the role of testimonial fiction in understanding both past and present. Using the novels of Catalan authors such as Xavier Benguerel as a lens through which to examine the experiences of Catalan Republicans exiled and interned in French camps, Resina argues that such fiction, like history, seeks to make exiles’ actions and suffering relevant for the present. In his analysis of Benguerel’s novel The Vanquished (1969), Resina shows how Benguerel makes a deliberate attempt to redeem the suffering of the vanquished from futility. Although Benguerel himself did not have direct experience of the French “welcome camps” for exiled Republicans, his narrative achieved a verisimilitude, in part owing to eyewitness accounts of everyday life in the camps but also, Resina argues, to Benguerel’s deep sense of remorse for having avoided that experience. The cold and ominous command to “Press on, press on!” (“Allez, allez!”), so often uttered by French gendarmes as refugees crossed the border, encapsulated the experience of Republicans, as well as their dispossession and dehumanization, in France during 1939 and under Vichy. Those four syllables also organized the Republicans’ social memory of exile in a France that grudgingly granted only purely jurisdictional safety to the thousands of unwelcome “Spanish undesirables” who sought asylum there.

After the Spanish Republican exodus of February 1939, some French authorities realized the economic potential of so many foreign manual laborers as France prepared for war against Germany. In March, the French government applied a law requiring all able-bodied Spanish refugees, many of whom were interned in the camps, “to participate in the national defense,” which led to the formation of the first Companies of Foreign Workers (Compagnies de Travailleurs) involving some twenty thousand men.22 In September 1939, France and Britain declared war on Germany. The Allies’ decision to avoid direct confrontation with the Germans led to what became known as the Phony War (drôle de guerre), a period of social and political tension that lasted until May 1940.23 In April, three weeks before the German offensive, the French authorities estimated that some 104,000 “former Spanish militiamen” were exiled in France. Fifty-five thousand of them had been assigned to Companies of Foreign Workers and another

forty thousand to industrial and agricultural work. Few exiled Spaniards remained in the camps. In May and June of 1940, as Hitler’s forces rapidly circumvented the Maginot Line and entered northern France, it took the German armies only six weeks to defeat the French militarily. On June 14, Nazi tanks rolled into a largely deserted Paris. During the previous six weeks, more than 4 million people had left the Paris region and fled south in an extraordinary human exodus, reminiscent of the confusion, misery, and suffering experienced during the massive Spanish Republican exodus into southern France little more than one year earlier. An eyewitness to the exodus from Paris, Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, captured a sense of the chaos and sorrow:

People loaded furniture and knick-knacks on to vehicles of all kinds, as houses were cleared of their contents. . . . Dog owners killed their pets so they would not have to feed them. In this sad frenzy of departure people rescued whatever possessions they could save. . . . Weeping women pushed old people who had been squashed into prams; their children followed behind, overpowered by the heat.

Shocked, anguished, and humiliated, most French citizens felt relief on June 17, 1940, when the newly designated premier, Marshal Philippe Pétain, announced that his government would seek an armistice with Germany in order to end the refugees’ plight. He offered himself as “a gift” to France and promised to end the chaos of exodus. The terms of the Franco-German Armistice called for the division of France into a German-occupied zone and an unoccupied or so-called free zone under the jurisdiction of the Vichy regime with Pétain as prime minister. The occupied zone ran along the Atlantic coast and in the industrial north, while the unoccupied zone covered roughly a third of the country, including central and south-central France. Although the Armistice allowed France to retain an army of one hundred thousand soldiers and a measure of semiautonomy, its economic clauses required France to pay severe war reparations,

24. Peschanski, La France des camps, 137.
27. Fourcade, L’Arche de Noé, 15, also quoted in ibid., 1. Marie-Madeleine Fourcade led one of France’s largest right-wing intelligence networks, Alliance, during the German occupation.
29. Pétain had served as the first French ambassador to Franco in 1939. See Paxton, Vichy France, 35.
to bear all costs incurred by the German army, and to deliver raw materials to Germany, among other things.\textsuperscript{30} From the German perspective, Franco-German “collaboration” meant the requisition of French goods, services, and manpower.\textsuperscript{31}

A much-respected hero of Verdun in World War I and a father figure who, for many French, personified the glorious Old France, Philippe Pétain preached the values of social stability through work, family, and the fatherland—the Vichy motto (\textit{travail, famille, patrie}).\textsuperscript{32} Vichy endorsed hierarchy, authoritarianism, provincial traditions, and the Catholic faith. Throughout its various stages of development, the regime aimed to eradicate subversion and to rid France of “undesirables” through its ruthless persecution of minorities, notably the Jews.\textsuperscript{33} Vichy propaganda idealized motherhood and a return to the land. During the first two years of German occupation dissent posed no serious problems for the regime.\textsuperscript{34}

On June 18, 1940, Charles de Gaulle broadcast his celebrated radio appeal (which few French citizens actually heard) from London, declaring that “the flame of French resistance must not be extinguished.”\textsuperscript{35} However, no resistance groups in France initially supported him.\textsuperscript{36} De Gaulle’s self-imposed isolation in London posed a serious obstacle to his recruitment efforts. Joining him in Great Britain required exile and the total disruption of daily life. With one-third of France not occupied by the Germans until November 1942, little active resistance against the Nazi and Vichy regimes took place during 1940–1941, a period in which many anti-German French people were not entirely sure whether Vichy was a friend or a foe, and resistance activity was wholly urban based.\textsuperscript{37}

After the defeat, the issue of foreign workers arose once more, though in a different political and ideological context. In September 1940, Vichy created the first Foreign Workers’ Groups (Groupements de Travailleurs Étrangers, or GTE) to help resolve some of France’s socioeconomic problems. Such groups very quickly constituted a substantial workforce in

\textsuperscript{30} Atkin, \textit{The French at War}, 37.
\textsuperscript{31} Paxton, \textit{Vichy France}, 143–4.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 35, 37.
\textsuperscript{33} Atkin, \textit{The French at War}, 48.
\textsuperscript{34} Paxton, \textit{Vichy France}, 38.
\textsuperscript{35} Diamond, \textit{Fleeing Hitler}, 127; and Jackson, \textit{France}, 385–6.
\textsuperscript{36} Paxton, \textit{Vichy France}, 40.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 291–2; and Kedward, “The Maquis and the Culture of the Outlaw,” 233.
southern France (mainly in agriculture, industry, and forestry) whose potential the Germans likewise recognized. In chapter 6, “Returning to the Land: Vichy’s Groupement de Travailleurs Étrangers and Spanish Civil War Refugees,” Scott Soo reveals how, from September 1940, exiled Spanish workers played a valuable role in both the local and Vichy economies, despite Vichy’s desire to exclude “undesirable” outsiders from daily life. As Soo points out, the gulf between the pragmatics of labor demand in wartime and the National Revolution’s emphasis on the exclusion of foreigners began to emerge very early on. Given that so many French people clearly regarded exiled Spanish Republicans as members of the “anti-France,” it is ironic that French officials increasingly associated these foreign workers with the well-being of rural communities. Sometimes the authorities even introduced measures aimed at improving the Spaniards’ working conditions, which were often bleak and sometimes so dire that the exiled Spaniards actively protested or escaped. Spanish workers also proved invaluable to the Organization Todt created in response to Hitler’s orders to construct fortifications along France’s Atlantic coast. As this chapter shows, an intriguing combination of official Vichy policy, labor shortages, and the agency of the workers themselves fundamentally compromised the strategy of control and surveillance associated with the GTE. Soo demonstrates just how central those units became to the existence of some rural departments, as well as to the creation of Spanish Republican resistance in southwestern France. Under the cover of GTE forestry work, exiled Spanish communists created an armed force named after the 14th Guerrilla Corps of the Spanish Republican Army, symbolic of the refugees’ determination to continue the struggle against Franco and to return to Spain.

With the total occupation of France in 1942 and Vichy’s first attempts to rally volunteers to work in Germany, Gaullists in exile and France’s emerging internal resistance began to coordinate their efforts. But it was not until February 1943 that an aggressive discourse of resistance and rural revolt by committed, voluntary fighters (maquisards) emerged. Dissent began to characterize the changing mood of the French people, owing especially to Germany’s demands for French labor and the Vichy law on compulsory labor service in Germany (service du travail obligatoire, STO). Active resistance against the occupier increased during the summer of 1943, amid widespread anticipation of an imminent Allied landing in the

west, as the Gaullist Secret Army and the communist FTP (Francs-Tireurs et Partisans) respectively became more of a full-fledged fighting unit and combat force.40

In chapter 7, “Combatant Exile during World War II: Free French and Spanish Republicans,” Guillaume Piketty explores the experiences of de Gaulle’s Free French in exile, including those of Spanish Republicans who joined the cause of external resistance in Great Britain and North Africa. Men and women chose to wear the Cross of Lorraine (symbol of de Gaulle’s Free French) for a variety of reasons: refusal to accept France’s defeat in June 1940, refusal to accept the German occupation of French territory, rejection of the Vichy regime, commitment to fighting for freedom and democracy, and sheer defiance in an attempt to prevent permanent demoralization. Some were civilians who worked in London, the capital of Free French exiles; others were combatants with an entirely military vocation. Piketty argues that the Free French created a double hierarchy in which their pioneering combatant members enjoyed a status higher than that of those who joined the movement later on or who remained “civilian” external resisters. In defense of their decision to leave France (which critics treated as cowardly), many Free French argued that leaving the homeland constituted “patriotic indiscipline,” that it was the only way in which to remain untainted by any dishonest compromise with Vichy or the Germans and thus to embody “the true France.” Piketty explores the experience of exile: what it meant to leave one’s country, home, family, familiar places, friends, and private possessions. Although exile often entailed suffering, many exiles also enjoyed the excitement of belonging to what they perceived as an elite group fighting for a great cause. In June of 1940, Spanish Republicans formed the most important contingent of foreigners in the Free French. They were “double combatant exiles,” having been driven out of their own homeland during the Spanish Civil War and then choosing a second exile from the country to which they had fled—France—in order to fight for freedom from Francoism. Spanish Republicans fought particularly bravely under General Leclerc in North Africa and also triumphantly led the Allies’ 2nd Armored Division into Paris on the eve of the German surrender.

The return from exile often led to disillusionment and, in the case of the Spaniards, hostility from staunchly anticommunist citizens. All return-
ees also had to deal with France’s internal resistance movements, especially the communists, whose members likewise saw themselves as the protectors of France and competed for positions of power and authority in the turmoil of postwar politics and society.

Foreign combatants working for the internal French resistance are the focus of chapter 8, “Historiography, Politics, and Narrative Form in Mosco Boucault’s ‘Terrorists’ in Retirement,” by Brett Bowles. In the spring of 1943, as French public opinion began to support the resistance and an Allied victory seemed increasingly possible, French police launched a campaign to dismantle the communist urban guerrilla unit the Francs-Tireurs et Partisans (FTP) and the Main d’Oeuvre Immigrée (MOI), a communist organization that defended the rights of immigrant workers in France. The guerrillas (who included numerous East European Jews) had carried out some 250 attacks on German military operations in the Paris region and were thus a high-priority target for both Vichy and German police. The campaign culminated in the deaths of at least twenty-three communist resisters and a Vichy propaganda campaign that branded the FTP-MOI as “foreign Jewish terrorists.”

Within the context of this historical background, Bowles analyzes a dissident documentary film about the FTP-MOI, “Terrorists” in Retirement, made in 1983 by Mosco Boucault. Using testimonies from surviving Jewish FTP-MOI members and period documents, the film controversially argued that the Communist Party leadership not only allowed the FTP-MOI unit in Paris to be liquidated but also covered up its betrayal by later commemorating the unit’s leader as a martyr. The documentary made a significant impact on the public memory of the FTP-MOI and initiated the second major French reappraisal of the resistance by challenging the carefully cultivated image of the French Communist Party as the champion of social justice and as the only truly international, egalitarian wartime resistance movement.41 The Communist Party denounced Mosco’s film as “defamatory.” Following a two-year ban, the film was finally broadcast on French television in 1985, in the midst of an ongoing identity crisis within the Communist Party. As Bowles argues, “Terrorists” in Retirement took an innovative approach to historiography by creating the first living-memory, audio-visual archive of foreign Jewish resistance in France.

41. In 1971, the film by Marcel Ophuls, The Sorrow and the Pity, triggered the first controversial reappraisal of French resistance by shattering the Gaullist myth that all French had acted heroically and had resisted the occupiers during the war.
Although now largely forgotten, Boucault’s film used cinematic techniques (such as reenactments using the real, by then elderly, surviving members of the FTP-MOI) that did much to reshape French collective memory of the communist resistance movement.

As is well known, cinema played an extremely important role in Nazi propaganda. Nazi leaders well understood the power of film to exert “covert and psychological influences on the masses” and to shape people’s thoughts and beliefs. As Minister for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels declared that the mission of German cinema was to conquer the world “as the vanguard of the Nazi troops.”42 Certain key themes recur in the propaganda of the Third Reich that had enormous appeal to “a certain kind of Nazi imagination”: the notion of “a people and the homeland” (Volk und Heimat), based upon the doctrine of “blood and soil” (Blut und Boden). That doctrine “attempted to define the source of strength of the Herrenvolk (master race) in terms of peasant virtues, the Nordic past, the warrior hero, and the sacredness of the German soil.”43

Similar themes appear in chapter 9, “The Basque Country through the Nazi Looking Glass, 1933–1945,” by Santiago de Pablo. With special focus on a little-known short documentary (Im Lande der Basken, In the Land of the Basques), de Pablo analyzes the cinema and literature produced in Nazi Germany about the Basque Country. Filmed in 1943, Im Lande der Basken provides a romantic vision of the Basques, their homeland, and their culture. The film depicts the Basques as an authentic Volk who have much in common with the “master race.” De Pablo locates Nazi propaganda films within the broader historical context of the Germans’ long-standing interest in the Basques, especially in their language, attachment to the homeland, and cultural emphasis on the importance of “the community” in Basque society. German intellectual interest in the Basques can be traced to Wilhelm von Humboldt, who traveled to the Basque Country during 1799–1801. Von Humboldt created a romantic concept of the Basque nation in which its language (Euskera) and “national spirit” (Volksgeist) played a major role. Throughout the nineteenth century numerous other German scholars wrote extensively about the Basque language in a German Basque studies journal, in which one German linguist published no less than eighty-five articles about Euskera.

42. Welch, Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1–2.
43. Ibid., 96–7.
Germans remained fascinated by the Basques when the Nazis came to power in 1933 and looked for “authentic, noncontaminated” European peoples to help build the new European order. Written in 1934 by a German anthropologist, *Das Land der Basken* (“The Land of the Basques”) claimed to be the first book about the Basque Country conceived according to the ideology of the Third Reich. Another German scholar tried to establish a cultural and political relationship between the Basque Nationalist Party and Nazi Germany by supposing an affinity between the ideologies of Basque nationalism’s founder, Sabino Arana, and Hitler. De Pablo then goes on to explore the attitude of the Basque Nationalist Party leaders toward Hitler’s National Socialism and the attempts made by Dr. Werner Best (head of the civilian administration of the German Military Command in France) to attract both Basque and Breton nationalists to the proposed new European *Völkisch* order.

In chapter 10, “The *Völkisch* Appeal: Nazi Germany, the Basques, and the Bretons,” Ludger Mees traces the genesis and evolution of Basque and Breton nationalism and explores the quite different ways in which the two movements reacted to National Socialism, to German occupation, and to German hegemony. Mees offers a range of reasons why the Basques were immune to Nazi Germany’s *Völkisch* appeal, while Breton nationalists were not. The *Völkisch* tradition had its roots in late-eighteenth-century romanticism. In Weimar Germany numerous influential intellectuals sought to transform the concept of *Volk* (people) into a scientific paradigm that referred to an ethnically homogeneous community of people who were clearly different from others. This transformation provided the foundation for Hitler’s proposed new European order under German hegemony. Werner Best firmly believed in the revolutionary value of the *Völkisch* idea; he regarded the Basques and Bretons as “authentic” *Volk* and thus as ideal candidates to become two of the autonomous nations under German control in postwar Europe. Germans had long been interested in the Basque notion of racial purity and superiority articulated by the founder of Basque nationalism, Sabino Arana, in the late nineteenth century, and the racial component in Arana’s concept of the Basque nation gave Germans

44. The author was Wilhelm Ziesemer. The completed title in translation is *The Land of the Basques: Outlines of the Homeland of the Most Ancient Europeans.*

an opportunity to link it to the *Völkisch* element in Nazi doctrine.46 During the 1920s and 1930s, Breton nationalists further developed similar ideas about the singularity of the Breton nation as part of a broader Celtic and Nordic culture with strong racist and anti-Semitic overtones.

Yet the two nationalist movements reacted very differently to Nazi Germany’s *Völkisch* appeal. Seeking political independence with authoritarian rule under German hegemony, Breton nationalists closely collaborated with the occupiers both militarily and politically. By contrast, leaders of the Basque nationalist government in exile remained firmly opposed to Hitler and National Socialism, and only a few, isolated individuals (most notably, Eugène Goyheneche) attempted to establish a politically useful relationship with the Germans.47 According to Goyheneche, he used Werner Best, the highest political representative of the Nazi regime in occupied France, and other high-ranking Nazis to carry out “diplomatic actions” that would help Spanish Basque Republicans exiled in France, facilitate the return of French Basque POWs from Germany, and aid French Basque citizens who had been imprisoned by the Gestapo, as well as those who hoped to avoid obligatory work service in Germany or needed passes and permits from the German authorities.48

The lengthy memorandum written by Goyheneche in 1942, and cited by Mees, shows that the young Basque nationalist tried to curry favor with the Nazis, although there is no evidence that he sought any direct German intervention to create a unified, independent Basque nation in postwar Europe. Basque nationalism never took root in the French Basque Country, and Basque nationalist leaders focused their concerns more on events in Spain. Their principal enemy was Franco. For Breton nationalists, the main enemy and oppressor had always been France. Thus, when the

46. As Ludger Mees points out in this chapter, Arana lived at a time when “race” did not have such a strong pejorative bias as it does nowadays and was often used as a synonym for “nation.”

47. Goyheneche’s relations with Germans during the occupation have given rise to considerable controversy and debate. Goyheneche claimed that he took personal initiative in establishing relationships with certain Germans, while others have speculated that he acted under orders from his superiors in the Basque Nationalist Party. See Ibarzabal, *50 años de nacionalismo vasco 1928–1978*, 290.

48. See the testimony of Goyheneche in ibid., 281–93; and Larronde, *Eugène Goyheneche*, 60–1. In the archives départementales des Pyrénées-Atlantiques in Pau, hereafter referred to as AD, P-A, file 30W22, relating to the Court of Justice of the Basses-Pyrénées, reveals that Dr. Werner Best classified Goyheneche as “an agent of value.” Numerous Zuberoan Basques testified that the young Basque nationalist had intervened with the Gestapo on their behalf and had negotiated their release.
Germans occupied Breton territory in June 1940, the archenemy of France became the Breton nationalists’ friend.

Even as certain Basques made expedient use of Nazi connections in their political negotiations, Austrian-born Rudi Mosaner masterfully negotiated his way across Nazi-dominated Europe from 1935 until 1945 by constantly altering his identity to suit changing and often contradictory circumstances. In chapter 11, “Rudolph Mosaner’s ‘Wanderjahre’: Irony and Impunity in Nazi Europe,” coauthors Andrew Stuart Bergerson and Maria Stehle used the tape-recorded memoirs of the latter’s maternal grandfather to explore the everyday life of a man who relished his chameleon-like ability to become an Austrian, Tyrolean, or Nazi ethnic German as the situation required. As Bergerson and Stehle argue, Rudi used irony in his postwar memoirs not only to gain control over his past and to forestall our ability to draw any certain conclusions about his “real” relationship with the Third Reich, but also to negotiate complex ethical and political situations. Cultivating an ironic self enabled ordinary people like Rudi to achieve a kind of sovereign impunity, to make us believe that they were not responsible for Nazi violence.

Eventually becoming a soldier in the German army, Rudi ended up in France in 1942. When his unit requisitioned the barbershop of brothers who had been deported, Rudi opportunistically cut the hair of both fellow soldiers and locals (which was forbidden). Having cut the hair of a local French butcher, Rudi asked him to organize some food for him to take back home as a reciprocated favor. The butcher willingly did so. Opportunism and ambiguity characterized their fleeting relationship as both the occupier and the occupied accommodated themselves to their wartime situation. Although Rudi depicted his barbering as something apart from the system of Nazi violence from which he was clearly benefitting, his activities in France were indeed conditioned on such violence. In 1945, Rudi deserted the German army and once again reinvented himself when captured by the Americans. He made friends with an Italian-American soldier, convinced him that he was Austrian, and thus avoided the German prisoner of war camps. When describing his escapades at the war’s end, Rudi almost completely erased violence from his story and, although he had indeed participated in murder, turned the war into nothing but a journey of opportunities.

Several interesting parallels can be drawn between Rudi Mosaner and the German officer, Gustav Hammer, who figures prominently in my chapter 12, “The Enemy as Insider: German POWs as Trial Witnesses in the
Basses-Pyrénées, 1944–1946.” Both men found themselves in ironic situations during the war and skillfully adjusted their positions to accommodate shifting political and military terrains with the hope of obtaining the best possible outcome for themselves (often at the expense of those who got in the way). Both men enjoyed “living the good life” and forged highly ambiguous, unstable relationships with “enemies” who became friends and allies, at least for as long as such relationships were expedient. Significantly, both Rudi Mosaner and Gustav Hammer also continually tried to place themselves on the margins of Nazi violence.

I argue that German occupiers and local civilians in southwestern France often negotiated the terrain of “collaboration” through inherently ambiguous relationships characterized by conviviality and reciprocity. Hammer was based in the same Basque town for nearly three years of occupation and thus became well acquainted with many local people, whom he cultivated and manipulated as they moved along the collaboration–accommodation–resistance continuum so usefully articulated by Philippe Burrin.49 Like Rudi Mosaner, Hammer was also a gifted linguist who could be both deceitful and charming. Even before the Germans had surrendered the town, the Basque authorities asked Hammer to identify the “bad French” in their midst. Still in uniform and still armed, Hammer gave an ironic situation an additional twist by expressing hope for a short holiday prior to his internment in a POW camp. Once the courts and legal structures for dealing with “collaborators” were fully in place, trained professionals continually tested the consistency of Hammer’s testimonies. From late August 1944 until the spring of 1946, prosecutors often used Hammer’s testimonies in the Court of Justice in Pau during the trials of suspected collaborators whom Hammer had known. Rather than becoming invisible as German POWs, Germans like Gustav Hammer paradoxically became “insiders” in the postliberation search for truth and justice.

As Robert Gildea once observed, the often tumultuous process of liberation—which took one whole year in some parts of France—“was as much about negotiating the postwar political settlement as it was about recovering French territory.”50 In some regions, opposing factions violently settled scores through forms of popular justice, such as lynching and sum-

49. See Burrin, France under the Germans.
50. Gildea, Marianne in Chains, 338. The liberation of the Nantes-Saint-Nazaire area on the Atlantic coast took one year owing to pockets of Germans who remained there until the end of the war in Europe.
mary executions, as local liberation committees and unruly bands of FFI men (the Free French of the Interior) noisily called for a speedier, tougher purge of those who had collaborated with the enemy. For the provisional government, bringing such disorder under control became a high priority. In the year that followed the D-Day landings on June 6, 1944, the situation in Normandy was quite different. The landings marked the beginning of a large-scale American military presence in France that lasted until 1966. By contrast, the British presence was limited and brief, with British soldiers always on the move, fighting in a small part of Normandy or moving eastward out of France altogether.

In chapter 13, “British Soldiers and French Civilians, 1944–1945,” Richard Vinen focuses on everyday relations between these two groups on French territory. As happened in the case of Franco-German relations during the occupation, the kind of contact British troops had with French civilians varied greatly and depended upon a number of factors, such as the duration of their presence in any given community. The two groups experienced the most contact when something disturbed the rapid pace of the Allied advance, and British soldiers had to rely upon local citizens for help. As Vinen explains, the first encounters between British soldiers and civilians in Normandy entailed two surprises: First, contrary to Allied expectations that D-Day would result in a massive civilian French exodus, British soldiers were most struck by the absence of people as they traveled through the countryside. Second, contrary to Allied expectations about finding a starving civilian population, British soldiers encountered a relatively well-fed population in a predominantly agricultural area with ample supplies of milk and produce. As one British officer observed, “the country regions are not that badly off . . . it’s the city folk who have felt the pinch.” As studies by Shannon Fogg and Kenneth Mouré have shown, many townspeople experienced severe material shortages during the war, and obtaining the basic necessities often dominated their everyday lives.

In Normandy, extensive interactions between the British and the French entailed amicable exchanges of food and scarce goods. British soldiers obtained eggs, butter, cheese, and fruit in exchange for cigarettes, chocolate, and soap. Although such trade was forbidden, both sides regarded these activities as mutually beneficial and harmless. Such

51. Ibid., 340.
52. See Fogg, The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France; and Mouré, “Food Rationing and the Black Market in France.”
amicability did not, however, characterize Anglo-French relations when politically sensitive issues arose. Although British soldiers usually avoided involvement in French citizens’ internal political quarrels, Vinen reveals that British servicemen sometimes had difficulty accepting the dismissal and punishment of Vichy officials (with whom they initially worked well to bring order to an area) by the new French authorities. British soldiers also found it hard not to intervene when they saw French citizens shaving the heads of women who had allegedly slept with the enemy. Overall, however, British soldiers and French civilians were relatively sympathetic to each other and had a mutual understanding of the suffering and destruction caused by war on both sides of the English Channel.

In chapter 14, “Displaced Persons, Displaced Possessions: The Effects of Spoliation and Restitution on Daily Life in Paris,” Shannon L. Fogg brings together many themes that emerged in earlier chapters of this book: dispossession, disillusionment with the liberation, divisiveness in postwar society, and the permanence of exile even after the exile’s return. She explores what the loss of physical possessions meant for individuals, families, and French society as a whole both during and after the war. Dispossession was a fundamental aspect of genocide, and the restitution of Jewish property was an essential component in the successful remaking of postwar France. Yet, as Fogg shows, French laws failed to do justice to the dispossessed.

In 1939, two-thirds of France’s Jewish population lived in Paris, and most of them fled the advancing German army in May 1940, when they joined an estimated 6.2 million other people likewise displaced in the exodus. Many Jewish-owned apartments remained empty in Paris in the wake of a 1940 ordinance that forbade Jews to return to the occupied zone and the Jewish round-ups in 1941 and 1942. The Germans then sealed, systematically emptied, and confiscated the properties. By focusing on the Germans’ Furniture Operation that began in 1942, Fogg uses private, individual experiences as a lens through which to examine spoliation and restitution. Her analysis reveals how people’s homes and belongings were sites contested by the Vichy authorities and the occupiers, as well as by Jews and non-Jews. By the end of the war, the Germans had emptied some thirty-eight thousand Parisian apartments and had shipped almost twenty-seven thousand train wagons of pillaged Jewish property to Germany.

After the liberation of Paris in August 1944, the French provisional government created a restitution service to help victims retrieve property confiscated in the war. Despite the government’s efforts to uphold republican equality in property restitution, Jews who returned to Paris
faced many obstacles: a lingering, insidious, economic anti-Semitism; an immensely frustrating bureaucracy; and postwar housing shortages that (among other factors) often prevented them from recovering their apartments and possessions. As Fogg shows, the postwar process of restitution redistributed only 30 percent of confiscated goods to Jews, and much still remains unresolved.

When an Allied victory was finally secured in May 1945, the French celebrated V-Day with muted enthusiasm, owing to ongoing postwar shortages, rationing, and an explosion of violence in Algeria, France’s most important overseas territory. World War II had deepened already existing social, political, and economic differences in French society, and the provisional government of the French Republic faced immense challenges in making the transition from war to peace. An official postwar estimate reckoned that ten thousand French citizens had been killed in summary executions during the process of liberation. Internal order urgently needed to be restored. The country also faced dire economic problems, with the massive wartime destruction of industries, transportation systems, buildings, and farms. The provisional government also had to rebuild France politically.

Owing in part to the return from Germany of nearly a million French POWs in June 1945, France also experienced a baby boom in the mid-1940s, and families yearned for a return to “normal” life. However, as a result of the war, the lives of French women and gender roles had changed and continued to do so, owing to the postwar challenges France faced. It is within this context that Sarah Fishman explores “Gender and Domesticity in War and Peace: France in the 1940s and 1950s” in chapter 15.

Under Vichy, policymakers promoted a Catholic, conservative, and patriarchal vision of the ideal family that, they argued, the Third Republic had destroyed. In their view, women were largely responsible, because they had joined the workforce and lowered the birthrate in the interwar years. Vichy traditionalists wanted to “return women to the home” (la femme au foyer). However, in the absence of so many French men, housewives

56. Ibid., 259; and Fishman, *We Will Wait*, 166.
57. Fishman, *We Will Wait*, 43.
developed new skills and experienced an independence to which they were unaccustomed, as well as physical and emotional hardship. During the occupation, 30 percent of French citizens (mainly urban dwellers) found it “impossible” to procure the basic necessities of food, clothing, and fuel. Most people, however, developed imaginative and resourceful strategies for survival. As Fishman reveals, wartime “women’s magazines provided helpful recipes such as 1,001 ways to prepare rutabagas” and suggested making bread pudding by gathering the crumbs left on the table after a meal.

Both change and continuity in attitudes toward women and domesticity characterized the postwar years. Women received the right to vote in the spring of 1945, although few entered the political scene. The provisional government also implemented an equal-wage law. Yet the postwar years also brought a romanticized revival of female domesticity that emphasized women’s roles as housewives and mothers. At the same time, many postwar political leaders also praised French women in general for their contribution to the resistance and for having successfully managed their wartime households and their wartime autonomy. As Fishman’s research on the wives of POWs has shown, however, many women wanted to give their independence and new responsibilities back to their husbands at the war’s end in 1945 and longed for an idealized life of pure female domesticity.

Women’s experiences during the war and the postwar validation of their domestic skills also gave rise to new ideas about domesticity that did not exclude feminist points of view. As Fishman argues, “postwar domesticity was not so much about a return to tradition,” which had been emphasized by the Vichy regime, “but about how hoped-for improvements [through new domestic technologies] would be a path to modernism.” In the late 1940s and 1950s, and in contrast to the popular press of the Vichy era, most popular magazines still defined women through their roles as housewives and mothers but also showed a clear willingness to reconsider gender roles and, in some cases, to celebrate feminism for both creating

58. Ibid., 55.
59. See chapter 15 by Sarah Fishman.
60. See Gildea, Marianne in Chains, 16, 414.
61. Ibid., 261.
62. See chapter 15; as well as Conklin, Fishman, and Zaretsky, France and Its Empire since 1870, 261–2; and Fishman, We Will Wait.
63. Conklin, Fishman, and Zaretsky, France and Its Empire since 1870, 262.
new opportunities for women in the workplace and for validating women’s important contribution to domestic life. The popular press for women also revealed changing attitudes toward fathers, fatherhood, and male sexuality. A poll in 1957 suggested that broader changes were also taking place in French perceptions of the double standard and the importance people increasingly attached to the fidelity of both men and women in marriage. As Fishman observes, in the late 1940s and 1950s, “French people found themselves gingerly embracing new possibilities in their relationships. The same can be said of France’s relationships with the rest of Europe,” as the continent moved toward an integration that required Franco-German cooperation.64

As the contributions to this volume show, in the mid-twentieth century the people of Western Europe showed immense resiliency, courage, and creativity during times of war, exile, and foreign occupation, as well as during the postwar years. They also experienced incredible hardship and suffering in their journeys. In very different ways, the chapters that follow make an important, however modest, contribution to our understanding of everyday life in such turbulent times.

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64. Ibid., 264.


The Impact of the Bombing of Gernika in the North American Press

Xabier Irujo Ametzaga

It is a well-known assertion that if Picasso had not painted *Guernica* no one would have ever known what happened there.\(^1\) The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that the bombing of Gernika (Guernica) was international news well before Picasso unveiled his famous canvas for the first time at the World Exhibition in Paris on July 12, 1937. In order to do so, I pay primary attention to the more than seven thousand articles that appeared in the American press from April 27 to July 12, 1937. I also show how the number of articles dramatically decreased from that day in July, after Picasso hung his canvas in Paris. Furthermore, while it is interesting that the American press devoted so much coverage to the bombing in 1937, the content of articles and editorials reveals key topics related to the bombing that the newspapers highlighted. By analyzing these articles I show that public interest focused mainly on the deadly new capability of German air bombardments. The devastating results of Germany’s terror bombing strategy, developed in 1937, brought Gernika to the attention of the world and made it a presage of the future of war.

The bombing of Gernika took place on between 4:20 and 7:40 in the afternoon of April 26, 1937. A special unit of the Luftwaffe in the service of the National Movement, Hitler’s Condor Legion, as well as Italian aircraft, carried out the attack. General Hugo Sperrle led the Condor Legion from November 6 to October 31, 1937.\(^2\) Colonel Wolfram von Richthofen, the

\(^1\) See, for example, Talón, *El holocausto de Guernica*, 198.

\(^2\) Colonel Wolfram von Richthofen refers to Sperrle under the pseudonym of “Sander.” The Legion was commanded by Helmuth Volkmann between November 1, 1937, and October 1,
Xabier Irujo Ametzaga

legion’s chief of staff between January 1937 and October 1938, directed the bombing campaign. While at present there is no documentary evidence to establish the exact number of aircraft involved in the attack, the available data indicate that some twenty-four German bombers, thirteen German fighters, three Italian bombers, and at least ten Italian fighters took part in the bombing. Approximately 118 men (90 Germans and at least 28 Italians) launched the attack. The aircraft dropped thirty to forty tons of bombs, many of them incendiary bombs, on the city center. As a consequence, the bombing reduced the city to rubble, destroying all of the buildings in the downtown area (74 percent of all buildings in Gernika). The fire could not be controlled until three days after the attack. Consistent with von Richthofen’s concept of terror warfare, the Astra-Unceta war material factory and the bridge remained untouched because Gernika was expected to be occupied by Franco’s Nationalist forces in a few days. It was common knowledge among civilians that factories were the safest place to hide during a bombardment in the Basque Country.

The Germans carried out the attack as a war experiment to measure how effectively they could coordinate units on the ground and aircraft. They also wanted to gauge the effect of a terror bombing on the militia and local population, according to the following strategy: A first wave of bombers forced citizens to seek shelter. A second wave dropped a combination of heavy bombs and incendiary shells, which cracked structures while the flammable liquid of the incendiaries penetrated the fissures and thus increased the intensity of the fire. The aim of this second attack was to torch or asphyxiate people in the shelters and, in general, to kill any survivors. Between raids, German fighters machine-gunned citizens who

3. Alexander Holle was chief of staff until January 20, 1937, and thereafter, von Richthofen until November 1, 1938.

4. The average crew of the German Junker Ju52s was three men, the Dornier Do 17 four, and the Heinkel He111 five. The average crew of an Italian Savoia Marchetti SM.79 was six. Fighters of both air forces had a single pilot.

5. Gernika was captured by the rebels on April 29 in the morning, seventy-two hours after the attack. Von Richthofen thought that it was “so stupid” to bomb factories that were going to be captured. Maier, *Guernica*, 101–2.


7. As expressed by von Richthofen in his war diary, the two-pound incendiary bombs were too light as to break the roofs by themselves so it was necessary to launch explosives to break the structures and increase the effectiveness of the incendiaries. Maier, *Guernica*, 128.
emerged from hiding and trapped survivors within the town limits in order to cause as many fatalities as possible.8

If the town had been a military target and the civilians had been soldiers, the German aircraft would have managed to keep the enemy within the perimeter of fire and within the city limits by machine-gunning forays that, in turn, would have enabled the German infantry to advance safely and quickly take the ruined town by assault. But it was an experiment and, indeed, in von Richthofen’s own words, a major “technical success” since Gernika was almost completely destroyed, and the German fighters succeeded in keeping the population under cover and immobilized for three long hours.9 After 1940, the Luftwaffe used the same technique in Warsaw, Rotterdam, and many other European cities. Von Richthofen himself led one of the Luftwaffe units during the bombing of Warsaw, when the Germans used the same strategy as in Gernika, but on a stunningly larger scale.10

First estimates put the death toll at eight hundred casualties.11 However, six days later, following the recovery of the first bodies and the dissemination of information from Gernika and from war hospitals in Bilbao, the minister of justice and culture, Jesus Maria Leizaola, notified Radio Euskadi that 590 people had died during and after the attack.12 Reporting for the Daily Express on April 27, Noel Monks returned to Gernika and saw six hundred corpses. Like many other observers, he described the town as a smoking pile of stones with an intense smell of scorched human flesh: “A sight that haunted me for weeks was the charred bodies of several women and children huddled together in what had been the cellar of a house. It had been a refugio.”13 The British consul in Bilbao, Ralph C. Stevenson, reported that preliminary information suggested that from one to three

8. Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, 608.
thousand casualties had occurred.¹⁴ Jose Labauria, mayor of Gernika, and Eusebio Arronategi, a parish priest who had participated in the recovery of corpses during the attack, provided the same numbers.¹⁵ Four nurses from a war hospital in Gernika gave the same death toll to the World Committee of Women against Fascism in Paris on May 22.¹⁶ On April 29, George L. Steer and a correspondent, Mathieu Corman, cited the first official death toll of eight hundred, most of them civilian.¹⁷ A month and a half after the raid, on June 9, 1937, Anton Irala, secretary-general of the Lehendakaritza (Presidency) of the Basque government, claimed that the attack had resulted in 1,654 deaths.¹⁸ However, as Irala pointed out, since Gernika was captured before the fire could even be extinguished and the occupying troops were ordered to remove all the evidences of the bombing, the death toll remains uncertain.

According to official reports by the Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and German regimes, and the media they controlled, no bombing had occurred in Gernika. As reported by Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes, counselor at the British embassy in Berlin, the German press blatantly denied the attack and protested against “the campaign of lies in the foreign press” about the “alleged bombardment of Gernika by General Franco” and in particular against the statement that German airplanes had taken part in the raid.¹⁹ On April 29, the Deutsche diplomatisch-politische Korrespondenz claimed that the difficult situation of Franco’s forces around Bilbao had caused the communists to falsify the facts.²⁰ Generalissimo Franco categorically denied the allegation that the bombardment had taken place under German leadership and suggested that Basque government forces had themselves bombarded or torched towns and villages far beyond the battlefront with aircraft manned for the greater part by Soviets. Franco ordered the

¹⁴. Stevenson personally went to Gernika after the bombing.
¹⁶. Euzko Deya (Paris), May 27, 1937.
¹⁸. “Relación de víctimas causadas por la aviación facciosa en sus incursiones del mes de abril de 1937.” Irargi archive, Bergara, Gipuzkoa, GE-0037-03.
¹⁹. Telegram by Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes, counselor at the British embassy in Berlin, to Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, April 29, 1937. In Medlicott and Douglas, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 687.
²⁰. Ibid.
Spanish press office to report accordingly. As a consequence, three days after the bombing, General Gonzalo Queipo de Llano broadcast through Radio Sevilla that Gernika had been burned down:

There are many people who have been bought with gold robbed from our banks who are capable of relating things which they have not seen, and even of offering objects brought from other places in support of their accusations. Guernica was not a military objective for us, and it held our respect through our belief in the valor it traditionally contains. Our airplanes have taken photographs which prove that it was not destroyed by bombs, whose craters are distinctive, but by explosives placed in the interior of the houses, as shall be duly proved. If we had bombarded it, we should not have to deny it, since we would have been within our rights, just as the reds destroyed Oviedo, Toledo and other such towns.

This remained the official Spanish version of events until the early 1970s, when the Spanish government decided that denying the bombing was no longer viable and claimed that a German operation unknown to Spanish military authorities had carried out the attack but with only minimal loss of life. The first books on the bombing of Gernika were published in that decade, during the last years of Franco’s dictatorship. However, most of the articles or books on the bombing were published after Franco’s death, such as the eyewitness account by Joseba Elosegi, *La destrucción de Guernica* (1976), Castor Uriarte’s *Bombas y mentiras sobre Guernica* (1976), Klaus Maier’s *Guernica: La intervención alemana en España y el “caso Guernica”* (1976), Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan-Witts’s *El día que murió Guernica* (1976), Ángel Viñas’s *El bombardeo de Guernica: Aún faltan datos* (1976), Luis Haranburu’s *Gernika* (1977), and Herbert R.


23. General Queipo de Llano is referring to shells or other kinds of evidences found by the survivors or international reporters in Gernika after the attack.


Despite the regimented denial of the bombing, the efforts of the Non-Intervention Committee to avoid an international crisis, and Francoist censorship, the raid soon gained significant international attention. Following George L. Steer’s editorials in the *Times* (London, hereafter *Times*), most newspapers in free Europe and the United States included editorials on the event, expressed strong disapproval of the attack, and denounced the active and decisive participation of Germany and Italy in the Civil War. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* and the *Bakersfield Californian* were among the first newspapers to publish news of the bombardment on April 27. In the days following the attack literally hundreds of newspapers in South and North America published the story, using information provided by news agencies such as the Associated Press, Reuters, United Press, and Universal News Service. Most newspapers used information provided by the four war correspondents who had gone to Gernika hours after the bombing and paid special attention to the reports by George L. Steer for the *Times*.

A sampling of the press in the United States reveals nearly six hundred news items about the bombing of Gernika between April 27 and 30, 1937, with roughly 100 on the twenty-seventh, 120 on the twenty-eighth, 170 on the twenty-ninth, and 210 on the thirtieth. On the morning after the attack, virtually every statewide newspaper recorded the bombing, usually on the front page. On April 29, a significantly greater number of newspapers reported the news, and from April 30, information and comments on the bombing appeared almost daily in the American press. An estimated seven thousand news items about the bombardment appeared between April 26 and July 12, 1937. The press published more than 2,500 news items in May

26. Full information for the books listed in this paragraph can be found in the bibliography.

27. It was not possible to accuse the Germans of bombing Gernika without creating an international crisis leading to a broader international conflict. Telegram by State Secretary Hans Georg von Mackensen to Ulrich F. W. Joachim von Ribbentrop, German ambassador to Great Britain, Berlin, May 5, 1937. In *Documents on German Foreign Policy (1918–1945)*, 280.


29. The Canadian press also reported on the event. Newspapers such as *Montreal Daily Star*, the *Toronto Daily Star*, and *La Presse* claimed that Mola’s air force was responsible for the attack.
alone. The number dropped to approximately two thousand in June, with a further three hundred news items published up to July 12.\textsuperscript{30}

Figure 1.1. A sample headline for April 27, 1937. Source: Courtesy of Timothy Hughes Rare & Early Newspapers.

The bombing of Gernika had to compete with other events for space on the front pages of American newspapers, such as the bizarre suicide of a beautiful actress, Helen Mont, who was found dead on the kitchen floor by guests who had been invited to an “unusual” cocktail party. The Ohio River’s water level also occupied much of the headlines, and a major flood affected cities along the Ohio Valley in six states, leaving fifteen dead, three missing, hundreds of people out of work—especially in Liverpool and Wellsville—and about four hundred families homeless.

American interest in the bombing is not surprising, given widespread concerns over Hitler’s rise to power and his relations with Franco. April 20, 1937, marked the Hitler’s forty-eighth birthday; he was honored by a huge

\textsuperscript{30} The survey was done by using newspaper databases such as Access Newspaper Archive, Times Digital Archive, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, LexisNexis Congressional, and other secondary files.
parade in Berlin featuring Nazi Germany’s latest armaments. The event did not go unnoticed by the American press. On April 27, most newspapers highlighted that the House Appropriations Committee had recommended an allocation of $416,413,382 for the US army during 1938, in order to relieve an extremely disturbing international military situation. With respect to other events of the Civil War of 1936, neither the brutal bombardment of Madrid on April 26, 1937, with an initial estimate of 270 deaths, nor the capture of the devastated Basque town of Eibar overshadowed news of Gernika’s bombing. But none of these items had the impact that the bombing of Gernika had.31

Roughly 80 percent of the newspapers that reported the bombing of Gernika on April 27 did so on their front pages, a testament to the widespread attention the tragedy received.32 Such attention proved to be long-standing, for the news remained on the front pages of the American press until at least early July 1937, two months after the attack itself. By the end of May 1937, several newspapers wrote about “the wide-ranging outcry about Gernika,” an event that, according to the New York Times, tended to worsen Anglo-German relations, as well as to arouse “worldwide indignation” against the Nationalist leadership, for two main reasons: the position defended by the Nazi regime within the Non-Intervention Committee33 and the fact that ambassador Ribbentrop originally refused to condemn the bombardment of open cities, that is, a city that is not occupied or defended by military forces and that is not allowed to be bombed under international law.34 In another article the journalist noted that “since the bombing of Gernika feeling in England in favor of General Franco had lessened.”35 Finally, the bombing of Gernika prompted a debate in the US Congress that on June 1, 1937, passed a resolution declaring Germany and Italy belligerent states, at war with the Spanish Republic.36

31. “All out for Der Fuhrer,” Lowell Sun (MA), April 27, 1937, 3. Also, “Nazi troops parade for Hitler as tribute on birthday,” Syracuse Herald (NY), April 27, 1937, 6. Hitler’s birthday was on April 20th.

32. Please see appendix 1 for a record of American newspapers consulted by the author that reported the bombing of Gernika on April 27.

33. The official version was that Germany was not sending troops or equipment to the Francoist forces. German pilots were always considered volunteers.


36. Joint Resolution 390, 75th Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives, June 1, 1937.
As an example of American interest in Gernika, between April 28 and July 12, 1937, the New York Times published sixty-three articles on the bombing or on the massacre, that is, almost one per day for seventy-five days. In the ninety articles on the Civil War at the Basque front, sixty-three mentioned or referred to the bombing of Gernika (70 percent). Sixteen articles were published on the front page, and the News of the Week in Review section provided a further three.37

While the numbers are indicative of American interest in the bombing, the content of the articles in the American press reveal the reasons why the bombing of Gernika had such an impact on the American media and, in the end, why the bombing became such a significant event in American public opinion. The first reports on April 27 and 28 were based on information provided by the International News Service, Reuters, United Press, the Associated Press, and some British newspapers such as the London Daily Express and the Times. This means that the vast majority of the American press based their accounts on the news given by the reporters who were in Gernika on April 26, among them, George L. Steer, Noel Monks, Mathieu Corman, and Christopher Holme. Since most American newspapers received the information from the same sources, all of them roughly covered similar facts and provided great consistency to reports on the bombing.

Unlike the newspapers controlled by the censorship of the regimes involved in the bombing (and some French ones), none of the American newspapers consulted thus far denied that a bombing had taken place, questioned the nature of the attack, or doubted German responsibility for the tragedy. Similarly, except for an incorrect reference to “Juan” Agirre (instead of “Jose Antonio”) as president of the Basque government by some correspondents, the data provided by the US press accurately corresponds to what occurred in Gernika on April 26.

The reports all referred to three basic aspects of the attack: the destructive capacity of the Luftwaffe (number of fatalities, level of physical destruction, and strategy of the attack), the evacuation of civilians (mainly children) as a result of the indiscriminate bombing campaign, and finally, German denial of responsibility for the attack. Consequently, the leitmotifs of articles in the New York Times, in particular, and the American press, in general, included the following: fear over the destructive capabilities of

German aircraft and fear over the possibility of further air attacks against European and American cities as the start of a second world war became increasingly more certain. In the first six articles published by the *New York Times*, five referred specifically to the massive destruction of Gernika and the indiscriminate mass murder of innocent civilians. Forty out of the sixty-three articles (63 percent) made reference to the total destruction of the Basque town. In the same terms as Steer’s article for the *New York Times*, the *New Castle News* published an article on its front page that epitomizes the news published in the American press on April 27:

Hundreds of men, women and children were literally roasted alive and torn to pieces by explosive and drilling machine gun bullets today in a savage rebel air raid on the Basque city of Guernica, according to a Reuters dispatch. The news agency reported the ancient and picturesque city, one time Basque capital, was reduced to a blazing mass of ruins. It stated casualties were “uncountable” and termed the air raid the “most appalling” in modern warfare. *The London Daily Express* said the city was “completely gutted” along with three surrounding towns situated 25 miles from beleaguered Bilbao. This account said total deaths were estimated at 1,000. The “whole countryside was ablaze” and 5,000 persons were left homeless by the insurgent air attack, the *Express* stated. “An uncounted number of German planes” for three and a half hours roared over Guernica in groups of seven, accompanied by large numbers of fighting craft, the Reuters dispatch said.

Paraphrasing journalist Anna R. Mask, the bombing of Gernika gave eloquent expression to the intensity and immensity of what was not only the tragedy of Gernika but also of the world, because it showed how ruthless the quest for power could become and how efficient the Luftwaffe was. The raid demonstrated the unparalleled brutalities that modern warfare could inflict, and the depiction of the terror bombing campaign by George L. Steer and British eyewitnesses of German air raids on the Basques increased an already existing anxiety provoked by German raids over British cities during World War I and warned of expectable attacks by the German air force in the future.

41. *Hammond Times* (IN), April 27, 1937, 8.
The headlines were very precise about the nature of the attack (bombing), the scale of the destruction (Gernika was wiped out), and the number of victims (all of them estimated a death toll ranging from eight hundred to one thousand). On April 27, the Chester Times reported on its front page: “800 killed as rebels shell old Basque city. Men, women, children roasted alive and torn to pieces.” Headlines in the Daily Independent reported: “Rebel planes kill 800 in ‘holy city.’ Mow down shrieking, fleeing civilians, burn their homes.”42 The front page of the Daily Messenger read: “Hundreds are killed in new war bombings. Former Basque capital is mass of blazing ruins today.” Numerous other newspapers ran similar headlines: “Rebel bombs kill 800 in Basque city,” according to the Greeley Daily Tribune; the Hammond Times reported “800 killed in savage air raid.” The Indiana Evening Gazette headlined with “Hundreds of civilians killed at Guernica, Left in ruins.” The front page of the La Crosse Tribune reported: “Hundreds are killed in air attack.” The headlines of the New Castle News read: “Estimate 1,000 dead in ‘most appalling’ rebel air massacre.” In the Lethbridge Herald the front-page banner read: “Sacred city subjected to worst raids of war.” The Lowell Sun and Alton Evening Telegraph both reported “800 killed in air attack.” The headlines of the Oakland Tribune read: “800 Basque civilians die in air raid.”43 Some newspapers (such as the Evening Herald of Provo, Utah) even highlighted the news banner, “800 civilians slain in insurgent raids,” over the title of the newspaper itself.44 Widely distributed American newspapers such as the Washington Post, El Nuevo Herald, the Miami Herald, the Chicago Tribune, the Boston Globe, and the San Francisco Chronicle also covered news of Gernika at length. Most articles focused primarily on the level of destruction: “and the city was left in blazing ruins after a fierce insurgent bombardment,” one journalist noted.45 “Gernika no longer exists,” several other reporters observed.46

42. Daily Independent (Murphysboro, IL), April 27, 1937, 1.
43. Oakland Tribune (CA), April 27, 1937, 1.
44. Evening Herald (Provo, UT), April 27, 1937, 1.
45. Big Spring Daily Herald (TX), April 27, 1937, 1.
the one based on the first official report of eight hundred deaths. The \textit{Bakersfield Californian} reported: “Spanish rebel planes kill 800 civilians in two raids” in reference to the two different waves of bombers that hit the Basque city and surrounding area. Other newspapers reported that “hundreds of men, women and children were roasted alive and torn to pieces by explosives,” without giving an exact number of victims. Acting on information given by journalists in Gernika on the previous night, newspapers like the \textit{Bakersfield Californian} reported “bodies in streets.”

Many of the articles insisted that Gernika was an open and undefended town, with no military value. Journalists depicted the town as a symbol for the Basques, variously describing it as “the national shrine of Basque liberties” and as “the sacred city of the Basque Republic.” They repeatedly emphasized the cruelty of the act: “Eight hundred persons were killed when rebel planes attacked the Basque city of Guernica. According to reports in Bilbao a thousand persons fled to the hills, hundreds of men, women and children were roasted alive and torn to pieces by explosives and machine gun bullets in the air raid; according to a Reuters’ dispatch one bomb hit a shelter.”

According to most of the newspapers, the bombing accomplished nothing of strategic importance, since the city was not armed and no troops werequartered there; the newspapers also underlined the psychological effect of the raid by remarking that Basque officials “were incensed at the devastation of their Holy City.”

The press also focused heavily on the strategy of the attack. Most newspapers accurately reported that the bombing had been executed in successive waves of aircraft that soared over the town in squadrons of seven planes each, followed by fighters “dropping heavy explosives and scattering hand grenades for three and a half hours.” Journalists writing for the news agencies reported that the first wave of attack was confined to grenade-throwing and machine-gunning, with the next relay of planes

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47. Edwardsville Intelligencer (IL), April 27, 1937, 1; El Paso Herald-Post (TX), April 27, 1937, 1–2; Greeley Daily Tribune (CO), April 27, 1937, 1; Hammond Times (IN), April 27, 1937, 8; Lethbridge Herald, (Alberta), April 27, 1937, 1 and 3; Lowell Sun (MA), April 27, 1937, 3 and 21; Alton Evening Telegraph (IL), April 27, 1937, 1; and Bakersfield Californian, April 27, 1937, 1.


49. El Paso Herald-Post (TX), April 27, 1937, 1.

50. Hammond Times (IN), April 27, 1937, 8.

51. Mason City Globe-Gazette (IA), April 27, 1937, 1. Also, Denton Record-Chronicle (TX), April 27, 1937, 1.
dropping high explosive and incendiary bombs, which were followed by a final machine-gunning of civilians in the streets and in the fields around the town.\textsuperscript{52} “The planes rained death on them,” reported the \textit{Daily Independent} and many other newspapers.\textsuperscript{53} In general, all the newspapers pointed out that the terrified civilians, “scattered in confusion as the planes rained death on them,”\textsuperscript{54} sought refuge in the hills but that the low-flying planes turned machine-guns on the shrieking populace, felling groups “like a reaper going through wheat.”\textsuperscript{55} Finally, the use of incendiaries was also highlighted. The historic town was “burning on all four sides.”\textsuperscript{56} It was estimated that more than one thousand incendiary bombs hit the town.\textsuperscript{57} In general, press reports coincided in noting that the air raid was the “worst raid of the war” and the “most appalling in modern warfare,” headlines that appeared in newspapers such as the \textit{Lethbridge Herald} and the the \textit{New Castle News}. According to Steer’s dispatches the aim of the bombing was to terrify civilians, for

civilian morale is an extremely important element of war in any voluntary or militia system; where the conduct of war depends not so much on direction from above but on willingness to fight for an ideal, an army and the civilian population which it protects are so tightly linked that changes in their feeling, either towards fear or enthusiasm, become common property at once. The more so with the Basques, whose militia at only forty miles at the farthest from their homes in Bilbao were constantly visiting, eating with, receiving letters and laundry from their families. Mutual reactions on morale were immediate.\textsuperscript{58}

The Germans wanted to strike terror into everyone who lived in Durango, Gernika, Bilbao, or in any other city and town in the Basque Country, as well as into everyone who passed through them and everyone who heard of them.

\textsuperscript{52} Denton Record-Chronicle (TX), April 27, 1937, 1; and Daily Messenger (Canandaigua, NY), April 27, 1937, 1.
\textsuperscript{53} El Paso Herald-Post (TX), April 27, 1937, 1; and Daily Messenger (Canandaigua, NY), April 27, 1937, 1.
\textsuperscript{54} Bakersfield Californian, April 27, 1937, 1.
\textsuperscript{55} Daily Independent (Murphysboro, IL), April 27, 1937, 6.
\textsuperscript{56} Daily Messenger (Canandaigua, NY), April 27, 1937, 1.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Steer, \textit{The Tree of Gernika}, chapter XIII.
Moreover, the Nazi regime was perfectly aware of the political and diplomatic effects of panic that had given rise to the Non-Intervention Committee and had triggered treaties such as the British-Italian agreement of April 1938 and the Treaty of Munich the following month. Once World War II started, Nazi propaganda tried to make use of the terror produced by the Luftwaffe’s aerial bombing campaigns by making documentaries such as *Baptism of Fire*, whose main aim was to generate an image of invincible German air power, both inside and outside the borders of the Reich.\(^{59}\)

One other recurring theme in press accounts of the Gernika bombing, in particular, and on the bombardment of open cities, in general, was the dramatic situation and evacuation of civilians, mainly minors, who sought refuge in Bilbao. The British and the American presses correctly estimated that there were about 250,000 refugees in Bilbao in early May, after the initial air offensive of April.\(^{60}\) It should be emphasized that the mass evacuation of thirty-two thousand children conducted by the Basque government between May and August 1937 was the first large-scale operation of its kind in contemporary European history. It was also the first time that the possibility of evacuating hundreds of thousands of civilians to foreign countries had been considered. Alongside the panic generated by the Luftwaffe’s terror bombing campaign, the evacuation campaign gave rise to great concern in the United Kingdom, where people recalled the measures taken by the British government over civilians in London during the World War I. The evacuation campaign also increased fears that German terror-bombing campaigns might also take place in southeast England and require a massive evacuation of British citizens.

Many articles also pointed out that the bombing of Gernika drove General Mola’s forces closer to Bilbao. Gernika was only some twenty miles northeast of the Basque financial and administrative capital. “Bilbao tottered Tuesday before an advancing insurgent army that had crushed its outer defenses and plunged its defenders into a disastrous retreat,” echoed most of the newspapers.\(^{61}\) The war at the Basque front was consequently close, and for first time, the final victory of Franco and his allies seemed certain.

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The American press also reported on German denial of Gernika’s bombing, but as George L. Steer wrote for the *New York Times*, German, Spanish, and Italian refutation of their responsibility for the attack against Gernika surprised no one in London or Washington, because the bombing of Durango on March 31, 1937, was also denied by the rebels despite the presence of British witnesses. Indeed, most newspapers reported that the bombers “were identified as of German manufacture,” and none of the articles cited in this chapter denied or even questioned German and Italian participation in the massacre. No credence was given either to the alleged destruction of Gernika by the Basques, by the “Asturian dynamiters,” the Reds, the Bolsheviks, or the Jews. As pointed out by the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the German administration tried to avoid responsibility (rather than magnifying their triumph, as Nazi propaganda did after September 1939). World public opinion was not prepared to accept aerial bombardment of open towns as an ordinary act of war, and even totalitarian regimes did not think it safe to ignore such opinion in 1937. In short, to give publicity to this successful war experiment was regarded as inopportune at that particular moment by the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda (Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda).

In conclusion, press reports on the bombing had an important international impact less than twenty-four hours after the attack and remained on the front pages for at least two months, from April 27 until early July 1937. From the fall of Bilbao on June 19, 1937, until the end of the war on April 1, 1939, however, the number of articles on the Gernika bombing published by the *New York Times* (about fifty-five new entries, or more than two articles a month) fell significantly.

The Spanish dictator’s death in November 1975, and, consequently, the end of censorship on Gernika’s bombing, led to a resurgence of interest in and literature about the bombing. At least 552 news items featuring Gernika appeared in the *New York Times* between 1977 and 2010, or more

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64. The official version of the Spanish Francoist, German, and Italian governments was that the city had not been bombed by their planes but set afire by the Spanish Republican or Basque forces. The Nazi propaganda within Germany also blamed the Jews for the destruction of Basque towns.
66. The *New York Times* registers 435 mentions to Gernika from April 1, 1939, to January 1, 1977, or about one a month.
than one per month across a thirty-three year period. In addition, the Washington Post published 211 articles on the subject, and more than 140 articles about Gernika have appeared in El Nuevo Herald and the Chicago Tribune during the same timeframe. Overall, an examination of the American press of this period (1977–2010) shows that more than five thousand articles on Gernika had been published in the one hundred major American newspapers or about 160 news items annually. The ten first newspapers to report on the tragedy of Gernika published at least 1,666 articles about the bombing during this period.

The overwhelming majority of American newspapers accepted reports that the slaughter had been carried out by the German air force at the service of the Spanish Nationalist army, and the vast majority openly expressed their disapproval. On the contrary, the press controlled by the powers behind the attack (Germany, Spain, and Italy) and their allies (Portugal and Japan) denied that the town had been bombed and defended the thesis that Gernika had been set afire by the Basques or the “Asturian dynamiters.” It is interesting to note that while the Spanish press accused the Basque “separatists” or “Reds” of destroying Gernika, the German press preferred to blame the “Bolsheviks” and “Jews.”

As the American press revealed in 1937, panic arising from the German terror bombing of Gernika gave rise to extensive, longstanding news coverage of the attack and its consequences. Terror bombing had never before been implemented on such a large scale or as rigorously as it was against the “Holy City” of the Basques. Following the Winnipeg Free Press editorial on Saturday May 22, 1937, Gernika gained lasting significance in the history of war, mainly because its ruthless, calculated destruction shocked the European and American public, especially the British. It was an object lesson to the free world, a tragic case that governments and public opinion feared would be repeated as World War II rapidly approached on European territory. The Nazi strategy for breaking civilian morale by bombing and machine-gunning from the air became commonplace after

67. The same proportion—one article a month—is registered from 1939 to 2010. The survey includes the news on Guernica by Picasso.
68. Survey conducted through Access World News of Newsbank.
69. The New York Times (552 articles), the Washington Post (211), El Nuevo Herald (Miami, FL) (148), Chicago Tribune (135), the Boston Globe (128), the San Francisco Chronicle (115), the Miami Herald (109), the Star-Ledger (Newark, NJ) (91), St. Petersburg Times (FL) (91), and the San Diego Union-Tribune (86).
Gernika, and even if this was not tactically new, the bombing of Gernika showed that the Nazi strategy had become one of the major tools of aggressive war.70 Despite the efforts of the Geneva Convention on disarmament, the bombing of Gernika showed for first time that terror bombing and its consequences were no longer a theory of war but a fact, as one Canadian news editorial made clear:

It was a complete demonstration of the success of the tactics of aerial warfare which are being worked out by the general staffs of every country that has an air force. Guernica was a town, open and undefended; its people were, with no doubt some exceptions, non-combatants; it was an ancient and decayed city, containing memorials and expositions of Basque history and civilization. All these were reasons why it should be destroyed, since the purpose of the attack was to make it clear to all the Basque people that if their government did not make peace with the insurgent leader, there would be similar massacres of the people wherever this was possible. . . . Guernica remains a portent of what will happen in the future on an immense scale whenever and wherever war breaks out.71

In conclusion, the bombing of Gernika became shocking, international news before Picasso painted Guernica.72 Picasso made the first sketches of his masterpiece on May 1, began working directly on the canvas on May 11, and finished the painting on June 4, 1937. Guernica was moved to the Spanish pavilion of the World Exhibition in Paris (Exposition Internationale) in the second half of June, although the pavilion was opened very late, on July 12, two months after the supposed official opening.73 Consequently, before the artist from Malaga had finished his magnificent canvas, the news had already circulated and remained on the front page of the American press and, by extension, that of the British and the whole free world’s press. This fact helps to explain why Picasso chose to represent the tragedy of Gernika in a canvas for the World Exhibition.74 Furthermore, along with the undoubted innovative and aesthetic value of the work by Picasso, the international attention given to the bombing strengthened the resounding

70. This was Germany’s strategy during World War I or British strategy during the Mandate at the Middle East in the postwar era.
72. Talón, El holocausto de Guernica.
73. “Spain’s Picasso paints bombing of Guernica for Paris Exposition (bombed by rebels April 27),” July 26, 1937, 64.
74. See Southworth, Guernica, Guernica.
critical acclaim for Picasso’s masterpiece and ensured that Gernika would become an icon of terror bombing and, by extension, of the human suffering caused by war through the merging of the historical and the artistic. This was precisely the intention of the artist himself, who believed that artworks were not and should not be mere aesthetic works but also political tools in the service of humanity.75

Appendix 1. Sample of American Newspapers that Reported the Bombing of Gernika on April 27, 1937

Among the first newspapers to post the news on the bombing in the United States on Tuesday, April 27, were the following:

1. Abilene Reporter-News, Abilene, Texas, 1, 11
2. Ada Evening News, Ada, Oklahoma, 1
3. Alton Evening Telegraph, Alton, Illinois, 1
4. Bakersfield Californian, Bakersfield, California, 1
5. Beatrice Daily Sun, Beatrice, Nebraska, 1
6. Big Spring Daily Herald, Big Spring, Texas, 1
7. The Bismarck Tribune, Bismarck, North Dakota, 1
8. Blytheville Courier News, Blytheville, Arkansas, 1
9. Brainerd Daily Dispatch, Brainerd, Minnesota, 1
11. Chester Times, Chester, Pennsylvania, 1–2
12. Chicago Daily Tribune, Chicago, Illinois, 1
13. Chronicle Telegram, Elyria, Ohio, 15
14. Clovis New Mexico Evening News-Journal, Clovis, New Mexico, 6
15. Corpus Christi Times, Corpus Christi, Texas, 1
16. Corsicana Daily Sun, Corsicana, Texas, 1
17. The Daily Courier, Connellsville, Pennsylvania, 1
18. The Daily Democrat-Times, Greenville, Mississippi, 1
20. Daily Hawk Eye Gazette, Burlington, Iowa, 1
21. The Daily Independent, Murphysboro, Illinois, 6
22. The Daily Inter Lake, Kalispell, Montana, 1
23. The Daily Messenger, Canandaigua, New York, 1
24. Daily News Standard, Uniontown, Pennsylvania, 1, 8
25. Denton Record-Chronicle, Denton, Texas, 1

75. Tucker, Dreaming with Open Eyes, 45.
28. *The Emporia Gazette*, Emporia, Kansas, 1
29. *The Evening Herald*, Provo, Utah, 1
30. *Fitchburg Sentinel*, Fitchburg, Massachusetts, 1, 11
32. *The Greeley Daily Tribune*, Greeley, Colorado, 1
33. *Hamilton Daily News Journal*, Hamilton, Ohio, 1
34. *Hammond Times*, Hammond, Indiana, 8
35. *Hutchinson News*, Hutchinson, Kansas, 6
36. *Independent*, Helena, Montana, 1–2
37. *Indiana Evening Gazette*, Indiana, Pennsylvania, 1
38. *Iola Daily Register*, Iola, Kansas, 1
39. *Jefferson City Post-Tribune*, Jefferson City, Missouri, 1
40. *Kingsport Times*, Kingsport, Tennessee, 1
41. *The La Crosse Tribune and Leader-Press*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1
42. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, Las Vegas, New Mexico, 2
43. *The Lethbridge Herald*, Lethbridge, Alberta, 1, 3
44. *The Lima News*, Lima, Ohio, 1
45. *Logansport Pharos-Tribune*, Logansport, Indiana, 1
46. *The Lowell Sun*, Lowell, Massachusetts, 3, 21
47. *Manitowoc Herald Times*, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, 1
48. *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, Mason City, Iowa, 1–2
49. *Miami Daily News-Record*, Miami, Oklahoma, 1
50. *Moberly Monitor-Index*, Moberly, Missouri, 1
51. *New Castle News*, New Castle, Pennsylvania, 1
52. *The Newark Advocate*, Newark, Ohio, 9
53. *North Adams Transcript*, North Adams, Massachusetts, 1
54. *Oakland Tribune*, Oakland, California, 1
55. *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, Ogden, Utah, 1
56. *Pampa Daily News*, Pampa, Texas, 1
58. *Pharos Tribune*, Logansport, Indiana, 1
59. *The Piqua Daily Call*, Piqua, Ohio, 5
60. *Port Arthur News*, Port Arthur, Texas, 1
61. *The Portsmouth Herald and Times*, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1
62. *Portsmouth Times*, Portsmouth, Ohio, 3
63. *The Rhinelander Daily News*, Rhinelander, Wisconsin, 1
64. *Syracuse Herald*, Syracuse, New York, 1
66. *Waterloo Daily Courier*, Waterloo, Iowa, 1
67. *Wisconsin State Journal*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1
68. *The Yuma Daily Sun*, Yuma, Arizona, 1
69. *The Zanesville Signal*, Zanesville, Ohio, 1

Appendix 2. Articles Published in the *New York Times* between April 27 and July 4, 1937, on the Bombing of Gernika

2. “Rebels go slowly for fear of traps in drive on Bilbao,” William P. Carney, April 28, 1, 4.
6. “32 planes rushed to Bilbao’s rescue as Basques dig in [ . . . ]. Rebels find Guernica in ashes,” April 30, 1, 4.
7. “Air attack on Guernica attributed to Goering,” Pertinax, April 30, 1.
10. “Reich ‘volunteers’ reported in north [ . . . ]. Fresh government troops are holding Mola’s forces in check on Guernica front,” Wireless, May 1, 3.
11. “Germany in the news,” May 1, 18.
13. “No air raid marks seen by newsmen in Guernica,” May 2, 1.
21. “Germany now ready to limit air raids,” May 6, 6.
30. “Mothers honored in churches here,” May 10, 16.
33. “6,000 years ago,” May 12, 22.
35. “Rebels at Munguia in drive on Bilbao [. . .]. Captured German flier is said to have admitted taking part in Guernica bombing,” May 14, 7.
37. “Refugees from Spain a problem for France [. . .]. Said Guernica was bombed,” P. J. Philip, May 16, 64.
42. “Rebel planes strafe roads inside Bilbao fortifications [. . .]. German fliers sentenced to die,” Wireless by George L. Steer, May 22, 1 and 3.
44. “Rebels push lines almost to Lemona [. . .]. Third German flier on trial,” Wireless by George L. Steer, May 24, 3.
47. “Non-interventionists speed effort to win back Germany and Italy,” Wireless by Frederick T. Birchall, June 2, 1–2.
49. “New pact on Spain is near in London,” Special cable by Frederick T. Birchall, June 9, 18.
50. “Eden wins assent of Italy and Reich to plan for Spain [. . .]. Confirm Guernica raid,” Frederick T. Birchall, June 11, 1.


52. “Can Europe banish the specter of war?” Walter Duranty, June 13, 101.

53. “Warning is issued to Soviet industry,” June 14, 1.


55. “Franco rules out compromise peace,” Special cable, June 18, 14.

56. “Bilbao withstood siege nine months [. . .]. Guernica bombed on way,” Hanson W. Baldwin, June 20, 27.


58. “Neutrals blamed for Bilbao’s fall,” Special cable by Frederick T. Birchall, June 21, 5.

59. “Neurath visit off; Britain offended by check to amity [. . .]. Ask about Guernica inquiry,” June 22, 1 and 12.

60. “Borah sees youth duped by fascists,” Special cable, June 24, 18.


63. “No longer an isle, Britain moves uncertainly,” D. W. Brogan, July 4, 75.

Bibliography


From the Pulpit to the Dock: Basque Priests in Franco’s Military Courts in 1937

Peter Anderson

“What caused us the deepest pain in the depths of our souls was to see the guiding principle of our war as a crusade undermined and to lose the support of some foreign Catholics.”

— Francoist Catholic on Basque nationalist priests

“How they hate us.”

— Basque nationalist priest languishing in a Francoist jail

In mid-July 1936 a group of army officers backed by civilian supporters launched a coup against the elected Popular Front government of the Spanish Second Republic. From late September 1936, General Franco took command of the rebels and gradually defeated government forces across Spain until he won final victory in late March 1939. Over the course of the Civil War, rebels and insurgents behind the lines cut short the lives of one hundred thousand opponents. In the ten years that followed the formal cessation of hostilities, Francoists put to death around a further fifty thousand victims and jailed hundreds of thousands.¹ Unsurprisingly, the general’s apologists did all they could to cover up this ghastly history. Even after the dictator’s demise in 1975, the enduring influence exercised by his supporters combined with the tacit agreement not to rake over the past thwarted discussion of the killings that had taken place. Since the early 1980s, how-

* The British Academy funded the research on which this article is based.

1. Figures cited in Casanova, ”Una dictadura de cuarenta años,” 8.
ever, historians have both exposed the extent of the massacres and identified many victims who were dumped in unmarked mass graves.²

Recently historians have often explained the violence sanctioned by Franco in terms of a systematic and sustained attempt to crush reform-minded activists who had rallied behind the Popular Front. In this task a collection of soldiers and paramilitaries formed death squads during the first weeks following Francoist occupation. Following orders from above, they uncompromisingly targeted large numbers of reformists who had long been classified as implacable and even “inhuman” enemies.³

Specifically in relation to the Basque provinces of Gipuzkoa (Guipúzcoa) and Bizkaia (Vizcaya), some historians close to the left wing of Basque nationalism have produced studies of the repression that overestimate the number of victims and portray the Basques as victims of Francoist outsiders.⁴ On the other hand, when discussing the period of Republican rule, a number of scholars imply that an oasis of peace reigned in the Basque Country. Accordingly, in their view, relatively little of the violence that occurred in other parts of Republican Spain, and particularly against the church and the clergy, blotted the landscape of the two Basque provinces.⁵ Such approaches receive some, perhaps inadvertent, buttressing from academics who have focused on the sixteen Basque clergy killed by Francoists, predominantly in the autumn of 1936, because they were believed to have supported the goals of the Basque Nationalist Party (EAJ-PNV, by its Basque and Spanish acronyms).⁶ We know comparatively little, how-

2. An overview of their work can be found in Santos Juliá, coord., Víctimas de la guerra civil.
3. Examples include Casanova, “La sombra del Franquismo,” 43; and Espinosa, La columna de la muerte, 7.
4. de Pablo, “La guerra civil en el País Vasco,” 115, 140. The most reliable figures place the numbers killed by the Francoists as 175 in Araba, 537 in Gipuzkoa, 916 in Bizkaia, and 3,000 in Navarre. A good overview can be found in Barruso Barés, “La represión en las zonas franquistas del País Vasco durante la guerra civil,” 670. On the Civil War between Basques see Goñi Galarraga, La guerra civil en el País Vasco.
5. On the “Basque oasis” see de la Granja Sainz, “El nacimiento de Euskadi,” 442–3. For a critique of the concept see de Pablo, “La guerra civil en el País Vasco,” 129. On the Francoist rebuttal of the idea of the Basque oasis see Universidad de Valladolid, Informe sobre la situación de las provincias vascongadas bajo el dominio rojo-separatista, 40. Francisco Espinosa points out that in many parts of Republican-held territory little violence took place against the clergy. Espinosa, “Sobre la represión franquista en el País Vasco,” 15.
6. A good study can be found in Aizpuru, ed., El otoño de 1936 en Guipúzcoa. Other useful studies include Barruso Barés, Violencia política y represión en Guipúzcoa durante la Guerra Civil y el primer franquismo (1936–1945), 156–64. An exposé can be found in a report by the Spanish Embassy Great Britain, Spain: Catholic and Protestant Priests, Freemasons and Liberals Shot by the
ever, about the EAJ-PNV-supporting priests who ended up in Francoist jails following the occupation of Bizkaia, the province centered on Bilbao, in June 1937. Significantly, a number of these clergy went to prison following denunciations by fellow Basques and, in an important number of cases, also suffered from violence meted out against them during the Republican period.7

Accordingly, one effect of these interpretations is to emphasize the exogenous, planned, and state-directed nature of Francoist violence and to shed less light on how much the repression emerged in the specific context of an internecine civil war. In particular, these perspectives can avoid analyzing how state and society worked together to cast out mutual enemies from their midst. Equally, by focusing on the violence of the first weeks of Francoist rule these approaches can obscure from view the way the repression developed and changed over time.8 Similarly, they can on occasion overlook some of the ways that shifts in domestic and international politics during the Civil War helped shape the Francoist repression in the longer term.

To address some of these relatively neglected issues this chapter examines the prosecutions of priests who had supported the EAJ-PNV and who fell into Franco’s hands when his forces captured the whole of Bizkaia.9 These prosecutions provide insight into the way the repression developed in the specific context of an ongoing civil war. The Francoist understanding of Basque nationalist priests as implacable enemies who deserved punishment, for instance, gained much of its currency from animosities triggered by the conflict. One reason for this is that the EAJ-PNV-supporting priests hindered Francoist efforts to mobilize supporters behind what they por-

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Rebels. Details on some of the priests can be found in de Iturralde, *La guerra de Franco, los vascos y la iglesia*, 331–72. On the fury of the head of the Catholic Church grouped around Franco, see Rodríguez Aisa, *El Cardenal Gomá y la guerra de España*, 62–8.

7. Important studies include Martínez Sánchez, “Mons. Antoniutti y el clero nacionalista vasco,” and Botti, “La iglesia vasca dividida.” Exact figures elude the historian, but estimates suggest seven hundred priests suffered some form of repression at the hands of the Francoists, from fines and exile to jail, in the three provinces of the Vitoria dioceses (Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, and Araba). In the Republican period around fifty-nine members of the clergy had their lives taken. This figure includes twenty-eight killed after the EAJ-PNV took over power in October 1936. See de Pablo, “La guerra civil en el País Vasco,” 125, 129.

8. Julius Ruiz argues the need to pay attention to chronology. See Ruiz, “A Spanish Genocide?” 176.

trayed as a defense of the faith. Similarly, the priests hampered the ability of insurgents to court Catholic opinion around the world. In addition, following the Francoist conquest, the especially stark need in civil war conditions to sift through the mass of the occupied population to distinguish friend from foe posed a grave problem when it came to classifying priests. For these men of the cloth very often hailed from political backgrounds that could place them both in the Francoist and Spanish government camps. In response, Francoists fostered a highly targeted and graded system of surveillance that depended on fine-grained information secured through collaboration with Basque Francoists at the local level. This helped satisfy the acute need generated by the Civil War to define the enemy and claim the unambiguous loyalty of the population.

In the process Francoists overrode the complex histories of priests who had often both opposed and fallen victim to anticlerical groups and reduced them to enemies of the “true” faith. Members of Franco’s camp also took into account foreign opinion and brushed off protests against the repression of clerics by extolling the virtues of their military trial system. More substantively, Francoists shifted toward more carefully calibrated punishment of those whom they identified and labeled as their enemies. By such means they proved successful in reducing Basque clergy to implacable enemies and prisoners.

It is important to note that tensions between supporters of the EAJ-PNV and the rightists who became part of the Francoist wartime coalition began before civil war broke out in Spain. During the course of the Second Spanish Republic, the relationship between these two groups grew increasingly strained as competing views of Catholic politics emerged. In 1931, at the start of the Republican period, the EAJ-PNV and the right-wing Carlists—who took the name Comunión Tradicionalista in early 1932—shared some common ground. Both groups viewed the new political system as a rod in the hands of the secularist left to reduce the power of the church. Close family connections often linked supporters of the EAJ-PNV and the Comunión Tradicionalista and fostered a common tack against the Republic. Indeed in the first months of the Republic, the EAJ-PNV and the Carlists were able to form part of an electoral coalition. Moreover, the EAJ-PNV and the Carlists both marched out of the Spanish parliament in

10. On the links between selective violence, fine-grained information, and collaboration in civil wars see Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War, 173.

11. de Meer, El Partido Nacionalista Vasco ante la Guerra de España, 95.
October 1931, when the ruling Republican-Socialist group passed constitutional clauses that reformed the relationship between church and state. Tensions began to mount between them, however, in December 1931, when the Republican constitution came into force and handed management of religious matters to the central Spanish state rather than to the regions. This proved a watershed for the Carlists who had held out hopes of gaining autonomy as a means of keeping the secular Republic at bay and favored the defense of a regional identity over the creation of autonomous institutions within the confines of the Spanish state. The EAJ-PNV, however, adopted a different approach and worked toward autonomy as a means of promoting Basque national interests and, in some cases, as a launching pad for ever greater freedom from Madrid. After the Carlists in Navarre stymied an effort to achieve autonomy in June 1932, the strains between the two groups grew. In the Gipuzkoan capital of Donostia-San Sebastián, for instance, EAJ-PNV activists heckled Carlist speakers with cries of “Long Live the Republic!” For its part, the right began to cast autonomy supporters as “separatists.” Carlists even started to denounce members of the EAJ-PNV for being in collusion with Jews and communists and in rebellion against true Catholic doctrine.

A battle over the future direction of Catholic politics in the Republic lurked behind these growing disputes. On one side, the EAJ-PNV accepted the rules of the political system and wanted to work within it to advance the cause of Basque autonomy or independence. Many Carlists, on the other hand, saw the Republic as irredeemably secular and began to plot against what they represented as an illegitimate political system. In this context, leading Carlists backed the use of violence as their best defense against the perceived attack on their faith and the imposition of the overweening power of the central state. Meanwhile, the EAJ-PNV defended the view put forward by Spanish bishops in a pastoral letter in 1931 that sedition and rebellion lay out of bounds to Catholics. For its part, the hard-line right across Spain fell ever more behind the stance of Aniceto Castro Albarrán,

12. de Pablo and Mees, El péndulo patriótico, 127.
14. On the tension within the EAJ-PNV between political realism and the desire for independence see de Pablo and Mees, El péndulo patriótico, 128.
16. de Hiriartia, The Case of the Basque Clergy, 18.
17. de Pablo and Mees, El péndulo patriótico, 132.
professor of canon law at Salamanca, who argued that the Republic represented a tyranny that right-minded people had to sweep away with sword in hand.\textsuperscript{18}

At issue also lay long-running resentments against the Basque clergy from the seminary in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Araba (Álava). José Calvo Sotelo, a leading right-wing monarchist, denounced the seminary as “a separatist center” in a speech given in Madrid just before the Civil War.\textsuperscript{19} A book about the Basque clergy published by the Franco regime in 1940 furnishes us with more of the details behind this charge. The book’s author tells us that prewar Spanish nationalists referred to the seminary as a “batzoki,” the Basque term for a EAJ-PNV political and cultural center. According to the author, seminarians brought the seeds of nationalism with them from their homes, and the educational authorities did little to prevent these from flowering. Groups of professors and students, for instance, were said to fine each other if they spoke in Spanish. Seminarians read the “separatist press,” and the sporting of belts in “separatist colors” became the rage. One student was even accused of repeatedly changing his garb so that he could vote four times for the Basque autonomy statute.\textsuperscript{20} What all of these developments in the seminary meant, as the Jesuit priest and propagandist Constantino Bayle put it in 1940, was that “part of the Basque clergy had been poisoned against Spain and their legitimate right to love of their own land and people.”\textsuperscript{21}

In fact, the seminary authorities protested that they did not permit separatist propaganda in the seminary and with some reason. In 1924 the then-bishop of Vitoria-Gasteiz, Zacarías Martínez instructed his priests to dedicate themselves simply to the politics of Christ; and in 1932 Bishop Mateo Múgica ordered his priests to “ensure” that they worked only as the Lord’s ministers.\textsuperscript{22} The seminary, however, did differ from similar institutions across Spain in that it allowed debate of new political and educational ideas and so represented a more open and tolerant form of Catholicism. It

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Castro Albarrán, \textit{El derecho a la rebeldía}.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Cited in Clero Vasco, \textit{El pueblo vasco frente la cruzada franquista}, 54.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Centro de Información Católica Internacional, \textit{El clero y los Católicos vasco-separatistas y el Movimiento Nacional}, 168–73.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 200–1. All translations provided by the author, including the epigraphs, unless otherwise noted.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Clero Vasco, \textit{El pueblo vasco frente la cruzada franquista}, 74; de Meer, \textit{El Partido Nacionalista Vasco ante la Guerra de España}, 65.
\end{itemize}
also stood out by permitting the study of Basque culture. Part of the explanation for this is that it drew many of its trainees from the local area, and Basque was the first language of 50 percent of the student body. This cohort brought with it the growing support for the EAJ-PNV brand of Basque nationalism that was found across the region.23

The trauma of the Civil War, however, did most to harden attitudes.24 Even at the start of the conflict it is easy to fall into the trap of drawing too fine a line between the EAJ-PNV and the Carlists. Indeed, the EAJ-PNV itself lay divided between supporters who accepted democracy and wanted to achieve autonomy through the Republic and members who felt closer to the Carlists.25 This difference took such a sharp form that historians seriously debate whether sections of the EAJ-PNV had actually met with the conspirators who plotted the revolt against the Republic, which in turn sparked the Civil War.26 In Navarre and Araba many EAJ-PNV cadres rushed over to the rebels.27 Furthermore, through the summer of 1936, figures inside the rebel camp glimpsed signs that the EAJ-PNV in Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia might align with them against the elected government of the Republic. The rebels even offered the EAJ-PNV the opportunity to join their ranks, and British diplomats reported that the EAJ-PNV could well side with the Carlists in support of the revolt.28

After late September 1936, the rebel hopes of winning over the EAJ-PNV lay dashed when the Basque nationalists, now largely reduced to their Bizkaian stronghold, swung behind the Republic. In return, the central Republican government promised to grant the Basques their long-cherished goal of autonomy. With the Bizkaian EAJ-PNV backing the Republican war effort with its own armed forces and in league with the center and left-wing parties of the Popular Front, Francoist attitudes hardened greatly. From this point on, the insurgents leveled a series of accusations against the EAJ-PNV. They charged that Basque “treason” forced Franco to divide his forces by creating an “unnecessary” front in the Basque Country. This they

23. Lannon, “A Basque Challenge to the Pre-Civil War Spanish Church,” 40, 44. There is a general history of the seminary: Ibáñez Arana, Historia del Seminario Diocesano de Vitoria.
25. de Pablo and Mees, El péndulo patriótico, 169.
26. de Meer, El Partido Nacionalista Vasco ante la Guerra de España, 72.
27. Ibid., 95–8, and de Pablo, En tierra de nadie, 229–69.
28. Ibid., 114–5.
Peter Anderson contended had also caused the senseless loss of thousands of troops and prolonged the war for two years. They further accused Basque nationalism of attempting to dismember Spain and of disobeying the ecclesiastical authorities who had ordered them to align with the insurgents.

Such recriminations often gained a particular intensity against the clergy who stood solidly with the EAJ-PNV. The vast bulk of the province of Araba, for instance, fell to the insurgents at the outset of the war. The Francoist military commander there complained that in villages with priests sympathetic to the Basque nationalist cause he could mobilize few volunteers. Similarly, in Gipuzkoa, army officers believed that winning the support of priests was vital in persuading civilians to come over to the rebel side. Reports also surfaced of rebel soldiers becoming deeply unnerved when they fought against the Basque army staffed with chaplains. In addition, the EAJ-PNV’s phalanx of priests launched an international propaganda campaign that, the insurgents bemoaned, badly damaged the reputation of the Francoist cause.

The most prominent examples come in the sharp criticisms voiced by a number of Basque priests against the bombing of civilians in Gernika (Guernica) by Hitler’s Condor Legion. Their denunciation of the atrocity helped to swing much foreign opinion against Franco. But this was not an isolated case; Basque priests exiled in France also strongly criticized the Francoist cause. These criticisms found an echo and we know that Franco’s representative in the Vatican encountered the hostility of some groups in the pope’s circle who knew all too well about the shooting of the sixteen Basque clergy. He also noted the strength of feeling running against the Francoists in important Catholic sectors in France and Belgium.

29. Centro de Información Católica Internacional, El clero y los Católicos vasco-separatistas y el Movimiento Nacional, 164. See also Elosegi, Quiero morir por algo, 99.
32. Martínez Sánchez, Los papeles perdidos del cardenal Segura, 374.
33. de Onaindía, Hombre de paz en la guerra, 141.
34. Centro de Información Católica Internacional, El clero y los Católicos vasco-separatistas y el Movimiento Nacional, 164. Altabella Gracia, El Catolicismo de los nacionalistas vascos, 35–41.
35. Steer, The Tree of Gernika, 246–58. Priests as witnesses in de Aralar, La rebelión militar española y el pueblo vasco, 130. José de Aralar was the pseudonym of the Basque priest Gabino de Garriga.
37. AMAE, R 3459, 10, Informe del Padre José Pérez del Pulgar.
Here lay the fiercest accusation hurled against the Basque nationalist clergy. As Constantino Bayle noted, “What caused us the deepest pain in the depths of our souls was to see the guiding principle of our war as a crusade undermined and to lose the support of some foreign Catholics.”

He added that the EAJ-PNV traitors had suddenly embraced the enemies of the faith and become splashed by the blood of Catholic martyrs. The context for these contentions lay in the rebellion of July 1936, which had triggered a collapse in the Republican policing services and unleashed a wave of killings in government-held territory that led to the death of around 6,800 members of the clergy. Although the rebels had not originally launched their coup in defense of the faith, these deaths became a central motif in Francoist attempts to legitimize the battle against the elected government as the failed revolt turned into a civil war. Now arguing that they were fighting and dying for the faith against the Marxist hordes of the secular Republic, the rebels staked an exclusive claim on the Catholic belief that left no room for the EAJ-PNV Basque clergy. Indeed, the insurgents charged that the EAJ-PNV in Bizkaia had abandoned the faith and allied with “the forces of evil” in its search for the political goal of autonomy.

By siding with the Republic, the clerics aligned with the EAJ-PNV directly challenged the entire Francoist mission. Indeed, in a famous speech given on December 22, 1936, Lehendakari (Basque president) and EAJ-PNV leader José Antonio Aguirre rejected the Francoist argument that the Civil War represented a religious struggle and railed against what he portrayed as the silence of the Catholic authorities on the Francoist executions of Basque priests. Moreover, he pointed out the insurgents killed Basque priests precisely because they were involved in a war against Basque nationalism rather than in favor of the church. The Basques also

38. Centro de Información Católica Internacional, El clero y los Católicos vasco-separatistas y el Movimiento Nacional, 9.
39. Ibid., 7.
40. On EAJ-PNV efforts, and particularly those of Manuel de Irujo, to stop or ease this violence see Raguer “Manuel de Irujo Ollo, ministro del Gobierno de la República.”
41. Gomá y Tomás, Por Dios y por España, 564–9, 574–7.
42. Altabella Gracia, El Catolicismo de los nacionalistas vascos, 10, 55.
43. Redondo, Historia de la iglesia en España 1931–1939, 234–5. (José Antonio Aguirre or Jose Antonio Agirre in Basque —ed.)
contrasted their humanitarian approach to fighting the war to the brutal conduct exhibited by the Francoists.\textsuperscript{45} For the Francoists, Cardinal Gomá replied that the struggle pitched those who loved the faith against those who despised religion.\textsuperscript{46} Meanwhile, the Francoist University of Valladolid set up an entire investigating committee to ensure, in its words, that “great Basque falsehood” be “unmasked.”\textsuperscript{47} For his part, Franco felt so stung by the stance of the priests who refused to endorse his “crusade” that in December 1936, through the offices of his brother Nicolás, he unsuccessfully pressed the pope to excommunicate EAJ-PNV clergy.\textsuperscript{48}

To further appreciate the intensity of the loathing that fell upon the EAJ-PNV-supporting clergy, we need take into account the extent to which Francoist war culture came to link national redemption to a fight to the death against evil enemies of the true faith.\textsuperscript{49} A Francoist on the frontline in the Basque Country, for example, described the struggle as “a war of national penitence” against the “bestial hordes” in which “civilization would be saved” by returning “red Vizcaya” to its proper place within Spain.\textsuperscript{50} The sacred nature given to this mission also came across in the speech by the Francoist head of recently conquered Bizkaia at a ceremony on September 12, 1937, conducted beside the statue of the sacred heart of Jesus in Bilbao. The monument held a special symbolic significance because there had been controversial attempts under the Republic to have it removed. At this spiritually and politically charged site, the Francoist intoned, “We all swear to work to exterminate Judaism, Masonry, liberalism, communism, and separatism, because they have led to our ruin. Particularly as, in order to achieve the triumph of Satan, one of the sinister goals of Masonry is to foster the hatreds common to separatism . . . Mary has saved us . . . and very soon across the whole of Spain the triumphal cry

\textsuperscript{45} See Government of Euzkadi, \textit{Rebel Opposition to Efforts for the Humanisation of the Civil War in Spain}.


\textsuperscript{47} Universidad de Valladolid, \textit{Informe sobre la situación de las provincias vascongadas bajo el dominio rojo-separatista}, 42.

\textsuperscript{48} Goñi Galarraga, \textit{La guerra civil en el País Vasco}, 167; Botti, “La iglesia vasca dividida,” 464.

\textsuperscript{49} On the importance of war culture see González Calleja, “La cultura de guerra en la España del siglo XX,” 65–7.

\textsuperscript{50} Gómez Aparicio, \textit{¡A Bilbao!}, 9, 333–4.
will ring out: Christ is victorious . . . Long Live General Franco . . . Long Live Catholic Spain.\textsuperscript{51}

Given that the Francoists claimed to be waging a sacred religious war, they stood aghast at the decision of the Catholic EAJ-PNV to enter into an alliance with what they regarded as the diabolical Popular Front. Basque Carlists in particular now felt even more intense loathing of Catholic EAJ-PNV supporters whose decision to back the Popular Front they found simply unfathomable.\textsuperscript{52} As one military tribunal stated in its condemnatory sentence against several Basque priests in March 1938, it was “incomprehensible” that the priests had chosen to side with communist, anarchist, and other extremist partners during a cruel civil war when these allies were themselves murdering clergy across Spain.\textsuperscript{53} More aggressively, the newly appointed Francoist mayor of Bilbao, José María de Areilza, declared in a public speech that Bilbao had just been liberated from the worst tyranny of all time and that he found it hard to decide who repulsed him the most: the “Asiatic barbarism of the reds” or the “hypocritical Basque nationalist priests” who had supported them.\textsuperscript{54}

The thirst for retribution generated by the EAJ-PNV in Francoist circles is readily apparent. As early as September 1936, for instance, the Carlist leader Fal Conde wrote to Cardinal Segura stating that EAJ-PNV army chaplains should be shot alongside those priests who “incited the masses.”\textsuperscript{55} This bloodthirsty desire, however, clashed directly with domestic and international political reality. When Bishop Mateo Múgica learned of the execution of the Basque clergy, he passed a list to Vatican authorities containing the names of eleven victims and complained that none of them had even faced trial. In fact, Múgica had initially felt deeply uncomfortable with the prospect of the EAJ-PNV allying with the Popular Front. The executions, however, horrified him.\textsuperscript{56} Francoists soon turned against

\textsuperscript{51} Speech in Altabella Gracia, \textit{El Catolicismo de los nacionalistas vascos}, 184–5. On the decision to remove the monument see de Pablo and Mees, \textit{El péndulo patriótico}, 133.

\textsuperscript{52} Blinkhorn, \textit{Carlism and Crisis in Spain 1931–1939}, 264.

\textsuperscript{53} Archivo Intermedio Noroeste (Ferrol) (AIMN) Plaza de Bilbao, SU 2.455.

\textsuperscript{54} Archivo Manuel de Irujo y Centro de Documentación de Historia Contemporánea del País Vasco. Sociedad de Estudios Vascos/Eusko Ikaskuntza, J, 1, 48.

\textsuperscript{55} Barruso Barés, \textit{Violencia política y represión en Guipúzcoa durante la Guerra Civil y el primer franquismo}, 149. On Fall Conde’s desire to shoot priests see Martínez Sánchez, \textit{Los papeles perdidos del cardenal Segura}, 374–89.

\textsuperscript{56} Lannon, \textit{Privilege, Persecution, and Prophecy}, 205.
him and in October 1936, they forced him into exile.\textsuperscript{57} Pressure also came from more firm supporters of Franco. By October 26, the strongly pro-Franco Cardinal Gomá, perturbed among other things by the disregard for the church’s right to prosecute clergy in its own courts, had met with the insurgent leader, and the Spanish general had undertaken to end such arbitrary killings.\textsuperscript{58} Below the surface of this compromise, however, the desire to castigate the Basque priests lay unassuaged. Accordingly, in mid-April 1937, the Francoist military governor of Gipuzkoa wrote to the bishop of Vitoria-Gasteiz telling him that those priests who had brought about the current situation should not be free to walk the streets and that it would be wrong to be merciful because it was high time they paid the price for their “crimes.”\textsuperscript{59} It is in this context that we can understand the appeal of the military trials that offered a means of avoiding due process while at the same time providing a practical means to slake the Francoist desire for retribution. Importantly for the insurgents, the use of army courts also allowed them to forestall any attempt by the church to arraign the priests before its own ecclesiastical courts.\textsuperscript{60} Consequently it comes as little surprise that when Bilbao fell in June 1937, Francoists hunted down and prosecuted as many Basque priests as they could in army tribunals.\textsuperscript{61} When the city fell, many EAJ-PNV-supporting priests fled with the Basque army toward Santander. Others, however, remained either as army chaplains with units based in Bilbao to maintain public order, or because they assumed they had nothing to fear from the Francoists. Some even returned to their home villages once the fog of war had lifted a little. In the following section I offer a case study of twenty-nine such priests prosecuted in the Bilbao area.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{57} Raguer, \textit{La pólvora y el incienso}, 367.

\textsuperscript{58} Garriga Alemny, \textit{Los validos de Franco}, 63.


\textsuperscript{60} Martínez Sánchez, \textit{Los papeles perdidos del cardenal Segura}, 386.

\textsuperscript{61} Gabino Garriga argued that in early 1937 even before Bizkaia fell, 150 priests languished in jail, 300 suffered internal exile, and 1,000 had been classified as undesirables. De Aralar, \textit{La rebelión militar española y el pueblo vasco}, 301. There are claims that five hundred natives of Bilbao returned with the occupiers to denounce their enemies. De Iturralde, \textit{La guerra de Franco, los vascos y la iglesia}, 286.

\textsuperscript{62} By mid-August 1937, Francoists had eighty-one members of the clergy imprisoned. Martínez Sánchez, “Mons. Antoniutti y el clero nacionalista vasco,” 49. They had pushed a further forty-eight into internal exile, Ibid., 53.
The determination of the Francoists to track down EAJ-PNV-aligned priests forms one of the starkest aspects of these cases. Indeed, of the twenty-nine priests prosecuted in the Bilbao area, nineteen of them were arrested by the military authorities shortly after the Francoists occupied the city. In some cases, however, the police had opened files on unfortunate members of the clergy before the occupation began. Román Jauregui, a forty-four-year-old priest from Araba, for instance, had come to attention of the Francoist authorities before they managed to capture him, because they believed he had traveled to France to represent the Basque government.63 Once a town came under Francoist occupation, the new authorities also tried to ensure that no priest slipped through the net and brought certain priests in for questioning. Events followed this pattern in the prosecution of Felix Bustinduy from Berriatua, Bizkaia. In his case, we have reason to suspect that the military acted on a tip-off from a local person. For when asked why he thought he had been arrested, Bustinduy stated he did not know, although he suspected he might have been denounced for having once advised children in the village to feel free to express themselves in Basque, their mother tongue.64 Other priests seem to have fallen into the army’s hands in the general chaos of occupation. Leonardo Atucha, for instance, appears to have felt that with the collapse of the Bizkaian front he was under orders to report to the regional ecclesiastical authorities in Vitoria-Gasteiz, where the authorities promptly jailed him.65 A further four priests were Basque army chaplains captured with their units in the Bilbao area. In addition, the Francoist police force tracked down another two priests just after Bilbao’s occupation by drawing on the services of two of their own detectives.

Those who escaped the initial wave of detentions, however, did not necessarily savor freedom for long. Once the military authorities had appointed local councils they instructed them to carry out investigations into every priest in their regions. Given the desire to forestall foreign criticism over the prosecution of priests, Francoists ensured that the councils

63. AIMN, Plaza de Bilbao, 254-37.
64. AIMN, Plaza de Bilbao, 1304, 2-37. On the prewar controversy on the clergy and the use of Basque see de Pablo and Mees, El péndulo patriótico, 112. The Francoists did not ban speaking Basque in public but restricted its use, de Pablo, “La guerra civil en el Pais Vasco,” 137.
65. AIMN, Plaza de Bilbao, 911-37.
carried out these investigations with more thoroughness than usual. Each council set up a municipal investigative commission that produced reports on priests that were then forwarded to a special military judge, Alfonso Junco Mendoza. In an effort to ease the criticisms sparked by the earlier summary execution of Basque clergy, Junco Mendoza devoted his time to the investigation and prosecution of priests. Similarly, in a deal struck with the church, the authorities transferred all priests, however they came to be arrested, from ordinary prisons to the Carmel Convent in Bilbao. Here ecclesiastical authorities themselves kept the priests in custody. Indeed, five of the cases I studied for Bilbao started with municipal reports to Junco Mendoza who then ordered the arrest of the priests and their detention at Carmel.

The remaining four priests I researched came to the authorities’ attention after being denounced by members of their own communities. On the July 12, 1937, for instance, a municipal policeman in Zornotza (Amorebieta), Bizkaia, denounced Father Luis Aguirre and at the same time supplied full details of his victim’s address in Bilbao. Armed with this information, the authorities arrested Aguirre on July 14, subjected him to questioning, and locked him up in Carmel. More shockingly, the forty-five-year-old priest from Gatica, Bizkaia, Pedro Bilbao, fell victim to a denunciation from his own verger, who had joined Franco’s Falange party on July 1, 1937, just a few days after the rebels captured the entire province. In a slightly different way, the thorough nature of the occupiers’ hunt for priests comes across in the case of José María Larragán from Orozco, Bizkaia. He was arrested as late as September 14, 1937, after witnesses in another prosecution claimed that he was “anti-Spanish and a separatist.”

66. On ordinary prosecutions, see the National Archives, PRO, FO 371, 21300/19078. Chilton to Eden, Oct. 1937.
67. See AIMN, Plaza de Bilbao 1304-37 and 254-37 for details.
68. For special terms for the prosecution of priests see Goñi Galarraga, La guerra civil en el País Vasco, 210. On the pressure exerted by Cardinal Gomá, see Rodríguez Aisa, El Cardenal Gomá y la Guerra de España, 225–8.
69. AIMN, Plaza de Bilbao, 452-37. Militia forces blew up one part of a church in the village. Universidad de Valladolid, Informe sobre la situación de las provincias vascongadas bajo el dominio rojo-separatista, 196.
70. AIMN, Plaza de Bilbao, 1304-37. Three priests from Orozco died in prison killings in Bilbao in January 1937. Larragán stood accused of being left alone by leftists due to his “separatist ideology” and of confiscating private property. Universidad de Valladolid, Informe sobre la situación de las provincias vascongadas bajo el dominio rojo-separatista, 243–4.
With their quarry behind bars, the Francoists needed to proceed with caution. They knew that they could not risk another series of arbitrary executions. The pope had even sent his own representative, Mons. Antoniutti, to press for clemency. Acting under such international scrutiny, the Francoists well knew that their claims to be building a solid set of state institutions and to be prosecuting their military campaign according to the laws of war could collapse around them. At the same time, they stood resolved to destroy what they believed to constitute an evil separatist movement. Their solution was to target priests for carefully measured punishment, and this required a great deal of knowledge. In effect, soldiers put down the rifle and picked up the trial dossier. They began by calling for reports from each priest’s local authority and for testimonies from neighbors of the accused. Fielding such information they classified each prisoner according to three categories of Basque nationalist: “A” for propagandists, “B” for supporters, and “C” for sympathizers.

Twenty-three well-documented case studies in which the priests received clear sentences provide an opportunity to examine this process. In these cases, the authorities produced fifty hostile reports on the accused and six positive ones. Twelve witnesses provided hostile testimonies, and twenty people testified favorably on the prisoners. Holding nationalist views constituted the most modest accusation leveled in these reports and testimonies against priests. More serious was the charge of having been a long-term “separatist” and being an enemy of the “national movement.” For Francoists, having published or spoken on behalf of the EAJ-PNV or its goals constituted an even graver “crime.” Opponents who had worked for the EAJ-PNV-controlled autonomous government in roles such as school inspectors and chaplains proved particularly galling to the Francoists. Shortest shrift of all was given to those accused of providing information on Francoist troop movements or even helping train Basque soldiers.

The hostile reports and testimonies offer revealing insight into the depth of loathing for EAJ-PNV-supporting clergy and the reach of Francoist war culture. A report from the military commander in Ugao (Miravalles), Bizkaia, issued on September 15, 1937, for instance, described the priest José María Larragán as possessing “a detestable separatist background”


and accused him of attending meetings with EAJ-PNV leaders to plan “against the movement of national salvation.” Similarly, a former local Carlist leader from Ihurre (Yurre), Araba, testified on December 12, 1937, that the priest Fermin Goti was a “rabid nationalist” who had “done much damage to the cause of Spain” by “dragooning young people into separatism” though his propaganda work. Equally, the fifty-nine-year-old priest, Nazario Sarasola, from Lekeitio (Lequeitio), Bizkaia, found himself subject to hostile testimony from three of his neighbors: a baker, a carpenter, and a businessman, who all testified that they regarded Sarasola as a “fervent nationalist” and an “enemy of the new Spain.” In their view, his crimes included meeting with EAJ-PNV leaders, carrying out propaganda work, and calling for an autonomy statute for the Basque Country.

Such testimonies reveal a number of the divisions that wrenched some Basque communities apart. The mayor of Mañaria, Bizkaia, for instance, claimed that many local people would not send their children to be educated by the priest Florencio Barrenechea, because he taught them separatism instead of religion and because he maligned those who did not support his views. By the same token, the Falange leader in Basauri, Bizkaia, reported that the priest Mariano Ereña was a separatist and that “he and all his family are profound enemies of the great national movement.” His “crimes” included encouraging his parishioners to read the Basque nationalist press and enjoying friendships with the most “anti-religious and immoral” “reds.” The mayor also alleged that the priest was so possessed by Basque nationalism that he refused even to greet right-wing supporters in the street.

Moreover, some people demanded complete loyalty to the Francoist movement at the local level and marked out for retribution those who fell

73. AIMN, Plaza de Bilbao, SU 1304-37.
74. AIMN, Plaza de Bilbao, SU 2,455.
75. AIMN, Plaza de Bilbao, SU254-37. Militia men had turned one church in the town into their headquarters. Universidad de Valladolid, _Informe sobre la situación de las provincias vascongadas bajo el dominio rojo-separatista_, 211.
76. For a prewar struggle in Guernica on the use of Spanish or Basque in the local church, which pitched Carlists against EAJ-PNV supporters, see Clero Vasco, _El pueblo vasco frente la cruzada franquista_, 77.
77. AIMN, Plaza de Bilbao, 1304-37. Local Francoists were furious that another priest from the village had been blinded after surviving a botched execution. Universidad de Valladolid, _Informe sobre la situación de las provincias vascongadas bajo el dominio rojo-separatista_, 151–2.
78. AIMN, Plaza de Bilbao, 911-37.
short of this measure. For example, the seventy-year-old priest from Erri-goiti (Rigoitia), Bizkaia, Antonio Rementeria, suffered condemnation in the mayor’s report. The mayor claimed that although the priest had never denounced the Francoist movement, he had also never criticized the “reds.” Even after Rementeria returned to his village following its occupation by Francoists, he was still not known by villagers to have expressed any sympathy for the “national army of liberation.” This intransigent condemnation came despite the fact that the University of Valladolid committee investigating “crimes” of “red separatism” had given great prominence to Rementeria’s suffering at the hands of “red battalions.”

The twenty testimonies in favor of the priests do show that not all citizens viewed the accused with hostility. Enough Francoists, however, did seek to incriminate the priests and enabled the occupying authorities to categorize them as enemies of the Francoist movement and therefore of the faith itself. By doing so, Francoists ignored the fact that Basque priests like Rementeria were members of what historian Hilari Raguer, among others, has tellingly described as the “Third Spain,” that is, people who did not easily fall within the reductive categories of virtuous and evil so central to the Francoist meaning of the war. In the case of priests prosecuted by Francoists, however, what counts is not so much that the clergy were members of this Third Spain. Of greater importance is the role of the Francoist military justice system, and its collaborators, in reducing those priests, who threatened their entire sense of purpose in the struggle, to members of what Francoists termed the “anti-Spain.”

It is clear that Basque priests did form part of the Third Spain. Indeed, by extending the case study to include thirty-seven chaplains who served with Basque forces and were captured when the remnants of the EAJ-PNV army surrendered in the Santander area in late August 1937, we gain some insight into how widely Basque priests suffered at the hands of anticlerical groups in the Republican period. From the two groups of priests in

79. AIMN, Plaza de Bilbao, SU 729-37.
80. Universidad de Valladolid, *Informe sobre la situación de las provincias vascongadas bajo el dominio rojo-separatista*, 245.
81. Raguer, *La pólvora y el incienso*, 275. For a defense of the decisions by Catholics to support the Second Republic and the Popular Front government see Semprún Guerrera, *A Catholic Looks at Spain*. For a wider discussion see Arasa, *Católicos del bando rojo*.
82. Francoists argued that priests in the Basque Country either formed victims of the “reds” or fell behind the EAJ-PNV. See for example, Altabella Gracia, *El Catolicismo de los nacionalistas vascos*, 96.
the study, seventeen provided clear accounts of persecution before the area fell to the Francoists. José María Larragán, for instance, was captured after the fall of Bilbao and accused of maintaining close relations with the EAJ-PNV leadership. In fact, he only became the parish priest after the previous incumbent had been killed for being a Carlist and, importantly, Larragán himself hailed from a Carlist family. Indeed, because of this background he received a number of death threats that unsettled him to the point of a nervous breakdown. Similarly, an anarchist militia group had thrown twenty-five-year-old chaplain José Juaristi out of his own village of Aramaio (Aramayona), Araba. Significant numbers of priests, like Larragán, hailed from right-wing backgrounds. Again from my combined study groups, twenty priests maintained close relations with right-wing organizations. Fernando Marcoerquiaga, a fifty-five-year-old priest from Mendata, Bizkaia, for instance, had been denounced in 1931 for supporting a monarchist candidate. According to Franco’s police, he had expressed displeasure over the alliance between the EAJ-PNV and the Popular Front. For his part, Juan José Aguirre, a thirty-year-old chaplain, had been arrested in August 1936, for hiding a monarchist flag. He later headed the army chaplain service and in Santander had carried out many baptisms and weddings for those who had been unable to marry or to introduce their children to the faith during the Republican period.

It was precisely the complexity of this background that made it so difficult for Francoists to distinguish between friend and foe. This was exactly the point made in a personal missive from the head of police to Franco, in which the policeman noted: “It is not easy to spot the Basque-Jews” because they have now begun to portray themselves as “fervent admirers of our army” and never neglect to cry “¡Viva España!” The case of Fabián Angoitia, a priest from Zeanuri (Ceánuri), Bizkaia, provides a good example of this type of difficulty. The local police force reported him to be “a tireless propagandist for criminal separatist ideas.” Yet he had provided financial support for presumed Francoists persecuted in early months of the war. Indeed, until he fell victim to a denunciation in the first weeks of

83. AIMN, Plaza de Bilbao, SU 1304-37.
84. AIMN, Plaza de Santoña, SU 5-4112.
85. AIMN, Plaza de Bilbao, SU 729-37.
86. AIMN, Plaza de Santoña, SU 5-4112.
the occupation he had worked on behalf of the Falange and enjoyed close relations with military commanders in his village.88

In this context, by drawing on information provided by local authorities and their collaborators, the military justice system offered a means of identifying individuals whom Francoists regarded as turncoats and foes. Moreover, targeting only specific priests for harsh retribution helped in the battle to win favorable foreign public opinion while also ensuring that a crucial group of EAJ-PNV supporters would be effectively crushed within Spain. At the same time it allowed Francoists to sustain the myth that they represented the sole defenders of the church. Indeed, in order to perpetuate that myth, Francoists needed to brand all their opponents as evil and criminal. In this sense, without convicted prisoners, Francoists could not enjoy a proper feeling of self-worth and purpose. This is one of the services the military justice system offered.

Accordingly, given the need to win over foreign and domestic opinion, army tribunals had to project an image of leniency while at the same time meting out harsh punishment. The evidence from a study of twenty-three cases for which sentences exist in the archive indicates that the tribunals achieved this goal to some extent. Six priests were released, three were sentenced to internal exile, and two suffered six months of imprisonment. Three priests received sentences of six years; two, twelve years; one, sixteen years; and five, thirty years. Although sentenced to death, one other priest had his sentence commuted to thirty years in jail.

Many of those priests freed after trial benefited from political circumstances and the efforts of Antoniutti to ease their suffering. The Vatican representative had put pressure on priests to declare themselves in favor of regional rather than separatist feeling. When they followed his bidding, the Francoists appeared to respond by showing greater benevolence.89 This leniency took a particularly pronounced form in favor of military chaplains drafted into the army and captured at Santoña. The Francoist authorities, however, forced those freed into hard labor.90

88. AIMN, Plaza de Bilbao, SU 911-37. Francoists argued that at least two members of the clergy had been killed in the village and that in two hermitages near the village “cabaret and dancing and all kinds of sacrilege” had taken place. Universidad de Valladolid, Informe sobre la situación de las provincias vascongadas bajo el dominio rojo-separatista, 171–2.


90. Ugarte, Odisea en cinco tiempos, 144.
Meanwhile, Cardinal Segura, based in the southern city of Seville, advocated strongly on behalf of the Basque priests.\(^91\) The bishop of Pamplona also spoke out in their favor.\(^92\) Under considerable pressure, Francoists went to great lengths to claim that they treated their clerical foes leniently once they held them firmly behind bars.\(^93\) However, the letters left by some of these priests show that the desire for retribution remained, and convicted clergy continued to suffer great indignities. They were marched en masse through at least two Spanish towns. They also suffered incarceration in tiny, dark cells in the southern town of Carmona. During the Republican period the authorities had closed this prison owing to its insalubrious condition. The Francoists seemed less swayed by these considerations and issued the inmates with such flea ridden mattresses that they had to sleep on cold floors. Locked up in this squalid prison and trying to make sense of his suffering, one priest commented: “How they hate us.”\(^94\) At the heart of this loathing lay the intense discomfort Francoists felt in having their exclusive claims to defend the faith unsettled by Basque clergy. Indeed, Francoist authorities required priests seeking to reduce their jail terms to make a statement of repentance. In this statement priests had to declare that their cooperation with the EAJ-PNV and the “reds” during the war represented a “criminal” act against “both the Fatherland and God,” because they had participated “directly in the destruction of the faith in Spain.”\(^95\)

In practice, many Basque clergy found their suffering did not end with release from jail. Incarcerated following hostile testimonies by his own neighbors, the priest Nazario Sarasola gained release in August 1940, only to be sent into internal exile in the faraway southern province of Almería.\(^96\) Similarly, when the Basque chaplain Julio Ugarte was released in July 1940, the authorities confined him to the city of Toledo; when he ventured out of this area he found himself prosecuted and imprisoned once again.\(^97\) Ugarte

\(^91\) See Martínez Sánchez, Los papeles perdidos del cardenal Segura, 481–3.
\(^92\) Espinosa, “Sobre la represión franquista en el País Vasco,” 19.
\(^93\) Intense Francoist protestations in Ministerio de Justicia, Dirección General de Prisiones, Diligencias practicadas en la prisión especial de Carmona, Archivo General de la Administración, Justicia 41/11952.
\(^94\) Archivo del Nacionalismo. Fundación Sabino Arana (PNV), BA, 1238.
\(^95\) Ugarte, Odisea en cinco tiemps, 182.
\(^96\) Ibid., 189.
\(^97\) Ibid., 191–204.
finally gained freedom in 1944, and returned to Donostia-San Sebastián. When Ugarte went to register with the authorities, they were incredulous to see a convicted priest back in the Basque Country, because at the time the majority of convicted clergy remained in internal exile. As one policeman exclaimed about Ugarte: “what a well-connected bastard he must be to wangle his way back here.”

In conclusion, studying the prosecution of EAJ-PNV-supporting clergy can enrich our understanding of the Spanish Civil War by complementing the more numerous studies of the summary executions of priests in autumn 1936. The suffering of many of these priests in the Republican period also helps further erode the idea that in the early months of the Civil War the Basque Country provided a relative oasis of peace. Furthermore, grassroots hostility toward the priests poses a challenge to those who argue that outsiders imposed the Francoist occupation of the Basque Country. Indeed, the case studies of prosecuted Basque priests offered here also show that explanations of the Francoist repression, which highlight its top-down and long-planned nature, do not by themselves tell us enough. As the case studies reveal, the war also generated enmities that reached into the depths of society.

Examining the cases of Basque priests also sheds light on the way the Civil War at a national level created a need for a legitimizing discourse that could mobilize the population behind the rebels and insurgents. In this internecine conflict, the Francoists demanded the total loyalty of those in their zone. From the insurgents’ perspective, the stance and equivocal position of EAJ-PNV-supporting clergy made all of these challenges much more difficult. Accordingly, the Francoists felt a profound need to uncover members of the Basque clergy who (they believed) had acted “criminal” by aligning themselves with the “reds” and failing to defend the “true faith.” They proved able to harness the enmity felt by some of their grassroots supporters toward members of the Basque clergy.

The case studies of EAJ-PNV-supporting priests also offer insight into the international dynamics that helped shape the Francoist occupation process. Significantly, in the fragile diplomatic environment, the Francoist military tribunals offered a means to clip the wings of some of the most important supporters of Basque nationalism. In the process, the Francoists

98. Ibid., 248.
mobilized supporters, won sovereignty, kept up appearances, stifled protests, and inflicted harsh retribution.

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Exile, Identity, and Education: The Evacuation of Basque Children to the French Basque Country, 1937–1939

Virginia López de Maturana

In the spring of 1937, thousands of Basque people, mostly elderly, women, and children, fled their homes as a consequence of the insurgent military offensive against the Basque province of Bizkaia (Vizcaya) during the course of the Spanish Civil War. Many of the refugees went to France, Belgium, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union and some even crossed the Atlantic Ocean—far away from their homeland, their homes, and their families—to start a new life, but usually with the hope of returning to their native land someday. Most of exiled Basques had been linked to Basque nationalism or leftist parties, so the threat against them was great. This threat, both in real terms and in the popular perception, was due to the terror bombing of the Bizkaian villages of Durango and Gernika (Guernica) by the German Condor Legion and Italian aircraft serving the rebel army in its invasion of the Basque Country.

The bombing of Gernika on April 26, 1937 definitively marked the Basques’ collective memory of the Civil War. Although another nearby town (Durango) had been bombed on March 31, 1937, Gernika was and

1. Irazabal Agirre, *1937 martxoak 31 Durango 31 de marzo de 1937*, 36–58. While the devastation of Durango received considerable international attention, the bombing of Gernika had an even greater impact. A British delegation of clerics, which included the dean of Canterbury (Hewlett Johnson), signed an article in the progressive newspaper *The Manchester Guardian* after a visit to Spain during the war. Harshly criticizing the attack of the rebels against Durango he wrote: “We visited Durango the next afternoon. As we approached it we witnessed a renewal of the bombardment by six rebel bombers accompanied by a number of fighting planes. Afterwards we entered the town and found ourselves in a scene of indescribable desolation. A great part of
remains a true icon for the Basque people. As Ludger Mees noted, “There is no other place, nor personality, nor symbol in the Basque collective memory that has had or has such an important presence as this small Bizkaian town.” The bombing successfully demoralized the civil population and also left hundreds of families displaced. It was also the turning point that led the Basque authorities to carry out mass evacuations of children to destinations abroad in order to protect them from the threat of further bombings. In the midst of war and with the front just a few kilometers from Bilbao (Bizkaia’s capital city), organizing the evacuation of approximately twenty-five thousand children was a daunting task. Those in charge had to select the children, obtain permission from their families, raise funds to cover costs, hire boats, identify families or institutions to organize the children’s reception by foreign authorities, recruit people to travel with them, and obtain all necessary permissions in the host countries. In addition to concerns about the complex logistics entailed in such a massive evacuation, the education of several thousand young evacuees also preoccupied the Basque government. The purpose of the evacuation was not only to protect children from the bombings carried out by primarily German and Italian aircraft, but also to ensure that the children could continue their studies in exile. Since the Basque government was formed by a coalition of leftist parties and Basque nationalist Catholics, the latter had a strong interest in controlling the evacuation of children, with the aim of educating them according to their own ideas, sometimes in conflict with the departments of the Basque Government that were controlled by the left, especially the socialists. This daunting task had several precedents in previous educational experiments implemented by the Basque Nationalist Party (EAJ-PNV) since its creation by Sabino Arana in 1895.

This chapter focuses on the education of Basque children in exile in the French Basque Country during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and provides new information linking exile and education, two key subjects

the town was destroyed.” The Manchester Guardian, March 26, 1937. “Guernica, the most ancient town of the Basques and the centre of their cultural tradition, was completely destroyed yesterday afternoon by insurgent air raiders. The bombardment of this open town far behind the lines occupied precisely three hours and a quarter, during which a powerful fleet of aeroplanes consisting of three German types. . . . The whole of Guernica was soon in flames except the historic Casa de Juntas with its rich archives of the Basque race, where the ancient Basque Parliament used to sit.” The Times [London], March 28, 1937.

in the history of Euskadi (the Basque Country) in the twentieth century. The chapter is divided into three different parts. The first one explains how Basque nationalism, from its origins but especially during the Second Republic (1931–1937), tried to launch its own particular school system, based primarily on native language learning (Basque or Euskara) and respect for Catholic morality. It is important to analyze these efforts prior to 1937 because they demonstrate how Basque nationalists would later try to implement educational plans with evacuated children. The second part clarifies how the Basque government carried out an evacuation plan to save the children from bombings. Those children were displaced to different countries and were welcomed into adoptive families, or camps in France and England. Finally, the chapter describes how some children, who came from Basque nationalist families, were taken to the camp in Donibane Garazi (Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port) called La Citadelle, where they continued to receive the same education that the Basque authorities had created during the Second Republic which was based on Basque culture and language and promoted Catholic morality. The situation at La Citadelle contrasts sharply with the early childhood education promoted by Basque socialists at other camps, such as Lurbe–Saint Christau. The comparison of the educational situation at La Citadelle and Lurbe–Saint Christau presents a unique opportunity to study both the exile of children as a whole and the way in which the Basque Nationalist Party (EAJ-PNV) tried to take advantage of the situation to impose its own educational model at La Citadelle. The comparison also illuminates the important political and religious differences between the left and the EAJ-PNV. Furthermore, these case studies demonstrate the importance of education in the construction of collective identities, especially in exile. The emergence of this collective identity has been emphasized in other cases of displacement and childhood exile; however, this chapter is among the first to bring this perspective to the case of Basque children evacuated between 1937 and 1939.

Basque nationalist interest in early education, as a means of transmitting their ideas and their national identity to new generations, is almost

3. The Spanish Second Republic’s final demise occurred in 1939, however it was defeated in the Basque Country by 1936–1937: In Araba the Republic was ended in July 1936, in Gipuzkoa in September 1936, and in Bizkaia in June 1937.

contemporaneous with the birth of Basque nationalism in the late nineteenth century. The first primary schools providing instruction in Euskara were founded in Bilbao in 1896 by the priest and Basque language specialist Resurrección María de Azkue. The curriculum included standard subjects such as arithmetic, geography, and reading and eventually expanded the number of subjects offered, such as the history of the Basque Country, religious history, and the Basque language. Although it is not known which texts were used or how classes were organized, it is known that the school used several plays written by Azkue as a learning technique for Basque language instruction.\(^5\) While Azkue’s original school closed in 1899, it marked the path later followed by the Basque schools or *ikastolas* of the Republican period. In 1914 the *ikastolas* of Plaza Nueva and Colón Larreategui Street were also established in Bilbao. These *ikastolas* tried to provide an entire curriculum in Euskara, but linguistic circumstances in Bilbao at the time did not allow it, since so few students had fluency in the language. Therefore, most classes were taught in Spanish, even though learning Basque was the primary mission of these schools. Euskara was also the language of instruction for classes relating to local culture, such as Basque history, geography, and folklore (including songs and dances).\(^6\) At roughly the same time, schools sponsored by Miguel Muñoa appeared in the historic district of Donostia–San Sebastián in Gipuzkoa (Guipúzcoa), one of the three Basque territories. These *ikastolas* offered classes in Euskara for children under the age of six who were cared for by two teachers.

However, the most important event that favored the implementation of the *ikastolas* was ascendancy of the EAJ-PNV to the presidency of the provincial government of Bizkaia in 1917. Upon taking over the government, they started an educational program for rural children that became known as the Escuelas de Barriada (neighborhood schools).\(^7\) This measure was taken in order to respond to the needs of a highly dispersed Basque rural population, where children, who were often monolingual in Basque, had great difficulty reaching schools, especially in areas with difficult ter-

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6. Ibid.
rain and prone to bad weather. Such conditions gave rise to absenteeism in schools.\textsuperscript{8}

The neighborhood schools had very specific objectives: to promote the education of Basque children, to stimulate their intellectual development, and to promote the conservation and improvement of Euskara, precisely because the schools were intended for children living in Basque-speaking areas. Concurrently, in 1918, a Basque cultural institution, the Society of Basque Studies (Eusko-Ikaskuntza), was created. From its founding, the society’s education section promoted the \textit{ikastolas} and the publication of texts in Euskara, in order to “respond to the new necessities created by the creation of neighborhood schools in Bizkaia.”\textsuperscript{9} The Society of Basque Studies played a vital role in promoting the publication of Basque-language texts, mainly reading primers and history books. This experiment, however, was frustrated by the installation of the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923–1930) who was a staunch opponent of regional nationalism and promoted a strongly pro-Spanish (i.e., pro-Castilian) educational policy.

The end of Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship in 1930 gave Basque nationalist educators the opportunity to repeat the neighborhood schools’ experiment and to extend aid to promote instruction in Euskara. In 1932, female Basque nationalists provided a new impetus for creating the Basque-language schools. Concerned about increasing educational opportunities for Basque women, a nationalist feminist association known as Emakume Abertzale Batza (EAB, Association of Patriotic Basque Women) collaborated with the EAJ-PNV to foster the training of EAB-affiliated women.\textsuperscript{10} Above all, the EAB believed that children’s education was part of its own political and social commitment, “as a projection and complement to the maternal function of patriotic Basque women.”\textsuperscript{11} Nationalist women promoted the creation of a Federation of Basque Schools (Euzko Ikastola Batza) to carry out this work. It was formed through the efforts of EAB in Bilbao and other entities linked to the EAJ-PNV that supported the EAB project. According to Mercedes Ugalde, the establishment of \textit{ikas-}

\textsuperscript{8} Calvo Vicente, “La enseñanza en la zona rural guipuzcoana durante el primer franquismo,” 165–76.

\textsuperscript{9} Dávila, \textit{Enseñanza y educación en el País Vasco contemporáneo}, 53–77.


\textsuperscript{11} Ugalde, \textit{Mujeres y nacionalismo vasco}, 449–54.
tolas was enabled by dissatisfaction in the EAJ-PNV and in various Basque cultural sectors—not necessarily linked to the nationalist party—owing to the paucity of Basque-language teaching in both public and religious primary schools.\textsuperscript{12}

Another important factor was the Second Republic’s educational policy, which sought to elevate public schools and suppress religious education. In contrast, the \textit{ikastola} philosophy elaborated by the EAB embraced both nationalist and Christian instruction in order to offer children an education that they considered properly Basque.\textsuperscript{13} This tactic went along with the EAJ-PNV’s renewed effort for an autonomy statute (which they had supported since 1917) under the Spanish Republic. Along the lines of the educational debate, the Catholic and, in 1931, conservative character of the EAJ-PNV made it impossible, in principle, to reach agreements with the Republican regime. The EAJ-PNV, however, gradually steeped itself in Christian Democratic ideals and aligned with the Socialists and left-Republicans in order to achieve a Statute of Basque Autonomy.\textsuperscript{14} After several failed attempts, the EAJ-PNV made a pact with the Spanish republican Popular Front to obtain an autonomy statute, which was adopted on October 1, 1936, just over two months after the beginning of the Civil War. After the adoption of the statute, the Government of Euskadi was formed by means of a coalition between the EAJ-PNV and the Popular Front, and José Antonio Aguirre (member of the EAJ-PNV) became the president (\textit{lehendakari}) of the Autonomous Basque Government on October 7, 1936.

Aguirre appointed Jesús María Leizaola (another leader of the EAJ-PNV) as head of the Department of Justice and Culture, which included responsibilities for education. Owing to the Civil War, Leizaola decided that all kindergartens and primary schools would be integrated into his department, in an attempt to make schooling for children possible in such difficult circumstances.\textsuperscript{15} The two most active people in this department

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 449.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 450.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Tusell, \textit{Historia de la democracia cristiana en España II}, 118.
\item \textsuperscript{15} \textit{Diario Oficial del País Vasco} (DOPV), October 9, 1936; Sebastián, \textit{Entre el deseo y la realidad}, 64–66.
\end{itemize}
were the general secretary of culture, Alfredo Ruiz del Castaño, and the director of primary education, Vicente Amézaga.16

Amézaga was the principal proponent of the Escuelas de Euskadi (Schools of Euskadi), institutions that were created in December 1936 in Bizkaia and whose purpose was to provide not only an educational resource for Basque children but also civil protection from enemy attacks. Following the model of the Federation of Basque Schools in the Second Republic (but with which they were not mixed from an organizational perspective) the Department of Justice and Culture made teaching Euskara an educational requirement in primary schools in Euskadi. Gymnastics was also required, for which the Physical Education Section was created and subsequently led by Teodoro Ernandorena and Segundo Olaeta, who also acted as the technical adviser for folklore.17 This second requirement sought to improve the fitness of children, as well as to create a Basque national consciousness through the Basque songs that accompanied physical education. According to the Official Gazette of the Basque Country (DOPV), “the physical improvement obtained by gymnastics and body culture, with rhythmic dancing and appropriate games, will automatically lead to an advancement of our naturally superior racial characteristics and the polishing and tempering of the rough material of our physical reserve, which is rich in aptitude for athleticism and all types of sports.”18

Just four months after the establishment of the Schools of Euskadi the offensive against Bizkaia began, along with the civilian terror bombings of Durango and Gernika, which set in motion within the Basque government steps to provide for a massive evacuation of children, and various departments worked together to streamline administrative procedures for this undertaking. The Department of Social Welfare, headed by socialist Juan Gracia, played the most active role in the initiative by creating deadlines for the submission of applications to be evacuated. For its part, the Department of Interior, headed by the nationalist Telesforo Monzón, was responsible for processing applications for mothers wishing to accompany their children and all support staff who wanted to assist in the children’s care. The Department of Justice and Culture collected requests from teachers who also wanted to go with the children on these expeditions. The idea

18. DOPV, January 31, 1937.
was not only to keep the children away from the horrors of war but also to continue with their education, which had been interrupted by the conflict. Thus, although the department that was responsible for evacuations was controlled by a Basque socialist (Juan Gracia), the EAJ-PNV wanted to guarantee the children's education and especially those who came from Basque nationalist families. The efforts of Amézaga and the Department of Justice and Culture to provide the children with a national education in Euskara lasted a very short time, as war circumstances precluded continuation of their work.

Strongly opposed to the evacuations, Franco's regime worked hard to convince international public opinion that Basque children were being forcibly removed from their homeland. Cardinal Isidro Gomá Tomás even sent a letter to cardinals in France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Mexico claiming that these children had been stranded by both the Republican and Basque political authorities. Moreover, he asserted that “many of them will receive an anti-Christian education.” However, contrary to Gomá’s assertions, the priest Alberto Onaindía and the Basque nationalist newspaper *Euzko Deya* confirmed that children had left their homes at the express wish of their parents, who wanted to spare their children the horrors of war.

From May 6 until June 15, 1937, eleven convoys of some twenty-five thousand children traveled from Bizkaia to France; many continued on to various other destinations, mostly Belgium, Great Britain, Switzerland, Denmark, the Soviet Union, and Mexico, although this list is not exhaustive. Although it is impossible to know with accuracy the total number of Basque children evacuated, according to Alonso Carballés, a total of 15,383 children were recorded as having taken refuge in France.

On arrival at the destination ports, children underwent a medical examination, and most of them had their heads shaved and were vaccinated to prevent contagion. Later they were offered food and sent on to various locations in France to be received by foster families or in children's refugee camps. Although most children went alone, some were accompanied

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by their families (usually their mothers, siblings, and grandparents) and were taken to various camps distributed throughout France. In addition to the children who were evacuated directly from Bilbao from May 6 to June 15, 1937, there were other children who, because of their “exceptional” nature, were very important to the EAJ-PNV: those who had studied in the Schools of Euskadi or in the ikastolas that were created before 1936. These children, who came from nationalist families, had been receiving the Basque nationalist and Catholic education, and therefore the EAJ-PNV did not want these children to be intermixed among children who came mostly from public schools or non-Basque nationalist private schools.

On June 19, 1937, Franco’s troops captured Bilbao. Shortly thereafter, the whole territory fell to Franco’s troops. As a result, six hundred children from the Schools of Euskadi left the Basque Country for Santander, where they joined children who came from the ikastolas and who had been refugees in a camp called Villa Cuba in the Bizkaian town of Gordexola (Gordejuela), established by the Basque government in late May.23 The children’s dance group of Gernika, called Elai Alai or “Happy Swallows,” was among them.24 The Basque government’s director of primary education, Vicente Amézaga, assumed responsibility for directing and organizing a special expedition that would take these children from Santander to the camp at La Citadelle in the French Basque Country. On June 23, he and the convoy departed in a French ship called Ploubazlanec, which was chartered by the Autonomous Basque Government. The evacuation had been organized directly by the Department of Justice and Culture, “with the clear objective of continuing in exile the labors of reaunching the culture and the Basque language that had begun a few years before”25 in the ikastolas and the Schools of Euskadi. The EAJ-PNV took immense pride in these two educational institutions (the ikastolas created between 1931 and 1936 and the Schools of Euskadi between 1936 and 1937) and intended to continue to control them in exile, rather than leaving the evacuation and education of the children to their socialist partners. The EAJ-PNV was adamant that the educational projects they had begun in the Spanish Basque territory had to continue in exile. And no other place was better to achieve this continuity than the French Basque Country (“the Northern side,” Iparralde in Euskara).

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23. Villa Cuba was one of the Schools of Euskadi. Gordejuela borders Santander.
During the 1930s, the northern Basque territories of Lapurdi (Labourd), Lower Navarre (Nafarroa Behera, Basque; Basse Navarre, French), and Zuberoa (Soule), as well as neighboring Béarn, fell within the department of the Basses-Pyrenees. At that time the population of Iparralde was 190,000, with most living on the Basque coast. The region was sparsely industrialized and had a distinctly rural character. During the French Third Republic (1870–1940) it was one of the least developed and most depressed areas in France and considered “a fief of conservative Catholicism and clericalism dominated by rural overlords.”

A staunch French nationalist and traditionally Catholic conservative, Jean Ybarnegaray dominated the political life of the French Basque Country during the interwar years. Anticlerical reforms carried out by the Third Republic from the late nineteenth century were the main source of political mobilization in Iparralde. The elimination of religious instruction and the secularization of public education (the separation of church and state in France) had a great impact on Basque culture and the Basque language. Education came to be directly taught by representatives of the French state, so there was an extensive process of linguistic and cultural homogenization. In this sense, “it is not strange that the battle over clericalism was united with the defense of the Basque culture and Basque language, which had been traditionally used by priests in their sermons.”

Thus, in the 1930s, the French Basque Country had become a bastion of the conservative Catholic right against the leftist wave that was spreading through France at the time. Despite this coincidence in the Catholicism of most Basques to the north and south of the Franco-Spanish border, the Basque nationalist movement, born in Bilbao in the late nineteenth century, did not crystallize in the French Basque Country. It was not until the marked growth of the EAJ-PNV in the 1930s in the south that a Basque Catholic regionalist movement emerged in the French Basque Country with the creation of Eskualerri-Zaleen Biltzarra (the Euskal Herria Friends Board). The group included a small number of young activists who edited the magazine *Aintzina*, founded in 1932 by Father Pierre Lafitte. However, the *Aintzina* group was “an ambiguous movement, varying between nationalism and regionalism” that aimed at a progres-

27. Ibid., 667.
sive political, administrative, and cultural decentralization of France. It also defended the “re-Basque-ification (reeuskaldunización) of cities and towns” and tried to strengthen relations between Iparralde and the peninsular Basque Country. According to Jean Claude Larronde, this group soon shifted toward the right.

Although the members of Aintzina never agreed with Ybarnegaray in political terms, the movement aligned itself with the local right and its leader, Ybarnegaray, during the 1936 elections, thus opposing the leftist French Popular Front, “which its members understood as a danger of communist victory.” It was a compromised decision, mainly because of the political weakness of the group led by Lafitte. The situation became further complicated when the Civil War began and Spanish Basque refugees arrived in southern France in massive numbers. Lafitte tried to maintain a neutral position and wanted to encourage an agreement between the rebels and the EAJ-PNV. However, Ybarnegaray supported Franco and condemned the EAJ-PNV’s backing of the Republic. This situation led to the demise of the Aintzina magazine in 1937 and the disbanding of its activists.

Many French Basques received the Spanish Basque refugees with a measure of suspicion, owing to their left-wing political allegiances as well as to a measure of ethnic prejudice. The Basque government authorities were aware that the conservative nature of the local community could pose problems for the reception of the evacuated Basque children; yet from the start the authorities preferred to locate their camps and shelters in the western Pyrenees (the French Basque Country and Bearn), not only for reasons of geographical proximity but, above all, because of links these authorities had with various mayors and local governments in Iparralde, a Basque-speaking area with a direct political and cultural connection to its southern neighbors.

The experiences of exiled Basque children in Iparralde varied considerably, depending to a great extent upon the type of settlement, the community to which they were assigned, and their hosts. There were three

33. Dreyfus-Armand, El exilio de los republicanos españoles en Francia, 31–42.
34. Ott, War, Judgment, and Memory in the Basque Borderlands, 67–75.
35. About the longstanding trans Pyrenean ties that bound northern and southern Basques, see ibid., 7–19.
categories of hosts in Iparralde: camps (places where only children lived and where everything—food, accommodation, teaching—was covered and coordinated by the host organization that funded the establishment), shelters (buildings that housed the elderly, women, and children), and home-stays with local families. In exile without their families, most children lived in home-stays; their host families generally never received financial assistance of any kind from any institution.36 In some cases, families with deep Catholic convictions took in dozens of Basque children, especially those who came from the EAJ-PNV, a party closely linked to Catholicism.

Young children who went into exile with their families likewise had to adapt to a new and often confusing situation. The personal, socioeconomic, and political circumstances of exiled families varied greatly. Families who were attached to a left-wing party or trade union stood out in solidarity with the Spanish Republic in its fight against Franco and against fascism. Such solidarity sometimes contributed to tensions between the refugees and their conservative French Basque hosts.

The camps provided accommodation, food, and education exclusively for children and were equipped with classrooms, teachers, and professors who taught classes daily in Spanish and Euskara; they also tried to adapt to their environment by teaching French. By contrast, children placed in shelters received education in French public schools. Thus they were required to interact with locals outside the confines of the shelter and to learn the local language. Most of the settlements installed in Iparralde depended largely on the Department of Social Welfare of the Basque government, although the Department of Justice and Culture provided teachers so that the children received education within the institution rather than in the local community.

Institutions financing these shelters and camps had very diverse origins. Through its Departments of Justice and Culture and Social Welfare, the Basque government played a key role. Owing to the different political origins of these two departments (Basque nationalist and socialist, respectively), they handled the issue of child evacuation differently. On one hand, the Social Welfare leader, Juan Gracia, established an important relationship with parties and groups of the French left, including socialists and communists, which gave much of the money intended for the maintenance of the evacuated children. Gracia also wanted to promote the

establishment of camps and shelters with a preferably leftist and secular character, in which children could live with their families, such as those of Lurbe–Saint Christau, Orthez, Guéthary, and Arraute-Charrite. In these institutions the lay Republican constitution was respected, promoting secularism and education in Spanish. By contrast, the Department of Justice and Culture impelled the establishment of camps exclusively for children in an environment that prioritized Catholicism and Basque culture, such as those at La Citadelle, Ciboure, Cagnotte, Poyanne, and Armendaritz in which only children and the camp staff lived. Department head Jesús María Leizaola looked for economic support from various Catholic organizations in France.

Regardless of the internal divisions between Basque nationalists, Christian Democrats, and Basque socialists, much of the money raised for the maintenance of refugee children came from partnerships, both left-wing and Catholic, in solidarity with exiles who were well aware of the problems that the Civil War had created in Spain. The left-wing Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) created the Confédération Générale d’Accueil aux Enfants Espagnols, which organized numerous camps. They also recruited a large number of families who adopted many Basque children. Meanwhile the Comité National Catholique d’Accueil aux Basques coordinated the children’s reception by numerous French Catholic families.

While they had maintained an alliance of necessity during the Civil War, Basque socialists and Basque nationalists in reality had very different political cultures and codes of collective identity. Basque nationalists hoped that support for the Popular Front would enable them to achieve autonomy for Euskadi, which would never have been obtained by allying with the rebellious rightist parties led by Franco’s Nationalists. Euskadi, as a nation, and Euskara, a primary pillar of Basque culture, formed an important part of Basque nationalist identity. By contrast, the socialists “took Castilian culture to be dominant and identified with Spanish cul-

37. Rubio, La identidad vasca en el siglo XIX, 21–31; Rivera, Señas de identidad, 73–117.
38. When combat ended in the Basque Country Francoist authorities assumed all power, including education. At that time the Basque children who remained in Spain returned to their lessons. However, everything changed because the Francoist state took over schools stamping them with its own centralizing and pro-Castilian style. Ostolaza, El garrote de la depuración, 51–121; Calvo Vicente, “La enseñanza en la zona rural guipuzcoana durante el primer franquismo,” 165–76. Dávila, Enseñanza y educación en el País Vasco contemporáneo, 44–45.
ture without favoring its coexistence with what remained of the preexisting Basque culture.”

If the attitude of socialists to the culture and to Basque national identity did not contribute to the maintenance of good relations with the EAJ-PNV, despite being allies in the Civil War, the attitude of the EAJ-PNV in exile did not help foster a better understanding with the socialists. First, despite the fact that all the issues relating to refugees were the responsibility of Gracia’s Department of Social Welfare, the nationalists tried at all times to control the work of the Basque government through the Department of Finance, led by the nationalist Heliodoro de la Torre. Finance was a key department through which the EAJ-PNV “could influence the workings of other non-nationalist departments.” This maneuver was denounced by the leftist parties. Second, the EAJ-PNV tried to get both the people and the French authorities to differentiate between Basque and Spanish exile, to avoid confusing the Spanish “red” exile with the Basque and Catholic exile. Third, the EAJ-PNV established a support network for refugees separate from other political parties and organizations. These different identities inevitably led to political struggles in the camps and shelters over matters relating to the Basque language, the Catholic religion, and the symbolic universe.

As I explained earlier, during the first three decades of the twentieth century the fundamental aim of the “Basque school” or ikastola was to preserve Euskara and to expand its use. Although they were different organizations, the Schools of Euskadi had the same objective. They were both based in the EAJ-PNV’s desire to carry out its educational project based in Euskara, the Basque national education, and Catholicism. Therefore, the Department of Justice and Culture likewise gave special importance to these issues in relation to the Basque camps in Iparralde that it controlled directly. It is estimated that 60 percent of the children who resided in La Citadelle were Basque-speakers. In addition, many of the teachers, priests, and clerks came from the ikastolas and Schools of Euskadi. From the beginning staff encouraged Basque-speaking children to speak the language and separated them from Spanish speakers, even during rest and recreation. As an incentive to use Euskara, camp educators in La Citadelle devised a system of points for Basque-speaking children. Each child

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39. Rivera, Señas de identidad, 92.
40. Pablo and Mees, El péndulo patriótico, 197.
41. Arrien, La generación del exilio, 175–76.
received five vouchers once every two weeks. If a Basque-speaking child was caught speaking Spanish, he or she would have to relinquish, by way of penalty, a voucher or item. If a child accumulated “debts,” he or she would subtract vouchers in the following two-week period to pay those debts. At the end of two weeks children had to settle the points definitively. Depending on the points they had accumulated, children obtained a score that ranged from “good” (five points) to “exemplary” (ten points). Children could swap these vouchers for certain perks, depending on the points they obtained. These coupons could be exchanged for movie viewings or for raffle tickets to get various prizes.42

The first camp director, Vicente Amézaga, made concerted efforts to teach the rosary in Euskara. Children also learned to sing in Basque during music classes, in organized choirs and choruses, and were often accompanied by other children who performed traditional Basque dances. Musical activity, for which Martin Anucita was responsible, was an important part of the curriculum. Children devoted many hours to the study of song, dance, and Basque theater. Although all types of Basque songs were sung, those written in Euskara had priority.43

In Donibane Garazi the local population and even some local civil and church authorities came to watch Basque folklore shows put on by the refu-

42. Archivo del Nacionalismo (AN, the Archive of Nationalism), GE-456-1.
43. Arrien, La generación del exilio, 271–2.
gee children. Initially, the children sang and danced without traditional dress, but with time, and thanks to the money earned from these shows, the camp staff acquired several Basque costumes for the children. This represented a considerable achievement due to the camp’s severe financial problems, which prevented the purchase of textbooks and other educational necessities. It was precisely “the teacher’s abilities and their experience that allowed them to overcome this lack of materials, but many of them had not even been able to begin classes due to the lack of materials.”

The Department of Justice and Culture even went to great lengths to acquire Basque costumes for children because Basque dances are closely linked to the Basque identity.

Despite efforts to promote the teaching in Euskara in this camp, some sources indicate that the proposed targets were not being fulfilled. For instance, Avelino Barriola, the general secretary of Justice and Culture in the Basque government, called for change in the teaching program, especially in Euskara, as the camp had slipped in Basque language teaching. As he observed, “well, the children who only know Basque now don’t want to speak it, and among the erdaldunes [referring to Spanish speakers], no one wants to speak Basque. The education (provided there) means almost nothing.” But this report did not find “deficiencies” in the camps as far as religion was concerned. One of the priests confessed that he “recognized that what has most worried [Amézaga] was the religious question and that he is favorable of results in this regard.”

Indeed, another pillar of education in La Citadelle was the maintenance of Catholic mores. Following the example of religious schools at the time, prayer played a vital role in preserving Catholic morality and took place during the morning Mass, the grace before each meal, during mid-afternoon lessons when students recited the rosary, and again at bedtime. The priests responsible for the daily worship at La Citadelle included Pedro Menchaca, canon of the cathedral of Vitoria-Gasteiz, capital city of the Basque province of Araba (Álava); Fortunato Unzueta, pastor of the Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Begoña in Bilbao; and Pedro Zubeldia, pastor in Laurgain, a village in Gipuzkoa. In fact, daily masses were obligatory at La

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45. AN, GE-805-3.
46. AN, GE-805-3.
Citadelle, because religion “was not just a course, but nearly the environment in which one lived.”\footnote{Arrien, \textit{La generación del exilio}, 265.}

Most refugee children in camps overseen by the Department of Justice and Culture took their First Communion in exile. Both ecclesiastical and civil authorities came to this sacramental act. While public displays were not exclusively religious, those in charge of the camps showed “a manifest desire to demonstrate to the world the practicing Catholicism of the Basques.”\footnote{Ibid.} Since Iparralde was located in such a conservative region, the organizers of camps and shelters often found that the local population did not always warmly welcome the exiled children. Franco’s propaganda machine claimed that the Basque Republicans were communists and anti-Christian exiles. Such propaganda achieved a measure of success in Iparralde, owing to its conservative Catholic traditions, to the prominence enjoyed by its most powerful politician, the ultra-right-wing deputy Jean Ybarneagaray, and to the special way Iparralde had been affected by anticlerical measures during the Third Republic.\footnote{Amézaga, \textit{La mujer vasca}, 375–83.} The leaders of French Basque refugee camps linked to the EAJ-PNV tried to disprove the Francoist propaganda that had spread throughout the Catholic world about the Basques through public displays of religiosity aided by some members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.\footnote{“Carta de S. Emcia. Rvdma. el Cardenal Primado por los niños evacuados,” in \textit{Boletín Oficial del Obispado de Vitoria} (15-IX-1937). Raguer, \textit{La pólvora y el incienso}, 99–211.}

The children who lived in the camp of La Citadelle were nearly all Catholics, since they came mostly from families linked to the EAJ-PNV. Accordingly, religious matters did not divide their community, in sharp contrast to the experience of exiled children in other camps, where children who came from ideologically heterogeneous families were mixed together. For example, in the Stoneham camp in Great Britain, Basque children were separated into sub-settlements according to the political persuasion of their families (Basque nationalist, republican, and socialist). In the Stoneham camp hundreds of children were housed in tents borrowed from the British Army. One of those tents was converted into a chapel for nationalist children who, when attending mass, were surrounded by other children who threw buckets of water while singing the “Internationale.” A few weeks later all these children in the camp were separated and sent to different
camps. The girls of Weston Manor—all from nationalist families—went to daily mass, which was celebrated by Basque priests Benito Larrakoetxea and Pedro Atutxa. The latter taught religion, Euskara, Gregorian chant, and Basque songs for mass.\(^{51}\)

Led by socialists, similar conflicts took place between leftists and Basque nationalists over the Catholic religion in some shelters in the department of the Basses-Pyrenees. The parents of these children—who were affiliated to leftist parties or unions—refused to let their children be transferred to the camps managed by the Department of Justice and Culture; such a transfer would have entailed receiving a religious education. In fact, religion did pose a problem in shelters managed by the Department of Social Welfare. In a report to Leizala, the aforementioned Barriola noted:

“In the camps, apart from some that are very much ours where children and educators are nationalists, the little teaching that is done is secular and the Minister Mr. Gracia claims that it should be thus because religious instruction is prohibited by the Spanish constitution. Against my way of thinking and my desire to act, that gentleman argues that the camps are public places, not private and that here, as in public schools, teaching should not include religion. . . .

It thus happens that the Catholic Basque child does not receive religious instruction and in some places is even treated with disdain for holding such beliefs.”\(^{52}\)

In June 1939, several nationalist refugees\(^{53}\) signed a letter to Lehendakari Aguirre in which they denounced the attitude of the Department of Social Welfare for this reason. When nationalist refugees requested the celebration of Corpus Christi at the Lurbe–Saint Christau shelter, Gracia’s department informed them that this was not possible, since all political and religious acts were forbidden within the shelters. However, when consulted on the matter, the local French authorities consented to the celebration. The signatories claimed to be “Catholics and proud of it, we desire to be permitted to celebrate, with liberty, religious rites that do not nor cannot offend anyone who is seeking refuge through our government.”\(^{54}\)

\(^{51}\) Interview by the author with María Rosario Beascoechea Gabiria, November 17, 2009.

\(^{52}\) AN, GE-805-3.

\(^{53}\) All with political positions before the war, and led by the priest Aniceto Unzalu.

\(^{54}\) AN, GE-409-1. Letter: some refugees to José Antonio Aguirre, June 10, 1939.
These refugees did not take into account the fact that the government of Euskadi was made up of different parties with very different ideas. In this case, Lurbe–Saint Christau was in the hands of a department headed by socialists, who advocated the third article of the constitution of the Spanish Republic, under which the Spanish state had no official religion. In contrast, for Basque nationalists the Catholic religion, regardless of legal issues, was a way of life, and they saw no incompatibility between belief and republican legality, blurred by the distance of exile.

Aguirre replied to the letter from the Lurbe–Saint Christau refugees several days after the celebration of Corpus Christi, trying to placate them and to avoid any kind of political confrontation between the various parties involved in the Government of Euskadi. Aguirre calmed them by assuring them that “there is no sectarianism in the Basque government.” Furthermore, he promised not to “consent to it in any way,” although “the worries that preoccupy us in these times sometimes allow us to distract our attention.”55 The affair provides an example of the balancing acts Aguirre and the EAJ-PNV had to perform in order to reconcile in practice a pluralistic government in religious matters with secular or clerical people.

As this chapter has shown, departments in the Basque government made significant efforts to coordinate and to carry out mass evacuations of Basque children during the Spanish Civil War. The educational experience in exile maintained by the Basque nationalists was based on the Basque school and the Schools of Euskadi, which was launched during the Second Republic. In practice, this was an extension of the educational projects carried out during the Republican period, which intended to keep alive the culture and the Basque language, in spite of the war. However, when the Departments of Justice and Culture (EAJ-PNV-controlled) and Social Welfare (PSOE-controlled) installed their shelters and camps in the French Basque Country, problems arose owing to religious and political quarrels and differences in identity formation. On the one hand, the camps that depended on the Department of Justice and Culture admitted children from nationalist families. These children received an education according to the political culture of their origins, based on the teaching of Euskara, Basque culture, and the Catholic religion. Through their educational experiences in exile, children achieved a measure of immersion in the political culture embraced by their nationalist parents.

55. AN, GE-409-1. Letter: José Antonio Aguirre to the refugees of Lurbe–Saint Christau, June 24, 1939.
In contrast, no such political cohesion emerged in shelters operated by the Department of Social Welfare. Nationalists, socialists, and republicans lived there together. Although most refugees accepted the authority of the Government of Euskadi, a minority never recognized a political culture (of the EAJ-PNV, which led the entire Basque government) that was not its own. In this sense, the camps and small shelters became a laboratory of ideas that reflected the complexity of the Basque exile, and in which the children were the principal actors. Unwillingly, the young refugees found themselves on a battlefield where their elders played a contest of identity that transcends this particular experience of exile and emerges as a central theme in Basque history from the late nineteenth century.

Bibliography


Basque Narrative about the Spanish Civil War and Its Contribution to the Deconstruction of Collective Political Memory

Mari Jose Olaziregi

I still remember the impact the cover photo of Joseba Tapia’s record, *Agur intxorta maite*, had on me when I first saw it. The photo shows the Basque nationalist front on a mountain range called the Intxortas during the Spanish Civil War. An accordion player (*trikitilari* in Basque) stands behind the group of *gudaris* (Basque nationalist soldiers) in a clear attempt to cheer them up.\(^1\) The image resonated with many of the stories that my grandfather (also an old *gudari*) used to tell me, but the instrument itself particularly captured my attention owing to its close association with festive moments such as open-air dances in settings like the Intxorta mountains, whose symbolism has left a dramatic mark on Basque collective memory. The Intxorta mountains lie near the Gipuzkoan town of Elgeta, a place that evokes memories of the beleaguered Basque army’s resistance against fascism, and of that army’s epic achievement in October 1936, when it neutralized General Mola’s rebel forces in their attempt to invade Bizkaia. Today a large sculpture called *Intxortako Atea*, the Intxorta Pass, presides over the setting of that seven-month battle, an area that a Basque association (the Intxorta 1937 Kultur Elkartea) hopes to make into a themed “memory” route in an increasingly popular form of war tourism.

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\(^{1}\) The *trikitixa* is a two-row diatonic accordion.

* This essay forms part of the EHU10/11 Research Project financed by the University of the Basque Country.
This chapter first provides a brief overview of the changing ways in which the contemporary Basque narrative has treated the Spanish Civil War. I then examine the sites of memory, such as the Intxorta mountains and the town of Gernika (Guernica), in the most recent Basque novels and analyze the ways in which such places give rise to recollections of the Civil War. In *Gorde nazazu lurpean* (*Let Me Rest*, 2000), novelist Ramon Saizarbitoria portrays a recollection of the past seeking to dignify the memory of the vanquished republican side in the Civil War and to make a humanist plea against war.\(^2\) Other works, such as the novel *Soinujolearen semea* (*The Accordionist’s Son*, 2003) by Bernardo Atxaga, reflect upon the impact of the Gernika tragedy of April 1937 on later generations, especially during the emergence of ETA at the height of the Franco dictatorship. Another recent novel, *Antzararen bidea* (*On the Trail of the Goose*, 2007) by Jokin Muñoz, draws parallels between the victims of the Civil War and the primary and secondary victimization of ETA.

In Basque society, some political and administrative institutions have sought to construct a collective political memory through the recovery of traumatic memory\(^3\) so that political recognition, therapeutic restitution, and ethical responsibility form the bases of a future coexistence.\(^4\) In simi-
lar fashion, Basque literature has taken tentative steps since 1990 to rid terrorism\(^5\) of its fetishized and ritualized elements. Anthropologist Joseba Zulaika contends that this intellectual strategy can break down terrorist remythologizing.\(^6\) Francis Blessington argues that any novel addressing terrorism seeks to understand and to show why someone chooses terror, what lies inside the terrorist’s mind.\(^7\) As a means of recovering the historical memory of the Civil War and the repressive postwar era of Franco’s dictatorship, the contemporary Basque novel has adopted this objective in order to discover the historical causes of a conflict that has now lasted more than five decades. The contemporary Basque novel is committed to contributing to a cultural, collective, and identity-based memory rooted not in forgetting and ignorance, but in a shared remembering\(^8\) that entails the recollection of a traumatic past so that history is not repeated.\(^9\)

### The Past and Deterritorialization

L. P. Hartley’s novel, *The Go-Between* (1953), begins with the thought-provoking words: “The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there.” These words underscore the estrangement that the past can generate within us. Through its evocative power, Hartley’s observation has inspired both critics such as David Lowenthal (1985) and Basque authors such as Bernardo Atxaga, notably in his novel, *The Accordionist’s Son*. Ulrich Winter was similarly inspired when he wrote of the triple “exile” that, in his opinion, republicans in Spain suffered between 1936 and 1975. The origins of this exile are to be found in the dual forgetting that dominated this era, “first as a result of the dictatorial repression . . . and another ‘agreed on’ forgetting during the democratic transition.”\(^10\) In novels written after 1975, the repatriation of history through the aesthetic recuperation of the memory of the war and Francoism led to a thematic line characterized

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5. For Zulaika and Douglass terrorism is “first and foremost discourse,” a discourse that is largely a matter of “fictionalization.” The latter includes literary as well as non-literary “types of fictionalization”—representation by the media, political manipulation, academic definitions, the imaginary archetype informing the thriller.” Zulaika and Douglass, *Terror and Taboo*, 14 and 16.


10. Winter, ed., *Lugares de la Guerra Civil y el franquismo*, 9. All translations from Spanish and Basque in this chapter are by the author unless otherwise cited.
by Winter in the trinomial “traumatism, paralysis, reconciliation” and a remythologizing of silent as opposed to official history.\textsuperscript{11}

Jan Werner-Müller writes about the “explosion” of memory and the prominence it enjoys in the humanities and, especially, in history: memory as an antidote to the utopia of globalization, memory as a mooring for reality and a counterpoint to the hyper-real space, and memory as the axis of new ethnic maps.\textsuperscript{12} What was described, after the Holocaust, as the shift from a “history of winners” (or in Nietzschean terminology “monumental history”\textsuperscript{13}) to a “history of victims” attempts in reality to give a voice and prominence to those who had been silenced for decades. We should speak, to mention just two examples, about micro-history\textsuperscript{14} and about the “present pasts” that dominate the postmodern era it is said we are living in.\textsuperscript{15} It is true that the study of memory in its different conceptualizations has become vital when addressing new assessments of questions such as nationalism, ethnic identity, and the politics of recognition, all questions that point to the growing need to return to a past of suffering and exclusion. It is in precisely this context that Iberian literature has championed an aesthetic recuperation of the Civil War. This recuperation has been legitimized critically and theoretically by a long list of studies that have emphasized the centrality of memory within its paratext.\textsuperscript{16} The past is revisited with the aim of understanding ourselves better,\textsuperscript{17} and literature is believed to be a privileged tool in alleviating and healing wounds.\textsuperscript{18}

Key concepts such as \textit{lieux de mémoire} (Pierre Nora), collective memory (Maurice Halbawchs), and communicative memory/cultural memory

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{11} See Labanyi, \textit{Myth and History}; and Herzberger, \textit{Narrating the Past}.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Müller, \textit{Memory and Power in Post-War Europe}, 13–18.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} See Nietzsche, \textit{The Use and Abuse of History}.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Ginzburg, “Just One Witness.”
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Huyssen, \textit{Present Pasts}, 11.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} “Our memories are indispensable because they are the stuff out of which individual experiences, interpersonal relations, the sense of responsibility, and the image of our own identity are made.” Assmann, “Memory, Individual and Collective,” 212.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} I recommend the article by Annabel Martin, “Critical Basque Studies,” in which the author contends that Basque literature can contribute to the creation of a new public sphere founded on a pedagogy of peace.
\end{itemize}
(Jan Assmann) have become conceptual axes for such readings and serve as a guide through this exploration of Basque narrative on the Civil War. In particular, I will draw upon Pierre Nora’s well-known sites of memory (lieux de mémoire),19 understood as “the points at which the collective identity of a nation takes shape.”20 These are places in which memory appears and coexists with history, and they can be material, symbolic, and/or functional (e.g., an archive, a flag, a will).

The Basque Novel on the Spanish Civil War

Some authors have argued that the postwar generation in Basque literature was one of the most important because it offered what was most needed at that time: continuity. In the postwar era, names and even inscriptions on tombstones in Basque were banned. Francoist censorship operated in streets, public administration, and culture. Within this context, in which the terrible political cultural repression of Francoism followed a major number of casualties and exiles, the most developed genre was poetry, among other reasons, because it was easier to publish the odd poem than complete works and because, between 1940 and 1950, normal publishing activity was practically impossible. In the case of Basque literature, the Argentinean publishing house Ekin, founded by Basque exiles, published the first postwar novels, Joanixio (1946) and Bizia garratza da (Life Is Bitter, 1950) by Jon Andoni Irazusta. Both incorporate the Spanish Civil War as a backdrop, although neither tackles in any detail the drama implied by political exile for thousands of Basques. Although wartime conflict appears in both novels, it plays no direct part in the unfolding of either plot, whose leitmotifs are, without any doubt, the overwhelming suffering and nostalgia of the emigrant/exile character. And this is quite striking, given the case of Irazusta himself, a distinguished member of the Basque Nationalist Party (EAJ-PNV by its Basque and Spanish acronyms) who chose to go into exile rather than comply with the request of the lehendakari (Basque president), Jose Antonio Agirre, to collaborate with him on the Basque nationalist side during the war.21 It would hardly be presumptuous to see in the conclusion of the novel Joanixio an image of repentance that Irazusta himself felt for having chosen exile. When the protagonist of

19. Nora, Between Memory and History.
the novel speaks his final words to a priest—“Amerikatara . . . joandako . . . damua” (“I regret having fled to the Americas”)—the text takes as its own the negative representation that the Americas and Basque emigration had in Basque literature from the mid-nineteenth century until almost the last third of the twentieth century. That representation was clearly shaped by the nationalist dream of an eternal return to the motherland, a dream that also encouraged censorship of the nationalist press during the early decades of the twentieth century and that was in tune with the message of the Basque church.22 What is surprising is that this negative representation of emigration and the Basque diaspora did not change, even when the already existent hundreds of thousands of Basque emigrants to the Americas were joined by several thousand other Basque exiles as a consequence of the 1936 struggle. Irazusta’s novel reveals an essentialist, clerical, and traditionalist ideology that Basque fiction displayed at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The novel *Ekaitzpean* (Under the Storm, 1948) by José Eizagirre was more original in that it presented a story of the contradictions that many Basques experienced between the Carlist side (allied during the Spanish Civil War with the nacionales, or Franco’s forces) and the Basque nationalist side, allied with defenders of the Spanish Republic. Mention should also be made of Sebastián Salaberria’s autobiographical novel, *Neronek tirako nizkin* (It was Me Myself, 1964), which demonstrates the force and dramatic quality imparted by firsthand war experience. At the time, this text was presented as a major advance in Basque literature and it might be considered a clear statement against a war branded as fratricidal: The narrator/protagonist of the story fights on the side of the nacionales and loses a leg. After some time, he discovers that it was his own brother, fighting on the opposing side, who shot him.

Martin Ugalde made a landmark contribution to the treatment of the heartrending and alienating drama entailed in political repression and exile for many Basques. Among his works, two stand out: *Iltzalleak* (the Murderers, 1961), a book of short stories that, according to observers like Andima Ibinagabeitia, initiated “Basque literature about the war”; and his novel *Itzulera baten istorioa* (the Story of a Return, 1989, translated into Spanish as *Historia de un regreso*), clearly autobiographical in nature, that tells the story of a Basque family in exile and the impossibility of their

return to Euskadi. The hybrid identity of the narrator, the daughter of exiled parents, demonstrates for the first time in Basque narrative the dislocation and alienation suffered by exiles.

With the passing of time, and as those people sharing an inhabited memory of the war have gradually died, a political, emotional, and intellectual distance has been imposed on wartime themes in Basque literature. Therefore, the trend shifted from stories that “tended to be autobiographical, anecdotal, strongly grounded in historical events, and clearly identifiable with a particular position”\(^\text{23}\) to proposals that have extended and diversified the subjects, styles, and approaches representing the Civil War. Of special interest are new identity-based perspectives on the past that became more prominent in the 1980s and beyond,\(^\text{24}\) perspectives that have served to break the orthodox, monolithic, and Christian concept of the Spanish nation.\(^\text{25}\)

Once established as a literary device,\(^\text{26}\) the Basque narrative has also sought to tell and deconstruct historical and political events from a point of view far removed from mythologizing or Manichaean arguments. Having questioned the objectivity of historiographical discourse,\(^\text{27}\) it is argued that literature can also serve to tell those “other truths” that history has banished from its epic discourse, those truths that are, ultimately, ours. This is a responsibility and a duty that has been demanded of the Basque novel for some time, which already in 1988 the critic Jesús María Lasagabaster accused of living with its back turned to the convulsed Basque reality.\(^\text{28}\) Lasagabaster was of course referring to a Basque reality framed by the terrorism of ETA, a group that claimed most of its victims in the 1980s and that stepped up its activity in order to spread panic\(^\text{29}\) with terrorist acts, such as the infamous 1987 Hipercor attack resulting in twenty-one deaths. Although two decades later, writers like Harkaitz Cano and Jokin Muñoz called upon the Basque novel to further confront the challenge of narrating

\(^{23}\) Faber, “The Novel of the Spanish Civil War,” 82.

\(^{24}\) Resina, ed., Disremembering the Dictatorship, 1.

\(^{25}\) Herzberger, Narrating the Past, 113.

\(^{26}\) Olaziregi, Waking the Hedgehog, chapter 2.

\(^{27}\) Halbwachs, On Collective Memory, 49.

\(^{28}\) Lasagabaster, ed., Contemporary Basque Fiction, 22.

\(^{29}\) Although there is no internationally accepted single definition of terrorism, I believe Hoffman’s description, insofar as it stresses the terrorist aim of instilling fear, is the most useful one to consider here. Hoffman, “Defining Terrorism,” 40–41.
the sadly violent Basque reality, as had happened in literary representations of the Civil War, the Basque novel only began to address ETA’s terrorism from 1990 onward. In this, then, the Basque novel coincides with the tendency of the English-language novel. However, there are certain singularities that differentiate the Basque novel from its English-language counterpart. Although the Basque novel also demonstrates a diversity of approaches and notable fictional typologies, it tends not to focus as clearly on narrating events from the victim’s point of view (as happens in the English-language novel) but rather from the terrorist’s perspective.

Ramon Saizarbitoria, or the Dignity of the Old Gudaris on Intxorta

The narratives of three key contemporary Basque authors focus on the recovery of the historical memory of war: Ramon Saizarbitoria (1944), Bernardo Atxaga (1951), and Jokin Muñoz (1963). Considered by Basque critics to be the great innovator of the Basque novel, Ramon Saizarbitoria has remarked that his writing is a struggle against forgetting, and that he writes because, in the same way as his cherished Samuel Beckett, he has a very precarious memory. For this reason, memory has a major presence in Saizarbitoria’s work, whether in the form of quotes from treasured authors or in the form of historical memory through the presence of the Civil War and the violence of ETA in his novels. Writing is, therefore, a creative antidote for this Basque writer with a bad memory, an occupation that has never turned down the temptation to recall a horrifying historical past in order to delve into our collective fears.

31. The list of contemporary Basque narrators who have addressed the topic of the Civil War and that have been translated into Spanish includes, for example, Arrieta, Abuztuaren hambosteko bazkalondoa; Izagirre, Euzkadi merezi zuten; Mujika Iraola, Azukrea belazetan=Azúcar en los prados, Gerezi denbora, and Sagarrak Euzkadin/Manzanas en Euzkadi; Egaña, Pausoa noiz luzatu; Epaltza, Tigre ehizan; and Jiménez, Azken fusila and Kikkeren hotsak.
33. The conclusions of the research project we are undertaking on Basque literature and terrorism will have to corroborate this tendency. We are attempting, through this project, to fill the gap in critical Basque academic studies on the issue; this gap has, furthermore, apparently been prevalent until quite recently in other literatures, such as that of the English-speaking world. See ibid., 388.
34. Olaziregi, “Basque Fiction” and “Is There a Return of the Real in Postmodern Fiction?”
35. “Memory is a broken plate,” a quote attributed to Claude Simon in Hamaika pauso, 406, or “To remember is to imagine,” attributed to Alain Robbe-Grillet in Bihotz bi.
To date, *Gorde nazazu lurpean*, a compilation of five narratives, is Saizarbitoria’s most successful novel. The legacy of nationalism is evident not just in stories like “Rossettiren obsesioa” (*Rosetti’s Obsession*, 2000) but also, and especially, in “Gudari zaharraren gerra galdua” (the Old Gudari’s Lost War) and “Asaba zaharren baratza” (Our Ancestors’ Vegetable Garden), the two narrations that open and close *Gorde nazazu lurpean*. Although the presence of old gudaris is constant throughout Saizarbitoria’s work, I believe it is in this novel that we find his most heartfelt tribute, especially in the first of the narrations, “Gudari zaharraren gerra galdua.” The story relates the ups and downs of an old gudari who lost a leg in the Civil War and who goes to a notary to get an affidavit in order to be able to claim a pension. As the story goes on, we learn that the gudari was injured as a result of his own negligence: he left the trenches to see his beloved Miren at a farmstead near Loxeta (60), after which he was hit by shrapnel from a Heinkel 51 that was sweeping the area and was seriously wounded. These events took place on April 20, 1937, on Mount Intxorta, when a member of the Martiartu battalion and protagonist of the story is wounded in his leg and transferred to a hospital in Durango, and later to Basurto, in Bilbao. The metanarrative comments included in the text (“All that about not knowing where to begin telling something happened to him a lot,” 38) locate us in a historiographical metafiction riddled with references to real events and people, a tale only interrupted by the to-ing and fro-ing of memory and the exclamations of the notary (“to business, to business!”), who regards all the old soldier’s details of his story superfluous, details that come to reveal his “awakening” in the face of a long-denied reality. The story mentions, in addition to the Martiartu and Saseta battalions, well-known combatants of the Civil War, such as General Gamir, Colonel Vidal, and Commandant Beldarrain. Indeed, details about the Beldarrain are truly revealing:

36. Olaziregi, “Basque Fiction.”

37. Published separately as a standalone book in English, *Rosetti’s Obsession*.

38. In fact, the narration is dedicated to an old gudari and friend of the author, Iñaki Arriola. Saizarbitoria’s admiration for these old Basque soldiers is also evident in the following declaration: “Everyone respected them, didn’t they? Even our greatest enemies couldn’t say that those men weren’t completely worthy of respect. Jon Juaristi himself wrote a short while ago: ‘Every time I extended my hand to one of them, I was always under the impression I was extending my hand to an honorable man.’ And I believe the same.” Saizarbitoria, *Argia*.

39. References to “Gudari zaharraren gerra galdua” will be provided parenthetically within in the text and refer to Spanish edition of *Gorde nazazu lurpean*, *Guárdame bajo tierra*, from which quotes have been translated by the author.
They held on because Commandant Beldarrain, despite being a simple mechanic, knew how to change the old fortifications, built by the authority of incompetent soldiers trained during the first war: He ordered a withdrawal from the old straight trenches and to hide in scattered camouflage hollows that had been made for this purpose. (55)

These events are corroborated, for example, in a work by Martin Ugalde:

Beldarrain made a whole neighborhood out of the old fortifications in the Intxortas. The straight trenches, of which there were two rows, were half-filled up so as to fool the enemy artillery, but not to protect the infantry, because behind those abandoned tombs Beldarrain constructed new defenses, intertwined and irregular, with one covering the other in parallel slanting rows.40

The roll-call of authors and politicians listed in Saizarbitoria’s tale includes, as one would expect, the names and activities of distinguished EAJ-PNV members, such as Joseba Elosegui, a former member of the Saseta battalion who, in the early 1950s, planted an ikurriña (Basque flag) atop the Buen Pastor Cathedral in Donostia (32); the respected and admired Juan de Ajurriaguerra, one of the architects of the Santoña Pact (40);41 and Angel Otaegui (30), one of the last people executed by Francisco Franco and who, in the same way as the old gudaris of the Civil War, had to go through the Burgos military trial (30).42

The tale also relates the terrible events following the entrance of the “Moors” into Elgeta, from the murders and pillaging that took place to the sexual violence against women (67–68), all events that the Intxorta 1937 association for the recovery of historical memory commemorates in its themed route.43 In any event, what Saizarbitoria’s narrative reveals is that any attempt to recover the past leads us to reinvent it.44 In effect, the attention to detail with which the two witnesses brought before the notary try to

40. Ugalde, Nueva síntesis de la historia del País Vasco, 246.
41. Reference to the surrender of the Basque army to the Italian fascists in August 1937. See Watson, Basque Nationalism and Political Violence, 156–57.
42. In 1970, several ETA members were condemned to death in the Proceso de Burgos (“Trial of Burgos”), but international pressure resulted in commutation of the sentences.
narrate the events, together with the constant interruptions of the notary himself (asking them to cut their stories short and limit their recounting of the details), gives us the impression that any attempt at objectivity is in vain. It is not just that the affidavit ends up full of errors (the battalion names, for example, 22) but also that the witnesses brought by the interested party were not really there when the events took place at the time outlined. All of this is of little importance to the old gudari, though, who cannot get the war out of his head (46) because, as he repeats obsessively (i.e., “I lost it in the war,” 27), what he lost in the struggle, his leg, is an external symbol of what he also lost in his heart, his beloved Miren, by any reckoning an irretrievable loss. For this reason the old gudari’s watch stopped at 4:30 (23), because the events took place at this time, the hour at which his life ended forever. The words of Adolfo Suárez,45 invoked by the text, “The wounds of war must be healed” (27), highlight the impossibility of any attempt to do so. When, at the end of the story, the gudari tries to recover his leg on the mountain where his friend buried it, he realizes that this is impossible. And in accepting the loss of his leg, in other words, that of his love, he dies.

Saizarbitoria’s tale attempts, ultimately, to underscore the dignity of the losers in war. That dignity is mentioned again in the next text we are going to analyze: “Asaba zaharren baratza.” The narrator and protagonist of the story, Policarpo, is the son of a Basque nationalist who worked as a driver for a EAJ-PNV leader during the war and who witnessed the exhumation and removal of Sabino Arana’s (the founder of Basque nationalism, and whose second given name was Policarpo) remains on April 27, 1937. The relics of Arana, a few small bones Policarpo’s father stole during the removal (472),46 become the inheritance he leaves to his son on his deathbed.

“Asaba zaharren baratza” refers to a well-known poem of the same name by one of the great Basque poets of the Second Republic, Xabier Lizardí. In the poem, Lizardí argues in favor of a positive future for Euskara, for its survival. In Saizarbitoria’s text, however, overcoming his paternal legacy is what allows the protagonist to free himself of the burden and begin to live. The story gradually tells us about this family’s past, one full of moments of intimacy between father and son in which both share a whole

45. Adolfo Suárez was Spain’s first democratically elected prime minister after the dictatorship of Francisco Franco.
46. Further references to “Asaba zaharren baratza” provided parenthetically in the text.
political legacy that is most apparent in the veneration the father feels for
the founder of Basque nationalism, Sabino Arana, whom he considers a
“saint” (435). Looking through photos of Arana (437), he ends up trans-
mitting a whole series of values, such as the egalitarianism and nobility of
all Basques (465), the dignity and courage of the old gudaris during the
war (445–6), the refusal of the nationalist side to raze Bilbao factories to
the ground (446), and Ajuriaguerra’s courage and honor (446). According
to Marianne Heiberg, these are all examples of what many Basques thought
appropriate and of what the EAJ-PNV got right in politically articulating
the defense of “real Basque values: the dignity of work, religion, honesty,
egalitarianism and individual autonomy.”47

The centrality Saizarbitoria bestows on Sabino Arana in his story is
understandable. As Jose Luis de la Granja explains, many myths, symbols,
festivals, traditions, and emblematic places associated with nationalism
originate in the charismatic founder of the EAJ-PNV.48 If Arana’s birth-
place, the Sabin Etxea (Sabin’s house), is a clear site of memory, the parallels
between his figure and that of Jesus Christ are obvious. With Arana con-
verted into a messiah who had to save the Basque people, the EAJ-PNV fed
on this similarity with humanity’s savior from the outset by choosing Eas-
ter Sunday in 1932 to celebrate the first Aberri Eguna or Day of the Basque
Fatherland, just at the moment when it was celebrating the golden anniver-
sary of the revelation of nationalism to Arana by his brother Luis.49

“Asaba zaharren baratza” incorporates different versions that have
been put forward regarding the removal of Arana’s remains, versions
that reveal clear contradictions between what the father told his son, the
records of Ceferino Xemein (450–2) at the time, later published in the
daily newspaper Deia, and the “true” story of the transfer.50 But in reality
what Saizarboitoria’s text suggests is that history is just one more narra-

49. Ibid., 66.
50. Deia, January 3, 1989, 1. According to Mikel Aizpuru, “There are different, complemen-
tary rather than contradictory, versions about the methods and the people who took part in the
operation and about the veracity of the notes drawn up by Ceferino Jemein, the consequence, in
large measure, of the secrecy surrounding it and the fact that only three people knew about it in
its entirety. See, for example, Antonio Gamarrá’s article, ‘Los restos de Sabino,’ in Euzkadi 102.
The writer Ramón Saizarbitoria devotes a fictional account to it, but very close to the facts . . .”
Aizpuru, “Modelos de movilización y lugares de la memoria en el nacionalismo vasco,” 144.
tion, a construction written from a self-interested ideological position. In this regard the work of a writer and a historian would be very similar to one another.

At the end of the story, the protagonist decides to hurl Arana's small bones into the ocean. As the psychoanalyst Mariasun Landa Lizarralde has observed, in reality he is freeing himself of the ideological legacy thrust on him by his father—a legacy symbolized by that clearly phallic relic—and beginning to face up to his own desire. The words with which he addresses his lover, another victim of the nationalist legacy, “you are my homeland” (490), perfectly sum up Saizarbitoria’s novel. Indeed, the five stories combine memory, nationalism, and desire in a trinomial literary universe through which the Basque narrative manages to exorcise our most sacred demons.

The Long Shadow of the Bombardment of Gernika

As Ludger Mees has observed, “Gernika is probably the Basque site of memory par excellence.” Bernardo Atxaga turns to this event as well in his work, in which the past has been invoked repeatedly. Specifically, remembering the consequences of the Condor Legion’s bombardment of Gernika on April 26, 1937, has influenced some of his recent publications. In 1991, in his children’s novel Behi euskaldun baten memoriak (Memories of a Cow, translated into Spanish as Memorias de una vaca), the memories of Mo, a cow who takes the Kantian maxim “sapere aude!” (“Dare to be wise!”) as her own, serve to recreate the harsh postwar era in Euskadi. Those memories were also inspired by lives such as that of Juan Fernández Ayala, Juanín, the well-known Cantabrian maquisard (resistance fighter) to whom Atxaga paid special homage.

The paratext of Atxaga’s poetic essay Markak: Gernika 1937 establishes its central theme at the outset. Here, in a style similar to that of Roland Barthes in his well-known 1980 book, La Chambre Claire, Atxaga analyzes the awful consequences of the bombardment through the marks left by the massacre (bodily scars, testimonies, carvings, poems, reports,
letters). After examining the typology of marks in Atxaga’s book, following Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert\textsuperscript{56} it is clear that Atxaga tries to make use of three kinds of memory: communicative memory (society’s short-term memory, communicated orally), collective memory (long-term social memory, in other words a memory that is also political and that runs parallel to or overrides communicative memory), and cultural memory (made up by books, images, etc. as a whole that helps to maintain experiences and recollections of the past).

In any event, I believe that \textit{Soinujolearen semea} is Atxaga’s most ambitious novel to date.\textsuperscript{57} Its success among Basque readers has been reconfirmed by excellent reviews in Great Britain and the United States, and awards such as the Mondello and Grinzane Cavour prizes awarded him in Italy in 2008.

In \textit{Soinujolearen semea}, Atxaga once again discusses exile, by way of protagonists who are trying to make a home away from home. From his California ranch, David recounts his memories, in which he tackles his childhood in Obaba and a painful awakening as the result of discovering the serious events that took place during the Civil War and the postwar period. The Obaba that he outlines in this novel is not, as is the case in the book of narrations \textit{Obabakoak} (1988), a place where fantastic things happen that are difficult to explain with reason, but rather a far-off Arcadia, a little \textit{locus amoenus} inhabited by happy peasants to whom Virgil sang. Iruain, the maternal home of the protagonist, is located in this place, in a valley described as green and bucolic, a valley that has nothing to do with the second utopian space highlighted in the novel, Stoneham Ranch, in Tulare County, California. Nevertheless, the illusion of a Californian utopia is broken by the link established, from the outset, with the Spanish Civil War. Stoneham Fields, near Southampton, United Kingdom, was the destination for four thousand exiled Basque children who fled the Civil War on May 21, 1937, aboard the ship \textit{Habana}. In this sense, America, the New World, far from being the longed-for Arcadia that inspired travelers and artists from the Renaissance until recent eras (see, by way of comparison, Franz Kafka’s \textit{Amerika}) is transformed in \textit{Soinujolearen semea} into a destination of self-imposed Basque exile for political reasons. There is little

\textsuperscript{56} Assmann and Frevert, \textit{Geschichtsvergessenheit—Geschichtsversessenheit}, 35–52.

\textsuperscript{57} Following page references to \textit{Soinujolearen semea} will be included parenthetically. Translations are taken from the English edition published as \textit{The Accordionist’s Son} translated by Jull Costa, and page citations are to that edition.
doubt that the novel breaks with the clearly negative representation, fed by
the illusion of the eternal return, that the Americas had in Basque litera-
ture from the nineteenth century onward. In contrast to this, Atxaga’s novel
tells us of an exile that allows those Basques who had to leave Euskadi for
political reasons to start a new life.

Walter Benjamin argued that both the historian’s task and that of the
writer was similar to that of a collector wandering among ruins of the past,
reconstructing fragments of what once existed by means of some valu-
able pieces. In the case of Atxaga’s Soinujolearen semea, those fragments,
those valuable pieces, are visualized, as objects, such as the piece of string
to remember, the books and letters, Ángel’s notebook, the photographs,
the cardboard box, and the Hotson hat; as spaces such as the hideout and
the Hotel Alaska; and as symbols, like the monument to those who fell in
the war. These are all sites of memory that help to recall traumatic events
and lead to a healing, to the “working through” of something via literary
creation, of which Dominique LaCapra speaks (142–4). These are places
that break the “hypnosis” (84) or day-dreaming (209) by which David lived
in the utopian space of Iruain and that allow for David’s awakening and his
assumption that he is the son of a collaborator with the Falange.

Moreover, Soinujolearen semea does not just simply seek to recupera-
te a traumatic past, but rather to reflect on the influence that this past has
exerted on subsequent Basque generations, ones that, as happens with the
protagonists in the novel, go from dictatorial repression to armed strug-
gle. The declarations the narrator attributes to Triku (Agustin), the third
member of the terrorist cell together with protagonist David and Joseba,
leave one in no doubt: the piece of cloth, a relic of Gernika, that Triku car-
ried with him is a reminder of his reason for fighting:

Then, before going to bed, I sewed the relic from Gernika inside my
favorite shirt. . . . Contact with that piece of cloth was important to me. It
reminded me of the reasons for the struggle. (360)

...
I thought of the nearly 2,000 people killed in the bombing, especially my two aunts, who were only children then..." (362)61

This interpretation of terrorist violence as the continuation of a lost war during the civil conflict has also been sustained by other literary arguments, such as those of Joseba Sarrionandia,62 and by the adoption of popular songs from the Civil War era, such as “Eusko Gudariak” (Basque soldiers),63 by radical left-wing Basque nationalists. This is obviously an attempt to establish a correlation between the original Basque nationalist gudaris and ETA’s current “gudaris”; something that is only possible as a result of manipulation and betrayal of historical memory.

One can see the sense that literature is given in Soinujolearen semea: to transfigure reality (387) and alleviate a hostile reality, an attempt to face up to the past and deal with the future, and life, optimistically. Indeed, to paraphrase Bertolt Brecht, one of the poets mentioned in the novel, life is the greatest thing and to lose it is to lose everything.

Remythologization of Terrorism: The Narrative of Jokin Muñoz

The publication of the novel Antzararen bidea by Navarrese writer Jokin Muñoz was one of the most noteworthy literary events in recent years in the Basque Country. A novel unanimously acclaimed by Basque critics (it won the Euskadi Prize and the Critics’ Prize in 2008), it tells the story of Lisa, the mother of an ETA terrorist, and her son, Igor, who dies when a

61. The figures for the number of victims in the bombing are still disputed.

62. Joseba Sarrionandia’s “Intxorta” poem leaves no room for doubt: the poet encourages us to replace those who fell in the Intxortas in order to carry on what they, the gudaris, began. This is a call to arms, to a violence that has an instrumental goal (Arendt, On Violence, 46) to recover “what was lost” long ago:

Gogora ditzagun Intxorta aldeko gudariak, / Kainonazio eta fusileriaren artean / Heriotza-ren ertzeko / trintxerak eusten. . . . / Erdu hona, laguna, eroritakoen lekura, / Jas o ditzagun haien armak, / Bete ditzagun eroritakoen hutsuneak, / Defenda dezagun aspaldian galduta-koa. (We should remember the soldiers of Intxorta, /digging in to the mortal trenches, / between gunfire and rifles. . . . / Come, my friend, to the place of the fallen, / let's pick up their weapons, / let's fill the empty spaces they left behind, / let's defend what we lost years ago.)

63. See Casquete Baldaño, “Eusko Gudariak.” Here, the author studies the origins of the song “Eusko Gudariak,” a song he considers a musical site of memory. Since its creation in 1932 by a member of Juventud Vasca (Basque Youth, the Basque nationalist youth organization) in Bilbao, it has become an inevitable part of the protest and memory rituals carried out by radical Basque nationalism. However, it was initially popularized during the Civil War in the Basque Country. I also recommend reading Casquete Baldaño, “Música y funerales en el nacionalismo vasco radical.”
bomb he is handling explodes in a Salou (Tarragona, Catalonia) apartment in 2003. Lisa looks after an old man, Jesús, the descendant of a landowning family from the imaginary town of Trilluelos in the Navarrese Ribera area, and who suffered Falangist persecution during the Civil War. The memory of Igor’s death becomes more and more intertwined with testimonies of horrifying executions during the war in Trilluelos.

Seen as a tremendously tense psychological thriller, Antzararen bidea is full of protagonists for whom violence has destroyed their lives and snatched away those they most loved. It is a poignant gallery of castaways who wander about aimlessly, like the decapitated geese with which the novel begins, those geese that Jesús’s Falangist uncle beheaded before the terrified stares of children and that carry on walking until they topple over into a pool of blood (23).

It was communicative memory, familial memory, that inspired Muñoz to write Antzararen bidea. For Muñoz, by recovering that memory via literature, it endures in the collective memory and influences future generations. This is at least how the author explained it when he received the Beterriko Liburua prize in 2007. In any event, the originality of Muñoz’s text is rooted in the site of memory chosen, the Navarrese Ribera. Antzararen bidea speaks about the victims from this area of Navarre, who in the main lost their lives as a result of the repression exercised by the rebels against the Spanish Second Republic, a repression classified by some as well planned and calculated. This is a site of memory that has not had the same symbolic repercussions that Intxorta and Gernika have had in the Basque collective memory:

Your old man’s group of friends killed around three thousand people in Navarre, after the uprising and in the months that followed, did you know? . . .

64. Further references to Antzararen bidea will be provided parenthetically within in the text and are translated by the author.


66. The contemporary historian, Ángel Pascual Bonís, pointed out that in Navarre, “where there was not even any modest rebellion,” three thousand people were assassinated in the Civil War, 1 percent of the population at that time, and most of them between July and November 1936. He was sure it was something “planned”: “The repressive and murderous activity was not carried out randomly. Enemies or potential future enemies were chosen.” Diario de Navarra, November 19, 2008.
Mayors, councilmen, union leaders, schoolteachers . . . Left-wing people. Of those that died in Gernika there were ten like that. But nobody felt the need to do a painting remembering them . . .

“They weren’t killed on Intxorta, I mean . . . They didn’t deserve any epic in our Basque collective memory. (154)

Yet Muñoz’s novel goes much further in connecting the violence practiced by the winning side during the war with ETA terrorist violence. The image of a bullet in the head for socialists in the Ribera in 1936 and that of a bullet in the head for socialists in 2003 draws a picture of a Basque society in which violence has become sadly endless. In this regard, the scene in which the protagonists, Lisa and her friend Gigi, travel to Trilluelos, is truly revealing when they see the excavations being done there by the Aranzadi scientific association from Donostia on the remains of people executed during the Civil War. In the presence of Lisa and Gigi, a local farmer makes an ironic comment that they don’t have to come to Navarre to recover skulls will bullet holes in them, since they can find them just as easily in the Gipuzkoan capital. The old man mentions a chef, the grandson of an anarchist republican, who was assassinated in Donostia. This is a reference to Ramón Díaz García, a worker in the Marine Headquarters in Donostia, who was assassinated by a limpet bomb placed in the military barracks in Donostia’s Loiola neighborhood on January 27, 2001: “I would bet that more than one grandson of requetés [pro-Franco Navarrese Carlists during the Civil War] from that time is operating now up and down Euskadi. It’s in their blood,” he remarks to Gigi (164).

It is undoubtedly telling that Muñoz does not relate ETA’s terrorist violence with the repression of the winners over the losers (Gernika, the Francoist postwar period) but with an omnipresent violence more rooted in Basque society.67 Although there have been those who argue that ETA is only the “tip of the iceberg” of silent resentment and opposition to forty years of Franco,68 in truth, Basque literature in recent years and, especially, the narrative of Jokin Muñoz, has gone further to suggest that the problem of violence is one deep-rooted reality in Basque society, as represented in the book of short stories Bizia lo (Lethargy), with which Muñoz won the Euskadi Prize for Literature in 2003. As in the novella Zorion perfektua (Perfect Happiness, 2006), the gallery of characters and stories included in

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67. Ibid.; and Arruti, On the Lightness of Being.
68. Silver, “Malditos pueblos!,” 53.
Antzararen bidea (parents waiting for their son to come home, worried that he may be behind a terrorist attack that has just been reported on television; an ETA cell fleeing after killing a teacher in front of his pupils; a “reformed” ETA terrorist who teaches an ETA prisoner’s son) includes a wide representation of indirect victims of terrorism trapped in a society that appears to have become “accustomed” to living with violence.

It is precisely in the representation of terrorists and those who support them that the novel Antzararen bidea makes one of its most interesting contributions. Lisa, who feels as if she does not know her son (285) and is terrified of the possibility that he may have assassinated a retired councilman (24), feels sick at the sight of graffiti on the walls of Donostia’s Old Quarter proclaiming the sadly well-known phrase “gogoan zaitugu” (“we remember you,” 364), which is repeated by her son’s friends during demonstrations, on posters, and in acts of protest. In fact, the funeral-homage for her son, as well as the vigils and activities following his death, only intensify this feeling of detachment. She grieves at the thought that they are activities and slogans lacking any substance, for “Basque warriors” (153) who, in the same way as Donostiarraren society, can easily live with this violent reality. The scene narrated on pages 291 and 292 presents the Boulevard (one of the main streets traversing Donostia) full of demonstrators and riot police, and the promenade by the Concha beach, barely fifty meters away, full of passers-by and children enjoying ice cream. Life goes on, and support demonstrations for ETA enjoy a stage and a calendar in the day-to-day life of the city. Day in, day out, plagued by repeated behavior on the part of both sides ad nauseam, repetitious behavior in Muñoz’s novel manages to break down the radical nationalist discourse that keeps it going. In the words of Homi Bhabha: “What emerges between mimesis and mimicry is a writing, a mode of representation, that marginalizes the monumentality of history, quite simply mocks its power to be a model, that power which supposedly makes it imitable.”

The novel’s questioning of a Basque society that lives sadly with the scar of terrorism reveals that it shares the same goals as recent English-language narratives: “Most recent terrorism fiction in English is not about terrorism per se; it is about the political legitimacy and moral integrity of the society to which terrorism’s victims belong.”

Conclusion

The current Basque novel is contributing to the recuperation of our historical memory and, especially, in rememorizing the Civil War in the Basque Country and in remythologizing ETA’s terrorism, thereby responding to the different fictional representations that the media, political authorities, and academic institutions have undertaken for decades. This demonstrates the Basque novel’s contribution to constructing a collective Basque memory, a collective identity based not (just) on the awareness of being a victim—a consciousness that has only fuelled heroistic attitudes and models—but rather on a collective memory that includes the suffering associated with decades of terrorist violence and encourages therapeutically overcoming its paralyzing effects. As we can see, something is happening in Basque literature, a literature that no longer shies away from reality and that, without any doubt, has taken up the challenge of contributing to a more and more necessary pacification.

Bibliography


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All at once, Martí Carulla left the group behind and found enough courage in himself to start running. He stopped, raised his arms emphatically and after looking intently at the sky, kneeled down and placed his lips on the boundary stone.

“I am already in France!” he shouted naively as he overstepped the limit.

“You can’t see anything but everything’s there,” he said affected, “Martí, since you’re already in France, can you tell me when are we going to return?”

“Don’t think about returning; it’s a loser’s idea.”

“Are we anything else?”

No one replied. We crossed the border, drenched in moonlight, silent.

— Xabier Benguerel, El vençuts

Xavier Benguerel’s novel, Els vençuts (The Vanquished, 1969), begins with the evacuation of Barcelona in the last days of January 1939, and ends when Joan Pineda, the novel’s fictional author, leaves the camp of Sant Cebríà (Saint Cyprien) in Rousillon. In the foreword to this work Benguerel comments on the paradox besetting the writer who hovers between objectivity and verisimilitude. Later he would write in his memoirs: “In 1955, when I published Els fugitius, what was rigorously historical was objected to on grounds that it was ‘exceedingly literary.’ The way I have recently ‘imag-
ined’ it in *Els vençuts* has been deemed absolutely verisimilar and logical.”¹

The inversion of the reception between historical and fictional discourses calls for analysis of the status of historical truth in collective memory and of the role of testimonial fiction in revising epistemological routines in the present. In the case of Benguerel, the difference between the two texts mentioned is not in their adscription to this or that discursive modality (literary versus historical narrative) but in the method of composition and, above all, in the history of its reception. Benguerel wrote *Els fugitius* upon returning from exile in 1955, a time when the story of the losers in the Civil War could not gain a foothold in public life and the experience of exile was lost on the generations that had grown up or lived in Spain after 1939.²

This experience was incommunicable, in part because it had no semantic equivalent in 1950s Spanish life, then again in part because the biographical interruption experienced by the exiles entailed a rift in national and cultural continuity that had not yet been resolved and was potentially irresolvable: “Exile is a permanent situation; so much so that in certain moods I feel that all of us who returned after some years used to exchange looks, silences, strange and scarce words, which confirm the fact that exile does not end, that it cannot end.”³

By 1969, when Benguerel published *Els vençuts*, censorship was somewhat less stringent, and he found it possible to complete the subject “as far as my capacity and the current circumstances permit.”⁴

Circumstances were different indeed, not only in terms of opportunity for the vision of the defeated, as this sequel to the earlier novel was boldly titled, but also because, if in 1955 sympathetic understanding was hindered by silence, thirteen years later it could be thwarted by surfeit: “it may be risky to try to arouse again retrospective interest for certain episodes about which much has been said.”⁵

If for years insufficient context precluded reception of the testimonies of the Holocaust, as revealed by Primo Levi’s initial difficulties with the publishing industry, is it farfetched to speculate that negative context, in this

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¹ Benguerel, *Memòries 1905–1940*, 301. Unless otherwise stated, all translations in this chapter are by the author.
² Benguerel, *Els vençuts*, 15. The censorship objected even to the title of the book. It was published under the personal responsibility of historian Jaume Vicens Vives.
³ Ibid., 15.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid., 16.
case the stigma that adhered to the Civil War exile, might have prevented Benguerel from broaching the subject of the concentration camps in the mid-1950s? If in the 1940s Levi found it difficult to talk about Auschwitz because of the shame that attached to the victim’s degradation and because of the listener’s inability to fathom the reality of the extermination camps, Benguerel, as a returned exile leading the drab life of the defeated, did not find it easy to surmount the psychological (in fact, social) hindrance to exposing one of the most humiliating experiences undergone by the Spanish republicans. Nor could he expect sympathy from a hypothetical readership in the Western democracies if France itself, sitting at the victors’ table, hushed the reality of its concentration camps.

In 1969 when he revisited the theme of the republican exodus, Benguerel admitted to the “serious error” of not “tackling” (entrar) “the hideous French concentration camps.”6 But he also confessed his decision to write “the new work that a certain change of climate would allow me to move forward according to my intimate project.”7 This new project included “entering” (entrar) in the “abominable French concentration camps” as part of a testimonial account that, as he pointed out, was “imagined,” even if prompted by “great responsibility.”8 The extent to which it was “imagined” becomes apparent in the episodes in his memoirs that depart significantly from the novel, in that Benguerel himself was never confined to a concentration camp. He crossed the border through a mountain pass, the Coll de Manrella, and was sent by gendarmes on to the border town of El Voló (Le Boulou), where thousands of republicans were massed prior to their internment. Benguerel was fortuitously rescued from this fate, taken to Perpignan and then to a writer’s hostel in Roissy-en-Brie before his passage to South America was paid by the Catalan Center in Santiago de Chile.

Thus he avoided the cold, hunger, lack of hygiene, disease, neglect and shame, humiliation and abuse, sadness, and death that thousands of men, women, and children suffered in so-called shelters for months and even years. It may have been from a sense of unmerited privilege that he felt compelled to write about the camps as if he had not been separated from the mass of refugees. After avowing the “grave error” of not “entering” into the camps, he made this theme the focus of his new novel, where his

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6. Ibid., 15.
7. Ibid., 16.
8. Ibid.
“imagined” account achieves the effect, as he put it, of seeming “verisimilar and logical.”

This verisimilitude owes a great deal to Jaume Pla’s report of his experience in the camp of Sant Cebrià, but also, I suggest, to Benguerel’s remorse for dodging the fate of his equals, a feeling that underlies his effort to empathize with them and account for their misfortune. In the foreword to *Els vençuts*, he writes: “If the reader of this new book does not realize that many of its pages were written anxiously, with a feverish hand and with immense, incalculable regret, I will consider that I have failed in my purpose.”

The keyword here is *recança*, regret for having done or neglected to do something.

Regret powers memory and disciplines writing, providing the “as if” or “imaginary” dimension that turns fiction into testimony. If Benguerel’s partly fictional, partly autobiographical narrative lacks the authority of the personally and somatically experienced, it nevertheless wields the authority of the literarily effective. In fact, not a few accounts of concentration camps by actual internees adopt conspicuous novelistic traits and some even the luxury of the lyrical. Agustí Bartra’s “Crist de 200.000 braços,” for instance, rejects the idea that camp life can be adequately represented through mimesis and resorts instead to an extraordinary image verging on the surreal. “At the camp, the usual images of life belonged to a past in which everyone dived in search of his own lost time, in an irascible copula between imagination and phantoms arising from dreams.”

One hundred thousand men exposed to the cold, the rain, and the wind on the Argelès beach must come to terms with a reality that can no longer be deciphered through the repertoire of accustomed images. Lack of a visual vocabulary capable of articulating the unbelievable sends the captives on a Proustian search for familiar images through the fury of the imagination and the oneiric vapors of the unconscious. From this quest for a visual semantics arises the surreal image of the Shiva-like Christ that gives the title to the novel. This structuring image makes sense of the atypical experiences of the internees where everyday images fail to do so.

It was an enormous city of defeat that imposed its vast unreal quality with its terse, concrete and fragile elements, a barren lazaretto for a huge lying torso with two hundred thousand arms. And its isolation from the world,

the rigid siege that clustered them in one thousand naked lives, revealed above anything else the fear that pervaded an era of contempt for man.12

Although Bartra spent half a year in the concentration camp at Argelès, he also delegated the narrative voice to another writer. Crist de 200,000 braços professes to be the notebook of Pere Vives i Clavé, a camp mate of Bartra’s who was later interned at Mauthausen and murdered by a gasoline injection in his heart. His internment and death inspired Joaquim Amat-Piniella’s Mauthausen novel K. L. Reich. Thus, three years after becoming the chief character of Bartra’s novel, Vives again received literary homage by a fellow prisoner. Through the fictional voice of Vives, Bartra proclaims the status of his work as a testimonial legacy stemming from ethical commitment to memory. “I seriously doubt that I will be granted the power to use what I have written here for a work that, if it were realized, would be the throbbing and moving testimony of someone for whom not to forget is the central duty of his soul.”13

Bartra’s book is fundamentally about the formation of a community of exiles, a mystical body collected from the disjecta membra of defeat and held together by the memory of common suffering and the triumph of moral survival. In my opinion, the humanistic values of this book belie the central thesis of Francie Cate-Arries’s Spanish Culture behind Barbed Wire, which purports to show “how Spanish Republicans in exile begin to construe a shared sense of nationhood through the unlikely discursive vehicle of the French concentration camp.”14 Even if we accept that national identity was reaffirmed among internees who found themselves rejected, isolated, and mishandled as foreigners, it is hard to see how a “shared sense of nationhood” could have emerged from the camps, unless that sense had gone into them in the form of a lost cause and broadly shared feelings of social estrangement—in other words, through purely negative psychological dispositions. More importantly, what evidence is there of a shared national community spontaneously achieved in captivity, when that goal had just cost Spain a civil war and was at that very moment being relentlessly pursued by the winners through repressive measures? Cate-Arries inadvertently furnishes examples of the dislocation between state and nation on the Republican side. Citing an eyewitness of the last days of Republican

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12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 163.
Barcelona, she glosses: “Mistral, amid her fellow Republican supporters frantically preparing to leave Barcelona, sees in the pieces of papers, these scraps of identity, the physical proof of a nation-state in ruins.”  If we turn to the actual words of her witness, however, we find that she does not mention a ruined nation-state but merely “an organization that is falling apart.” What were those scraps of identity? What did they identify? How did they refer to a nation-state that, according to this interpretation, was being destroyed, ironically, by its national army? As a matter of fact, the scraps of paper that greeted the rebels like tumbleweed in a ghost town came from the archives and centers of widely different political organizations, including the anarchist and communist, as well as various Catalanist parties. They came from newspaper offices and stockrooms, from militants of all colors, and from the Generalitat’s commissariat of propaganda. Did these sectors amount to anything like a nation-state? Throughout the war, they collaborated uneasily while pursuing widely divergent political agendas. With goodwill such a precarious coalition of interests could be described as an organization, though perhaps more precisely as disorganization, but hardly as a nation-state.

Another signpost of interpretive trouble is the witness who, shortly after leaving Barcelona, saw peasants prudently burning the Republican and Catalanion flags. Where is the nation-state in this cautious disposal of two different national emblems? Plainly, for these peasants the senyera symbolized the nation and the tricolor the “organization,” that is, the political form of the state. And this dichotomy, far from disappearing, was reaffirmed rather emotionally in exile. Benguerel, who is not mentioned in Spanish Culture behind Barbed Wire, relates his subjective moral pressure to write “about one of the probably most impressive chapters in our contemporary history” to “the single fact of having been a Catalan writer that perhaps helped me to fulfill . . . my duty.” On April 20, 1939, Agustí Centelles—the outstanding photojournalist of the Spanish Civil War—began a description of the concentration camp at Bram in the form of a letter to his son, explaining at the outset: “I write in Catalan so that whatever our fortunes and wherever we are—you, your mother, me and other members of the family who may be with us—you may have the pride and satisfaction

15. Ibid., 27.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Benguerel, Els vençuts, 16.
of calling yourself a Catalan.” To add one more example, in 1969, exactly thirty years after his internment, Lluís Ferran de Pol recalled that during his stay in the camp of Sant Cebrià, he read poems of Joan Salvat-Papasseit to his fellow veterans. Thus, it was the poet of *Les conspiracions* and *La gesta dels estels*, not Machado, whom Cate-Arries presents as representing the inaugural moment of Spanish national identity remade in exile, that sustained the sense of national community for a group of Catalan soldiers. “Later they often asked me for them, and there, by the sea, with the snow-covered Canigó for our farthest horizon, with defeat as our sole asset, we all huddled together to listen to ‘the fixed price of anguish.’”

It would be easy to collect other examples that show the retention of the diverse national identities of the losers, who therefore could not constitute an “exiled nation” marked by a deterritorialized identity. This distinction does not, on the other hand, exclude their solidarity as human beings fallen on hard times. If we ask what elements were essential to the emergence of something like an exile identity, we should not appeal to formulaic concepts and must turn instead to the experience of the exiles. The beginning of an answer is provided by the citation with which I started this reflection. In the fictive reconstruction of the conversation between Benguerel and his fellow fugitives at the moment of crossing the boundary, we discover the border’s arbitrariness and a sense of its magical, taboo-like efficacy. This border exists only by virtue of its indexicality: a boundary stone, a physical object that one can easily overstep, set in the middle of nowhere marks the transition from a spiritual domain to another. “You can’t see anything but everything’s there.” “Everything’s there” speaks of a vision of hope in the depths of dejection, of plenitude in the absence of concrete certainties, of illusion when in fact “you can see nothing.” This is of course an expression of Benguerel’s irony setting up the psychological terrain for the shock of disappointment awaiting republicans who flocked to safety in a country they believed to be germane to their values. To be sure, Iberian republicans who entered France through official crossing points like El Portús or La Jonquera did not find the border so easy to overstep, but the significance of the moment, overpowering the arbitrariness of the political division, took

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hold of their minds with no less consequence. Antoni Rovira i Virgili went into France through El Portús on January 31, riding on the bus used by the Generalitat to evacuate Catalan writers. He reflects upon the moment of crossing:

We know quite well that this part of France into which we have come is still Catalonia. But now the official line has a true meaning. We leave one state and enter into another one; we go away from the enemy’s persecution and come into the protection of a different sovereignty. For this reason I renounce all reflection on the Catalan identity of the Rousillon and on the fact that the state line is, in some ways, fictitious. For our group, the psychological moment of the change of country is this moment of entry into the territory of the French state.

Regret mixes with joy. We are protected and are personally saved, but we are in exile.24

Rovira’s wife looks back to the country they are leaving. On her mind is probably the question that Benguerel puts in the mouth of one of his characters: “When are we going to return?” Thinking of returning is a loser’s idea, says another character, prompting the riposte: “Are we anything else?”25 This time the question meets with silence. The “everything’s there” of exultant border crossing elicits the “we are nothing” as a self-definition of the exiles. Apparently, the concept of loser does not imply an ontological class but is merely the expression of bereavement, the sign of an absolute divestment of positive ties. Deprived of the credentials that go with having a home and civil status, the exiles receive a new, negative identity at the moment when their past is wiped out and no future can yet be discerned. Ferran de Pol expresses the losers’ dispossession by means of the phrase “with defeat as our sole asset.”26 Defeat was in fact the first thing the fugitives experienced upon crossing the border. A few hours earlier and few miles behind the border the dignity of the Republican fighters still held up under the illusion of reassembling and taking up the combat elsewhere. “Now,” says Avellí Artís-Gener in his memoirs, “the disaster appeared to us in its true dimension and this happened paradoxically when we were no longer facing the adversary, were not fired upon, and did not repel the attacks. What could have been a pleasant stroll through a peaceful land

25. Benguerel, Els vençuts, 89.
26. Ferran de Pol, Campo de concentración, 58, 38n.
became the four-dimensional representation of defeat." Congruent with their status as losers, the protection offered by French sovereignty was negatively qualified, amounting to the bare distancing from a murderous regime. Such purely jurisdictional safety was granted grudgingly and at the price of dehumanization. “Full of irrational authority, [the mobile guard deployed to meet us] meted out a harsh treatment without the remotest sign of compassion, which we sufficiently deserved.” Of the half million people who crossed the French-Spanish border in 1939, about half were interned in improvised concentration camps. For reasons of national security, and because the Spanish Republicans were perceived as politically dangerous by the conservative French government, they were not placed in military camps, which were equipped to receive them; instead, they were massed in stretches of beach at Argelès, Sant Cebrià, and El Barcarès without a roof over their heads but prudently fenced off with barbed wire and watched by gendarmes and mounted Senegalese guards. Artís-Gener describes the arrangements at the camp in Prats de Molló:

The “concentration camp” was an old vineyard on the side of the Tec river, with the badly shaved beard of the vines trying to breathe through the layer of snow. They had marked out its perimeter with loops of barbwire and Senegalese soldiers, who, passionate for a vengeance that was full of common sense, did not waste the opportunity to assert their presence to whites that represented oppression, and handled that limp mass with an irrational authority that was deeply rooted.

That was all: the small hut [for the commander of the mobile guard], the barbwire fence and, inside, the vineyard, the snow and us.

Artís-Gener surrounded the words “concentration camp” with quotation marks to stress the inadequacy of the makeshift arrangements into which Republican exiles were imprisoned. From his standpoint as a victim of French hospitality, the word “concentration camp” overstated the physical reality. But today French analysts refuse to call “concentration camps” the detention centers erected in French territory in the 1930s, preferring out of sentimental nominalism the euphemisms that began to circulate shortly after their creation. Marc Bernardot considers the term inappropriate inasmuch as French “foreigners’ camps” (les camps d’étrangers) did

27. Artís-Gener, Viure i veure, 8–9.
28. Ibid., 8.
29. Ibid., 11–12.
not aim to destroy but to expel or, when this was not immediately possible, to segregate the unwanted inmates while waiting for expulsion. He recognizes nonetheless that these camps became a repressive tool under pretext of an exceptional political situation. Under these conditions the rule of law and individual guarantees were suspended, while discretionary powers were granted to the police within the space of the camp. But as Giorgio Agamben states without circumlocutions, the camps do not owe their existence to the deterioration of ordinary law but were from the beginning the intended consequence of suspending the rule of law within perfectly delimited confines: “The camps were not born out of ordinary law, and even less were they the product—as one might have believed—of a transformation and a development of prison law; rather, they were born out of the state of exception and martial law.”

The problem with appealing to the exceptionality of the political situation to explain, if not justify, the duress to which large contingents of asylum seekers were officially and deliberately subjected is that it tends to rationalize the exceptionality of the measures. In 1939, the exceptional political situation was not France’s but Spain’s and, in particular, that of the defeated Republicans who crossed the Pyrenees fearing for their lives, some of them dying of exhaustion, hunger, or maladies contracted in the camps without benefit of medical care or hospitalization. Not to speak of the propaganda and the pressures applied to the refugees to accept repatriation that in many cases led directly to imprisonment or execution upon reentering Spain. In any case, the consequences of an exceptionality that mobilized national anxieties and xenophobia were grave and, as Anne Boitel points out, predicated from the beginning on a hypocritical terminology employed to refer to these sites of human “parking.” Although the denomination “concentration camps” was used by Interior Minister Albert Sarraut for the centers created to intern the Spanish exiles, the Vichy government soon introduced a distinction between concentration camps (camps de concentration, such as Vernet and Rieucros) and shelters (centres d’hébergement, such as Gurs, Argelès, and future installations). But as Boitel comments, “ultimately, terminology is a mirage, since life conditions

31. Ibid., 121.
in either case are dramatically the same.” Furthermore, the categorical decoupling between “foreigners’ camps” and “concentration camps” does not appear essential after some of these camps became intermediate stations for the Nazi camps. This was true, in particular, of Rivesaltes, which in the summer of 1942 became a Centre National de Rassemblement des Israélites, an antechamber to Auschwitz, in the words of Michel Cadé, while still retaining a majority of Spanish republicans among the inmates.

On the other side of the border, Republican exiles experienced an unexpected reversal of their hopes. Their expectation of finding again the civil rights of which they had been deprived was soon dashed. At the points of crossing, greedy gendarmes confiscated personal items, aggravating the refugees’ state of dispossession. Profiteers swarmed into the border villages to exchange currency at abusive rates and to pick the spoils of defeat from people whom hunger forced to sell any valuables they had managed to cling to. In view of this reception and of the ensuing treatment, it is impossible to accept the notion that France observed the republican tradition of asylum. On the contrary, what strikes the reader of the testimonies is the severity of the conditions and the persistent deprivation of basic human needs. As Greg Burgess puts it, “One seeks in vain a humanitarian impulse in the manner in which they were received and accorded asylum while under French protection. Instead, the gesture displayed in the admission of the Spanish Republicans pales next to the overwhelming economic and security preoccupations of French officials.” Such hypocrisy is captured by Benguerel’s description of the first encounter with French authority shortly after crossing the border.

Leaving Maurellas we were stopped by two gendarmes on bicycle.

“You must go on to Le Boulou . . . Allez! Allez! . . . Et maintenant vous êtes libres!” exclaimed the younger one, smiling.

The refugees would hear the words “allez, allez!” many times while being rounded up and herded into concentration camps. This word would remain in their memory associated with mechanical repetition and dehu-
manizing intent. Thrown upon the sand of Sant Cebrià’s beach in the company of ninety-five thousand other internees, exposed to the rain and the cold with no shelter besides the sand in which they dug themselves to keep bodily heat from dissipating, the novel’s narrator takes the full measure of their situation: “Even more impressive was, on turning the other way, to see the swarm of black spots scattered on the sand, like small heaps of slag, of useless scraps, of waste. . . . Who had said to them the slightest word of comfort, of hope? Only that glacial, inhuman command: “Allez, allez . . . !”40

This word, remembered obsessively by many witnesses of the Spanish and Catalan exodus, is fraught with the quality of testimony. Through the years the command retains its peremptory concreteness. Its alienating timbre rings in our ear, distinguishing the lived from the imaginary, fiction from history. This command, reiterated many times along the roads of the Roussillon during late January and early February 1939, was the single official communication, instruction, or advice offered to the hundreds of thousands who crossed the Pyrenees at the peak of winter to place themselves under the protection of asylum laws presumably in force. The order to press on to an appointed destination, made comminatory through doubling and iteration, appears external to the subject of enunciation; it is not this or that particular gendarme that speaks but the Third Republic and France itself. The word’s paradoxical status between constative referentiality (its suggestion of a destination) and performativity (as a command, it brings about the motion it purports to connote) displays the grain of truth (in this case, the rejection and repulsion) that is the hallmark of testimonial literature.

Such vague, though by no means open-ended, directionality appears in retrospect as a clue, sign, or rule governing the fate of the exiles—a clue they were at first incapable of fully decoding without, however, being insensitive to its ominous sound. In time the redoubled command became the symbolic referent for a narrative that took shape in the camps and precipitated in a plethora of stories voicing the experiences of thousands of people of all ages and walks of life. What these stories articulate was not, or not primarily, a new national identity but more modestly a shared meaning that could then be reincorporated into the tellers’ personal lives while

40. Ibid., 185.
being recognized or understood by other agents engaged in the social construction of the past.

It is in this becoming public of the personal that the distinction between fiction and testimony founders, a distinction that proved difficult to make by early readers of Benguerel's novels. And it is tempting to conjecture that the seeming fictional quality of Els fugitius, a novel based on fact, stemmed from its silence on the subject of the camps, and thus from an incomplete configuration of the actions and suffering endowing a particular historical episode with narrative meaning. In the time between conception and reception, the missing theme had been shaping the shared meaning of the protagonists and had already emerged—as Benguerel later admitted—as a full-fledged referent and potential organizer of the social memory of the vanquished. Ultimately, if the words “Allez, allez!” achieved the status of a symbol, if those four syllables encapsulated the refugees' experience on the yonder side of the border, it is because they were perceived as the expression of their newly found status.

If Paul Ricoeur is right to say that, “in the final analysis, narratives have acting and suffering as their theme,” then accounts of exile in France are quintessentially narrative. The actions involved aim at the most basic of epic functions, anticipating the survival of the internees without ever predicting a happy outcome, so that beyond representing sheer endurance in the face of hardship the narratives foreground the continuity of something like essential humanity. It is in and through these actions that the agents recognize themselves as the source of their deeds and thus, within limits, as masters of their own will. The accounts of life in the camps are typically concerned with small actions: collecting scraps of materials to put a roof over people's heads, fetching the daily rations of soup, tending a companion who has fallen ill, taking leave of someone who is departing, cutting out a flute from a reed, or carving pieces of wood. These are all actions with a double import: a pragmatic one geared to survival and a symbolic one engaging the ethical quality of the action. It is this symbolic quality of work with no social transcendence outside the camps but with huge, immanent importance that draws out the ethical meaning of every action and every gesture. Whether undertaken in abnegation or insensitive to the fate of those around, whether purposeful or absurd, the trivia of survival acquires momentous meaning within the narrative. Telling the

41. Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 56.
quotidian life of the camps from the point of view of their residents raises these minimal acts (rudimentary actions of a collective subject constrained to play both the role of Robinson and that of Friday) to the level of cultural re-founding. Above all, actualizing the potential stories inherent in the scattered experiences that made up life in captivity is continuous with those experiences. Such continuity between austere experiences that were entangled in a complex political and historical past, and the stories that bring that entanglement to the fore, transforms the “primitive life” in the camps into complex accounts of the breakdown of the liberal ethics under the shadow of rising totalitarianism.

Benguerel’s attempt to “stir retrospective interest for certain episodes that have been much talked about” was plainly an effort to maintain continuity and not let the suffering or the conditions that engendered it disappear into a dreamy and disputable past.42 His novels, as much as the personal memoir or the intimate diary, were a deliberate effort to redeem the suffering of the vanquished from futility. His attempt to stir retrospective interest joins similar efforts in projecting the horizon of the defeated beyond the limits of the barbed wire and to merge it with the reader’s horizon in productive intersection. Fiction, in this broad sense, is not absolutely distinguishable from history. In the last analysis, both aim to make relevant for the present the actions and suffering of the bygone and the lost. A hermeneutical approach to so compelling a discursive modeling of the past would shuttle back and forth between semiological anchoring points like the, in principle, semantically diffuse “allez, allez!” and the horizon of experience in which those words became ominously oppressive. Fiction, however, in the sense of a specific form of literary discourse, short circuits the interpretive movement between the anchoring points and the horizon of interpretation, collapsing the two into a form of presence that formally, if not existentially, is equivalent to the experience itself. Reading these works we hear the ominous words through the ears of exiles who, after a difficult, wearing trek over the Pyrenees, reach the other side of fear hoping for a place to rest and recover. Semantically, those words are the opposite of a greeting, and this reversal of expectations stands for the sign of an absent welcome, unequivocal proof that desire meets its Other, and the latter becomes the negative condition of testimony.

42. Benguerel, Els vençuts, 16.
Bibliography


The presence of the foreign labor force in our country poses an acute problem. Throughout the ages France has honored itself as a welcoming land. One of the signs of its decadence, however, consisted of leaving the country’s borders wide open for the ever-pressing flood of foreigners.

— A. D. Gironde, La Petite Gironde, September 2, 1940

In August 1940 one of the largest newspapers in southwestern France, La Petite Gironde, greeted the agreement between the Vichy regime and the Mexican government on the re-emigration of Spanish Republicans to Mexico with a mixture of relief and animosity. There was no reference to the Spanish Republicans’ role in the defense of France. Instead, the article associated the refugees with the so-called decadence of the Third Republic, and by implication the country’s defeat. The Vichy regime’s effort to mesh together a sense of national identity in the wake of an overwhelming defeat was premised on creating a series of outsiders. To be sure, as the concentration camps of the Third Republic illustrate, excluding foreigners from French daily life was by no means an exclusively Vichy invention. But under the new regime this became an ideological imperative of the National Revolution.

Vichy ministers sought to rid the country of the Spanish Republicans during the first months of the occupation through repatriation to Spain or re-emigration to Mexico and other Latin American countries. However, neither strategy was successful. General Franco was preoccupied
with consolidating his power and therefore unwilling to accept the mass return of the very people who had opposed his onslaught on Republican Spain.\(^1\) The option of re-emigration had even less impact than repatriation on reducing the Spanish refugee population due to the vindictiveness of Franco’s dictatorship. In their eagerness to persecute the Spanish Republican leadership, Franco’s Ministry for Foreign Affairs asked the German armistice commission to pressure Vichy into slowing and preventing re-emigrations to Mexico in order to allow for extradition requests to be presented and processed.\(^2\)

As the repatriation and re-emigration strategy remained uncertain, Vichy policy makers had to consider other options for dealing with the Spanish Republicans. Their answer lay in the law of September 27, 1940, which stipulated that all stateless persons between the ages of eighteen and fifty-five, and surplus to the French economy, could be grouped into Foreign Labor Groups known as Groupement de Travailleurs Étrangers (GTE) under the responsibility of the Ministry of Industrial Production and Work.\(^3\) These labor groups were initially organized into five administrative regions or groupements with headquarters in the cities of Clermont-Ferrand (Groupement 1), Toulouse (Groupement 2), Montpellier (Groupement 3), Marseille (Groupement 4), and Lyon (Groupement 5). Each region contained individual GTE units with anything between just over a hundred to several thousand workers. Some units were entirely composed of Jews such as the “Palestinian Groups” in the Dordogne,\(^4\) and others contained

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1. The Vichy government stopped short of ordering the forced mass repatriation of the refugees and also turned down the bulk of the 3,617 extradition requests that it had received from the Francoist authorities by the end of 1940. Nonetheless, Vichy officials prevented Julián Zugazagoitia, a former minister of the interior and leading member of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), from re-emigrating. The German occupying authorities handed him over to the Francoist authorities along with Lluís Companys, the former president of Catalonia, Francisco Cruz Salido, who had worked at the Ministry of Defence; and Joan Peiró of the anarcho-syndical Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT), and former minister for industry in Largo Caballero’s cabinet: they were all executed in Spain. For further details about extradition see Rolland, “Extradition ou réémigration?,” 51, and Dreyfus-Armand *L’Exil des Républicains Espagnols en France*, 143–7.

2. Between the signing of the Mexican-French accords and the rupture in diplomatic relations between the two countries in November 1942, just 5,900 refugees were able to leave France. Dreyfus-Armand, *L’Exil des Républicains Espagnols en France*, 142.

3. Land Forces Archive Service (hereafter, AN SHAT), 34N 375.

workers from different national backgrounds, but the vast majority of the travailleurs étrangers or foreign workers were Spanish Republicans.\(^5\)

There was nothing particularly innovative about the Foreign Labor Groups. They were modeled on the Foreign Labor Companies or Compagnies de Travailleurs Étrangers (CTE), which the Daladier government of the Third Republic had created in 1939.\(^6\) As with the CTE, Vichy’s Foreign Labor Groups (GTE) were aimed at keeping “undesirable” refugees on the margins of French society and the labor market while using them to plug gaps in the economy. Furthermore, as under the Third Republic, unemployment made refugees vulnerable to repressive measures including internment and expulsion.\(^7\) Vichy prefects were thus authorized to intern any refugee who was physically unable to work in a Foreign Labor Group.\(^8\)

There was one point of difference between the CTE and GTE concerning the period of enrollment. This had been set at two years for the CTE, while under Vichy refugees worked in a GTE for as long as required.\(^9\)

On the whole, however, Vichy simply recycled a format from the Third Republic for dealing with the Spanish Republicans.

This chapter concentrates mainly (though not exclusively) on the Spanish Republicans enrolled in the administrative region of Groupement 2, which covered the départements surrounding and including the Haute-Garonne (Lot, Lot-et-Garonne, Gers, Basses-Pyrénées, Haute-Pyrénées, Tarn-et-Garonne, Ariège). While the subject of the GTE has attracted increasing attention over the past decade, much remains to be uncovered about the histories of the foreign workers at the local level and, in particular, their valuable role in the labor economy of Vichy France.\(^10\)

\(^5\) In August 1943 thirty-one thousand out of a total of thirty-seven thousand workers were Spanish. Temime, “Espagnols et Italiens en France,” 29. Estimates of the total number of workers involved vary: a figure of forty thousand workers of various nationalities appears in Maux-Robert, “Le commissariat à la lutte contre le chômage en zone sud,” 140; Sarah Farmer cites a total of sixty thousand men, a third of whom were Jews, as of July 1941, Farmer, “Out of the Picture: Foreign Labor in Wartime France,” 252.

\(^6\) Although some scholars refer to the GTE in English as “Foreign Labor Battalions,” I prefer to use the term “Foreign Labor Groups” in order to avoid any confusion with the Foreign Labor Companies of the Third Republic.

\(^7\) For further details see Lewis, The Boundaries of the Republic, and Caron, Uneasy Asylum.

\(^8\) Reviriego, Les Juifs en Dordogne 1939–1944, 126.

\(^9\) Journal Officiel de la République Française, October 1, 1940.

in which the exclusionary thrust behind the Foreign Labor Groups was undermined through the exigencies of everyday life constitutes the broad focus of this study. As we will shortly see, a gulf between the pragmatics of labor demand and the National Revolution’s emphasis on the exclusion of foreigners began to emerge very early on. Given that the Spanish Republicans were clearly associated with the “anti-France,” it is ironic that French officials increasingly associated them with the well-being of rural communities. There are nuances to be underlined. Some officials purposely introduced measures aimed at improving working conditions while others became concerned at retaining the foreign workers in their localities due to severe labor shortages. What this multilayered account of officials’ reactions will illustrate is that the strategy of control and surveillance associated with the Foreign Labor Groups was fundamentally compromised by an intriguing combination of official policy, labor shortages, and the agency of the workers. More specifically, this chapter will demonstrate just how central the GTE became to both the existence of some rural départements and the creation of the Spanish Republican resistance in southwestern France.

**Working the Land: Ideology and Practice**

There was nothing new about either the idea of reviving rural France or of using immigrant labor for agriculture. Spanish migrant labor had been a steady and necessary presence in southwestern France from the end of the nineteenth century. In the late 1930s, some policy makers explored how immigrants, and notably Jewish refugees, could contribute to the regeneration of rural southern France. Although the Serre plan of creating agricultural cooperatives for Jewish refugees did not pass beyond planning stage, Spanish libertarians managed to create two agricultural cooperatives in the Lot département. According to police reports, French neighbors were very happy with the new arrivals. Moreover, the prefect was initially encouraging of the scheme, even going so far as ordering an inventory of all abandoned properties liable to be rented out or bought by Spanish Republican

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11. Phillipe Serre, a Radical and undersecretary of state for immigration, elaborated this plan with Georges Mauco. Caron, *Uneasy Asylum*, 164–5
aid associations. He was less sanguine, though, on learning the refugees belonged to the Spanish Libertarian Movement. Under the Third Republic, opportunities, albeit often limited, existed for refugees to make a contribution to daily life in rural France. The potential contribution that refugees might make to rural France was clearly not, however, part of the National Revolution’s emphasis on returning to the land. Subsides for the restoration of abandoned farms were aimed at encouraging the expansion of a uniquely French rural labor force.

Local officials were left in no doubt about keeping foreign workers away from the labor market. In October 1940, the commander of land forces pressed this point home to regional commanders with specific reference to rural labor. Around the same time more precise guidelines emerged about the internment of Spanish Republican men and women considered to be either surplus to the economy or a threat to the public order. And yet, the role of refugees in shoring up labor shortages in southern France had already become a reality. Back in the summer, just one week after the Ministry of the Interior had instructed prefects to begin regrouping CTE workers who had become dispersed across France during the debacle, the head of the 17th Military Region announced that Spaniards working in either agriculture or industry could remain with their employers. As the return of French POWs failed to materialize and unemployment declined, the refugees’ role in agriculture took on additional importance.

Vichy ministers soon began to accept the need to improve refugees’ working conditions. By the end of 1940, representatives from the Ministries of the Interior, Industrial Production and Work, and Agriculture agreed on a series of measures. Families of foreign workers would receive an allowance, and could now be reunited. The new guidelines permitted relatives

12. For more information on the Spanish libertarian cooperatives in the Lot see chapter 3 of Soo, Exile, Identity and Memory.
13. Haute-Garonne Departmental Archive (hereafter, AD Haute-Garonne), 2517W 45. Le Général d’Armée Commandant en Chef des Forces Terrestres, E. Ricard to Généraux commandant les 7th, 9th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, and 19th Regions, October 3, 1940.
14. Men considered as a threat to public order were to be interned in the camp at Vernet d’Ariège, and women in the camp at Rieucros. Anyone without a job faced internment at Argelès-sur-mer, and those rounded up in the unoccupied zone of the Basses-Pyrénées and Landes were placed in the Gurs camp. Laharie, Le Camp de Gurs, 1939–45, 142.
15. AD Haute-Garonne, 2517W 45. Note de Service, 17ème Région Etat-Major, July 31, 1940.
16. Thirty-six percent of POWs were farmers. Paxton, Vichy France, 209. At the end of 1940, thirty thousand people were unemployed in the southern zone. Weil, “Espagnols et Italiens en France,” 95.
to request a transfer to the localities in which their partners were based, or if that proved difficult, workers could even apply to leave the GTE and move closer to their families if appropriate work could be found.\textsuperscript{17} It took some time for the new measures to have some impact. In May 1941, prefects based workers’ allowances on subsidy rates established by a February 1940 decree, the real value of which would have declined in the intervening period. To make matters worse some families had not regularly received their entitlements.\textsuperscript{18} But at the end of the year, additional benefits were introduced, namely paid holidays and parity between the salaries of foreign and French workers.\textsuperscript{19} Despite the measures, conditions in the GTE varied considerably according to locality.

The growing reliance on the foreign workers was certainly a contributing factor but cannot alone explain these concessions. The Commission against Unemployment (Commissariat à la Lutte Contre le Chômage [CLC]), which was created within the Ministry of Labor and Industrial Production in October 1940, had taken over administrative responsibility for the GTE. The Occupied Zone was under the direction of François Léhideux, but it was the head of the Unoccupied Zone, Henri-Clément Maux, who drove forward the progressive agenda for the foreign workers.\textsuperscript{20} Maux did not have any pro-refugee precedents, but was undoubtedly motivated by his Catholic faith and association with the journal \textit{Esprit}, along with the inequalities he had witnessed as an engineer in French Indochina.\textsuperscript{21} He was aided by Gilbert Lesage, the head of the organization responsible for the welfare of foreign workers and their families, the Foreigners’ Social Service (Service Social des Étrangers, SSE). Lesage was a Quaker who had been an active supporter of refugees from central Europe during the 1930s.\textsuperscript{22} Under

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\item \textsuperscript{17} AD Haute-Garonne, 2517W 45. Secrétaires d’État à l’Intérieur to Présidents, December 31, 1940.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Daily payments to families of TE workers consisted of seven francs in the Paris/Seine area, five francs in towns with populations of more than five thousand people, and four francs in villages. An additional sum of four to five francs was available for each child. AD Haute-Garonne, 2517W 46.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Maux-Robert, “Le commissariat à la lutte contre le chômage en zone sud,” 140.
\item \textsuperscript{20} The CLC was created on 11/10/40 by René Belin, minister of labor. Léhideux was theoretically in charge of the CLC in both zones. He was replaced by Jean Terray on December 3, 1941.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Maux-Robert, \textit{La lutte contre le chômage à Vichy}, 8–9.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Maux-Robert, “Le commissariat à la lutte contre le chômage en zone sud,” 126.
\end{itemize}
Returning to the Land

the leadership of Maux and Lesage, the CLC and SSE played a determining role in securing the best possible conditions for refugee workers.23

Control, Surveillance, and the Organization Todt: 1940–1941

The shortage of labor in the Unoccupied Zone was compounded by two overlapping factors: control and surveillance; and German demand for labor in France. The issue of control and surveillance had been central to the creation of the GTE, but difficulties arose early on. Back in September 1940, the commanding officer of the 17th Military Region remarked how the total number of Spanish foreign workers was well below what it should have been and ordered local commanders to seek out errant workers.24 The police services also began publishing a list, the Bulletin de recherches des déserteurs et insoumis (the Investigation Bulletin on Deserters and Evaders), but its impact was superficial: by the end of 1941, there had been just 635 arrests out of a total of 4,835 workers missing in the occupied zone.25

The Commission against Unemployment (CLC) had facilitated the ease with which refugees could disappear through undermining the paramilitary structure of the GTE. Rather than concentrating workers at the GTE base camp, the CLC began placing as many foreign workers as possible with local employers.26 In the Dordogne the dispersion of workers corresponded to the local labor needs of agricultural work, forestry and charcoal production, lignite mining, work on hydroelectric dams, and public work programs. In October 1941, only 136 out of 1,497 workers were living at the base camp.27 A similar scenario existed in the neighboring Lot-et-Garonne where just eighty from among 1,600 workers of the 536th GTE were accommodated at the GTE camp.28 The CLC strategy was evidently facilitated by the growing dependency on refugee workers. During

25. Fontainebleau National Archive (hereafter AN Fontainebleau), 19890151/6. Note for the Inspecteur Général des Services de Police Judiciaire, December 6, 1941.
27. Dordogne Departmental Archives (hereafter AD Dordogne), 42W 60/2.
28. The 1,600 workers of the 536th GTE were mainly composed of Spaniards and were dispersed amongst thirtyeight different employers in agriculture, forestry, and various other industries. The Lot and Garonne Departmental Archives (hereafter AD Lot-et-Garonne), 1W 92 and 2W 15.
1941, the GTE administration could only satisfy half of the overall demand for foreign workers in the Dordogne.\textsuperscript{29} Employers’ requests for refugees similarly stripped availability in the department of the Gers.\textsuperscript{30}

Vichy officials endeavored to keep track of the foreign workers but were clearly struggling with their dispersion. One method of control consisted of a roll call every Sunday at the headquarters of the GTE, but this could not account for the workers’ activities during the rest of the week.\textsuperscript{31} Material shortages made an existing problem even worse. The commander of the GTE at Fleurance in the Gers had just a couple of bicycles and a moped at his disposal to keep track of workers scattered over a wide rural area.\textsuperscript{32}

The second factor aggravating labor shortages, and which would eventually influence considerable numbers of refugees to abandon their GTE work sites, related to a competing and insatiable source of refugee labor: the Organization Todt (OT) and its construction sites along the Atlantic coast.\textsuperscript{33} The initiative of supplying Spanish Republicans for the OT came not from the Germans, but from François Léhideux who hoped to satiate German labor demands without having to resort to French workers. In November 1940, he therefore decided to begin transferring Spanish foreign workers from the Unoccupied Zone to German work sites in Occupied France.\textsuperscript{34} However, not all Vichy officials supported Léhideux’s plan. In the second half of 1941, the head of the 16th Military Division, General Alt­mayer, protested about the departure of half of all Spanish foreign workers from the Montpellier region. At the same time, Maux used his position in the CLC to try and protect Spanish workers from the OT by stressing their importance to the national economy. His lobbying of the Vichy government’s deputy premier, Admiral Darlan, and the minister of the interior, 

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  \item \textsuperscript{29} AD Dordogne, 42W 60/2.
  \item \textsuperscript{30} Laffitte, \textit{L’encadrement par le travail des étrangers dans le département du Gers 1939–1944}, 100.
  \item \textsuperscript{31} AD Dordogne, 7 AV 19.
  \item \textsuperscript{32} Laffitte, \textit{L’encadrement par le travail des étrangers dans le département du Gers 1939–1944}, 100.
  \item \textsuperscript{33} Created when Hitler ordered the fortification of France’s Atlantic coast, the Organization Todt undertook large-scale construction projects and paid higher wages than French employers. See Vinen, \textit{The Unfree French}, 117.
  \item \textsuperscript{34} For more information on OT recruitment see Soo, “Ambiguities at Work”; Maux-Robert, \textit{La lutte contre le chômage à Vichy}; Dreyfus-Armand, \textit{L’Exil des Républicains Espagnols en France}, 132–3; and Stein, \textit{Beyond Death and Exile}, 136.
\end{itemize}
Pierre Pucheu, paid off with a six-month suspension of recruitment for the Organization Todt from the southern zone at the end of 1941.35

The first struggle over manpower, German recruitment, and the well-being of Vichy France had been fought over the question of foreign workers, eight months before the introduction of Laval’s “Relief Scheme” (the Relève, which promised that one French POW would be released for every three skilled French workers who volunteered to work in German factories) and the recruitment of French specialist workers. Although it did not bring an end to the matter, it is nevertheless indicative of labor shortages in Vichy France and of the positive reputation that Spanish refugee workers had managed to create amongst their employers.36 They had, though, created an equally good impression amongst French and German businesses connected to the Organization Todt.37 The latter wanted more workers, and consequently the organization’s voluntary and forced recruitment of Spanish workers restarted with vigor during the summer of 1942.38

Emerging Patterns of Escape and Subversion: 1942

The system of refugee labor was dialectically involved in the escalation of disappearing workers from both sides of the demarcation line. In the Occupied Zone, the Organization Todt competed for the retention of Spanish refugee workers with French- and German-controlled businesses working for the German military. Once refugees had been incorporated into the Organization it was relatively easy to eschew French administrative controls. Moreover, the demand for labor was so acute that refugees were able to escape from OT work sites and obtain work with new French and German businesses offering higher wages. Their new employers were not so much preoccupied with the refugees’ backgrounds as with their work capabilities. Even if the refugees were caught, they might face a spell of internment before their reincorporation into the Organization.

The French authorities tried without success to improve their control and surveillance methods. The head of police in Bordeaux, Pierre Poin-
sot, introduced new measures to do so in late 1941. But six months later, Vichy’s delegate for the ministry of the interior in the Occupied Zone reluctantly agreed with the German authorities that Spanish workers who had escaped from the Organization Todt and been caught would be returned to the Todt. His agreement was supposedly predicated on the proviso that any individuals attempting to escape for the second time would be repatriated to Spain. However, this was never implemented, most likely because of the acute shortage of Todt workers.

In the Unoccupied Zone, the impact of labor shortages led the ministry of labor to create auxiliary teams for foreigners who had been previously classified as physically inept for work in the GTE. The lack of workers also produced some surprising reactions. Some of the missing Todt workers had crossed back over the demarcation line to be reincorporated into GTE units. In many cases Vichy officials failed to notify either the German or French authorities in the Occupied Zone, thereby contributing to the administrative confusion over the whereabouts of Spanish workers. Moreover, the Vichy government seems to have, albeit inadvertently, somewhat legitimated refugees’ escape tactics by instructing officials to hide Spanish workers from Todt recruitment agents. By 1942, a muddled and contradictory approach to employing the refugees was in existence.

Throughout 1942, missing workers were being reported throughout the Vichy Zone. Motivations for escaping clearly differed according to the group of refugees in question. The two roundups of Jewish foreign workers by French officials in August of 1942 starkly underlines that for some workers escape could make the difference between survival or transfer to a Nazi

39. Gironde Departmental Archives (hereafter AD Gironde), D64, Commissaire Spécial, Poinso特 Pierre to Commissaire Divisionnaire, November 7, 1941.
41. AD Gironde, SC 1906. Instructions to Directeur du Camp de Mérignac-Beaudésert, October 24, 1942.
42. AD Lot-et-Garonne, 2W 11. Telegram from the Ministre de Travail, April 16, 1942.
43. Sweets, Choices in Vichy France, 114.
extermination camp. At this stage, the Spanish Republicans were often driven by material circumstances to protest and escape. In April 1942, six Spaniards from the 554th GTE in the Lot working for a charcoal company in the commune of Cours put down their tools in protest about their living conditions, their daily allowance of nine francs, and the company’s refusal to allow workers to keep their ration cards. Perhaps even worse for refugees’ morale was the knowledge that some employers deliberately allocated the most arduous and dangerous tasks to them as opposed to French workers, as was the case for workers attached to the 518th GTE, based at Buzy in the Basses-Pyrénées. Inadequate wages also had implications for workers’ relatives. As the winter of 1942 approached, the local Foreigners’ Social Service (SSE) representative of the Gers expressed concern about how workers’ families (Spanish but also Austrians, Belgians, and Czechs) would cope with the winter: three-quarters of them were without shoes or woolen clothes. To be sure, precise conditions varied according to the French commanding officers, employers, and the type of work, but they were often bleak, and in some cases dire.

Resistance activity was another, though less substantial, reason for foreign workers to escape. In the Dordogne for example, Saturnin Garcia Palacio, a Spanish refugee administrative assistant, and Eugène Degerman, the French deputy commanding officer of the 647th GTE, protected Spanish workers from the German authorities by directing them towards local resistance groups. But while resistance was underway in southern France, it was not at this stage related to large numbers of escaping foreign workers. On the contrary, subversion was developing within the ranks of Vichy’s Foreign Labor Groups.

Frequently situated in remote rural areas, the GTE offered ideal conditions for clandestine activities. Even when the workers were dispersed around the countryside, communication between them was not difficult. Some Spanish Republicans worked in the administrative office of the GTE

45. On attempts by Lesage and his team at the SSE to protect Jewish workers see Maux-Robert, La lutte contre le chômage à Vichy, 169–72.
46. AD Lot, 1W 646. Étrangers 1942–45.
47. AD PA 1031W 234. Travailleurs étrangers et espagnols postérieurs à 1940.
49. For examples see Cubero, Les républicains espagnols, 143–44.
affording them access to all workers’ records (and templates for forging documents). Furthermore, between the weekly roll calls, the TE could often move around relatively unhindered as surveillance in rural areas continued to be severely compromised by poor policing resources. In the Basses-Pyrénées, for instance, the General Bureau of Information (Renseignements généraux) was unable to investigate the Spanish Republicans attached to the 526th GTE. With only bicycles at its disposal, getting agents to the workers in mountainous and wooded areas was unfeasible. But even if agents had a moped, the monthly fuel allowance would not have enabled even a single person to make a one-way trip to the GTE work site.

By 1942, two Spanish organizations in particular had managed to reorganize and start preparing the ground for resistance. José Berruezo and other libertarians of the anarcho-syndical Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) were among the mass of foreign workers building the dam of l’Aigle in the Cantal. Refugees were also reconstructing the CNT elsewhere in France, notably in Bordeaux, Lyon, Marseille, the Montpellier area, Saint-Étienne, and the Camp of Vernet. The most significant activity underway, though, was in the Cantal. In this locality the libertarians’ preoccupations included the reorganization of the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) and the battle against Franco’s dictatorship, but also involved teaming up with French resisters, and most notably André Decelle, to transform the GTE work site into a safe haven for fugitives from the Occupied Zone.

The other Spanish organization emerging as a resistance phenomenon within the GTE was the Spanish Communist Party (PCE). Contacts between Spanish Republican and French freemasons led to the creation of forestry works by Georges Thomas and Dr. Delteil in the Aude and Ariège to employ and protect both Spanish foreign workers and French freemasons. From the end of 1941, the two firms became central to the reconstruction of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) and the development of groups of Spanish guerrilla fighters (guerrilleros). Dr. Delteil went as far as allowing the Spanish workers to use proceeds from charcoal sales to

51. For instance, Spanish communists worked in the office of the 721st GTE at Saint-Jean de Verges in the Ariège.
52. AD PA, 1031W 234. Renseignements généraux, August 26, 1942.
53. The dam was an epicenter of CNT activity. Berruezo, Contribución de la historia de la CNT de España en el exilio, 38, 97–125.
finance their activities. Under the cover of forestry work, Jesús Ríos of the PCE was charged with the task of creating an armed force that was named after the 14th Guerrilla Corps of the Spanish Republican Army. The name was more than a reference to the Corps’ experience of behind-the-lines warfare during the Spanish Civil War, it emphasized a continuation of the refugees’ struggle against fascism and Francoism, and signaled a determination to return to Spain. This latter point was equally articulated in the name of their clandestine paper: *Reconquista de España* (The Reconquest of Spain).

The political arm of the 14th Corps was the Unión Nacional Española (UNE). Communist party leaders in Moscow and Mexico had called for a “National Union of all Spaniards” following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June of 1941. Refugees in the Lot-et-Garonne area took up the call by creating twenty local committees of the UNE by the spring of 1942. But it was not until a meeting in Toulouse at the start of November 1941 (it had been called the “Grenoble” meeting to confuse the police services) that militants agreed on a definitive structure for the UNE. The organization characterized itself as open to Spanish Republicans of all ideological backgrounds, and did effectively attract people from different political and trade-union backgrounds. However, the PCE was the sole party represented in the Unión Nacional Española.

What distinguished the Spanish Republican resisters from their French counterparts is the GTE’s role as a vector for subversive activities. The point was not lost on Vichy’s police services. In September 1942, the head of police services warned prefects and police officials across southern France of links between the GTE and subversion. The warning followed the start of the “Reconquest of Spain Affair” when a bicycle mechanic in Fumel, Lot-et-Garonne, discovered copies of the clandestine paper *Reconquista de España* hidden in the bicycle of José Ocino Torres on July 6. The mechanic’s boss reported the discovery to the gendarmerie, which led to numerous arrests of foreign workers in the Lot-et-Garonne and surrounding area, including some Spanish women, for the distribution of propa-

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55. See the detailed local study by Farreny del Bosque, *L’Affaire Reconquista de España 1942–1944*.
57. For a detailed study see Farreny del Bosque, *L’Affaire Reconquista de España 1942–1944*.
ganda and bomb-making. The arrest lists reveal just how central the GTE had become to resistance activities. Amongst the first arrests in the Lot-et-Garonne, sixteen people out of the twenty-five belonged to the 505th GTE at Fumel and the 536th GTE at Casseneuil. Vichy police soon widened the net to arrest an even higher proportion of foreign workers in the Cher, Corrèze, Dordogne, Haute-Garonne, Indre, Lot, Pyrénées-Orientales, Tarn-et-Garonne, and the Vienne. By the end of 1942, foreign workers from across southern France were associated with clandestine activities.

Localities and the Dynamics of Forced Recruitment, Acceptance and Rejection, 1943–1944.

The Allied landings in North Africa and the German occupation provoked mixed responses from Spanish foreign workers in the Lot-et-Garonne. While they greeted news of the landings with certain joy, they were worried about the arrival of German forces in the southern zone. The presence of German troops and the sharp increase in Todt recruitment followed by Laval’s “Relief Scheme” (the Relève) and Vichy’s obligatory work service in Germany (Service du travail obligatoire or STO) certainly changed the dynamics of absence. Prefects’ comments about the loss of Spanish workers indicate that a convergence of interests between Spanish Republicans and local inhabitants was beginning to occur. In some areas, Pétain’s vision of “family agriculture” took on new and unforeseen meanings. The fictional account of the amorous relationship between a Spanish refugee and the woman who employed him in Bernard Clavel’s l’Espagnol was not a common experience. But it does highlight an experiential trait that began to emerge in French officials’ reports in 1943: the increasing acceptance and dependence of local community structures on Spanish workers who had often been in the area for several years.

In January 1943, the prefect of the Tarn reported problems in trying to round up 550 foreign workers for the German authorities. The results were astonishing. In total officials gathered just 135 workers: fourteen were declared unfit, and a further thirty-one were reportedly ill. Fifty-eight
workers belonged to “category E,” meaning they worked on the farms of wives or parents of POWs, single women, or veterans, or had family ties and were therefore excluded from the draft. Some of the refugees, albeit a minority, were now married to French nationals or even running farms. Last of all there were 312 défaillants, or missing people. The prefect’s comments about the repercussions of this labor draft were clear and direct:

I need your immediate attention to the serious inconveniences for the agriculture of my department caused by the round-up of workers. The departure of the foreign workers from category e . . . will most likely lead to the complete abandonment of some large properties held by the elderly and wives or mothers of [French] prisoners who have no other recourse for male labor.62

The lack of workers recruited in the Tarn was reciprocated more widely in other departments of Groupement 2. A request for 3,297 foreign workers had been met with some cynicism by the regional labor representative. He believed there would be a dropout rate of 30 percent, and accordingly only 2,800 foreign workers were likely to be gathered for transfer.63 The estimation turned out to be wildly optimistic. Much to the consternation of the German Military Command in Paris, the French administration managed to gather just 5,920 workers out of 33,000 for the whole of southern France.64 The statistics from the various localities are revealing. In the Lot-et-Garonne the rate of evasions reached as high as 50 percent.65 Elsewhere the rate was even higher. In the Gers, only eighty-five workers out of a list of 250 were found, with gendarmes shooting one particularly recalcitrant Spanish refugee in the thigh.66 From the 554th GTE stationed in the Lot, out of 262 workers one hundred went missing, and at nearby Carjac only twenty-seven out of 145 were available from the 508th GTE.67 Vichy’s policy concerning foreign workers and its ability to assert its will was rapidly eroding.

62. AD Haute-Garonne, 1769W 1, Préfet du Tarn to Préfet Régional, January 7, 1943.
63. AD Haute-Garonne, 1769W 1. Commissaire Régional to Commissariat Général à la Main-d’oeuvre in Paris, December 27, 1943.
64. Sweets, Choices in Vichy France, 28.
67. AD Lot, 1W 953. Reports by Renseignements généraux, January 7 and January 16, 1944.
As the dialectic of recruitment and escape intensified, employers began complaining about the departures: the head of a forestry works from Arudy in the Basses-Pyrénées asked officials for his existing foreign workers to remain; and later on, an animal food business in the Gers was threatened with closure.68 Other employers warned of wider implications. Another forestry owner underlined that some of his workers had been with the firm since 1939, and that their departure threatened both to close down the business and disrupt wood supplies for the French national rail service (SNCF).69 The president of the Société Hydro-Méchanique, based in Toulouse, wished to retain his Spanish workers from the 562nd and 513th GTE to prevent disruption to electricity supplies.70

Prefects joined the chorus of complaints, echoing the remarks made at the start of the year by the prefect of the Tarn. In June 1943, the departure of foreign workers from the 525th Labor Group at Bagnères-de-Bigorre in the Haute-Pyrénées caused gravel production for the railway system (SNCF) to grind to a halt.71 In the Lot, an already serious situation was further aggravated by a subsequent drop in charcoal production by two-thirds. The language of the prefect’s report was unequivocal: any further departures, he wrote, “would be tantamount to suicide for the Government on the one hand, and the country on the other.”72 The prefect of the Gers went one step further by actually excluding seventeen refugee workers from the recruitment drive of December 15, 1943, on the grounds they were indispensable to the local economy.73 The complaints continued into 1944 with the prefect of the Haute-Pyrénées warning that the loss of trained forestry workers seriously threatened local wood and charcoal provision: disruption to the production and supply of bread and other foodstuffs had become a potential eventuality.74

68. AD Haute-Garonne, 1769W 1. Letters, July 1, 1943 and March 11, 1944.
70. AD Haute-Garonne 1769W 1. Letter, April 22, 1943.
71. AD Haute-Garonne, 1769W 1. Inspecteur Général de la Ministère de la Production, June 12, 1943.
72. The Lot Departmental Archive (hereafter AD Lot), 1W 5. Monthly report by the Préfet, August 6, 1943.
73. AD Haute-Garonne, 1769W 1. Préfet du Gers to Préfet Régional, December 30, 1943.
74. AD Haute-Garonne, 1769W 1. Préfet des Hautes-Pyrénées to Ministre de la Production Industrielle, January 14, 1944.
What had happened to the missing workers? Some went to the Todt Organization’s recruitment office in Toulouse. Not only did this strategy afford some choice over their conditions and place of work, it also represented the sole means of avoiding obligatory work service in Germany (the STO) without punishment by the French authorities. Others hid until the threat passed before returning to their Foreign Labor Groups. The fact that so many workers happened to be missing at the right time also pointed towards collusion with local officials. In 1944, some local authorities certainly suspected employers and officials of colluding with the Spanish refugee workers. In the Lot, it was the prefect himself who was involved.

Refusal did not necessarily imply revolt, though the difference between the two is not always clear. The unwillingness to accept poor working conditions or forced recruitment did not necessarily amount to an intention to rebel against Vichy or German rule, even if this was sometimes interpreted by GTE commanders as evidence of rebellion. Clearly, the most recurrent form of refusal consisted of abandoning the workplace, with many refugees doing so to improve their material circumstances. But even if revolt involved a minority of Spanish refugees, it was a significant phenomenon nonetheless.

Spanish Republicans participated in diverse outfits. In the Tarn, for example, they could be found in the 7th Brigade of Spanish guerrilla fighters, in the armed forces of the resistance movement formed by the French Communist Party and the communist organization that defended the rights of immigrant workers in France (the Francs Tireurs et Partisans-Man d’Oeuvre Immigrée, FTP-MOI), or in the Corps Franc de la Mon-

75. In September 1943, Vichy agreed that deserters from the STO and GTE, who worked for the OT, could not be pursued by the French authorities. Kedward, In Search of the Maquis, 22.

76. At the start of 1944, 101 workers out of the 136 evasions in the Lot-et-Garonne returned to their GTE once the threat of forced recruitment had passed. AD Lot-et-Garonne. Commissaire Principal to Commissaire Divisionnaire, Toulouse, February 16, 1944.

77. For the Auvergne see Sweets, Choices in Vichy France, 115

78. In April 1942 he threatened to close one work site unless the employer improved working conditions, and at the end of the year he reprimanded local GTE commanders for deplorable working and living conditions. AD Lot, 1W 646. Letter, December 19, 1943. The prefect also ordered officials to hinder the transfers of TE from the Lot. Yagil, Chrétiens et Juifs sous Vichy, 1940–1944, 393.

79. For an overview of the resistance activities of the Spanish Republicans see Dreyfus-Armand, L’Exil des Républicains Espagnols en France, 151–75.
Some foreign workers abandoned their work sites and became involved with the nearest, often French, resistance group, while others passed through several different resistance outfits. There were also Spanish Republicans who chose to resist with French groups out of vehement opposition to the Spanish Communist Party. In particular, libertarians of the CNT in the Cantal preferred to cooperate with the French resistance rather than be associated with the Union Nationale Espagnole (UNE). Some of these CNT militants subsequently joined the libertarian “Libertad” battalion, which fought alongside the Basque “Guernika” battalion and French forces to liberate the Point-de-Grave peninsula northwest of Bordeaux. Finally, it is important to stress that some Spanish Republicans had been active before the creation of the UNE in running escape networks across the Pyrenees. Francisco Ponzán’s group of CNT militants was perhaps the earliest and most well-known example. They started clandestinely transferring CNT militants out of Spain at the end of the Spanish Civil War before working with the British-sponsored “Pat O’Leary network” to organize the passage of allied pilots, Jews, and other refugees out of France. Despite the variety of activities, though, the GTE represented a significant conduit for Spanish Republican resistance.

By June 1944, every single département of Groupement 2, if not the rest of southwestern France, contained Spanish guerrilla units manned by foreign workers. As the wave of liberations unfolded across the country the number of Spanish guerrilla fighters in the now-named Agrupación de Guerrilleros Españoles peaked to around ten thousand. There are also several other points to emphasize: in addition to personnel, the GTE had also inadvertently provided equipment ranging from clothing, provisions, and explosives; secondly, even if the guerrilla units represented an autonomous resistance movement, relations between French nationals and Spanish Republicans had frequently been involved; and finally, the Spanish guerrilla fighters played a prominent role in liberating the region, and most strikingly in the Ariège where a statue of a guerrillero now stands.

81. For a study of the Basque battalion see Larronde, Le Bataillon Gernika.
82. For more information on Ponzán’s group see Téllez Solá, La Red de Evasión del Grupo Ponzan, and Ponzán Vidal, Lucha y muerte por la libertad.
84. The monument to the Spanish guerrilla fighters is located at Prayols.
The Spanish Republican resisters were nonetheless considered ambivalently by French nationals. Even amongst French resisters, attitudes towards their Spanish counterparts could vary from admiration for their staunch antifascism and combat experience from the Spanish Civil War, to disapproval of their revolutionary background with accompanying accusations of reckless behavior. Clearly, more research about public opinion at the local level is required. What is certain, however, is that some employers and Vichy officials began to react very positively to the presence of Spanish foreign workers. There is also some evidence of their good relations with the French public more generally. The daughter of one French GTE commander, Annick Garcia Palacio, eventually married a Spanish Republican, and recalled how Spanish refugees in the Dordogne created an orchestra that played at local events to raise money for French POWs. In the Gers town of Lectour, Spanish workers occasionally invited French locals to social events. The General Bureau of Information (Renseignements généraux) in the Gers noted that the Spanish Republicans were appreciated by employers and the public alike—so much so that some people had threatened to refrain from harvesting in protest at German labor drafts. But evidence from across the region also points towards some public hostility. Reports on censored letters and telephone calls of the French population in the Toulouse region for 1943 and 1944 contain references to public criticism that French youths rather than Spaniards were being sent for work service in Germany.

In conclusion, despite the positive impression made by the Spanish Republicans within an economic context, they continued to endure criticism because of their political heritage. However unfashionable their political background might become in post-liberation Europe, it was nonetheless integral to their collective sense of self. The Spanish Republicans perceived their struggle within a narrative of antifascism that stretched back to 1936 and that could only end with their return to Spain. The policing role of Spanish guerrilleros in the Pyrenean region during the liberation

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85. AD Haute-Garonne, 1896W. Contrôls Techniques—rapports de synthèse hebdomadaire. See some of the comments by former resisters in Kedward, In Search of the Maquis, 233–79.
86. AD Dordogne, 7AV 19. Recording of an interview with Annick Garcia Palacio.
88. Cited in ibid., 83.
89. AD Haute-Garonne, 1896W. Contrôls Techniques – rapports de synthèse hebdomadaire.
appeared as a step towards this goal and was a far cry from 1939, when they had been interned in the same localities following the republican exodus from Spain. A little farther from the border, it was of no coincidence that Spanish Republicans occupied the offices at number 4, Rue de Belfort in Toulouse. The building had been the head office for *Groupement* 2 of Vichy’s Foreign Labor Groups, but was appropriated to house the National Committee of the CNT from where militants began planning their return to Spain. If Vichy’s Foreign Workers’ Units had initially seemed like a setback to the Spanish refugees’ future aspirations, by 1944 they had become part of the solution.

**Bibliography**


Combatant Exile during World War II: Free French and Spanish Republicans

Guillaume Piketty

This chapter focuses on the combatant exile during World War II of the 74,500 Free French who rallied around Charles de Gaulle, or were injured or even killed when trying to join him, from June 1940 to July 31, 1943, when the French Army in North Africa under General Giraud officially merged with the Free French Forces.¹ (The Free French were officially disbanded in favor of the Combatant French Forces, whose governing body was the French Committee for National Liberation in Algiers under both Giraud and de Gaulle.²) Among these so-called Free French were the Spanish Republicans who joined de Gaulle and experienced a kind of double combatant exile—from their native land and then from France after the disastrous defeat of 1940.³ Therefore, the experiences of these soldiers, provide an important and multi-faceted lens through which to explore the experience of combatant exiles.

The historiography about Free France is not considerable in volume, and it barely touches upon the broad topic of exile, in contrast to the lit-

¹. This includes 32,600 men and women of French extraction; around 29,400 soldiers of the colonial troops; 5,700 members of the Free French Secret Service Networks in France; at least 3,000 people belonging to Free France’s committees worldwide; some 3,800 foreigners and/or Foreign Legion combatants. Muracciole, Les Français Libres, 36–7. I don’t take into account the combatant exile of those who joined General Giraud, which took place later and was driven by different motives.


³. The Czechs and the Poles who fought with the Allies until the end of World War II provide another interesting example. See for example Lenormand, “L’armée tchécoslovaque en France.”
erature about other French populations during both world wars. In some respects, I have worked “below” historians like Jean-Louis Crémi eux-Brilhac or Jean-François Muracciole, from diaries, war journals, private cor espondences, and speeches written during the conflict by the Free French, and from the speeches, autobiographies, and memoirs that a few of them published after the war, beginning with General de Gaulle himself.

Analyzing the experience of exile among the Free French leads to a series of observations that go against the quite simple traditionally accepted view that exile had presented these women and men with an obvious choice, an easy lifestyle, and the possibility of a triumphant return home. These observations will be organized in three stages. First, I will examine the reasons, the means, and the rhythms of exile. Then I will analyze the experience of exile during the war. Finally, I will consider the return from combatant exile and the concomitant disillusions to which the return gave rise.

**Reasons, Means, and Rhythms**

Whatever the circumstances, the decision to go into exile at the very beginning of World War II by choosing to join the external resistance was primarily individual. Each person who decided to leave France asserted his

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7. Many thanks to Géraud Letang, who is preparing a doctoral thesis at Sciences Po Paris under my leadership, for his judicious comments.
or her own individual will, even if the exile were as a member of a military unit—such as the 13th Brigade of the Foreign Legion on its return from the campaign in Norway (April–June 1940).

The reasons underlying the choices made by combatants who wore the Lorraine Cross can be divided into six groups. Many of these individuals refused to accept the defeat of June 1940 and the “inexcusable surrender”8 that had followed, and considered the Armistice to be ignominious.9 Thus they decided to carry on the fight for honor and in accordance with a sometimes mystical patriotism.10 Others refused to accept the enemy’s occupation of French territory, which entailed despoilment and, worse, enslavement.11 Others rejected the political regime that took power after the defeat. Some of the women and men who joined General de Gaulle did so for political, historical, and geopolitical reasons, because they were convinced that France was fighting a “Thirty Years’ War,” and that the fight would continue in any form until they were able to return to France as victors.12 Many of them also wanted to fight for freedom and democracy. Finally, a great number of the people who joined de Gaulle in 1940 or 1941 did so because they needed to try something in order to prevent permanent demoralization in the wake of the defeat.

For many of the women and men who chose it, exile under de Gaulle meant transgression.13 I wish to emphasize that it was possible to deny the legitimacy of the Vichy regime and, even more so, to refuse to accept the German occupation while at the same time remaining in metropolitan France. Such an attitude led to the other commitment—to the interior resistance.

Leaving France meant, first of all, to free oneself from the past and from one’s customs, to leave one’s natal territory, one’s home, familiar places, and possessions. The first words pronounced on February 23, 1941, by the officer-cadet Dargent illustrate this point well:

9. See for example Jacques Bingen’s letter dated July 6, 1940, quoted in Douzou, La Résistance française, 246-47 and 319. See also Torrès, Une Française Libre, 57.
12. This attitude is perfectly illustrated, for example, by Alexandre Dumas’s Comte de Monte-Cristo (1844).
... You have in front of you young men whose souls have suffered great and painful hardships. Most of us have known the tremendous sadness of the stem of a ship springing out of the foam, of a big trip, of the French coasts growing more and more distant and finally disappearing below the horizon. All of us have known the moral goodbye to France.14

Leaving also meant to move away from one’s family, circles of friends, and social networks that had been strongly established in prewar days, and possibly to break with them. It meant carrying on regardless of social conventions, to give up conformism, to confront the incredulous, indeed suspicious, eye of a doubtful and skeptical family circle,15 or, worse, to break with influential people. An immediate consequence of such a leave taking was the abandonment of close relations in possibly very precarious conditions.16 In many cases, the difficulties were even graver due to departures occurring after the general tumult and widespread dispersal of people following the French Campaign. For example, Captain René Génin preferred to stop writing to his wife rather than to risk weakening (through the intimacy of letter-writing) his resolution to join Free France.17 Thus, in addition to the difficulties of exile itself, individuals acutely felt the pain of separation and the sadness of estrangement. In some cases, going into exile also went hand in hand with rejecting an essential notion of service and duty. It made the decision even more difficult. Evidence of this is given, for example, by Captain Garbit’s painful debate with himself during the summer of 1940; by Philippe Leclerc de Hautecloue’s choice to leave the army and join de Gaulle even if, until then, he had been regarded as a model soldier; or by Major Diego Brosset’s arbitration “between discipline and honor,”18 in favor of the latter as he contemplated the likelihood of a death sentence by Vichy. (For a long time the Vichy government considered

14. On the occasion of the opening ceremony, in Brazzaville, of the Colonna-d’Ornano military school in which would be gathered the young Frenchmen who would have left France to rally Free French Africa and to fight with the Free French forces. Speech quoted in Douzou, La Résistance française, 35–6.

15. On this subject, see for example René Pleven, letters to his wife dated July 21 and 28, 1940, in Piketty, ed., Français en résistance, 938–43.

16. Notably, some of them chose to overlook their responsibilities as fathers and mothers.

17. See also the two letters written by Lazare Rachline to his spouse during autumn 1943, in Piketty, ed., Français en résistance, 1102–4.

and treated the Free French as deserters, assimilating them to “émigrés,” runaways, and mercenaries.) Each individual who joined Free France also broke the law, faced the fear of getting into trouble and had to reformulate the notion of what constituted a crime. As the historian Robert Belot observes, leaving was both “a challenge and an offense.” Rare were those who, like Diego Brosset, experienced this infringement of the law like a “baptism.” Finally, leaving also meant facing the challenge of taking personal risks and of putting others at physical, material, and financial risk.

Furthermore, the practical and psychological difficulties provoked by these inevitable and necessary infringements led to variable rhythms of exile. Once again, the Free French offer interesting examples. Some of those who were already abroad at the time of the defeat had to confirm what had become de facto an exile. A member of the French Military Mission in Colombia from April 1940, Major Diego Brosset provides a perfect example: on June 27, 1940, he sent a letter to General de Gaulle saying that he was ready to join him; in September he refused to go back to France as he had been ordered to; he finally arrived in London on January 13, 1941, met de Gaulle on January 14 and was appointed as a vice chief of staff the same day. Others, like Jacques Bingen, Romain Gary or the fishermen of Sein Island, went into exile immediately after the disaster. Men such as Jean Moulin or Pierre Brossolette, to take two famous examples, joined de Gaulle when the Free French still were very few in number and when many internal resistance fighters still regarded leaving the national soil an act of cowardice. My fourth and last example are the French men and women who went into exile in order to escape repression by the Nazi and Vichy regimes.

The experiences of the Free French in exile were not always characterized by difficulty, sadness, and pain. The men and women who chose exile also often enjoyed making “the big trip,” the intense excitement of leaving everybody and everything to serve what was, according to them, a noble and important cause. But, whatever the rhythms, their exile first consisted

19. This word was also used during the French Revolution.
22. They did so respectively in October and November 1941.
23. See Belot, Aux frontières de la liberté.
in going beyond a series of frontiers, real and/or symbolic, as an intellec-
tual, moral, and physical challenge.

Exile for the Duration of the War

Living in exile for the duration of the war was not an easy experience. It is
striking to note that a certain number of exiles, including some leaders of
Free France, quickly did their best to prove the legitimacy of their deci-
sion regardless of any republican and patriotic tradition. The first of the
principal arguments they put forward rested on their assertion that leaving
France constituted “patriotic indiscipline.” From this point of view, the
occupation and the early despoilment of national territory by the enemy
helped a great deal. A second common argument invoked the notion of
pureness, by which only those who left France remained untainted by any
dishonest compromise with Vichy or the Germans and thus embodied the
“true France.” In this case, exiled Free French experienced the homeland
more as a vocation than as a territory. Incidentally, one must notice here
the difference between such a posture of exile and two other courses of
action: going into exile to be inspired by “the other,” and going into exile
to be inspired by “the other” but also to help him or her. The third argu-
ment used by the Free French rested on the excitement of being part of
an elite (the “true France”) whose members were morally right to have
chosen exile in order to help France. In an interesting psychological pro-
cess, these individuals moved from being conscious of their status as dis-
sidents who belonged to a very tiny minority to having the conviction that
they now belonged to an elite group who represented the silent majority of
French citizens. Finally, a fourth argument sought to legitimize the deci-
sion to leave France through their absolute certainty about fighting for a
“great cause.”

These exiles quickly sought to create a “basis of sovereignty” in North
Africa. (Securing these colonies meant securing a part of what had made

24. See René Cassin’s work during autumn 1940 to juridically legitimate Free France—
Crémieux-Brilhac, La France Libre, 138–40.
25. Ibid., 82. Let’s think about the famous verse of Corneille’s play Sertorius: “Rome isn’t in
Rome anymore, it is entirely where I am.”
27. For example the French Republicans under the Second Empire.
28. For example the foreign volunteers who joined certain armies during World War I.
29. Crémieux-Brilhac, La France Libre, 127.
France great.) In a way, establishing such a basis of sovereignty weakened the experience of exile: exile was partially deconstructed by creating a sort of national territory on foreign shores.

But, above all, the people enlisted under the banner of the Lorraine Cross carried on with a fight that was synonymous with their existence, their autonomy, and indeed with independence. More often than not, it was a remote fight. For the great majority of the Free French and in contrast with the clandestine fight of the interior resistance, it took place in the light and brought a very specific experience of war: until the arrival in Italy of the 1st Free French Division under General Brosset at the end of April 1944, and the arrival of the 2nd Armored Division under General Leclerc in Normandy and the 1st Free French Division in Provence in August 1944, the officers, noncommissioned officers, and soldiers of Free France’s land forces took part in a “war of bands.”30 These men (for there were few women, mainly in health services) had to impose their military status as professional soldiers upon the enemy; they were not untrained combat units of *franc-tireurs.*31 They took the terrible risk of dying very far from home. Yet they found one more reason to overcome the vagaries of exile in this experience of war that they had deliberately chosen and that they endured alongside their comrades in dissidence. To a lesser extent, the Free French who worked in the offices of London or in Free French Africa related their activity to the idea of struggle, even if it was not very war-like. Very quickly, a double hierarchy developed among the Free French. It favored the pioneering members of the Free French to the relative detriment of those who had joined the movement later on. It also favored “soldiers” over “civilians.” In other words, Free France’s identity was based on combatant exile chosen in 1940 and with a military purpose.

Contrary to some expectations, the day-to-day experience of exile was not always thrilling. The Free French had to endure the pain caused by the distance that separated them from family and friends, to live in anxiety and with the fear generated by a paucity of family news and by an ignorance of their fate. Most Free French faced losing points of reference consubstantial with exile and also had to accept the recurrent questioning about the validity of their decision to go into exile.

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30. The idea of “war of bands” could easily apply to the Free French pilots and also to the Free French sailors fighting to protect the north Atlantic convoys.

31. For example, Free France sought to ensure that the Free French taken prisoner during the battle of Bir Hakeim (June 1942) would be treated as normal prisoners of war.
These difficulties were increased by the often-disappointing nature of exiles’ professional occupations. Servicemen had to endure a great deal of waiting with very little action; and until the winter of 1944 they had to overcome the feeling that they were no more than a weak cog in the armies of the Allies. Meanwhile, civilians had to endure very repetitive, improvised, and at times boring jobs.

In order to stand firm and remain committed to their cause, exiles developed certain antidotes. They had great faith in a leader and a “great cause.” They created peer social networks. For many Free French, the relationships they formed gave rise to a complete metamorphosis of the personal, intellectual, and, at the end, the political. They also created a geography of exile made up of the places in which their networks of sociability were maintained. For example, in London the Free French spent a lot of time not only in official buildings but also in the French pubs in Soho (such as Le Berlement and L’Escargot), certain restaurants, basement clubs (such as Hatchett’s and the Petit Club run by a Scotsman in St. James), and even in the Albert Hall. In the end, the exiles gradually accepted and referred to a moral economy of gratitude invented by General de Gaulle and notably organized around the Order of the Liberation and the French Resistance Medal, an economy which, it must be emphasized, gave them more than their due.

In many cases, these antidotes to boredom and inactivity sufficed. But, in the long run, some “civilian” Free French decided to join a fighting unit or, as Jacques Bingen did, to volunteer for a clandestine mission in occupied France: for them, the combatant exile experience became meaningful once again by facing the enemy “on the field.” Others, like Pierre Brossolette, chose to leave for a clandestine mission even if their position inside Free France was a very secure one: they were looking for additional legitimacy as the prospect of an Allied victory and the liberation approached.

Free French who had become agents on assignment in metropolitan France joined very specific groups of “interior exiles,” formed by internal

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32. These sites include 7–8 Seamore Grove, 4 Carlton Gardens, Stafford Mansions, Hill Street, and Duke Street.

33. Favored venues of sociability included the Belgian restaurant Chez Rose or, for the wealthiest, one of the luxury restaurants Prunier, L’Écu de France, and Le Coq d’or.

34. Every November 11 and June 18, as well as during important events during the war, the Free French often livened up collective celebrations at the Albert Hall.

35. See Piketty, “Économie morale de la reconnaissance.”
resistance fighters who had almost become “foreigners” in their own country, owing to the highly dangerous, clandestine nature of their operations. Internal resisters led double lives as ordinary civilians and as active, armed resisters, some of them even moving from place to place, living as pariahs.

In June 1940, Spanish Republicans made up the most important foreign contingent in the Free French: between 250 and 300 Spaniards returned from Narvick (Norway) with the 13th Half Brigade of the Foreign Legion (HBFL) under General Béthouart’s command representing 25 percent of the legionnaires who finally chose to join General de Gaulle.36 According to many witnesses and in all likelihood owing their shared experience of the Civil War and exile in France, these Spaniards showed a much stronger solidarity than the Czechs, Poles, or even Jews in Great Britain at the time.

At the end of the summer in 1940, the Spanish Republicans all embarked for Africa with de Gaulle.37 A few of them followed colonel and later General Leclerc at Al Kufra in southeast Libya in March 1941, throughout the Fezzan campaigns in southwest Libya during the winters of 1942 and 1943, and during the end of the Tunisian campaign in April–May 1943. The majority served in the 13th HBFL. After the Syrian campaign of June and July 1941, their number doubled in the 13th HBFL following the rallying of 1,200 legionnaires formerly stationed in Syria. After the battle of Bir Hakeim in northeast Libya during June 1942, in which nearly three hundred Spaniards fought, almost five hundred Spanish Republican combatants fought in what was to become the 1st Free French division in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Italy, and then France.

36. However, some 250 Spaniards refused to choose between the Free French forces and the French Army in North Africa and laid down their arms, See Comor, “La 13ème demi-brigade de Légion étrangère pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, 1940–1947.” Some of them enlisted in the British Army. A few others ended up joining the Gaullist movement. Some experienced British internment camps. The remaining Spaniards went back to Morocco with General Béthouart and were neutralized with the rest of the Foreign Legion according to the armistice agreement. Then they were stationed in North Africa where a great number of their fellow countrymen had settled since the end of the Retirada or Republican retreat of 1939. These legionnaires’ fate in Vichy North Africa was unenviable; being subject to a legislation particularly unfavorable to foreigners, a fortiori when these foreigners had indicated their political convictions by fighting in the ranks of Republican Spain, many of these Spaniards rebelled and were punished in the camps of South Algeria. Some of them were even repatriated to Spain through force, most often for the worst.

37. After the Dakar fiasco (September 1940), they went to Cameroon and to French Equatorial Africa.
These Spaniards’ commitment derived from their will to fight for freedom and democracy and their determined struggle against fascism and Nazism. Many of these men wanted to escape their condition as refugees and internees in French camps. But, it must be emphasized, for most of them, the “liberation” of Spain from General Franco was not in the forefront of their thinking.

After the landing of the Allies in North Africa in November 1942, a certain number of Spanish Republicans in Algeria or in Morocco enlisted in the Corps Franc d’Afrique, a special troop formed by General de Monsa-bert “to face the influx of volunteers that the French Army in North Africa didn’t want or who didn’t want to serve in the ranks of this Army.” At the end of the Tunisian campaign, two-thirds of the survivors of the Corps Franc chose the French Fighting Forces and General Leclerc rather than General Giraud’s army. Among them were 300 to 350 Spaniards who were gradually joined by compatriots based elsewhere in North Africa, including those who were coming out of the Vichy camps.

Aware of the military value these five hundred Spanish combatants offered, Leclerc gathered a majority of them in the 3rd March Battalion of Tchad (MBT; in the 2nd Armored Division). Under Major Putz’s command and named the “Spanish battalion,” three companies composed the 3rd MBT. The ninth company, known as “the Nueve,” got special treatment. On April 1, 1944, 148 of its 160 men were Spaniards, as were almost all its officers and noncommissioned officers. Within the unit, orders were given in Spanish. Its vehicles were named after battles or important places in the Spanish Civil War. Its combatants, mostly anarchists, had the right to display tags of Republican Spain beside the insignia of Free France. Under the command of Captain Dronne, a pioneer of Free France, and owing to the extensive combat experience of its men, the Nueve became a fearsome war

39. General Giraud had supported the Vichy regime for a long time.
40. This account of Spaniards who fought for France after the 1940 disaster would be incomplete without also citing the 850 Spaniards gathered in the Foreign Legion March Regiment (named after a mythic Foreign Legion regiment during World War I) in early summer 1943, and then assigned to the 5th Armored Division of General de Lattre de Tassigny’s army. See Crémieux-Brilhac, “L’engagement militaire des Italiens et des Espagnols dans les armées françaises de 1939 à 1945,” 589. These units were not, however, Free French. The Spaniards who fought in the interior French resistance, and about whom little has been written, should also be mentioned.
41. Putz served as an officer in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War.
instrument.42 Gradually, Leclerc and “his” Spaniards in the Nueve forged a special relationship based upon devotion and confidence.

The sometimes furious bravery of these exiled Spanish Republicans is confirmed by many witnesses. Individualists who were anxious to understand the orders they were given, the Spanish combatants often took the initiative for an action but did not behave in an undisciplined manner. If they were passionately devoted to their leaders, of whom they had tested the self confidence and bravery on the firing line, these former Republicans sometimes created parallel hierarchies of their own, giving specific credit to chosen ones. Many of them displayed great political passion and a deep-rooted anticlericalism. They were absolutely faithful to their homeland, to such an extent that they often obtained permission to be buried in a shroud made of the Spanish Republican flag, a symbolic act that helped them endure their “double” combatant exile.

The Nueve became famous in Normandy throughout the 2nd Armored Division’s tour, which included Ecouché, Vitré, Alençon, and the Ecouves forest. On the evening of August 24, 1944, two combat platoons of the company reached the town hall of Paris at the vanguard of the Division. Their armored vehicles had Spanish names: Brunete, Guadalajara, Ebro, Teruel, Guernika and Don Quichotte. Joined by fellow countrymen who had settled in Paris, the combatants of the Nueve spent the night singing Republican songs in a celebration filled with nostalgia:43 men vanquished in the Spanish Civil War had become victors with the internal French resistance and Free France. On August 26, four half-tracks of the Nueve protected General de Gaulle and others44 during their victorious walk down the Champs-Élysées.45 Then the 2nd Armored Division’s tour started again towards the Bavarian Alps.46 At the end of the war, the losses were terrible: only 16 out of the 148 Spaniards enlisted in the Nueve on August 1, 1942. The intelligence of the 2nd Armored Division commanders, and primarily of General Leclerc, must be underscored here: they decided to make use of the strengths of these remarkable combatants to the full, instead of trying to level them. See Dronne, Carnets de route d’un croisé de la France Libre.

42. See Dronne, Carnets de route d’un croisé de la France Libre, 338.
43. The entourage included members of the provisional government of the French Republic, some of the commanders of the French Army, and some leaders of the interior resistance.
44. Dronne, Carnets de route d’un croisé de la France Libre, 344.
45. Baccarat and Badonviller, the Vosges, Strasbourg, the Colmar pocket, and at the end of the journey, Berchtesgaden and the Berghorf, Hitler’s “eagle nest” in the Bavarian Alps.
1944 were still able to fight, which means barely 11 percent. Besides, since Alsace, orders were not given any more in Spanish within the company.

The Disillusions of the Return from Combatant Exile

Usually, the goal of the exile is to return to the homeland. In the case of combatant exile, it is to return to the homeland weapons in hands and as victors. Crusaders of “a certain idea of France,” convinced that they had saved their country’s honor, the Free French thought they would be warmly welcomed. In the turbulent days of the liberation, however, the return from exile often brought disillusionment.

For servicemen, the return to their homeland was synonymous with very hard fighting and heavy losses.\(^47\) For civilians the experience of return varied. When possible, some Free French of foreign nationality returned to their countries of origin, whereas Free French civil servants in London watched the process of liberation in France at a distance and started to return to France in the autumn of 1944. During the course of the war, the Free French had transformed themselves from pariahs, over whom a social and political opprobrium hung, into liberators, alongside combatants of the former French Army in North Africa and those members of the French interior resistance who had escaped persecution by crossing into Spain. Although they had received some news through the radio, newspapers, and comrades, their collective long exile had cut them off from the dark realities of occupied metropolitan France: rationing, the black market, repression, and fear. They found themselves back in a country they no longer knew and met up again with fellow countrymen who felt exhausted, damaged by the war, and anxious about survival. Unlike internal resisters, the combatants with the Lorraine Cross were completely out of touch with the French moral economy of suffering at the end of World War II. They quickly came to the conclusion that very little had changed in a France still populated by numerous rich and resourceful individuals.\(^48\)

During their experience of days, months, and years of exile, many of the Free French had discovered new horizons, new people, and new ways of life. Thus, the reality of once again living with presumed close relatives in

\(^{47}\) Among brothers in arms from the whole war. About this issue, see Muracciole, *Les Français Libres*, 282.

presumed familiar places was not always easy. Elisabeth de Miribel, the young lady who had typed de Gaulle’s famous appeal on June 18, 1940, provides a poignant example. She had fought with the Free French for more than four years. On her return home in the autumn of 1944, after having kissed her, her father questioned her, as though she were a teenager who comes back too late from a party: “And now,” he said, “you will tell us what you were doing over there.”

Returnees also had to share with members of the French interior resistance their intoxicating self-identification as the elite heirs to France’s greatness, as France’s protectors responsible for the nation’s future reform. Both groups had to deal with an extremely delicate issue: Who had earned the greatest right to exercise responsibilities in liberated France? Which group of exiles—the interior resisters or the exiled combatants who had served France from abroad—had the greatest legitimacy in postliberation France?

Moreover, like all combatants at war’s end, the former Free French had to confront the challenge of returning to private and intimate life. Having lived through the Free French fraternal adventure, each of them had to return home, to resume his or her role as husband or wife, father or mother, or as offspring, and to reestablish a normal domestic and sexual life. These former exiles also had to return to the rhythms and sensations of ordinary peacetime. Thirdly, they were compelled to give up the companionship with brothers-in-arms they had enjoyed in wartime and faced the challenges of reentering prewar social and friendship networks.

With time, the tension of combat usually evaporated, giving way to physical, psychological, and emotional relaxation. As had happened during World War I, many returnees also had to bear the consequences of traumatic experience and to recover from having caused or witnessed death. Most of them began to mourn and to work on their cultural demobilization. They also had to deal with the legal management of exile, for laws created at the end of the war dealt with the legal status of former exiles. The returnees likewise had to deal with the moral economy of gratitude created by de Gaulle.

50. On this issue, see Cabanes and Piketty, eds., Retour à l’intime au sortir de la guerre.
52. Published by the former combatants of the 2nd Armored Division, the journal Caravane is particularly instructive. I am grateful to Géraud Letang for having pointed this out to me.
Having acted on a principle of disobedience during the war, the former Free French once again had to accommodate themselves to the legal framework of France and to return to the ranks as ordinary citizens. Most of them resumed their academic or professional activities, whatever their hopes of profiting from the victory and changing their lives. After evolving intellectually, culturally, and politically as a result of their wartime adventure, they had to face up to the discrepancy between old ideas and new convictions. Some of them endeavored to make use of the political, economic, and social programs they had conceived during the war through associations, political parties created ex nihilo or which needed to be renewed, and participation in government at local and national levels.

For many former Free French, however, a kind of bitterness ensued, in spite of their victory. On the whole, their postwar behavior was less exuberant or triumphant than some accounts have suggested. The stage was set for the development of painful and even conflicting memories.

This was, a fortiori, also the case for the former Spanish Republican exiles, for whom any return to the native land was impossible. At the end of World War II, these Spaniards followed contrasting routes. Very few of them deserted. Some attempted to resume the fight against Franco. In the autumn of 1944 in the Pyrenean borderlands, a lieutenant colonel of the French Forces of the Interior (FFI), also a former Spanish Republican, mobilized between 3,500 and 4,000 guerrilla fighters in the Val d’Aran to launch an ill-fated national insurrection against Franco. Other former Spanish Republicans followed General Leclerc in Indochina, but the French army demobilized most of them. Unable to return to Spain, where in any case they no longer had homes, and with most of them not yet in possession of homes in France, their emergence from the world war was often

53. See for example Muracciole, Les Français Libres, 301–3.
54. For example, from 1945, the Free French National Association has been the driving force behind more than two hundred associations and clubs. See Muracciole, Les Français Libres, 336–9.
55. Such as the MRP or the Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance (UDSR).
56. This does not mean that some of the former Free French did not carry out outstanding professional and social work. See Muracciole, Les Français Libres, 303–34.
57. See notably Lagrou, Mémoires patriotiques et occupation Nazie, and “Les politiques de la mémoire.”
58. The paramilitary forces of the French interior resistance.
59. The planned invasion at Val d’Aran failed, with a loss of at least sixty lives. See Dreyfus-Armand, L’exil des Républicains Espagnols, 174–5.
painful. Most of these war veterans were alone, had no family, and very few friends. In the complex, turbulent times of postwar France, they were hardly ever helped in their gradual return to ordinary life in peacetime.60

In such a context, benefiting from at least some gratitude could have been helpful. But even in terms of a moral economy of gratitude, disillusions arose because, once again, these Spaniards found themselves in a very specific and thus difficult situation. Their native country had no reason at all to recognize their enlistment and victory for France; and France itself had to face difficult issues in terms of memory and did not want or was not able to give too much prestige to the foreign combatants who had supported the resistance so bravely. Thus, even if some of them had experienced the whole Free French adventure, former Spanish Republicans were not particularly honored within the French framework for a moral economy of gratitude. For example, the combatants of the Nueve got the smallest share in terms of wartime medals and decorations. Even though they had been exceptional combatants early on in the war, even though they had endured particularly heavy losses, they did not benefit from gratitude on the same level as their sacrifice. With very few exceptions, they weren’t made members of the Legion of Honor during the postliberation period. It would seem61 that no Spaniard was ever made a companion of the liberation.62

In terms of collective memory and commemoration, their fate was not much better. In Spain, Franco ensured that the history and thus the memory of Republican side was passed over in silence. In France, former Spanish Republicans who had rallied around General de Gaulle faced a similar problem. For decades, official French memory practically forgot General Leclerc’s hard-fighting, dedicated Spaniards in the Nueve. For example, their involvement in the liberation of Paris has been commemorated only by a very modest plaque on the Austerlitz Bridge. Historians and witnesses were also silent, to such an extent that, for many years, nobody in France knew anything about their commitment and their epic contributions to an Allied victory in France.63 For example, Adrien Dansette forgot to evoke

60. Some of the wounded in the 2nd Armored Division were an exception in that they received the “patronage” of French families.

61. For security reasons, some Spaniards changed their names during or after World War II, while others were naturalized. These factors make it difficult to identify all of those who fought and received postwar honors.

62. Unfortunately, statistics aren’t available concerning the French resistance Medal.

63. See Aron, *Histoire de la libération de la France*; Azéma, *De Munich à la Libération 1938–1944*; Kaspi, *Histoire de la libération de la France*; comparable silence with foreign historians—see
the Spanish combatants’ presence at the Paris town hall on August 24, 1944, from the very first edition (1946) of his *Histoire de la libération de Paris*, even though he pointed out that there had been a “large banderole with the Spanish republicancolors, purple, yellow, red” on the Champs-Élysées during the victory procession on August 26. Although remembrance of the Spanish Republicans’ double combatant exile had long been stifled, the past fifteen years have seen a revival of interest in their wartime efforts in both Spain and France that has accelerated recently, owing to widespread efforts to commemorate and to recover the memory of Spanish Republicans.

**Conclusion: Exile “Forever”**

Even if forever marked by the tremendous individualism of its founders,64 Free France gave birth to forms of sociability as rich and intense as they were specific and, very often, unique. From the solidarity created “in misfortune and hope”65 sprung a very strong link that some former Free French described, a long time after the war, as “indelible.”66

It is possible to think that the combatant exile experience that was consubstantial with that of the Free French (Indeed the double combatant exile experience for Spaniards enlisted under the banner of the Lorraine Cross) was one of the essential components in this link. The relative disillusionment brought on by the return from exile and the postliberation years made it even more indelible, beyond the personal choices and differences of opinion. Loyalty to a group, to the “great man” who had been its leader,67 and to dead comrades remained at the core of Free French solidarity.68

Thus, through its joys, difficulties, and sorrows, as well as through its achievements and ultimate crowning victory, the experience of combat-

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66. Ibid., 97.
67. Such fidelity was damaged—but not destroyed—only by important political breakdowns in France.
68. There is a surprising paradox: de Gaulle’s political legitimacy was founded on an exile but regularly reasserted as a national legitimacy until 1970, to such an extent that, at the end of his life, Charles de Gaulle told one of his oldest companions: “Free France is our best achievement.” Marin, *Petit bois pour un grand feu*, 538.
ant exile among the Free French gave rise to an “intransmissible legacy.” Armed with what one of them called the “Free French spirit” as well as with a voluntarism grounded in what they regarded as an unequaled adventure, former exiles held this legacy aloft; and that legacy proved to be one of the driving forces behind the French political and economic elites for some thirty years.

Last but not least, if current interest in psychiatric research on wartime combatants, refugees, and deportees and their postwar experiences ever extends to the psychological life of Free French combatants there probably would be a lot to say.

Bibliography


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69. For avenues of research, see notably Cordier and Crémieux-Brilhac, “La France libre, un héritage intransmissible?”


In March 1943 French police launched a large-scale operation to dismantle the resistance movement in the Paris region, focusing in particular on the Francs tireurs partisans—main d’œuvre immigrée (FTP-MOI), an urban guerrilla unit organized by the French Communist Party (PCF) a year earlier to disrupt and demoralize German military operations. Though small in number, with never more than a hundred total members, the group was highly diverse, including men and women aged sixteen to forty-five from Spain, Italy, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Armenia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Poland.¹ It also packed a disproportionate punch, carrying out roughly 250 attacks during its first eighteen months of existence.² In addition to regularly bombing public spaces where German soldiers and collaborationist French organizations gathered, the FTP-MOI targeted troop transports, derailed supply trains, and assassinated prominent officials. Its greatest success was the September 28, 1943, execution of Colonel Julius Ritter, commissar general of the hated Obligatory Work Service (Service du Travail Obligatoire) requiring all French men born between 1920 and 1922 to labor in Germany for six months.

From the outset of its activity, eliminating the FTP-MOI was a high priority for French and German security forces. In Paris that task fell prin-
cipally to a pair of police counter-intelligence units known as the Brigades Spéciales (BS). The first was originally created in early 1940 to monitor potentially subversive communist activity during the so-called Phony War; the second was formed in January 1942 specifically to combat foreign communists in the resistance. To ensure their condemnation and execution, those arrested were handed over to brutally expedient special French courts or in some cases German military tribunals.3

By mid-1943, eliminating the FTP-MOI had also become a pressing political imperative. As the tide of the war turned decisively in favor of the Allies and French public opinion in favor of the resistance, Franco-Nazi propaganda responded by attempting to pique deep-seated fears that liberation would lead to a bloody seizure of power by foreign communists and perhaps even the annexation of France to the Soviet Union.4 The fact that many of the FTP-MOI from Eastern Europe were also Jews gave their public condemnation additional propaganda value by stirring up French anti-Semitism, which in the context of late 1943 was being used to discredit the Anglo-American war effort as the work of “Jewish plutocrats” supposedly intent on restoring their prewar control of France.

In October and November 1943 a carefully planned series of raids by the Brigades Spéciales yielded over a hundred French and foreign communist resisters, including sixty-eight FTP-MOI led by Armenian Missak Manouchian.5 Over the next four months they were systematically interrogated under torture, then jailed indefinitely or deported to death camps. On February 15, 1944, Manouchian and twenty-two other combatants known to have carried out armed attacks were brought before a German military tribunal and condemned to death by firing squad—a sentence carried out six days later in the courtyard of the Mont Valérien prison. While the fate of the captured French men and women went largely unpublicized, a flood of sensationalist newspaper articles, newsreel reports, pseudo-documentaries, and a ten-page color booklet titled “L’armée du crime” (The Army of Crime) denounced the FTP-MOI as “foreign Jewish terrorists.”6 The single most visible element of this carefully orchestrated media blitz was an image that would later become known as “L’affiche rouge” (The Red Poster). Distributed throughout France as both a leaflet and a mural poster, it bears the

4. Laborie, L’opinion française sous Vichy, 300–11.
6. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.
photos of Manouchian and nine others, as well as photos showing civilian targets they had supposedly destroyed, and poses the sardonic question “Liberators? Liberation by the Army of Crime.”


Figure 8.1. The infamous affiche rouge denouncing the FTP-MOI.
A Dissident Film

Such is the historical background of “Terrorists” in Retirement (Des “terroristes” à la retraite), an eighty-two-minute documentary about the FTP-MOI made in 1983 by Mosco Boucault, a naturalized French citizen whose personal history echoed that of many wartime militants. Born in Bulgaria to a Jewish socialist family originally named Lévy, in 1951 he immigrated with his parents at the age of five to Israel to escape growing anti-Semitism, then to Paris in 1957 following the death of his father, eventually graduating from the Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques (IDHEC), France’s national film school. In a radio interview broadcast in 2009, Boucault (who has always disliked using that invented name and prefers to be called simply Mosco) describes “Terrorists” in Retirement as being linked to the identity crisis he felt as an adolescent adapting to life in France. In part part “a search for points of reference [repères] and father figures [pères],” the film also reflected his desire to “settle a family score” for his mother, who survived the war in France wearing the infamous yellow Jewish star imposed by Vichy. Intellectually, he found inspiration in the politically engaged action novels of André Malraux, John Steinbeck, and Ernest Hemingway as well as the dissident, self-reflexive philosophy of sociologist and excommunicated PCF militant Edgar Morin, whose 1959 classic Autocritique stresses the danger of self-deception and moral bankruptcy inherent in blind loyalty to any political party.

Acting on that autobiographical impulse, Mosco originally wrote a fictional screenplay in which a young man discovers not only that his father was an FTP-MOI militant executed by the Nazis but also that his family is Jewish—facts long concealed by his mother to prevent further persecution and ensure their assimilation into French society. However, after securing a small grant from the Centre National de la Cinématographie and tentatively casting the lead parts, including Simone Signoret as the mother, Mosco abandoned that approach to make a television documentary, noting that he “did not want actors to assume the roles and for the real

8. In the United States a VHS transfer is available for rental from New Yorker Films. It has never been released on DVD or VHS in France, but can be viewed at both the Inathèque de France and the Salle de l’Audiovisuel at the Bibliothèque Nationale (Tolbiac site). The film’s complete shooting script was published by the newspaper Le Matin in six segments under the title “Hommage aux franc-tireurs inconnus,” June 26–28, June 30, July 1–2, 1985.

people to die without any trace." Using additional funds provided by the French Ministry of Culture and Antenne 2—the second of France’s state-owned television channels—he located and interviewed surviving FTP-MOI members through a Paris-based veterans’ group known as L’Union des Engagés Volontaires et Anciens Combattants Juifs.

The result is a film with a dual historiographic goal visible in its formal composition. In addition to rendering the past personal, emotionally accessible, and relevant to the present through testimony from living witnesses—primarily Polish and all Jews—”Terrorists” in Retirement juxtaposes these personal stories with period documents (newsreel clips, letters, newspaper articles, photos), voice-over narration to provide context, and interpretative commentary by scholars to articulate a broader, highly controversial argument: that the leadership of the PCF not only allowed the Manouchian cell to be liquidated in order to highlight the exploits of less active, native-born French combatants and to better position the party to take political power in the intensely nationalistic context of 1944–1945, but that after the war the party marginalized the FTP-MOI in official histories of the resistance in order to cover up the betrayal by hypocritically commemorating the Manouchian cell as heroic martyrs.

Figure 8.2. Mosco (right) speaking with former FTP-MOI member Jacques Farber off-camera.

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That incendiary accusation challenged more than thirty years of party orthodoxy, which is given voice at the outset of the film through the inclusion of “L’affiche rouge” (1959), a song by Léo Ferré adapted from Louis Aragon’s 1955 poem “Strophes pour se souvenir” (Remembrance Stanzas). By playing the song over the opening credits and images of a solemn, snowy commemoration ceremony held annually by surviving FTP-MOI members in the Jewish cemetery just outside Paris, Mosco introduces the interdependent moral imperatives that will guide his investigation: preserving and paying tribute to the group’s exploits while exposing the reasons for their marginalization.

In both its structure and ideological dissidence, “Terrorists” in Retirement differs significantly from the first two French-made films about the FTP-MOI: René Gilson’s The Brigade (La brigade, 1975) and Franck Cassenti’s L’affiche rouge (1976), both highly didactic, orthodox works by committed communist directors who used a Brechtian mise-en-scène to underscore the heroism of the PCF in the struggle against fascism. The Brigade dramatizes the arrest, trial, and execution of a Polish Jew named Marian Lang who fought in the Nord department to insist on both the depth of French collaboration with the Nazis and the Gaullist resistance groups’ effort to marginalize their communist counterparts during the war. L’affiche rouge goes a step further by showing a group of young actors rehearsing a play about the Manouchian cell, their conversations with actual FTP-MOI survivors (including Manouchian’s widow, Mélinée), and their realization that the struggle of the FTP-MOI against fascism thirty years earlier is the same as that of armed communist liberation movements in Chile and the Basque Country during the 1970s. Though these films were released in theaters and drew widespread critical praise, neither had a substantial impact on public memory of the FTP-MOI or the scholarly historiography of resistance.

That distinction belongs to “Terrorists” in Retirement, whose incendiary critique sparked a national debate and inaugurated the second major reappraisal of the resistance since the theatrical release Marcel Ophüls's landmark film *The Sorrow and the Pity* (*Le chagrin et la pitié*, 1969) in France in 1971. Just as Ophüls shattered the Gaullist myth of a heroic nation united in resistance and untainted by internecine ideological rivalries or ethnic prejudice, Mosco extended that same critique to the PCF, challenging its carefully constructed image as the only truly international, egalitarian wartime underground movement and champion of social justice. Although archival research would later partially exonerate the PCF with regard to Manouchian, “Terrorists” in Retirement deserves to be remembered as a key catalyst in the ongoing evolution of the “Vichy syndrome,” Henry Rousso’s celebrated psychoanalytical metaphor for France’s difficult coming-to-terms with the war.¹²

As the first sociologically detailed, emotionally compelling portrait of the FTP-MOI, the film was a crucial complement and corrective to the first wave of scholarship devoted specifically to the Holocaust in France. Whereas influential works such as Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton’s 1981 book, *Vichy France and the Jews*, and Claude Lanzmann’s 1985 documentary *Shoah* focused on Jewish suffering, Mosco’s account of the FTP-MOI countered the prevailing public view of Jews as passive victims in need of rescue and restored their agency in the fight against state-sponsored genocide. “Terrorists” in Retirement revised Ophüls and Lanzmann with regard to cinematic form as well, using montage and interview techniques that the two directors perceived as ethically incompatible and mutually exclusive. In addition, Mosco incorporated self-reflexive narrative devices to demonstrate the potential and the limitations of cinema as a tool for writing history.

**A National Scandal**

Following its premiere in May 1983 at Cannes as part of a small parallel festival called Perspectives du Cinéma Français, the film initially seemed doomed to oblivion. Largely overlooked by critics and lacking the funding for even limited theatrical release, it was shelved by Antenne 2 director Jacques Desgraupe because of its controversial potential, as announced by a review in *L’Humanité* that praised Mosco’s directorial talent but dis-

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missed his political critique as “a bona fide falsification and a true misappropriation of witness testimony.”

However, “Terrorists” in Retirement resurfaced thanks to the support of three influential French-Jewish personalities who, like Mosco, were Jews who had family ties from Eastern Europe. In mid-1984, shortly after securing the extradition of Klaus Barbie to France, lawyer and Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld formed a committee of intellectuals to organize private screenings and pressure Antenne 2 for a public broadcast. He was joined by iconic actress Simone Signoret (née Kaminker), who had recorded part of the film's voice-over and publicly deplored its neglect in early 1985 while promoting her critically acclaimed, best-selling autobiographical novel, *Adieu Volodia*. On March 20 of that year her longtime friend Ivan Levai, programming director of the private radio station Europe 1, pleaded the case on air in a passionate editorial. After meeting in person with Signoret and Mosco, as well as receiving favorable recommendations from prominent historians René Rémond and Jacques Delarue, Antenne 2’s new head Jean-Claude Héberlé agreed to schedule a showing for June 2.

The announcement outraged French Communist Party officials, who demanded publicly under threat of legal action that the station cancel the “defamatory” film. Héberlé referred the matter to the government organization responsible for media regulation, La Haute Autorité de l’Audiovisuel, which decided to convene an honorary jury of noncommunist, and thus ostensibly impartial, former resisters: Lucie and Raymond Aubrac, Claude Bourdet, Henri Noguères, and Pierre Sudreau. Their laconic press release—which stated that “though it is highly desirable that a film inform French of all generations about the saga of the FTP-MOI, such a film nevertheless still remains to be made”—did little to conceal the profound danger that

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“Terrorists” in Retirement represented. By shattering the idealized memory of communist wartime activism, the film threatened to further tarnish the heroic image of the resistance as a whole.

Echoing Auschwitz survivor and Gaullist politician Simone Veil, who four years earlier had denounced The Sorrow and the Pity as “psychologically pernicious” for portraying “a cowardly, selfish, and cruel France where all the French were bastards,” juror Lucie Aubrac characterized Mosco’s work as “misery loving.” Referring to a recent wave of Palestinian bombings against Israeli and American targets in the Middle East, Sudreau added that “at the very moment when we are again talking about direct action, this broadcast legitimizes terrorist methods.” Bourdet pushed that specious logic a step further by labeling the picture “anti-Semitic and racist.” While the two-year ban by inertia that Mosco’s film suffered seems mild compared to the decade-long limbo in which The Sorrow and the Pity languished before finally appearing on French television, the political stakes were arguably even greater. In mid-1985 the PCF was struggling through an ongoing identity crisis initiated by the landslide election of socialist François Mitterrand in 1981 and the overwhelming majority his party secured in the ensuing legislative elections, which left the communists with a postwar low of only forty-four seats. The neo-Gaullist right found itself in a similar, though less desperate position, having lost control of the presidency and National Assembly for the first time since 1958. With new legislative elections less than a year away, “Terrorists” in Retirement thus tacitly bound the PCF to the same perennial enemy it had gleefully antagonized in 1971 by heralding The Sorrow and the Pity as “a cathartic political act after ten years of Gaullism and several more years of post-Gaullism.”

The honorary jury’s decision touched off a second, even more virulent press campaign in which commentators on both the left and right denounced politically motivated state censorship and the PCF accused its rivals, the socialists in particular, of conspiring to ruin its public credi-

bility.²² The Haute Autorité maintained its position that “the film does not meet the criteria of impartiality and balance commensurate with the mission of public broadcasting, or with regard to films of this type,”²³ but on June 11 Héberlé and the management of Antenne 2 resolved to run “Terrorists” in Retirement anyway on July 2, 1985, as part of the venerable series Les dossiers de l’écran (Screen files), followed by a roundtable discussion between a newly convened, nine-person jury and a studio audience. By that time, the debate over whether the film should be shown publicly was already moot thanks to an independent distributor named Marin Karmitz who had secured the film’s theatrical release on June 5 at a small Left-Bank cinema, the Quatorze Juillet-Severin.²⁴

In addition to conspicuously excluding Mosco and his interviewees, the new panel featured only two former resisters who were favorably disposed toward the film—Jewish psychoanalyst Annette Kamieniecki and French FTP member Roger Pannequin—versus four Communist representatives (Charles Lederman, Roger Bourderon, Henri Rol Tanguy, and Arsène Tchakharian) nominated by the party to discredit the charge that Manouchian had been abandoned, and three other wartime activists who had little interest in supporting the FTP-MOI: Gaullist officer Jacques Chaban-Delmas, conservative historian Henri Amoureux, and socialist party militant Christian Pineau.²⁵

Although the film’s broadcast scored an audience share of 29.4 percent, far outdistancing the two other networks and setting a new record for Les dossiers de l’écran since its debut in 1967,²⁶ the ensuing discussion was a one-sided affair that quickly abandoned questions of fact and historiography in favor of political hyperbole. Spectators’ questions about

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²⁴ Szafran and Mihaïl, “Censure télévisuelle.”


Manouchian’s arrest and his relations with the FTP-MOI leadership went unanswered; as the communists’ accusations of defamation overwhelmed Kamieniecki and Pannequin, Amoureux and Pineau watched in silence, while Chaban-Delmas exploited the conflict to present his party, the neo-Gaullist Rassemblement pour la République, as the only true guarantor of national reconciliation. A radio debate the following afternoon on France-Inter between Mosco and Lederman proved equally fruitless.27

A New Form of Documentary

Though the controversy surrounding “Terrorists” in Retirement focused almost exclusively on memory politics and ideology, viewing the film from that angle alone obscures the contributing role played by its innovative approach to historiography and use of narrative devices that challenged the implicit expectation that documentaries should present a scrupulously objective, carefully balanced, and factually irreproachable account of reality. Interpreted in its strictest sense, this quasi-juridical standard would require the director to afford all witnesses equal time on camera and identical interviewing conditions; to give spectators full disclosure of all recorded testimony and supporting documentation available on the subject before proposing any interpretation; and to refrain from any manipulation that might undermine the audience’s freedom to draw its own conclusions.

Popularized by the “direct” or “observational” movement of the 1960s associated with Robert Drew, Richard Leacock, D. A. Pennebaker, and the Maysles brothers, this ideal of “pure” documentary is in practice unattainable because cinematic narration inevitably relies on selective editing, compression of time and space, characterization, and, above all, emotion to engage viewers in a story.28 Recognized almost immediately as specious by cinema vérité pioneers Jean Rouch, Edgar Morin, and Chris Marker, the “direct” movement gave rise to an interventionist mode of documentary in which directors not only asserted their right to subjectivity and the devices of fiction filmmaking, but in many cases incorporated self-reflexive interrogation of their own prejudices and manipulations to problematize the truth value of documentary and highlight its fundamental similarity to fiction film.29


29. Nichols, Representing Reality, 32–75; Barnouw, Documentary, esp. 231–62.
Yet in France, expectations about the subgenre of historical documentary remained largely unmodified, at least with regard to films that posed uncomfortable questions about Vichy and Algeria. Whereas the authenticity and truthfulness of a reenacted docudrama celebrating the resistance such as René Clément’s *The Battle of the Rails* (*La bataille du rail*, 1945) were never questioned, Jacques Panijel’s first-hand footage of French police brutalizing peaceful Algerian protesters in *Octobre à Paris* (October in Paris, 1962) drew accusations of ideological partiality and willful distortion, prompting a ban still in effect today.30 Hostile commentators used the same specious double standard to coerce *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard*, 1955) director Alain Resnais into modifying the photo of a French policeman on duty at the Pithiviers concentration camp; to discredit Gillo de Pontecorvo’s witness-corroborated dramatization of French paratroopers torturing Algerian militants in *The Battle of Algiers* (*La bataille d’Alger*, 1965) as an exercise in subversive propaganda; and to attack *The Sorrow and the Pity* as “a lie told through truthful images filled with tricks, omissions, and deliberate falsifications.”31

As Jewish memory of World War II came to the fore of public consciousness in the 1980s, Marcel Ophüls and Claude Lanzmann renegotiated the documentary pact in two radically different ways. In *Shoah*, Lanzmann exposed the evils of Nazism by relying exclusively on the living word of witnesses. For him this purity of form was an ethical imperative both for denouncing perpetrators and paying homage to victims—one that justified using a hidden camera to record testimony from a former SS guard at Treblinka and reawakening camp survivors’ repressed memories through the performance of significant small gestures such as singing or haircutting, sometimes in conjunction with a visit to a key site of memory.32

At the opposite extreme, in his 1988 film *Hotel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie*, Ophüls radicalized the techniques employed in *The Sorrow and the Pity* by using a contrapuntal, often ironic and derisory montage of interviews, period documents, popular music, clips from fiction films, and even the director’s on-screen presence to condemn widespread

French and German indifference to the Holocaust as well as the CIA’s protection of Barbie in the context of the Cold War. While Lanzmann felt that Ophüls’s unabashedly subjective approach smacked of narcissism and undermined the credibility of their shared endeavor by exposing it to criticism from Holocaust deniers, Ophüls charged Lanzmann with hypocritically masking his own ideological agenda, aesthetic choices, and manipulation of witnesses under the guise of strict objectivity.

In “Terrorists” in Retirement, Mosco achieves a stylistic middle ground by incorporating elements from each method. By providing FTP-MOI veterans the opportunity to testify extensively on camera for the first time, he creates the first living-memory, audiovisual archive of foreign Jewish resistance in France. Seventy of the film’s eighty-two minutes (85 percent) are devoted to first-person testimony, which consists primarily of long takes lasting two to five minutes in which interviewees speak freely on a general topic, uninterrupted by follow-up questions, editing, or other postrecording additions. For the first-time director this approach constituted “the magic of documentary” in contrast to fiction and television journalism: “the witnesses have time to breathe, to exist rather than being used simply as tools, a sentence here and there by way of illustration.” Letting them talk freely through the past pays significant narrative and historiographic dividends by facilitating the recovery of forgotten details, gradually absorbing spectators into the narrative, and offering an affective, personal basis for understanding the complex convergence of social, political, and personal factors that led these immigrants from prewar Romania and Poland to armed combat against Nazism in France. Although a coherent composite portrait of the movement does emerge based on certain shared characteristics, the uniqueness of each man’s experience is preserved.

Some of them, like Poles Ilex Beller, Charles Mitzflicker, and Jean Lemberger, immigrated illegally in the 1930s with the hope of escaping poverty and state-sponsored anti-Semitism at home. The desperation of their

33. Golsan, Vichy’s Afterlife, 73–87; Suleiman, “History, Memory, and Moral Judgment in Documentary Film,” 509–41; Lowy, Marcel Ophuls, 118–35.


plight is illustrated by the harrowing details of their journey to France: Beller traveled the entire way on foot through Czechoslovakia, Germany, and Belgium; Mitzflicker endured a five-day train trip in a freight car filled with eggs, which he ate raw to survive. In material terms, these men’s lives improved only marginally in France. Unable to secure work visas, they eked out a living as black-market tailors, with Lemberger’s family suffering nearly constant extortion by Parisian cops who threatened to denounce them.

Mosco contrasts the tailors’ psychological and sociological profile with three other Jewish FTP-MOI from Poland—Jacques Farber, Louis Gronowski, and Abraham Rayski—all well-educated professionals who formally secured asylum in Paris and pursued successful careers as Communist Party organizers. They reached out to illegals such as Mitzflicker and Lemberger, forging a shared belief in the ideals of Marxism that was matched only by their opposition to Nazism. Despite orders from Moscow to respect the mutual nonaggression pact that Stalin had signed with Hitler in August 1939, Jewish Communist leaders did not dissuade Farber from enrolling in the French army as soon as war broke out. The Wehrmacht’s invasion of the Soviet Union two years later allowed all expatriate communists to breathe a “sigh of relief,” as Rayski puts it, and to reenter the fight against fascism in the FTP-MOI.

Though Mosco portrays all the men sympathetically, he gives Mitzflicker and Lemberger’s testimony special weight by filming them as they work, thereby transforming the banal, repetitive act of sewing into a multi-faceted signifier and narrative thread. If the stitching of garments parallels the act of piecing together memories to form a story that has gone untold and unheard for far too long, it also marks the unshakeable ethnic and class marginalization that these men have endured throughout their lives. Moreover, close-ups of the men’s busy hands and fingers register the necessity of working perpetually, even in old age, as an imperative of survival. As we learn in the film’s closing shots, a third Polish Jew and clandestine tailor named Raymond Kojitski works ten hours a day to earn a measly seventy-five francs. Psychologically, however, a crucial difference distinguishes Kojitski from his peers. Whereas they joined the FTP-MOI in 1942 as a matter of moral principle and often had great difficulty carrying out attacks because of their aversion to violence and instinct for self-preservation, Kojitski volunteered in early 1944 specifically to avenge his family members who had been deported to Nazi death camps. Convinced that “there was not a big difference between throwing a packet of leaflets and throwing a bomb,”
he felt “great pleasure if some Germans were killed” and was soon promoted to a special squad charged with high-risk assassinations.

Early in the film manual sewing is associated with the bravery, creativity, and potentially therapeutic effect of recounting the incredible trauma that all three men have overcome—Lemberger’s description of his arrest, torture by French police, and deportation to Auschwitz is especially harrowing. The introduction of electric sewing machines in the film’s final interviews with Kojitski and Mitzflicker underscores the ineffaceable emotional and psychological scars of their wartime activism. Kojitski’s machine, races, slows, stops, and restarts as he enumerates the members of his family exterminated in the Holocaust. He defiantly proclaims, “if there were Nazis to rub out right now, I’d do it with pleasure, with no remorse.” Moments later, he admits to feeling “hatred that will never go away,” its sharp, unwavering nature captured metaphorically by images of the steel sewing needle repeatedly stabbing the cloth.

Mitzflicker’s overpowering emotion is guilt at not having saved or sufficiently avenged his deported mother, brother, sister, nephews, and nieces. He attempts to maintain his composure for the camera, pedaling quickly to drown painful emotions from the past in the white noise of his sewing, but abruptly stops and breaks down in tears, repeating almost inaudibly with his head in his hands: “I didn’t do enough; I still shake, I didn’t do enough.” Unlike Kojitski, he specifically rejects hatred, adding that “it wasn’t the German people who did this to me; it was the Nazis.”

Figure 8.3. Survivor’s guilt: Charles Mitzflicker sobs at “not having done enough” during the war.

Despite this key difference, in both cases the whirring of the sewing machines serves as an effective metaphor for the psychoanalytical principle of “repetition automatism,” Jacques Lacan’s contention that trauma
circulates within the unconscious like the electric current powering a machine, with certain types of suffering so deeply rooted that they cannot be mastered through the Freudian “talking cure.”

By simultaneously signifying the trauma experienced by Jews in the past and the painful process of remembrance in the present, sewing takes on the same structuring role in “Terrorists in Retirement” as the footage in Shoah of railroad freight cars moving slowly along rusty tracks toward the abandoned death camp of Treblinka. The historiographic lesson is similar as well: though emotionally indelible for survivors, the past is never quite fully accessible for the rest of us.

The Power of Reenactment

A related challenge that both directors faced was the almost complete absence of visual archives documenting the extermination of Jews and the exploits of the FTP-MOI as they happened—crucial expository evidence for legitimizing their revision of collective memory and debunking politicized misrepresentations already in circulation. Whereas Lanzmann had at his disposal extensive concentration camp footage and photographs shot by the Allies in 1945, the only period recordings available to Mosco were the highly prejudicial photos and newsreels produced by German and Vichy officials.

Constructing a retrospective documentary entirely from such tainted material—as Claude Chabrol did in L’œil de Vichy (The Eye of Vichy, 1993)—is of course possible, but risky on several counts. On the one hand, underinformed spectators may be confused or even won over by wartime propaganda if it is not carefully contextualized and explained; on the other, creating such a didactic framework is laborious, reduces the subtlety and range of narrative strategies available to the director, and threatens to compromise the film’s power to render history as an emotionally compelling story.

37. French archives hold only three films of authentic resistance activity, all recorded in 1944 toward the end of the occupation. The first, a five-minute clip known as Ceux du maquis, shows a group of young men training for combat in the forest. The second is much more extensive footage shot during the siege of the Vecors plateau by the Wehrmacht in June and July. Supplemented with other archival material and reenacted scenes shot after the war, it was released in 1948 as Au cœur de l’orage. The third, and best-known film, is La Libération de Paris, a thirty-minute montage documenting the popular uprising against the Germans between August 16 and August 25. On these films, see Lindeperg, Les ecrans de l’ombre, esp. 62-70.
It was for precisely this reason that Lanzmann excluded archival material from Shoah: to avoid reproducing “institutionalized knowledge” and “images without imagination” whose power had been nullified by decades of didactic usage in schools and television. He chose instead to rely on a “conjunction of word and site,” combining witness testimony with his own footage taken at former extermination camps and several other sites in Poland. In the process Lanzmann employed two unusual forms of reenactment. The first, clearly inspired by Night and Fog, consisted of handheld sequences shot from the point of view of Jews arriving at the Treblinka train station in cattle cars and descending into a gas chamber at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The second, which Lanzmann referred to as “re-mise en scène,” involved putting witnesses in situations similar to those they experienced during the war: for example, having Abraham Bomba, a Jewish camp barber charged with shearing prisoners, cut hair again while telling his story; or having Henryk Gawkowski, a retired Polish railroad engineer who delivered Jews to Treblinka, reenter the station at the controls of a locomotive that the director rented at great trouble and expense.

Intended to access memories and emotions that had long been repressed or forgotten, the latter technique produced especially stunning results, prompting the engineer to make the wartime throat-cutting gesture he sometimes performed upon arrival to inform local residents of the train’s contents and the initially stoic barber to reveal his crushing sense of powerlessness and complicity vis-à-vis the Nazis. For Lanzmann, only through such moments could “truth and knowledge take bodily form,” and cinema recapture something of the otherwise unrepresentable horror of the Holocaust. Achieving this goal sometimes requires questionable treatment of witnesses, such as having Simon Srebnik, a survivor of the Chelm exterminations, sing a German song in front of a church where Jews were sequestered before being gassed in vans. Held on the feast day celebrating the birth of the Virgin Mary, Srebnik’s performance allows Lanzmann to expose Polish Catholics’ indifference and complacency toward the Holocaust by drawing a crowd and prompting them to reminisce about the war. Srebnik, however, appears understandably disturbed by the experience, which brings back painful memories of his own forced labor for the local SS.

40. Ibid., 20.
41. Ibid., 20–1.
While Mosco also makes extensive use of reenactment to awaken latent memories and feelings, his footage of elderly interviewees pantomiming wartime missions on the streets of Paris differs significantly from *Shoah* in tone, form, and function. Rather than seeking historical truth through relentless, often terrifying realism, “Terrorists in Retirement” adopts a self-reflexive mode of inquiry built around elements that Lanzmann systematically refused as unethical—makeshift props, costumed extras, and above all humor. This approach culminates in two staged sequences featuring Charles Mitzflicker. In the first, he sews a belted pouch to carry a concealed pipe bomb, approximated by a pink can of air freshener that once stuffed inside his pants hangs exactly at genital level and creates a large phallic bulge, eliciting a wry smile from Charles. We then see him, wearing dark sunglasses, a turtleneck, and a custom-tailored blue suit, strolling down a narrow, abandoned street and placing the “bomb” on a window sill while a jazz bass line plays slowly in the background, followed by an explosion sound effect.

![Figure 8.4. Mitzflicker stuffs his air freshener “bomb” into his pants.](image)
The second instance shows Charles and comrade Jean Lemberger attacking a German soldiers’ restaurant at the busy Place Madeleine. As the two old men approach the target on foot, they stop for a moment to retrieve a revolver and a time bomb from the handbag of a passing elderly woman; Jean moves ahead and mimics throwing the bomb through the window while Charles pretends to shoot a sentry played by an actor in a period Wehrmacht uniform. After a three-second wartime newsreel clip of German soldiers eating at a table, the sounds of breaking glass, and another explosion, the perpetrators run toward an alley. Charles, well behind Jean, initially overruns the narrow entrance and awkwardly reverses direction, and finally disappears into the shadows as well amidst a hail of bullets. With the reenactment finished, Jean explains that after safely reuniting in the subway, he noticed blood on the ground near Charles. “I asked him: ‘Charles, are you wounded?’” Charles replied: “No, I don’t feel anything. I think my hemorrhoids exploded.” The two men laugh in unison, and Jean adds: “Well, it was difficult to get medical treatment at the time, so whenever there was a mission to be carried out, he had to deal with his hemorrhoids.”

Figure 8.5. Mitzflicker, dressed like a dapper secret agent, prepares to place his “bomb.”
By cultivating a tongue-in-cheek variety of realism that constantly calls attention to its own constructed, artificial nature, Mosco’s reenactments offer several interrelated benefits beyond the obvious narrative appeal of comic relief. Everything about the staging of Charles delivering his air-fresher “bomb”—from his attire and demeanor to the addition of non-diegetic music and the sound effects—mocks the exaggerated conventions of historical fiction films about the occupation, particularly those belonging to the so-called retro mode of the late 1960s and 1970s. Exemplified by Jean-Pierre Melville’s *Army of Shadows* (*L’armée des ombres*, 1969) and Louis Malle’s *Lacombe, Lucien* (1975), these films offered highly stylized representations of resistance and collaboration that in many ways inhibited the opening-up of French collective memory.42

The tension between “Terrorists” in Retirement and *Army of Shadows* is especially strong thanks to the presence of Simone Signoret. Born in Germany to a Jewish father of Polish ancestry and a French Catholic mother, the beloved actress had played an important supporting role in Melville’s exaggerated, noir-inspired “gangsterization” of an urban resistance cell populated exclusively by native French members43 but for Mosco she serves as a voice-over narrator who affirms the active participation and politicized mistreatment of minority ethnic groups in the struggle to free France.

Despite their parodic dimension, the reenactments retain enough realism to impress upon spectators just how unglamorous, frightening, and risky a typical bombing attack actually was. The sight of two old men dressed in street clothes pantomiming their wartime exploits on a quiet Paris street forty years later thus ends up providing spectators a sense of how thoroughly crazy and genuinely heroic it was for two terrified teenagers armed with only an old revolver holding two bullets and a single homemade bomb, to take on the most powerful army in Europe. As Lemberger remarks, it was in effect a suicidal gesture, and yet the FTP-MOI repeated it literally hundreds of times at the risk of capture, torture, and deportation, followed by almost certain death. Lemberger himself barely escaped that fate, surviving internment at both Struthof and Auschwitz.

Far from trivializing the old men’s life-and-death narrative, the use of self-deprecating, scatological humor enhances its cultural specificity by exemplifying what Freud and Theodor Reik identified as quintessentially

42. On Malle’s film and the retro mode, see Golsan, *Vichy’s Afterlife*, 57–72.
“Jewish” wit. In addition to giving the testimony a cultural specificity that otherwise might have been lost, the hemorrhoid anecdote in particular registers the ambiguous moral dimensions of the bombing attempt. If in part the motif of bloody “explosions”—as Charles describes the rupturing of his inflamed bowels—suggests that killing German soldiers in late 1943 at the height of the Holocaust was an ethical act, but one that its Jewish perpetrators had difficulty accepting because of their genuine morality and that left enduring emotional scars, as Lemberger and Mitzflicker testify elsewhere in the film.

Psychologically, humor functions as a coping mechanism that allows Mitzflicker and Berger to maintain some emotional distance and protect themselves from having to relive the full intensity of their past trauma—a burden that for ethical reasons they should not be expected to bear. Moreover, the obvious pleasure that the old friends take in telling their story exemplifies the importance of solidarity within the FTP-MOI, both during the war and four decades later. For Mitzflicker, Lemberger, and others whose families had been wiped out by the Holocaust, the friendships they formed in the resistance were their only available social support structure and in some cases, their only reason to continue living. The importance of these bonds becomes fully apparent only at the very end of the film, when Mitzflicker begins sobbing while reproaching himself for not doing enough to save relatives exterminated in Nazi death camps.

Yet perhaps the most crucial function of Mosco’s singular reenactments is to highlight the fundamental insufficiency of cinema as a tool for writing history and the impossibility of ever fully recovering the past or applying its lessons to the present. Appropriately, in his concluding sequence Mosco shows Gilbert Weisberg, a Romanian Jew who served as the FTP-MOI’s primary bomb-maker, walking through a cemetery where gravestones have been spray-painted with swastikas and anti-Semitic epithets. Far from being a fatalistic acknowledgment of powerlessness, the image expresses a resilient humanism that affirms the need to continue struggling for historical understanding and social justice, despite knowing in advance that the struggle will never be complete. In the context of the 1980s, this self-reflexive philosophy distinguishes “Terrorists” in Retirement not only from Shoah and The Sorrow and the Pity, but all other preceding documentaries about World War II.

44. Freud, Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious; Reik, Jewish Wit.


Indictment by Montage

While Mosco’s focus on the experience of Polish Jews gives “Terrorists” in Retirement exceptional narrative continuity and emotional power, it also paints a somewhat reductive portrait of the FTP-MOI. There is nothing said about the numerous non-Jewish combatants from Spain and Italy who fled to France after fighting in the Spanish Civil War and languished in internment camps before escaping to continue their antifascist militancy against Vichy and the Nazis. The integral role that women played in the movement also gets short shrift; of the sixty-eight FTP-MOI arrested in the October to November 1943 raids, twenty-one were female. Cristina Boïco, a Jewish doctor from Romania who headed the FTP-MOI’s intelligence unit and even ended the war as a lieutenant in the Forces Françaises de l’Intérieur (FFI), is mentioned in passing only once. Olga Bancic, a Bessarabian Jew in charge of obtaining, hiding, and distributing arms, is not mentioned at all. Arrested the day after Manouchian, she was tortured and sentenced to death alongside her male counterparts. Because French law forbade the execution of women by firing squad, she was deported to Stuttgart and beheaded by axe on May 10, 1944—her thirty-second birthday.

The only woman interviewed on camera in “Terrorists” in Retirement is Mélinée Manouchian, who speaks exclusively about the circumstances surrounding her husband’s arrest rather than her own activity typing clandestine leaflets and carrying messages for the FTP-MOI, as described in her memoirs. Whether the product of modesty, simple oversight, or post-production editing, her testimony is packaged differently than her male counterparts’ and has an entirely different narrative function. Here Mosco employs the same variety of contrapuntal montage pioneered by Ophüls in The Sorrow and the Pity: juxtaposing short segments of witness testimony with period sources and retrospective commentary to articulate a scathing political critique. Significantly, the credibility of this argument relies as much on emotion generated through the effective use of cinematic techniques such as editing, characterization, staging, and camera angles, as it does on the analytical methods of historiography.

45. Courtois, Peschanski, and Rayski, Le sang de l’étranger, 356.
46. Ibid., 360; Holban, Testament, 122–3.
Mosco was deeply influenced by this approach, which he praised as creating “a unity of form and content that gives it an intensity equal to classical tragedy. The characters in the film do not know each other, but they share a city, a time, and a shadowy common ground. Ophuls encloses them in an arena, the tragic arena of collaboration.”\textsuperscript{49} “Terrorists” in Retirement employs similar devices to justify the accusation that in the weeks preceding the devastating police raids of November 1943, PCF leaders refused Manouchian’s requests for evacuation from Paris—a common practice in cases of imminent danger—despite knowing that he and other key members of the FTP-MOI had been identified to French police by a captured militant named Joseph Davidowicz, and that they were being tailed almost continuously. The case emerges gradually in a sixteen-minute montage built around the conflicting testimony from Mélinée Manouchian and Boris Holban, the Romanian military head of the FTP-MOI from mid-1942 through September 1943. Mélinée speaks with passion and conviction while recounting her husband’s comment to her that PCF officials “want to lead us to certain death.” She indicts Holban by name, claiming not only that he refused her husband’s entreaty for relocation but also threatened to have him executed as a deserter if he fled on his own.

Visually, Mélinée’s appearance, body language, and the interview site all suggest generosity, candor, and truthfulness. Wearing a brown long-sleeve sweater and flowered blouse open at the neck, she sits comfortably in the living room of her modest apartment on an overstuffed chair with legs uncrossed and looks directly into the camera as she speaks, occasionally pumping her hands for emphasis. Mosco highlights these details by filming her in a combination of medium-range shots and close-ups, the latter emphasizing the intense anguish and anger she still feels forty years after the fact. In her quest for long-denied justice, the gray-haired widow is irresistibly sympathetic, wielding a moral authority that galvanizes the credibility of her allegations.

In contrast to Mélinée, the aggrieved, indomitable victim, Mosco casts Holban as an implacable villain who denies any knowledge of or responsibility for the fall of Manouchian. Once again that impression emerges through subtle techniques of visual framing and mise-en-scène. Specifically, Mosco discredits Holban by including footage of him watching Mélinée’s interview in an editing room. Dressed in a dark suit, tie, and tinted

\textsuperscript{49. Letter from Mosco to Roberto Silvi, \textit{Via Libre}, no. 9 (July–August 2002).}
glasses, with a smoldering cigarette in his left hand and a lighter in his right, Holban looks like a cold, calculating crime boss from a noir gangster film rather than a heroic former resister. Initially shown from a distance, he sits motionless and stares impassively across a table toward an unseen television. Yet the sight and sound of Mélinée’s testimony—seen from Holban’s perspective in a brief shot of the video monitor—quickly produces a reaction. Now framed at much closer range, his once tightly clenched fingers now tremble around the cigarette and fidget nervously around the lighter; his head remains immobile as he takes a drag, but he clenches his jaw and purses his lips tightly, forcefully exhaling through his nose a stream of smoke that curls around his head before rising to the top of the frame. A moment later, he rocks his head slightly from side to side and changes hands with his cigarette in response to Mélinée’s charge that he is responsible for her husband’s death.

Before he ever utters a word of rebuttal, everything about Holban smacks of duplicity. His subsequent dismissal of Mélinée’s testimony as “nothing but fabrications” and personal attack on her as “someone who was never active in the resistance . . . but who presents herself as an a great source of knowledge and chooses . . . me as a scapegoat” ring hollow as well, as do his claims that he had already left Paris himself by August 1943, that Manouchian never asked him to be evacuated, and that he did not even know who Manouchian’s superior was at the time of the police dragnet a month later. His credibility is further undermined by a parade of addi-
tional witnesses including Simon Rayman, brother of the executed “affiche rouge” militant Marcel Rayman, and Louis Gronowski, political coordinator of all foreign communist activities in the occupied zone and liaison officer with PCF head Jacques Duclos. Gronowski admits rather sheepishly that the party often moved hunted FTP-MOI members from Paris to the provinces, but that “we could not surrender, so certain other groups had to fight.” In response to Mosco’s retort that “that means that they were sacrificed, right?,” the old man shrugs and adds “in every war there are sacrifices”—a declaration to which the director, now fully embracing his interventionist role, adds weight by replaying as an echo over the frozen image of Gronowski’s face.

Having given the supposed political treachery of the PCF a face, Mosco turns to the crucial issue of motivations. A first explanation is provided by Stéphane Courtois, who three years earlier had published an exceptionally detailed, meticulously researched political history of French Communism during the war: 50

From summer 1943 on, the Communist Party clearly sought to affirm its superiority within the resistance. To that end, and to reinforce its prestige, it had to have bombings and other armed attacks to publicize. In Paris there was only one group available to carry out such attacks: the foreign combatants. The party leadership had the option of keeping them safe or keeping them in the fight. That was what happened, and we can safely say that they were sacrificed to serve the higher interests of the party.

Journalist Philippe Ganier-Raymond, author of an unapologetically romanticized account of the FTP-MOI based entirely on oral testimony, 51 adds a still more damning indictment by openly accusing the PCF of xenophobia and denying the FTP-MOI the arms and money they so desperately needed to defend themselves.

The liberation is approaching, and what’s going to happen? An army will emerge from the shadows with members named Boczov, Fingerewag, Della Negra, Glasz, Alfonso, and Elek. That cannot be allowed because the Communist Party has already decided to take a nationalistic, flag-waving tack. So names like Rol Tanguy, Colonel Fabien sound good, have a homey feel, make one think of Brittany. Perfect, the resistance will be French. . . . On the other hand, these men from Central Europe, with their

50. Courtois, Le PCF dans la guerre.
heavy accents, with their distinctive faces, from the moment they stopped receiving ammunition and money, they were left on their own and could do nothing but wander around and get caught.

Before resting his case, Mosco provides two additional bits of evidence made compelling by a deft blend of cinematic technique and adherence to classic historiographic principles. The first is a citation of a primary document: Manouchian’s last preexecution letter, which states in part “I forgive all those who have wronged me except for the one who betrayed us to save his own skin and those who sold us out.” Read by Mélinée in voice-over as a close-up of the handwritten letter appears on screen, the accusatory sentence is electronically underlined in red. The second exhibit relies on establishing a parallel between the Manouchian group’s fate and that of the FTP-MOI in Toulouse, which was dismantled by French police in March and April 1944. The comparative angle and geographic displacement are elegantly evoked in a handheld point-of-view sequence filmed in an overgrown country graveyard and introduced by a terse voice-over comment from narrator Simone Signoret: “‘Those who sold us out.’ To understand the meaning of what may have happened in Paris, we must take a trip.” As mournful cello music plays, the camera wanders erratically through thick grass, weeds, and wild roses at eye level, briefly stooping to examine a headstone almost entirely obscured by vegetation before continuing on its way. The impression produced is that of being lost or trapped—an appropriate metaphor for the difficult, often confusing process of searching for historical truth forty years after the fact.

Yet that feeling dissipates almost immediately upon hearing the testimony from Claude and Raymond Lévy, FTP-MOI veterans from Toulouse who in April 1944 were disavowed by French FTP and left to their own devices. Arrested, tortured, and put on a train to Auschwitz, they incredibly managed to escape and return home in late August just after the city’s liberation. With nearly all their unit’s members dead or missing in action, its wartime exploits were formally credited to French Communist resisters in the region who had become active only following the Normandy landings. Fittingly, Mosco gives Mélinée the last word in another voice-over that accompanies images of her gazing forlornly out her open apartment window, arms crossed on the sill: “I can’t help thinking that maybe if the Nazis hadn’t made that red poster, nobody would have ever spoken about the foreign combatants. They would have been buried and forgotten.”
A Distinguished Legacy

Like his interviewees after the war, Mosco faded quickly from public view once the media feeding frenzy around “Terrorists” in Retirement subsided, yet his work had a lasting impact. Beyond bringing the wartime exploits of Jews and immigrants into French public consciousness, the film served as the direct impetus for a flood of memoirs by FTP-MOI veterans and the first scholarly analyses of the movement based on the juxtaposition of archival sources with survivor testimony.52 The most thorough of these, Stéphane Courtois and Denis Peschanski’s 1989 book Le sang de l’étranger, exonerated Boris Holban of all personal responsibility in Manouchian’s arrest and definitively refuted Ganier-Raymond’s argument that the PCF had cynically deprived the FTP-MOI of material support in order to facilitate their arrest, which resulted primarily from brutally efficient, methodical police work; the information provided by several captured militants under torture; and tactical errors made by the FTP-MOI themselves.

However, echoing Louis Gronowski’s comments to Mosco on screen, Courtois and Peschanski confirmed that high-ranking French Communist Party leaders including Rol Tanguy did deny Manouchian’s evacuation requests in mid-1943 and pressure the FTP-MOI to continue armed attacks against the Germans while declaring French collaborationist targets off limits—a strategy designed to galvanize the party’s patriotic credentials and maximize its political capital for the postwar power struggle against the Gaullists. By revealing that long-repressed truth, “Terrorists” in Retirement played a crucial role in problematizing the moral dichotomies that historians had traditionally used to assess French conduct during the occupation. In the process, it indirectly paved the way for groundbreaking new research focused on the complex, often maddeningly contradictory nexus of ethical, ideological, and material considerations that shaped resistance, collaboration, and attentisme.53

Mosco would go on to make two additional films exposing the hypocrisy and devastating human consequences of French Communist Party

52. In the first category, see especially Rayski, Nos illusions perdues; Tchakarian, Les Francs-Tireurs de l’affiche rouge; and Holban, Testament. In the second, see Robrieux, L’Affaire Manouchian; Wieviorka, Ils étaient juifs, résistants, communistes; Lazare, La Résistance juive; and Courtois, Peschanski, and Rayski, Le sang de l’étranger.

53. Notable works include Kedward, Occupied France; Sweets, Choices in Vichy France; Burrin, La France à l’heure allemande, 1940–1944; Kedward, In Search of the Maquis; Baruch, Servir l’Etat Français; and Simon Kitson, Vichy et la chasse aux espions Nazis, 1940–1942.
politics: Mémoires d’ex (Memoirs of the expelled, 1991), a three-hour television documentary that recounts the history of the party from 1920 to 1989 by examining case studies of excommunicated militants; and Ni travail, ni famille, ni patrie (Neither work, nor family, nor homeland, 1993), a sequel to “Terrorists” in Retirement that builds on the testimony of Claude and Raymond Lévy to tell the story of their FTP-MOI brigade in Toulouse between 1942 and 1944. Despite using many of the same cinematic techniques, the latter film is more rigorous in its historiographic methodology and radical in its ideological critique. Ni travail offers carefully weighed proof not only that high-ranking Communist leaders maintained the FTP-MOI on the front lines in extreme danger to enhance the party’s postwar political capital, as in Paris, but that they repudiated the Toulouse brigade following its unauthorized assassination of two French collaborators in late 1943: the virulently anti-Semitic, procollaborationist abbot Louis Sorel and state prosecutor Pierre Lespinasse, who had successfully lobbied for the execution of the brigade’s founder, Marcel Langer. That disavowal left the brigade without arms or funding and facilitated its dismemberment by Franco-German counter-intelligence during March and April 1944. In a final stroke of ignominy, at the liberation local French FTP formally claimed credit for their foreign peers’ attacks against German targets—an act of expropriation that contributed to the denial of military pensions for the few FTP-MOI veterans who survived the war.54

As a measure of how far French memory politics had evolved in the ten-year interval between the two films, Ni travail caused no controversy and drew nearly unanimous praise when it premiered on the Arte television station in 1993.55 Eight months later a French educational commission included the film in a pilot program introducing high-school students to television as a tool of cultural analysis.56 Made available on VHS shortly after its premiere, Ni travail was reissued on DVD in 2007 and incorporated into the catalog of the Bibliothèque d’Information Publique, the body charged with supplying cultural and educational audiovisual materials to public libraries throughout France. Later that year the release of La traque de l’affiche rouge, a television documentary by Jorge Amat and Denis

54. Boursier, La guerre de partisans dans le sud-ouest de la France; de Verbizier, Ni travail, ni famille, ni patrie.
Peschanski summarizing historical research on the topic since the mid-1990s, clarified the circumstances surrounding Manouchian’s capture by French police and confirmed Mosco’s portrait of PCF wartime politics.

Yet since late 2009 this hard-won revisionism has been overshadowed somewhat by Robert Guédiguian’s The Army of Crime (L’armée du crime), a dramatization of the Paris FTP-MOI’s final months. Enthusiastically endorsed by the PCF in L’Humanité and a special advance screening at the newspaper’s annual festival, which also featured the director (himself a longtime party activist) and his three principal actors reading a selection wartime letters, this “legend to help us live in the present” renewed the orthodox image of the FTP-MOI as heroic martyrs who willingly sacrificed themselves for a greater cause. In so doing, the film omitted all reference to French Communist leaders’ political manipulation of the group and Manouchian’s resentful accusations of betrayal (despite including idealistic portions of the same letter to Mélinée). Guédiguian’s “red-tinged gospel” even went so far as to have one of the characters repudiate Stalinism on screen—a glaring anachronism that would have been unthinkable for a communist militant in 1943 and immediate grounds for excommunication from the party.

The film’s national release briefly reignited the antagonism sparked by “Terrorists” in Retirement twenty-four years earlier, with communist and socialist writers exchanging their old arguments and accusations. There was also a heated exchange in Le Monde between Guédiguian, historian Stéphane Courtois, and Elise Frydman, cousin of a former FTP-MOI member. Echoing Courtois, who characterized the film as “a legend that fails to honor the memory of these resistance fighters by showing contempt for their own history,” Frydman denounced as “grotesque” and “scandalous” the portrayal of her relative as “an exalted, cartoon cowboy [un Lucky

Luke exalté]” who blithely socialized with girls between bombings and assassination attempts. In response, Guédiguian defended his right to express a personal truth through artistic license, contending that “there is no history without legend and no legend that is not based on real facts. . . . I wanted my Army of Crime to be an army of light, the light of young men and women who were crazy about humanity and who from the shadows dreamed of a reconciled world.”

Though a significant contingent of cinema critics felt that Guédiguian’s predictable mise en scène, didactic tone, and excessive Romanticism undermined the film’s emotional and ideological potential, The Army of Crime generated good French ticket sales (404,000 in all) and was widely shown at public commemorations of the resistance as well as in French schools. It also won the second annual “best film” award (the Prix lycéen du cinéma) given by a panel of five hundred high-school students, prompting debate about the place of minority ethnic groups in contemporary French society. An even more significant and encouraging development occurred in mid-2010 when the Ministry of Culture announced that in recognition of increasing usage, the archives of the French counterintelligence units that arrested and tortured the FTP-MOI would be digitized and made available to the general public on the web beginning in 2015.

Despite the seminal role it played in launching this process nearly thirty years ago, “Terrorists” in Retirement has been largely forgotten, with no theatrical rereleases and only two showings on French television since 1985. While perhaps understandable in light of the film’s factual gaps and

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68. Arte broadcast the film on July 4, 2001 and February 18, 2004. In the United States “Terrorists” did enjoy brief theatrical runs in New York and San Francisco in 2001 and since that time
interpretative distortions, such neglect has unfortunately obscured Mosco’s legacy and a classic of historical documentary that deserves to be remembered alongside Ophüls’s *The Sorrow and the Pity* and Lanzmann’s *Shoah* for its innovative use of cinematic technique to reshape collective memory of World War II.

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The Basque Country through the Nazi Looking Glass, 1933–1945

SANTIAGO DE PABLO

During the Third Reich, National Socialism used both movies and “non-fiction” films to spread its ideology and to mold and strengthen the German notion of the “people’s community.”¹ In addition to propaganda films, Nazi cinema dealt with a broad range of subjects, some of them seemingly pure entertainment. However, all of these films were integral to forming the specific Nazi Weltanschauung or worldview.² The goal of this chapter is to analyze the documentary cinema produced in Nazi Germany about the Basque Country. In order to understand its context I will first trace the history of cultural relationships between Germany and the Basque Country, before and after Hitler’s rise to power, as well as the attitude of Basque nationalism toward National Socialism. It is worth noting that the spread of Nazism in interwar Europe affected the Basques differently, according to their location in the French or Spanish state. As happened in all of France, the Northern Basque Country suffered the consequences of German occupation and World War II. The Southern Basque Country, located in Spain, witnessed pro-Franco German intervention in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). Ideological differences between the Basque Nationalist Party (EAJ-PNV, by its Basque and Spanish acronyms) and Nazism did not hinder attempts to form political relationships between them or Nazi interest in Basque ethnic particularity.

¹ Fritzsche, Life and Death in the Third Reich, 74.
² See Welch, Propaganda and the German Cinema 1933–1945; Rentschler, The Ministry of Illusion; de España, El cine de Goebbels; Giesen, Nazi Propaganda Films; O’Brien, Nazi Cinema as Enchantment; and Tegel, Nazis and the Cinema.
Wilhelm von Humboldt’s travels to the Basque Country (1799–1801) were the starting point of German intellectual interest in the Basque language, culture, and history. Through his publications, von Humboldt brought the Basque Country to the attention of European intelligentsia and promoted a romantic concept of the Basque nation, linked to its language and Volksgeist (national spirit), whose existence was unquestionable, in spite of the political border dividing the seven historic Basque territories in Spain and France.³ Throughout the nineteenth century, other German scholars followed von Humboldt’s footsteps, mostly focusing on the Basque language, as did Karl August Mahn, Arno Grimm, and Karl Hannemann.⁴ Hannemann, together with the priest Theodor Linschmann, promoted the Basque studies journal *Euskara*, which published seventeen issues in Berlin from 1886 to 1896. This journal was the voice of the Baskischen Gesellschaft (Basque Society), founded in 1886 by Linschmann and Hannemann, which counted on the participation of intellectuals from France (Julien Vinson and Louis Lucien Bonaparte), Spain (Arturo Campión), and Germany (Hugo Schuchardt, Christian Cornelius Uhlenbeck, Karl August Mahn, Victor Stempf, and Rudolf Sprenger, consul of the German Empire Embassy in San Sebastián). *Euskara* included studies and reviews on the language, literature, and history of the Basque Country, paying special attention to the “Iberian problem” (the theory that identified Basques with the sole remnants of Iberians, a people with their own pre-Indo-European language, who were once found throughout Southern Europe but elsewhere disappeared).⁵ The work of one of the leading scholars of *Euskara*, the linguist Schuchardt, was essential in the diffusion of Basque studies in Germany.⁶ He was a professor in the universities of Leipzig, Halle, and Graz and the author of eighty-five publications on the Basque language between 1884 and 1928.

Not even the circumstances of World War I stopped German interest in the Basques. On the contrary, some German scholars took advantage of the presence of Basque POWs in Germany in order to intensify their research. As Hermann Urtel pointed out in 1922, “the sad days of the war did not prevent us from continuing to work in Germany on Basque linguist-

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⁴. See Urtel, “El pasado y el porvenir de los estudios vascos en Alemania,” 38.
tic and popular literature. We have worked among Basque war prisoners; we have collected many legends, tales, songs, [and] Basque superstitions, and we wish to publish them as soon as possible.” In this way, Urtel highlighted German contributions to “the beauty and vigor of this euskalduna [Basque] race,” which would have continuity after the collapse of the Weimar Republic.7

Indeed, traditional German involvement in the Basque Country did not decline when the Nazi party came to power in 1933. On the contrary, that cultural and scientific basis was amalgamated with the ethnic or Völkisch idea, elaborated by some German intellectuals and developed by Nazism, which looked for authentic or noncontaminated European peoples, in order to build a new order of ethnic groups under Hitler’s hegemony. According to these theories, in this new European order “people with ethnically German origins would be part of the new Reich, and other tribes, races, and nationalities should be granted a certain degree of self-government as satellites of the German Empire.”8 For Ludger Mees, the focus on “sub-state ethnic and allegedly ‘more natural’ entities . . . also opened the door to interest in and even sympathy for stateless nations like the Basques.”9

Reflecting this rising fascination, at least thirty-five publications about the Basque Country were printed in German between 1933 and 1945.10 Among them, the predominant topics were linguistics and history, concentrated on the first years of Nazi Germany (1933–1936). Quite the opposite, during the Spanish Civil War, German publications on Basque culture almost disappeared, doubtless as a consequence of Nazi support of Franco and of special circumstances related to the war in the Basque Country. EAJ-PNV support of the Republican side and international repercussions over the bombing of Gernika (Guernica), a symbol of Basque freedom from the nineteenth century, gave a special nuance to the Basque war. The fact that the German Condor Legion conducted the Gernika air raid turned any special attention to the Basque culture in Nazi Germany at that time into a politically inconvenient topic. After the Civil War, during 1939 and 1940, the great majority of German books and articles with references to the Basque Country focused on Nazi intervention in Spain during the

7. See Urtel, “El pasado y el porvenir de los estudios vascos en Alemania,” 40.
9. Ibid.
10. See Lindemann, “Alemanerazko euskal bibliografia.”
hostilities. Until the defeat of the Republic on April 1, 1939, Germany had denied the participation of its troops in the Spanish conflict. Once the war was over, however, there were no objections to speaking openly about German intervention, including the actions of the Condor Legion in the Basque Country in 1937. Many accounts of German combatants in the Spanish war reported their presence in the Basque Country while denying their participation in the bombing of Gernika. Instead, the destruction of Gernika was slanderously attributed to Basque defenders, as Franco had asserted.¹¹ In addition, in 1939–1940 several new works about Basque culture were published again under the Nazi regime, although Germany immediately had to center all its efforts in World War II.

Table 9.1. German bibliography on the Basque Country (1933–1945)

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Source: Lindemann, “Alemanerazko euskal bibliografia.” I use the translations and the classification proposed by this author, excluding only the unpublished manuscripts and correcting a few misinterpretations.

As is normal in a totalitarian state like the Nazi regime, many of the supposedly cultural works on the Basque Country also had an ideological nuance.¹² Others did not conceal their direct relationship with Span-

¹¹. Unlike Lindemann, Southworth states that “during the years of World War II . . . the Germans rarely mentioned Guernica. Only one reference to the town has been found in any of the many books written and published by veterans of the Condor Legion and distributed widely throughout Germany during the war years.” Southworth, Guernica! Guernica!, 240.

¹². As Michaud writes, “Nazi language identified Kultur with all the positive aspects of tradition, and Zivilisation with all the evils of rationalist modernity.” Michaud, The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany, 255. See also Herf, Reactionary Modernism.
ish and Basque politics, exemplified in the articles “The Situation of Non Castilian Minorities in the Spanish State” and “The Land of the Basques: Historical, Cultural and Political Foundations of Basque Struggle for Self-Government.”

It is very significant that some texts, such as “The Euro-Africans and the Racial Division of the Iberian Peninsula,” made special reference to race. Others tried to link the Basques to peoples, like the Tibetans, who were considered sacred by some Nazi ideologists, as the book Relationships between Sumerian language and the Basque, the Western Caucasian and the Tibetan did. Some writers even applied the concept of Lebensraum (vital space)—a central concept of Nazi ideology, which was also transferred to other small nations, like Brittany—to “the Iberian peoples” and specifically to the Basques. The Land of the Basques: Outlines of the Homeland of the Most Ancient Europeans, written by Wilhelm Ziesemer, an anthropologist at the University of Cologne, was extremely interesting. Published one year after Hitler assumed control of Germany, this work was “the first book about the Basque Country conceived according to the ideology of the Third Reich,” according to the review published in the Revista Internacional de los Estudios Vascos. As the author of the review, Gerhard Bähr, admitted—even though using a euphemism—the publication of this and other similar books was directly related to the political change that had taken place in Germany in 1933, and with the dissemination of the Völkisch cultural idea, with obvious political implications. According to Bähr, “the events of the last years [Hitler’s takeover] have given a great boost to the study of Ethnography in Germany; in particular public interest about isolated races and ethnic groups has increased. Therefore, the Basques also deserve of more attention and not only linguistically but also from a racial and political point of view.”

17. Ziesemer, Das Land der Basken.
18. RIEV 25, no. 4 (1934): 726.
20. RIEV 25, no. 4 (1934): 726.
In his book, Ziesemer found “similarities” between some Basque and German cultural characteristics, pointing out precisely those that were “regarded as a reminiscence of an ancient pagan cult.” Bähr concluded that the German anthropologist had written his book with “genuine admiration of Basque genius, to whom [Ziesemer] attributes, in some way, world-wide importance.” It is significant that this review regretted the relatively little attention that Ziesemer paid to Sabino Arana y Goiri, the founder of the EAJ-PNV: “In my opinion, Arana’s biography is a bit shadowy . . . which is a pity because a more distinctive portrait of Arana y Goiri’s personality—totally unknown in Germany—would awaken certain sympathies in this country.”

Born in the Basque Country but from German origins, Bähr established, as early as 1934, a possible cultural and political relationship between the EAJ-PNV and Nazi Germany, based on that supposed affinity or empathy between Hitler’s and Arana’s ideologies. In short, as Mees once noted, “at first glance . . . the racial component in Sabino Arana’s concept of the nation provided the possibility of establishing a certain link with the Völkisch element of the Nazi-doctrine.”

In spite of Bähr’s desire to link Arana and Hitler, the supposed affinity between the EAJ-PNV and the Nazis never became a fact since other key points in the ideology and political tradition of Basque nationalism were a barricade against that possible attraction. In fact, although Basque nationalist newspapers admitted the organizational ability of the Nazis and the “national revival” prompted by them in 1933, they also showed, from the very beginning, a great distrust of the Führer. This bias was founded in part on Hitler’s anti-Catholic policy, but also on the Basque nationalist vision of Nazism as an example of “exaggerated” nationalism, totally different from the Basque movement. For instance, already on January 10, 1933, just before Hitler took power, the influential Basque nationalist priest, José Ariztimuño, criticized the “execrable super-Nationalism” of the Nazis in

21. Ibid., 727.
22. Ibid.
23. The Basque linguist Gerhard Bähr was born into a German family in the Basque town of Legazpi in 1900 and moved to Hannover in 1926. He was a member of the Academy of the Basque Language (Euskaltzaindia) and wrote several works about Basque language. After working as an interpreter in the German Army during World War II, he died in unknown circumstances in 1945, while Berlin was being conquered by the Russian Army. See Garmendia, Gerhard Bähr (1900–1945), and Jauregi, ed., Correspondencia de Gerhard Bähr con R.M. Azkue, H. Schuchardt y J. Urquijo.
the EAJ-PNV newspaper *Euzkadi* and explicitly condemned their “racism because of their superhuman exaltation of their German origin, denying any divinity.” According to this author, it was totally inadmissible that the Nazis, based on “superhuman destinies of an uncontaminated race, believe themselves to be a people with right to set themselves up as mentors of mankind.”

After Hitler’s electoral victory and appointment as chancellor, Ariztimuño admitted that the Nazi leader had changed his tactics during the election campaign, restraining “the extremism of his exaggerated Nationalism” in order to attract voters. Yet, despite everything, the EAJ-PNV persisted in criticizing “his agnostic and anti-Christian ideas, his doctrines of hate against Jews, and his designs to sacrifice sick and disabled people to the purity of the German race.”

Over the next years, Basque nationalist newspapers continued to criticize both Nazi ideology and German expansionism, which according to Basque nationalist writer José de Artetxe, were opposite to “Christian postulates,” as was demonstrated by the “neopaganish ideas” of some of their leaders.

As Núñez Seixas emphasizes, it was precisely “Catholicism and traditionalism” that permitted the EAJ-PNV not to fall even indirectly under German or fascist control, as some sectors of Catalan radical nationalism did. Indeed, thanks to these ideological discrepancies and to the democratic evolution of Basque nationalism, totally opposed to Nazi contempt for liberal democracy, the EAJ-PNV did not come under National Socialist influence between 1933 and 1936, unlike the Bretons and other small nationalist movements in Europe. Consequently, when the Congress of European Nationalities became a weapon of the foreign policy of the Third Reich, Basque nationalists began to view it with suspicion. Needless

27. See Ugalde, *La acción exterior del nacionalismo vasco (1890–1939)*, 400–9. Relationships between Nazism and Christianity have given rise to many studies and controversies. See for example Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*. In any event, it is very significant that EAJ-PNV press expressly highlighted Alfred Rosenberg’s ideas, as well as Nazi groups that defended a pagan cult, in order to criticize Nazism.
29. The Congress of European Nationalities was an organization set up in 1925 as an instrument of defense of national minorities, mainly from central Europe, in which the EAJ-PNV had entered in 1930. See Núñez Seixas, “Some International Aspects of Problems of Nationalities in Interwar Europe (1919–1939),” 1–23.
to say, anti-Nazism in the EAJ-PNV increased still more after its decision to fight in favor of the Republic against Franco and his allies, Hitler and Mussolini. As a result, the EAJ-PNV did not attend the 1938 Congress of European Nationalities in Stockholm, after verifying that “this organization is in Hitler’s hands.”

Taking into account ideological discrepancies between the EAJ-PNV and Nazism from 1933 onward, the Basque nationalist stance in the Civil War and the bombing of Gernika by the Condor Legion, it is understandable that Nazi cinematography about the Civil War would give a vision completely contrary to Basque nationalism. Totally controlled by Goebbels and the Propaganda Ministry, German newsreels and documentaries forgot the Nazis’ previous interest in Basque culture to reflect the Francoist vision of the conflict, as well as ideological and foreign policy targets of Nazi Germany. To give just one example, the main German newsreel *Ufa-Tonwoche* included news of the destruction of Gernika in spring 1937. The worldwide controversy sparked by the bombing incited *Ufa-Tonwoche* to show footage of the town’s ruins, trying to demonstrate that its own defenders had wrecked it. Moreover, the newsreel turned the controversy into an occasion to create propaganda against the Jews and the “Bolsheviks,” although the latter included Catholic Basque nationalists, who fought together with left-wing militias defending the Basque Country against Franco. Notably, the Nazi newsreel ignored any reference to Gernika as a symbol of Basque freedom, which was well-known among German scholars specialized in Basque culture. In fact, the above-mentioned book written by Ziesemer in 1934 contained a whole section on Gernika and its oak, icon of Basque identity. In contrast, *Ufa-Tonwoche* spoke about “the ruins of the old Spanish town of Gernika, some hours after Bolshevik incendiaries would have been expelled by Nationalist [Francoist] troops. The press run by mendacious Jews said that German airplanes had destroyed the town of Gernika but almost immediately the international press has been able to refute this information, propagated by the Bolsheviks before fleeing from the town, which was burned down house by house.”


31. I researched a copy of this newsreel preserved in a private collection.

In all the news about the Basque Country released by *Ufa-Tonwoche* between 1936 and 1939, reference to Basque identity was also totally absent. For political reasons, German newsreels were not interested in showing that special identity, in the same way that German publications on Basque culture almost disappeared from 1936 to 1939. The already mentioned German and Nazi attraction to the Basque Country had stopped just at the moment that it had ceased to be a useful instrument for Hitler's policy. The fact that the EAJ-PNV had sided with the Spanish Republic against Franco, and therefore against Nazi Germany, converted the Basque culture and, in some way, the Basques as a whole into enemies. In this way, Gernika had been divested of its exceptional character, since in the middle of the war the Nazis could not make any concession to the enemies, neither to the “Red Spaniards” nor to the Basque Catholics.

Something similar happened in the documentary films that Nazi Germany produced about the Spanish Civil War. However, the most important of these, *Helden in Spanien* (Heroes in Spain) from 1938, was in part an exception to the general rule.33 This movie summarized the war on Basque soil, focusing in particular on the spring 1937 offensive and on the destruction of Gernika. This part of *Helden in Spanien* was almost entirely edited using footage from the Spanish documentary *Frente de Vizcaya y 18 de julio* (The Biscayan Front and the Eighteenth of July) from 1937. The latter was a film strongly influenced by Carlism (a popular movement with broad support in the Basque Country and Navarre) and consequently more receptive to a Basque cultural and nonpolitical regionalism than the films made by the pro-fascist Falange.34 Due to this transfer of images and sounds from the Carlist documentary to the German one, part of the pro-Basque approach borrowed from *Frente de Vizcaya* remained in *Helden in Spanien*. For example, in spite of reiterating the Francoist assertions about the destruction of Gernika, this film acknowledged its symbolic character, as the “cradle of the Basque fueros [old laws],” according to its voice-over.

Nevertheless, *Helden in Spanien* showed a mainly Nazi point of view and consequently supported the Falange within Franco’s Spain, but paid

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33. Fritz C. Mauch, Paul Laven, and Joaquin Reig directed the film.

34. Falange Española was a Spanish far-right political party founded by José Antonio Primo de Rivera in 1933. Its “national-syndicalist” ideology was more or less similar to Italian fascism. The unity of the Spanish nation was one of the central ideas of Falange. Consequently, this movement was characterized by a strong anti-separatism, even after its forced unification with Carlism, under Franco’s command, in 1937.
no attention to Carlism. It is hardly surprising that the reception of *Helden in Spanien* reflected the internal rivalry between Carlism and the Falange. When this documentary was shown in February 1939 in Pamplona (the Navarrese capital and nerve center of Carlism) the audience booed and banged to protest against the “tendentious” character of the film. Several Navarrese Carlist leaders wrote to Franco’s government complaining about *Helden in Spanien* for having “distorted the facts blatantly,” hushing up the important contribution of Basque-Navarrese Carlism to the military uprising, and highlighting only the work of the Falange. This was further evidence that totalitarian Nazi propaganda was not interested in supporting historical or regional particularities within Francoist Spain, not to mention Basque cultural identity. For that reason the approach given to the Civil War in the Basque Country by Nazi cinema was analogous to the one given to the Spanish conflict as a whole, ignoring previous German interest in Basque culture.

After their defeat in the Civil War, the main leaders of the EAJ-PNV went to exile, settling primarily in Paris and in the French Basque Country. France’s defeat in 1940 and the German occupation forced many Basque nationalist leaders into exile in the United Kingdom and the Americas. Meanwhile, those who stayed in France opted either to go underground or to coexist with the new regime. In any event, the EAJ-PNV decided to support the Allies in World War II. Its strategy was based on the assumption that Franco would enter the war and the definitive defeat of Germany would lead to Allied military intervention in Spain and to the overthrow of Franco’s dictatorship. Yet, in spite of this decision, in occupied France some Basque nationalists also explored alternative strategies for dealing with the Nazi regime, as a last resort if Germany won the war. It is true, however, that it was a minority option, quite the contrary to what Breton nationalists did. More to the point, this pro-Nazi strategy compelled those Basque nationalists to create a new reality, emphasizing only those aspects of Arana’s ethnic nationalism that seemed similar to Hitler’s and overlooking all differences between Nazi and Basque nationalist ideology.

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37. See Jiménez de Aberásturi, *De la derrota a la esperanza*.
specifically the conduct of the EAJ-PNV in the Civil War. The person in charge of mediation between the EAJ-PNV and the Nazis was Werner Best, head of the civilian administration of the German Military Command in France. Best had already taken steps to attract Breton nationalists, proposing a “new European Völkisch order.” This was intended to end the artificial structure based on “abstract” states, getting back to “living peoples” like the Irish, the Bretons, the Flemish, and the Basques, who had defended their “Völkisch particularity” with “tenacity.”

A specific report on the Basque Country, written by one of Best’s assistants, stressed that, in spite of Basques’ alliance with the “Reds,” the Basques did not reject Germans, due to their “coincidence in the racial vision of the world.” Using a self-serving falsification of reality, this account made an effort to establish a parallel between Basques and Germans, even including anti-Semitism: “The Basques base their idea of Volk [people] on the same blood in the veins of all the Basques. They underscore that the purity of the race conserved during thousands of years makes them different from Spaniards and Frenchmen, who, so they manifest, have mixed themselves in terms of race. . . . The racial purity conserved by the Basques is also expressed in the fact that Jews were not allowed to enter into the Basque Country.”

These speculative reports crystallized in Best’s idea of establishing “a close-knit and effective relationship with the Basque Nationalist Party, setting up an agreement with it, which is necessary.” His main interlocutor was one of the few French Basque members of the EAJ-PNV, Eugène Goyheneche, who in 1942 sent a secret memorandum to the Nazis entitled “Euzkadi [the Basque Country] and the Europe of the future.” In this report, Goyheneche underlined the traditional interest of numerous German scholars in Basque culture and insisted not only on the supposed purity of the Basque race but also on its similarity to the German one. According to this report, this connection was shown in the presence of the lauburu (a cross similar to the swastika) in traditional Basque ornamentation. In order to justify this imaginary natural friendship between Nazis

41. Ibid., 50–51.
42. Original document in Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, R 901 A 4; 61164. Quoted in de Pablo, Mees, and Rodriguez Ranz, El péndulo patriótico, 111.
and Basques, Goyheneche hardly spoke about the attitude of the EAJ-PNV in the Civil War and avoided mentioning the bombing of Gernika. The report concluded that “the Basque people are convinced that they will not be forgotten or disregarded when in the future the conditions of life in the new Europe will be established.”

Nevertheless, in practice neither Goyheneche’s ideas nor Best’s geo-racial theories, advocating an alliance between Basque nationalists in the EAJ-PNV and Nazis, ever came to fruition. On the one hand, Best’s theoretical pro-Basque bias never had enough influence on Hitler and his high command, who were not really worried about striking up a friendship with the EAJ-PNV. On the other hand, in spite of these frustrated attempts to establish a relationship between the and the Nazi regime, among EAJ-PNV members the option to favor the Allies was undoubtedly predominant, as a consequence of its decision to fight against Franco in the Civil War. It is probably not a coincidence that the German high command assigned Best to Denmark in November 1942, moving him away from France, where he wanted to put into practice his ideas about small satellite nations of Germany in the new Europe under Hitler’s supremacy.

In spite of this failure, Best’s call for a Nazi alliance with the Basques, within the framework of the new European racial order, had left some traces, as is evident in the German short documentary *Im Lande der Basken* (In the Land of the Basques) that premiered in June 1944. This film was the cinematographic translation of an indulgent vision of the Basques, promoted by Nazis, as a people close to racial Germany. That same vision had appeared before the Civil War in Ziesemer’s book. Produced by the firm Dr. Brieger–Film of Berlin, *Im Lande der Basken* was directed by Herbert Brieger himself and was presented, according to the credits, by the “Cultural Section of the Ufa.” Although the film was released in June 1944,
taking into account the date of other movies made by Brieger in France, the seasonal clothes worn by the people who appear in the documentary, and the time necessary to complete it, the filming must have happened in the summer or at the latest in the fall of 1943. This thirteen-minute film is a very interesting one and poses many questions: Why would the Nazis be interested in showing a film about the Basque Country in June 1944, when the German army was struggling to repel the Allied advance in France? Why was filmmaker Herbert Brieger, one of the most important Nazi documentary makers, fascinated by the Basque Country? Why was the important German production company Ufa involved in the production and distribution of this film? Why did Victor von Ihne, secretary of the private Chancellery of Adolf Hitler, collaborate on this film?48

In my opinion, the answers to these questions are related to the political and cultural relationships between Germans and Basques before and above all during the Nazi occupation of France. This film must be analyzed from the point of view of the particular historical moment in which it was shot and produced: during the Third Reich, one year before the end of World War II and in a France that was still occupied by the Germans. Only in this way is it possible to understand Brieger’s interest in making a documentary about the Basque Country in the twilight of World War II. In addition, given that Brieger was himself a filmmaker linked to the central nucleus of the Nazi Party, his decision to make a film about the Basque Country was most likely not exclusively personal or even a matter of chance. Moreover, Im Lande der Basken should be regarded as a good example of one of the most important genres in German cinema between 1918 and 1945: the Kulturfilm or cultural film, a special kind of documentary, which was usually shown before the main movie in theaters. During the Nazi regime, the instructional character of the Kulturfilm blended with political propaganda, focused both on Germany and abroad.49 It is also worthwhile to remember that during the occupation both Vichy and the Germans were interested in making and showing documentary

48. Among the collaborators quoted in the credits it is worthwhile to highlight the presence of Carl Ebert. We do not know whether he was the producer and director of theater and opera of the same name that abandoned Germany precisely after Hitler’s takeover. Ebert was producer of the Opera Festival at Glyndebourne, UK (1934), director of the State Conservatory for Theater and Opera in Ankara, Turkey (1935–1944), professor at University of Southern California (1948–1956), and general administrator of Deutsche Oper in West Berlin (1954–1961). See Reisman, Turkey’s Modernization, 88–90.
49. See Sandoval, Una mirada al mundo.
films, within the scope of “Nazis’ attempted colonization of French cinema” between 1940 and 1944.\(^\text{50}\) In addition, this documentary cannot be separated from others made at the same time by German filmmakers about minority European peoples, such as Kroatisches Bauernleben (The Life of Croatian Peasants, 1942, by Oktavijan Miletić), a “wonderful short film (a real treasure for ethnologists),” which shows everyday life in the Croatian countryside.\(^\text{51}\)

*Im Lande der Basken* includes the most romantic and bucolic landscapes of the French Basque provinces; it expounds the virtues of a people devoted to fishing, raising herding, and agriculture, and it shows the natural beauty of the region. It also depicts the most deeply rooted customs of the Basques, from a repeated filming of the Basque game *pelota* (handball) to a demonstration of the purported joy Basques feel when they perform folk dances. In this way it is true that, at first sight, *Im Lande der Basken* seems similar to other documentaries about the Basque Country, which also attempt to show a romantic view of the region by focusing on its customs, rural landscapes, crafts, fishermen, shepherds, traditional dances, and sports. Some scholars have emphasized that not only in the first half of the twentieth century but also after Franco’s death, “some filmmakers tended to emphasize the folkloric, traditional, idyllically rural version of Basque life, disconnected from the outside world,” avoiding “the real changes to Basque life wrought by modernization, urbanization, and capitalist development.”\(^\text{52}\)

*Im Lande der Basken* shows this traditional and romantic view of the Basque Country, but adds a special nuance. As good propaganda does, only in the background do we see the deep meaning of the movie through carefully selected images that demonstrate the interest of some prominent Nazis (including Best) in ethnic issues related to a mysterious people of unknown origins, in opposition to contaminated races. In this context, the Basque Country—observed from a singular point of view—arose as a very interesting subject for the Nazi concept of a new ethnic Europe under the power of Hitler’s Germany. As was customary in Nazi documentaries,


every image included in *Im Lande der Basken* was selected according to Nazi premises, and the montage was also the result of a cinematic style created with the aim of achieving a single objective: the dissemination of the Nazi Party's ideology through cinematographic propaganda, hidden in films of great quality. This is the case in *Im Lande der Basken*, a film made up of superb quality images and an impressive soundtrack. The fact that the only existing copy is in German with subtitles in Czech may show the concern of Nazi cinema to expand its vision not only in Germany but also in the occupied countries.\(^\text{53}\)

More to the point, at least three other documentaries about the Basque Country, which are presumed lost, were produced in Nazi Germany: *Biscaya südwärts* (Biscay toward the South, from 1944, also directed by Brieger); *Die Basken* (The Basques); and *Das Volk der Basken* (The People of the Basques), whose release dates remain unknown. Another movie, *Im Baskenlande* (In the Basque Country), made in 1931 by H. Körösi, was distributed again in 1936.\(^\text{54}\) Hence *Im Lande der Basken* was not a unique phenomenon. On the contrary, it was linked to Nazi interest in the Basque Country, most of all in 1933–1936, before the Civil War, and explicitly to the aforesaid vision of the Basque Country “according to the ideology of the Third Reich” as shown in Ziesemer’s book. In fact, several cultural themes and issues described in that work also appeared repeatedly in the documentary: Basque sports, dances, mysterious steles in cemeteries, race, the Basque symbol *lauburu*, the importance of the rural house to both family and society, and the Basque people’s community. Although Ziesemer had devoted many pages to the town of Gernika in 1934, as a symbol of the Basque people, no reference to Gernika appeared in Brieger’s movie owing to the April 1937 bombing of the town.\(^\text{55}\)

In order to demonstrate the special identity of the Basques as an authentic Volk (people) and, indirectly, their relationship with the German nation, the key points stressed by *Im Lande der Basken* included the following: the notion of the Basque Country as a natural territory; representation of that region as isolated, rural, romantic, and picturesque; the importance

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\(^{53}\) We do not know whether there were other versions in different languages or whether there was a specific interest in showing this film in Czechoslovakia. On the cinematographic policy applied by Nazis in this country see Klimeš, “A Dangerous Neighbourhood,” 112–29.

\(^{54}\) de Pablo and Sandoval, “*Im Lande der Basken* (1944),” 159.

\(^{55}\) Ziesemer, *Das Land der Basken*, 37, 56, 154–66. This author dedicated more attention to some aspects ignored by Brieger, such as the industrialized southern Basque Country.
of the Basque family and house, and the Basques’ use of decorative motifs and symbols, which might suggest a link between the German and Basque races; the mysterious origins of the Basque race; a supposed Basque pre-Christian paganism; the importance of sport for the strength of the race and community; the effective use of folklore to represent the authentic spirit of a people; similarity between the Basque lauburu (figure 9.1) and the Nazi swastika; representations of the Basques, their occupations, and material objects as magical and captivating; and similarities between Basque and German attitudes toward animals and the environment.56

*Im Lande der Basken* depicts the Basque Country as a natural territory, beyond its political and artificial borders, as expressed by the map at the beginning of the film that shows no differentiation between France and Spain and in the only politically contextualized scene of the film: the international bridge linking the coastal French Basque town of Hendaye (Hendaia) to Spanish Basque territory. The bridge belongs half to Spain and half to France yet joins the Spanish and French Basque people.57

The film also focuses on a mountainous and isolated Basque Country, in the “wild world of the Pyrenees,” avoiding the cities, the tourism of Biarritz, and of course, the factories and workers of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa in the Spanish Basque Country. Actually, the whole documentary was shot in the occupied French Basque Country, although it seems likely that Brieger could also have made the film in the Spanish Basque Country, given Fran-

56. For a deeper analysis of this film, see Teresa Sandoval and Santiago de Pablo, “Herbert Brieger: A Nazi filmmaker and the Basque Country,” manuscript pending publication.

57. In fact, this was the same interpretation that Orson Welles gave in his documentary *The Basque Country* (1955). In a border crossing in the Pyrenees of Navarre he explains, “This border has always been more a theory than a fact . . . The people who live here are neither French nor Spanish.”
co’s relationship with the Germans. This choice reflects observations made by English writer Rodney Gallop in 1930: “The foreign visitor has always shown a disposition to concentrate on the French Basque Country at the expense of the Spanish provinces. The characteristics of the latter are more elusive, less picturesque and ‘romantic,’ perhaps, less ‘typically Basque.’ . . . The industrialization and modernization of the Spanish Basque Country have led superficial observers to consider it less Basque than the French provinces.”

The documentary also emphasizes the importance of family links and the traditional farmhouse (baserri) in the Basque Country, concentrating on coats of arms and decorative motifs on the lintels of doorways. Given the Nazis’ extreme interest in runes and other supposed esoteric and occult signs, the viewer might conclude that there was a certain relationship between the Aryan and the Basque “races.” It is worthwhile to remember that the German writer Guido von List had stated, at the beginning of the twentieth century, that mediaeval heraldry was based on magic runes whose forms remained hidden behind the symbolic conventions and were only visible for the initiated. The Nazis (especially Himmler) utilized these theories, which became part of the National Socialist identity, with political and esoteric interpretations. Nevertheless, in reality the coats of arms and signs used in traditional Basque art are merely decorative and do not have any esoteric meaning.

*Im Lande der Basken* also insists upon the mysterious origins of the Basque race, suggesting that the Basques could have been descended from the builders of the Tower of Babel, the inhabitants of Atlantis, the Finnish, the Phoenicians, the Mongols, or the Iberians. The Nazis were not only interested in race, blood origins, and genealogy but were also strongly attracted by the lost civilization of Atlantis, the supposed origin of the pure Aryan race. Reference to Atlantis in the documentary thus sought to create another link between Germans and Basques.

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58. See Viñas, *Franco, Hitler y el estallido de la Guerra Civil*; Bowen, *Spaniards and Nazi Germany*; and Bowen, *Spain during World War II*.
60. von List, *Das Geheimnis der Runen*.
In addition, Brieger’s film tries to show a supposed Basque pre-Christian paganism by suggesting that Catholicism, strongly present in Basque society at that time, was an imported and artificial religion. We can see this idea in the scene of the cemetery in the village of Ainhoa, where the camera skims over the “cheap glass imitations of French origin” (actually, Christian images such as a crucifix) and focuses on the authentic Basque symbols (such as the lauburu) on funerary steles, which, according to the voice-over, “nobody has been able to decipher until now.” Although the symbols have a Christian meaning and not a pagan one, the filmmaker tries to reinforce the idea of an enigmatic Basque people and to link them with the occultism and neo-paganism preached by some Nazi leaders.

The documentary also emphasizes sports, a subject frequently shown in Nazi cinema owing to the importance that Hitler himself gave to sports in youth education and in German nation-building. The film tries to highlight the strength of the race and the community of people around their own sport, the Basque pelota, defined by Brieger as the “Basque national game.” In the same way that the Nazis tried to strengthen sports in Germany, as a method “to win the heart of the people” and to demonstrate the hegemony of Aryan race, the film seeks to discover the same “cult of physical strength” in the Basque Country.

As the documentary shows, “national dance” is a subject that, like the pelota, is very spectacular, visual, and cinematographic, but at the same time is also linked with the Nazi movement’s idea of folklore as “an effective and potentially dangerous tool of the National Socialist Weltanschauung.” According to this theory, traditional folklore represents the authentic spirit of people, either German or Basque, hidden in their immemorial traditions.

Near the middle of the film, the camera provides a lingering, close shot of four plates decorated with the traditional lauburu, similar in shape to the swastika, urging the viewer to identify those “folk motifs” with the Nazi symbol. In fact, although the soundtrack makes no reference to the

64. Kruger, “Germany,” 20–1. However, in that part of the film we see some shots that seem to contradict the idea of showing a non-Catholic Basque Country: It is a scene of two priests wearing cassocks playing handball against two other players. This scene was probably included because of its exotic connotation and because it does not break the ideological message of the first part of the movie. Actually, a similar scene also appears in the above-mentioned Orson Welles’ documentary on the Basque Country.
65. Kamenetsky, “Folklore as a Political Tool in Nazi Germany,” 235.
swastika, it is significant that the camera lingers on this crockery in an exaggerated manner. In this way, Brieger tries not only to give a mysterious vision of the Basque people but also to establish a certain relationship between the Basque and German people.66

The film attempts to transport the audience into a lost, mysterious, and captivating world by featuring pirates and whale hunters in the harbor of Donibane Lohitzun (Saint-Jean-de-Luz), by attaching magical and mystifying meanings to the *makila* (a Basque walking stick with a hidden blade), and by seeking some kind of esoteric meaning in the unique characteristics of Basque churches. Finally, *Im Lande der Basken* stresses the importance of animals and the Basques’ good treatment of their livestock, which once again is an attempt to create a link between Basques and Germans. It is important to highlight that Himmler, reflecting the peculiar Nazi environmentalism (which gave more importance to animals than to human beings), used to say: “We Germans, who are the only people in the world who have a decent attitude toward animals.”67

*Im Lande der Basken* ends with images of forbidding surf on the Basque coast, and the following commentary in the film summarizes its main thrust: “In the dark and mountainous forests and in the wild valleys of the Pyrenees, which divided the [other] peoples, the Basques live. Their origin is still a mystery. Their lives are full of melancholy and loneliness, like the country which for centuries has been their homeland and is full of strength and impetuousness, like the wild waves of Biscay,” shown on screen.

It is true that this documentary was not too different from other romantic visions of the Basque Country created by foreign writers or filmmakers throughout the early twentieth century. *Im Lande der Basken* would also have appealed to Basque nationalists because their idea of national identity was similar to the one shown in the documentary. Themes in common include the mysterious origins and isolation of Basque people and the idea of a people’s community based on race. Cultural icons of the Basque Country represented in this documentary, such as the traditional farmhouse, Basque *pelota*, folk dances, and the *lauburu*, were common in Basque nationalist symbolism at that time. For example, Nemesio Sobreviela’s documentary *Guernika* (1937), produced by the Basque government

67. Quoted in Sala, *Diccionario crítico de mitos y símbolos del nazismo*, 397. See also Brügge-meier, Cioc, and Zeller, eds., *How Green Were the Nazis*?
and the most important Basque Nationalist film made during the Spanish Civil War, shows similar images to *Im Lande der Basken* and even has the same ending as the German film (the image of the waves breaking against rocks, as a metaphor of the strength of the Basque Country). Almost the only element alien to Basque nationalist ideology was Brieger’s idea of showing the imported and imposed character of Basque Catholic identity, an idea that contradicts the deep connection between traditional Basque nationalism and Catholicism.

As a matter of fact, although both issues are related, through this and other documentaries the Nazis were not really speaking about other peoples (in this case the Basques) but about the Germans themselves. As we have seen, many details shown in *Im Lande der Basken* were part of Nazi imagery, so their portrait of the Basque Country was also a self-portrait, a looking glass through which the Nazis tried to represent themselves. In *Im Lande der Basken* the search for lauburus in the shape of a swastika, for mysterious steles, for pre-Christian elements, for esoteric symbols, for isolated and majestic mountains, for national sport and folklore, and in conclusion, for a Basque Volksgemeinschaft or people’s community,\(^68\) more or less similar to the German one, recalls the Nazi fondness for ethnic studies with political consequences.

However, as Gallop used to say, “those who come to the Basque Country in the hope of finding a race which has always been unique will either be disappointed or hypnotize themselves into seeing something which does not exist.”\(^69\) The latter was the option chosen for political reasons by Best and cinematographically by Brieger in *Im Lande der Basken*. Neither of them was an outsider to the German National Socialist Party. The presence of Victor von Ihne, a person very close to Hitler, in the film crew of this documentary, as a “collaborator,” and Brieger’s prestige as a Nazi filmmaker show that the theories expressed in the movie were not isolated from the Nazi mainstream. This cinematographic interpretation of the Basques as a people with enough pedigree to be Hitler’s partner cannot be separated from Best’s frustrated attempts to set up a strategic alliance between the EAJ-PNV and the Nazis in the occupied France.

Even if in 1936–1939, Nazi Germany was not interested in a good relationship with the Basque Nationalist Party in 1940–1942, when *Im Lande*

\(^{68}\) Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich*, 38–56.  
der Basken was conceived, the situation had changed enough to make an
approach, not only political but above all cultural and in this case cinemat-
ographic, to Basque nationalism and to the Basque people. Nevertheless,
the historical reality went along pathways that were very different from
those imagined by Best and Brieger. Ignoring the tactical dealings of some
of its members with the Nazis in occupied France, the EAJ-PNV opted
decisively to support the Allies. This decision went far beyond mere strat-
egy, anchoring itself in the incompatibility between the EAJ-PNV’s Chris-
tian democratic ideology and totalitarian, somehow neo-pagan Nazism.

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The *Völkisch* Appeal: Nazi Germany, the Basques, and the Bretons

Ludger Mees

Since the advent of the modern age, nationalism—together with socialism—has been among the most powerful ideas of political thinking, and it is far from being sidelined at the beginning of twenty-first century. When the concept of nationalism emerged and was put into practice during the French Revolution, people rallied behind the banner of the nation to fight for freedom, self-government, and democracy in a historical context in which the feudal and absolutist structures of the ancien régime would be overcome by the new liberal and modern capitalist society. Yet, the idea of the nation and its defense against all types of enemies has also been the driving force behind the most terrible massacres, wars of extermination, eugenics, and the Holocaust. Nationalism has appeared in association with liberalism and democracy, but it has also been allied with fascism. On occasion, it has been a popular weapon used in the struggle against dictatorship, but in other circumstances nationalism has also helped to frame the discourse of dictatorial and totalitarian regimes.¹

Owing to this long life cycle of more than two centuries and the multiple expressions of nationalism within very different political, geographic, and cultural environments, it is not surprising that nationalism and ethnic mobilization have become one of the outstanding foci of interest and research among historians and other social scientists, especially since the end of World War II. Among the different conceptual approaches

to nationalism that have been formulated to define the complex and frequently contradictory nature of nationalism by means of scientific categories, the juxtaposition of a “political” and a “cultural” or “ethnic” concept of the nation is one of the most prominent ones. According to this analysis, the historical prototype of the “cultural” concept of nation was early nineteenth-century German nationalism and its attempt to define the German nation and, consequently, the German nation-state in terms of culture and language, following theorists like Herder or Fichte. Germany was a latecomer to modern state-building and its pre-Bismarckian political and administrative fragmentation was an important obstacle to the creation of the modern German state. Thus, from early on ethnicity became the core element of national identity and, thus, the main argument for the legitimization of nationalist claims.

Opposed to this ethnic concept of the nation, the political concept is based on the free and voluntary choice of the individuals who have decided to belong to a national community. According to this thesis, national identity is established not by given ethnic, linguistic, or biological essentials but by the explicit and frequently reiterated will of belonging to the nation: A human being is not born into a nation. On the contrary, as Ernest Renan famously wrote in 1882, each citizen’s “daily plebiscite” makes him or her a member of the nation.

This classic dichotomy of political/ethnic, democratic-pluralistic/authoritarian-essentialist concepts of nation has been helpful as a methodological tool to organize and structure the complex microcosm of nationalism when it is handled as a mere “Ideal type” in a Weberian sense. Yet, if it is applied not as a constructed and imagined model with analytical aims but as expression of an unquestioned historical reality, it will obstruct rather than facilitate a comprehension of nationalism. In fact, research on nationalism has demonstrated the artificial character of this dualistic approach in so far as few of the nationalist movements in contemporary history have only and exclusively been one or the other, political or cultural, democratic or authoritarian and essentialist. Take the emblematic case of French revolutionary nationalism: Would the “plébicite des tous les jours”

2. There is a large number of publications on Herder, Fichte and other authors of German romanticism and nationalism. In English see, for example, Barnard, Herder on Nationality, Humanity, and History, and Fichte, Addresses to the German Nation.

3. Wehler, Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte; Winkler, Der lange Weg nach Westen; Lepenies, Kultur und Politik: Deutsche Geschichten, 35–67.
have been possible without a previous notion of shared cultural features, historical experiences, and national myths? Would the process of nation-building have been accomplished so successfully without active support by the state and its colonialist effort to convert “peasants into Frenchmen,” which in many regions of France was not exactly the translation of the democratic plebiscite pronounced by the local population. On the other hand, if an overwhelming majority of nineteenth-century Germans made the claim for national unity, it was not only because of the feeling of solidarity produced by language—remember that the Empire of 1871 was not all German-speaking—but also because it was their decision and their will to live in a nation-state. In short, nationalism is too complex and contradictory to be forced into simplistic and one-dimensional schemes. Even within one and the same nationalist movement elements of democratic and pluralistic discourse might cohabit with illiberal and authoritarian approaches. According to changing historical surroundings, nationalism might adopt a more democratic and liberal platform by gradually abandoning its reactionary ingredients, and vice versa.

The history of Basque and Breton nationalism is no exception in this general panorama of contingent malleability. In both movements we can find ethnic, racial, and even racist thinking, but also democratic and liberal features. Yet, confronted with the political philosophy and military power of German National Socialism, each of the two movements reacted in a quite different way: the Basques supporting the Allies in their fight against fascism, and the Bretons collaborating with the German occupiers. What factors shaped their different responses? This chapter seeks to answer that question first by analyzing the rise of Basque nationalism and the particular concept of nation elaborated by Sabino Arana, the founder of the Basque Nationalist Party (EAJ-PNV, by its Basque and Spanish acronyms) and its principal ideologue. I will then examine the genesis and evolution of nationalist mobilization in Brittany and place a special focus on the way Breton activists defined their national identity. I will then explore both movements’ responses to German hegemony and occupation from 1940 to 1944. Finally, a comparative approach will seek to explain why Basques were immune to the Völkisch appeal of Nazi Germany, and why Breton nationalists were not.

When in 1895, Sabino Arana founded the EAJ-PNV in Bilbao the Basque province of Bizkaia and, to a lesser extent, Gipuzkoa were challenged by a radical and disruptive process of socioeconomic moderniza-
tion. Arana was the son of a well-off, Catholic family with a traditionalist Carlist, background. Within the context of rapid economic growth, massive immigration, and violent social turmoil, Arana’s early followers were recruited among sectors of the traditional, urban, lower middle classes, who saw themselves as victims of modernization, displaced from the center to the periphery of society and under pressure both from the socialist labor movement and from the small clan of the political and economic elites of the financial and industrial oligarchy. The nationalist petty-bourgeoisie had a strong antiliberal and reactionary tradition that, due to the political decay of nineteenth century Carlism, started to nourish nationalism.

As a politician living in the fin-de-siècle age of empire, Arana was not unaware of social-Darwinist thinking. Yet, in his writings he only mentioned Darwin once, and he did it in one of his most furious tirades against the non-Basque immigrant workers:

Many of them seem to be unimpeachable testimonies of Darwin’s theory, because instead of human beings they are more similar to monkeys only a little less beast-like than the gorilla: don’t search in their faces for any expression of human intelligence or any kind of virtue; their look only reveals idiocy and brutality.

Arana’s biographers have defined his idea of the Basque nation as “essentialist” or ethnicist and in line with classic German cultural nationalism à la Fichte or Herder. Indeed, the founder of the EAJ-PNV defined the Basque nation by the categories of race, (Catholic) religion, language, and history, with race being the most important element out of the four:

If our race disappeared from these mountains, and if on these mountains with the name of Euskeria [neologism meaning Basque Country] a confederation of our six partial States were constituted, and if each of them were established with the tradition of our race, our language and of our customs and character, that Euskeria would not be our fatherland, it would be a different Euskeria: extinguished the members of a family, the family itself will be extinguished.

4. Larronde, El nacionalismo vasco; Corcuera, La patria de los vascos; Elorza, Un pueblo escogido; de Pablo, Mees, and Rodríguez Ranz, El péndulo patriótico, 21–57.
Racial purity was much more important than linguistic homogeneity. Arana preferred a Basque nation of Spanish-speaking but racially Basque inhabitants to a Basque Country of bascophones who were racially impure or non-Basque people:

If they let us choose between a Bizkaya inhabited by maketos [Spanish immigrants] who only speak Euskera [the Basque language] and a Bizkaya inhabited by Bizkayan people who only speak Spanish, we would without any doubt chose this latter, because it is preferable to have the Bizkayan substance with exotic accidents that can be eliminated and substituted by natural elements, instead of having an exotic substance with Bizcayan properties that never would be able to change that substance.8

Briefly, the early conception of nation elaborated by Arana had racist implications from two points of view: first, because nation was defined predominantly in terms of racial purity; and second, because Arana interpreted the public and private spheres of the modernizing Basque Country as a racial struggle between an honest and superior race that was being invaded by another, inferior race: the Spanish one.

Nevertheless, the thesis of the racist character of early Basque nationalist ideology has to be balanced by other considerations.9 First of all, it should be remembered that in fin-de-siècle Europe, the meaning of the term “race” was not identical to its meaning at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Before the rise of fascism and the traumatic experience of the Holocaust, it had not yet acquired such a strong pejorative bias and was frequently used in scientific debates. Furthermore, it also served as a synonym for “nation.”10 Secondly, unlike mainstream social-Darwinist thought, Arana’s vision of the world was still teleological, and his ultramontane Catholicism did not fit into scientific Darwinist evolutionism. Catholic faith led him to the conviction of the equality of all human beings, and therefore he never really believed in a possible hierarchy of races or civilizations, which was, of course, an evident contradiction to his thoughts on the racial inferiority of Spanish immigrant worker. As a consequence, Arana never linked his racial theories to any kind of colo-

9. Mees, “Sabino Arana, el contexto y la política.”
10. “In many cases, theorists tended to use the term ‘nation’ and ‘race’ as broadly interchangeable, or to regard nations as embodiments of distinctive racial . . . attributes.” See Hawkins, Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 184.
nialism or imperialism. On the contrary, although he criticized the Cuban creoles for struggling against Spain in spite of the shared biological bonds with their colonial oppressors, Arana supported the struggle for Cuban independence advancing the famous maxim of “the enemy of our enemy is our friend”: “The more humbled and ruined Spain gets, the nearer is our triumph.” Finally, despite this racist and antiliberal influence in early Basque nationalism, in its daily political practice it also soon became an agent of political modernization and democratization. Within the corrupt political system of the Spanish Restoration Monarchy and challenging the domination of the traditional power elites, the EAJ-PNV worked for mobilizing the masses and bringing them into politics. Therefore, the clientelist influence of the Monarchist business elite had to be reduced and the transparency of parliamentary praxis based on a real universal male suffrage had to be established. Thus, Basque nationalism became a sort of double-faced movement that exhibited a radical ideology with reactionary and clerical ingredients, while attenuating this ideology with a moderate and democratic political praxis in the public sphere.

Sabino Arana died in 1903 at the age of thirty-eight. More than three decades had to pass until the Age of Empire would be substituted by the era of fascism. Were the “attitudes and opinions” of Arana “clearly and definitely pre-fascist”? Was the figure of the Spanish maketo in Arana’s discourse a “clear precursor of the Jude Süss in the Nazi propaganda”? In my opinion, this equation of Arana and Hitler, of early Basque nationalism and anti-Semitic fascism, is unhistorical, simplistic, and, furthermore, an insult to the 6 million Jews that died in the Holocaust. From the very beginning of his political career Hitler designed a coherent ideology in which the “inherent purpose of the genocide” was very explicit. He constructed a chain of successive arguments in which the physical elimination of the Jews, war, the conquest of new “Lebensraum” in Eastern Europe, and, finally, the “national salvation” were intrinsically linked. As we have already mentioned, Arana believed in the superiority of the Basque race vis-à-vis the Spanish one, but he was neither anti-Semitic nor did he design or mention any plan to physically eliminate all non-Basque inhabitants. The condition for the salvation of the nation for him was not the elimination of the maketos, a sort of Endlösung (the Final Solution — ed.), but the achieve-

12. Elorza, La religión política, 38.
ment of independence. In an independent Basque Country, he could even imagine cohabitation with the maketos, who would be degraded to an inferior status of second-class citizens by being deprived of their civil rights. This was no imaginable scenario for Hitler, who already in Mein Kampf (1925) mentioned the idea of gassing all Jews as a necessary precondition for the survival of the Aryan race. Due to these typological differences, a historian like Javier Corcuera, maintaining a very critical stance on Arana and Basque nationalism, prefers to describe the ideology of the EAJ-PNV’s founder as “ethnocentrism” rather than as racism.

Similar to the Basque Country, Brittany had a long tradition of self-government reaching back to the Middle Ages. It was governed as a duchy until 1532, when François I negotiated with the ruling Breton elite of the États to create the treaty of union with the French state. This treaty still granted a “relative political autonomy,” which was completely abolished by the new revolutionary France after 1789, a decision that was also supported by the Breton deputies of the National Assembly. The integration of the territory into the French central state went hand in hand with repressive policies against the autochthonous Celtic language that was being pushed back to the western part of the peninsula. During the nineteenth century, Brittany remained predominantly “Catholic, clerical, conservative, scarcely republican in spirit . . . within the framework of an increasingly bourgeois, anticlerical, and republican France.” The nascent and slow process of industrialization did not produce any remarkable transformation of the agrarian structure of society. In 1856, 84 percent of the 2.3 million Bretons lived in a rural habitat. By 1936, this figure had only dropped to 73 percent, with the French average for the same year at 48 percent. As in the better-known case of the Vendée, this contrast gave rise to the agrarian, clerical, traditionalist, and monarchist protest guerrilla movement of the Chouannerie during the 1790s, which was followed by several minor episodes of collective violence until the 1830s.

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15. Corcuera, La patria de los vascos, 392.
16. Nicolas, Histoire de la revendication bretonne ou la revanche de la démocratie locale sur le démocratisme; McDonald, “We Are Not French!”
18. Reece, The Bretons against France, 44.
Emsav means “insurrection” or “recovery” in Breton and is used as a collective denomination for all heterogeneous groups of Breton regionalists or nationalists. The rise of the first Emsav has also been interpreted as a “conversion of the Breton clerico-aristocratic right . . . motivated above all by the desire of its members to shield Brittany from the modernizing influences of French culture.”

The foundation of the Union Régionaliste Bretonne (URB) in 1898 was little more than an attempt to organize a conservative pressure group aimed at decentralization and the promotion of the Breton language in schools. Headed by the Marquis de L’Estourbeillon, its leaders avoided mass politics and mass mobilization due to their fear of provoking internal conflicts among its members, who never numbered more than one thousand. This lack of a clear political program gave the organization a certain folkloric touch. According to Sharif Gemie, the URB’s annual congresses “came to resemble more and more an upper-class fancy dress competition.”

While publicly manifesting the organization’s political neutrality, the ideology of the URB was clearly conservative, traditionalist, Catholic, and antisocialist. As a regionalist group, the URB did not elaborate any concept of nation opposed to that of the French nation. Yet, in its publications there are frequent references to the Bretons as a distinct racial group within a larger Celtic culture. Scholars like Jack Reece argue that “the exaltation of race, another theme that loomed large in the interwar Breton nationalist movement and encouraged the development of Breton extremism, actually had its origins in the URB.”

This exaltation of race came along with some hints of anti-Semitism by L’Estourbeillon, who had been radicalized by the Dreyfus Affair.

World War I was a mortal blow to this first period of the Emsav. And it was only under the influence of the nationalist atmosphere in postwar Europe that the Breton movement gained new vigor. During this interwar period the center of regionalism and nationalism in Brittany was the journal Breiz Atao (Always Brittany) created by several young activists in 1919 as the official organ of the Groupe Régionaliste Breton (GRB). Surviving all the ups and downs of the movement, Breiz Atao was published until August 1939. During its initial period, the review maintained the traditional regionalist approach, but after 1921 it turned to a more radical

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20. Reece, The Bretons against France, 52; Gemie, Brittany, 185–92.
nationalist discourse. The symbol of this transformation was the journal’s subheading, which became “The Breton Nation” after August 1921. This nationalist evolution, however, did not contribute to a more realistic analysis of the big socioeconomic problems suffered by a large part of Breton (agrarian) society, which lost more than two hundred thousand people during the 1920s. While thousands of Bretons had to leave the country, the main concerns for the authors of *Breiz Atao* were language and literature, Breton history, and Celtic identity. This mismatch between the region’s problems and the nationalists’ concerns was one of the reasons underlying the structural weakness of Breton nationalism and its failure to become a real mass movement with an important presence in the town hall councils and parliaments. Before World War II, it remained a minority movement of rural notables and the weak middle-classes of shopkeepers, artisans, and liberal professions.

Another reason was the movement’s internal divisiveness. From the beginning, at least two tendencies competed for control of Breton nationalism, once the Marquis de L’Estourbeillon’s URB had entered a phase of decay and agony: the federalist and autonomist wing close to leftist (socialist, republican) political options on the one hand, and the nationalist and rightist wing, on the other. After a first period of federalist hegemony, which in 1927 led to the foundation of the Parti Autonomiste Breton (PAB), nationalists managed to control *Breiz Atao* and the movement. This evolution was favored by the electoral debacle of 1930 and the subsequent financial crisis of party and journal, due to which the federalist leadership had fallen into discredit. This conflict was ended by a split: while the federalists headed by Maurice Duhammel founded the Ligue Fédéraliste de Bretagne (LFB), the nationalist leaders Olier Mordrel and François Debauvais created the Parti National Breton (PNB). More proof for the radicalization of Breton nationalism was the organization of a radical nationalist underground group set up by Célestine Lainé and called Gwenn ha Du, which was inspired by the Irish example of the violent insurrection for independence committed during the Easter Rising of 1916 in Dublin.


25. The first action of the group was the destruction of a monument at the town hall of Rennes dedicated to the incorporation of Brittany into the French state.
Formally, the second PNB did not break completely with the autonomist tradition of Breton nationalism.\textsuperscript{26} It called for the establishment of self-government without clarifying whether this self-government was to be implemented inside or outside the French state. The PNB under Mordrel and Debauvais also continued to proclaim an already paradigmatic neutrality on social questions, as well as on the religious issue. However, along with the growing influence of German National-Socialist thinking, the PNB and its leaders soon radicalized their discourse, and it became evermore separatist, reactionary, and racist. As Jack Reece points out, this radicalization was in part the consequence of the party’s attempt to react against the threat and competition of Charles Maurras’s Action Française on the extreme right fringe of Breton politics.\textsuperscript{27} Mordrel’s SAGA program, published in March 1933, was both a strategic initiative against Maurras and a logical consequence of the author’s progression toward fascist thinking.\textsuperscript{28} Even if SAGA was initially not adopted as official PNB doctrine, through the pages of \textit{Breiz Atao} it produced an important impact on the Breton movement of the 1930s. It was a heterogeneous and confused mixture of different political ideas borrowed from fascism, revolutionary communism, Christianity, and capitalism. Its core ideas were twofold: first, the racial conviction that the Breton people were ethnically superior and had more in common with the other Celtic people than with the French; and second, the notion that the preservation of the race required separation from the French enemy and the establishment of an independent state. This state would of course be authoritarian and built according to racial cleavages. Only ethnically pure Bretons would enjoy full civic rights. Foreigners, especially Latins, Jews, and Negroes could be accepted as second-class citizens, whereas other foreigners might simply be expelled if their presence was “undesirable.” The Breton language would be restored in the schools, and in the area of international relations, independent Brittany would look for the protection of a great power, which was no other than Hitler’s Germany.

Because these separatist, racist, and fascist theses provoked open criticism and contest among the rank and file of the nationalist movement, the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} In 1911 a party with the same name had already been founded, but it remained completely insignificant.
\item \textsuperscript{27} The party was founded in 1898 under the influence of the Dreyfus Affair, proclaiming a monarchist and right-wing French nationalism of the anti-Semitic and \textit{Völkisch} type.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Meaning “Party of Risen Celts” in Breton.
\end{itemize}
party’s leadership tried to calm down the debate and impede another split by creating a new platform for Mordrel, the journal Stur (The Rudder) in September 1934. This new publication sought to symbolize the supposed independence of the official party organ Breiz Atao. This, however, was a quite artificial measure, because Mordrel continued as editor-in-chief of Breiz Atao. Rather than narrowing his political influence, the creation of Stur helped him to increase it. On the pages of Stur there was no longer any restriction to the development of what Georges Cadiou has called “the Breton type of fascism,”29 and Pierre-Jean Simon has referred to as the “summit of racist imbecility.”30 Nearly all the core ideas of Nazi politics and ideology found their way into the Breton journal. It goes without saying that Hitler’s aggression against Czechoslovakia and the Anschluß of Austria were applauded with enthusiasm. The imperialist claim of Lebensraum (vital space) was not only defended, it was even transferred to Brittany by the statement that “our country has reached as far as the [river] Maine.”31 Anti-Semitism was also present in the articles of Stur, in which the “intellectuals of the Jewish race” were blamed for the “catastrophic development” of materialism and “mechanized civilization” that was, together with the “great enemy of Latinism,” “the threat for the Celtic genius.”32 It was necessary to preserve the Breton race, which by belonging to the Celtic civilization, was part of a broader superior Nordic race, like the German race: “Our Breton ancestors came, via England, from the forests in Northern Germany. The Breton are thus also a part of the master race [race des Seigneurs].”33

As in Germany, the preservation of this Breton master race required policies of biological selection and even eugenics to be carried out in the future independent Brittany:

You can make the human race evolve toward an ideal type by applying measures of eugenics, by retarding the reproduction of degraded or undesirable individuals and by stimulating the proliferation of noble and healthy subjects. A Breton state, committed to the purity and the beauty of the race, will without any doubt adopt a certain number of measures,

31. Stur 13, 1939.
32. Ibid. 13, 1938.
33. Ibid. 10, 1937.
like the neutralization of alcoholics and the degenerate. . . . But that is
not all. It is not impossible that the will is going to play its part also in
the more frequent reproduction of a preferred physical type. . . . It is not
foolish to imagine that in the future the inclination of couples in favor of
children of a Nordic-Breton type in the long run can only be the conse-
quence of some sort of preliminary selection.34

This evolution toward fascism undergone by the radical sector of the
Breton movement was corroborated by other events, such as the PNB
annual congress in Carhaix (August 1937), where the SAGA program was
accepted and an authoritarian party structure created.35 One year before,
and once again influenced by the German example, Lainé created a new,
armed paramilitary force called Kadervenn (Nursery of Combat). Whereas
his first initiative, Gwenn ha Du, was conceived as an underground group
for sabotage action, Kadervenn was supposed to be the nucleus of a future
Breton army.36 It was no surprise that in the light of these political and
military activities the French government had to react, even if the PNB
continued being a minority phenomenon in Brittany: in 1938 the Breton
movement had some six thousand militants, and Breiz Atao had twenty
thousand subscribers. Lainé and several of his followers were arrested by
the police, a new law punished activities “against France and the national
integrity” with sentences from one to five years in prison, and, finally,
in October 1939 President Dalladier dissolved the PNB, whose leaders
escaped to Germany.37 They went there as Breton nationalists, but also as
fascists. It was not the war and the German occupation of France that made
them adopt a pro-Nazi attitude for strategic reasons. On the contrary, their
escape to Nazi Germany was a logical consequence of their previous ideo-
logical evolution from regionalism to authoritarian and racist separatism.

German aggression against Poland in September 1939, and especially
the occupation of France by the German army (Wehrmacht) in June 1940,
created a new geopolitical scenario to which Basque and Breton national-
ists had to react. After Franco’s military victory first in the Basque Coun-
try (June 1937) and then in the rest of Spain (April 1939), Franco banned
the regional autonomous Basque government that had been established in

34. Ibid.
October 1936, under the nationalist leader Jose Antonio Agirre.  

A campaign of severe repression against Basque nationalism was launched. This persecution was both against separatism and against “the Reds,” a reference to those Basque nationalists who had supported the Spanish Republic and the Popular Front during the war. As a consequence, Paris—where Agirre’s government was located after its escape from Barcelona in February 1939—and the French Basque Country had become places of exile for thousands of Basque refugees. At the beginning of World War II, President Agirre had not hesitated to offer Basque support to the French government in the struggle against fascism. In February 1940, Agirre himself was caught by surprise by the German invasion of Belgium when he was there on a family visit. He did not manage to return to France and had to go underground. During the following fifteen months he lived with a false identity in Belgium, Germany, and Sweden. In the summer of 1941, he was able to embark with his family on a steamer that took him to Latin America. In the meantime, Paris and the French Basque Country had come under German occupation, and those Basque nationalists who had not escaped to London or Latin America had to abandon any kind of political activity. Even the activists on the other side of the Franco-Spanish border had to suffer the consequences of the German presence in France: While occupying Paris, German police forces found an important secret dossier in the former office of the Basque government. This dossier contained personal data relating to members of a Basque underground group operating in Spain against the Franco regime (the “Red Álava”). This information was immediately delivered to the Spanish police, who proceeded to arrest the twenty Basque resistance fighters and threatened them with death penalties.

The fate of those prisoners was reason enough to forget about political and ethical principles for a while and to look for some kind of mediation on their behalf through Vichy France or Nazi Germany in order to save the lives of those condemned by the Francoist courts. We know that these attempts were carried out by leading nationalists in Paris. The result was mixed: nineteen of the twenty condemned were finally sentenced with imprisonment, but Luis Álava, the leader of the group, was executed.

Apart from these sporadic contacts motivated by humanitarian aims, was there any serious attempt to establish some kind of relationship with
the German occupiers in order to achieve political goals? At first glance, as we have seen, the racial component in Sabino Arana's concept of the nation provided the possibility of establishing a certain link with the Völkisch element of the Nazi doctrine. It was true that Arana had died in 1903 and that three decades had passed before Hitler came to power, but it was also true that in the 1930s Arana, who already had been elevated to the category of a national hero, was still the main and unquestioned ideologue of the Basque nationalist movement, and nobody had dared to revise any of his ideas.\(^40\) During the 1920s and 1930s Basque nationalism displayed no clear ideological rapprochement with authoritarian or fascist thinking similar to that of Breton nationalism, but due to the enduring popularity of the creator of Basque nationalism at least a latent permanence of ethnic and racial convictions might be expected.

Irrespective of these convictions among some Basques, were the German occupiers receptive to a hypothetical rapprochement with these “separatists” and “reds” who had been fighting against Franco and whose “sacred city” of Gernika (Guernica) had been completely destroyed by Göring’s Condor Legion?\(^41\) Notwithstanding these serious impediments, it is well known that the Völkisch discourse in the late Weimar Republic was above all an ideological weapon for the legitimization of the imperialistic conquest of Lebensraum in Eastern Europe. Yet, as a result of a shift from classical political thinking in terms of the nation-state to a focus on sub-state ethnic and allegedly “more natural” entities like races and/or nations, the Völkisch point of view also opened the door to interest in and even sympathy for the stateless nations of the Basques and the Bretons.\(^42\) As a matter of fact, some scholars have pointed out\(^43\) that in Weimar Germany numerous, influential intellectuals worked hard to transform the concept of Volk (“people”) from a mainly political term into a new scientific paradigm. According to this new interpretation, Volk referred to a community of persons that was ethnically homogeneous and clearly different

\(^{40}\) The only exception was the small liberal nationalist party Acción Nacionalista Vasca (ANV), which was the result of a split in the EAJ-PNV promoted in 1930 by a minority sector of Basque nationalism. The main criticism of the dissidents was the Catholic fundamentalism in the EAJ-PNV program inaugurated by Arana and maintained by the party-majority at the beginning of the Second Republic. About ANV, see de la Granja Sainz, Nacionalismo y II República.

\(^{41}\) Mees, “Guernica/Gernika como símbolo.”


\(^{43}\) Haar, Historiker im Nationalsozialismus.
from other nationalities. Affiliation to the Volk depended on ethnic, that is objective criteria, as opposed to subjective criteria established by the free and rational decision of being a member of a state. This interpretation produced an immediate political benefit, since it created a (pseudo-)scientific framework for the claim of “back to the Empire” (“Heim ins Reich”) and the incorporation of Austria, the Sudeten Germans, or Alsace into Hitler’s Reich. Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS and chief of German police, was a fervent devotee of this ethnic or racial way of understanding and organizing the world. His organization Ahnenerbe (German Ancestral Heritage), created in 1935 and officially attached to the SS in 1939, was one of the most sinister examples for the transformation of theory into political praxis in Nazi Germany (Longerich 2008). Apart from this more immediate use of the new concept of Volk, right-wing intellectuals broadened the scope by designing a new European postwar order under German hegemony, in which people with ethnically German origins would be part of the new Reich and other tribes, races, and nationalities should be granted a certain degree of self-government as satellites of the German Empire. A new “order of ethnic groups” (Volksgruppenordnung) was to be elaborated as the theoretic groundwork for this New Europe.

Dr. Werner Best was one of these young idealistic Nazi intellectuals who firmly believed in the revolutionary value of the Völkisch idea for German politics. Within the party, he was one of the most prominent and powerful advocates of a postwar Europe based on racial and ethnic parameters. To some extent, Best resembles Dr. Maximilian Aue, the protagonist of Jonathan Little’s bestselling 2009 novel The Kindly Ones. The SS officer Aue is portrayed as a cultured, highly educated, and classical music-loving intellectual who holds a doctorate in law. So did Best. In 1927 Best obtained his doctoral degree in law at Heidelberg but soon started getting involved in politics. In 1931 he joined the SS, and after Hitler’s seizure of power (Machtergreifung) he became one of the most influential intellectuals within Himmler’s SS, in which he was rapidly promoted until he reached the very top of Hitler’s administration of security and repression. Between 1939 and 1940, Best was a departmental head of the National Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt) and as such was responsible for the death of thousands of Polish intellectuals and Jews. After the occupation of France, he was sent to Paris, where he was appointed head of

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44. Kater, Das “Ahnenerbe” der SS 1935–1945; Longerich, Heinrich Himmler.
the civilian administration of the German Military Command. According to Ahlrich Meyer, Best was de facto “boss” of the German military administration in France.46

Best used part of his intellectual skills to think and write about the surprisingly fast and complete breakdown of the French army after the German invasion. He explained this military weakness as a late consequence of the French Revolution, which had created the French nation as an artificial invention based on political convention instead of on ethnic bonds. According to this analysis, France was a fragile agglomeration of “abstract citizens” whose nation was nothing other than a subjective feeling without the necessary solid ethnobiological groundwork. It was then only a logical consequence of the historical process that these people with a “democratic-individualistic Weltanschauung” succumbed to the superior strength of a people like the Germans with a deep-rooted ethnic tradition as a Volk. As he concluded in a memorandum published with the intention of gaining the support of the Führer, if this weakness was to be maintained in the future, Germany had to promote the establishment of the “Basques, Catalans and Galicians as sovereign peoples” in postwar Europe.47

Once established in Paris, Best switched from theory to praxis. He wished to have background information about the Basques. Therefore he ordered one of his military subordinates, the sublieutenant Machen at Biarritz, to draft a report on the Basque question. Machen wrote the document with some empathy, attributing the Basque nationalist attitude during the Civil War to their their fear of losing autonomy if Franco won. The author admitted the existence of “emotional reservation” toward Italians and Germans—Gernika and the Condor Legion were not mentioned—but he also stated that the Basques “do not hate the Germans” due to the “coincidence in (their) racial vision of the world”:

From an ideological point of view, and due to the racial principles shared by Basques and Germans, the Basques feel themselves very close to the current Germany. The Basques base their idea of Volk on the same blood in the veins of all the Basques. They emphasize that the purity of race conserved during thousands of years makes them different from Spaniards and Frenchmen, who, so they claim, have mixed themselves in terms of

46. Meyer, Die deutsche Besatzung in Frankreich 1940–1944.
47. Herbert, Best, 292–5.
race. Furthermore, they also highlight that the Basques are anti-capitalists and that their democracy never had a parliamentary character.

This information, of course, had to sound well in the ears of a high SS official like Best, who might even have considered forgetting about the active support given by the Basques to the “Reds” during the Civil War, when he was informed about the supposed Basque anti-Semitism:

The racial purity conserved by the Basques is also expressed in the fact that Jews were not allowed to enter into the Basque Country. To mention just one example, until today the Jews of Bayonne are only allowed to settle down at the north of the Adour River.48

According to this description, the Basque case seemed to be another example of an ethnicity that, within the geopolitical restructuring of post-war Europe, was a clear candidate to become one of the autonomous nations under German control. Was this a sufficient incentive for the followers of Arana to try some kind of political deal with Nazi Germany? Although the documentary information available in the different archives is not too detailed, leaving some questions unanswered, there is evidence to make to points.49 First, the EAJ-PNV leadership did not actively seek contact with the German occupiers. On the contrary, during the war the Basque government’s secret services cooperated in various ways with the British and US governments against Nazi Germany.50 From a Spanish prison, Basque nationalist leader Juan Ajuriaguerra ordered his party’s members on the French side of the border not to appear in public with Germans and not to fall into the trap of suggesting German sympathy or support only because the occupiers had allowed the publication of the pro-nationalist Basque journal Aintzina in 1942. After regaining his freedom in the summer of 1941, President Agirre himself did not leave any doubt about his profound antifascist convictions in his public allocutions, and he did not need to wait for the turning point of the war after the battle of Stalingrad to demonstrate those convictions once more, even before the possibility of a German defeat became something more than wishful thinking.

49. Mees, El profeta pragmático, 41–64; de Pablo, Mees, Rodríguez Ranz, El péndulo patriótico, 110–4.
50. Jiménez de Aberásturi and Moreno Izquierdo, Al servicio del extranjero.
Yet, and this is the second point, sincere antifascism did not mean complete isolation. On a minor and unofficial level, several Basque nationalists tried to establish relations with the German occupiers, and we know that President Agirre was not only informed about these activities: In the case of Javier Landaburu, a close governmental adviser to the Basque president (Lehendakari) exiled in occupied Paris, Agirre authorized Landaburu to contact the Germans and to determine whether “any kind of benefit” might be gained from such encounters. Landaburu seems to have been quite successful in his efforts to establish relations with certain Germans. In December 1941, Agirre mentioned top-secret information delivered by the Germans to Landaburu in Paris, according to which Franco was about to enter into war.51

Other contacts had a stronger ideological base. Even if there was no doubt about the democratic stance of the EAJ-PNV’s leadership during wartime, there were also exceptional cases of leading nationalists who were attracted to and who admired National Socialism for its racial and anti-communist ideas. The deputy and union leader Manu Robles Arangiz, for example, had great sympathy for those ideas.52 Others tried to highlight similarities between German and Basque racial thinking. One anonymous Basque nationalist wrote to the Basque Nationalist Party’s leadership that “the Basque problem is closely linked to the German racial problem and it is thus only logical and natural to hope that the Führer will welcome and treat it with great sympathy.” This statement was one of the responses given by the author to an item on a German questionnaire: “If Germany wins the war, do you also expect some bonus or would you consider your hopes to be lost?”53

The young French Basque nationalist Eugène Goyheneche was probably the militant who searched for German contacts with the greatest intensity. He managed to establish direct contact with Best. The SS official seemed to have a positive impression of Goyheneche, because after leaving France for Denmark, Best continued sending reports to the Ministry of


52. de Pablo, Mees, Rodríguez Ranz, El péndulo patriótico, 112.

53. The original of this document is located in AN, EBB 42-14. It is classified as a “report” of the Basque Nationalist Party’s (EAJ-PNV) leadership, which, however, cannot be corroborated after analyzing the content. The only thing that seems to be clear is that the author was very probably a nationalist living in French exile. Excerpts from the German questionnaire and the response are quoted in de Pablo, Mees, Rodríguez Ranz, El péndulo patriótico, 111–2.
Foreign Affairs recommending closer relations with the Basque nationalists that could be very helpful in the case of a hypothetical occupation of the Basque provinces by the Wehrmacht.

Did Goyheneche proceed on his own initiative or did he act as a messenger for the Basque Nationalist Party’s leadership, or even for President Aguirre? It seems difficult to imagine how a young rank-and-file member of the EAJ-PNV was able to gain access to Best, the highest political representative of the Nazi regime in occupied France, without any kind of mandate or authorization by his superiors. Yet, there is no archival or other documented evidence to shed light on this question. In any case, what seems to be clear is that Goyheneche managed to present his case to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the very heart of the German foreign administration, very probably thanks to the intervention of Best. In 1942, a memorandum of thirty-four pages written by the young Basque nationalist made its way to the Ribbentrop administration on Wilhelmstraße in Berlin. The text sought to create German sympathy for an independent and unified Euskadi in postwar Europe. Therefore, once again, the issue of Basque “racial purity” was emphasized. The text also minimized the Basque nationalist sin of having sided with “savage reds” during the Civil War, which Goyheneche argued was an act of self-defense. He also played down Basque nationalists’ collaboration with the Western Allies from the beginning of the world war, treating it as a consequence of Italian and German intervention in the Civil War. According to Goyheneche, the Allies had not accepted the Basque offer of collaboration. The author did not suggest any direct German intervention to grant Basque independence, nor did he pledge to organize an independent Euskadi according to National Socialist or authoritarian principles. He did, however, make a great effort to highlight the economic strength of the Basque Country, in order to convince the Germans of the advantages that a close bilateral relationship would produce. At the end of the memorandum Goyheneche expressed certainty about a German military victory and made an allusion to future involvement in the Basque question: “The Basque people are convinced that they will not be forgotten or disregarded when in future the conditions of life in the New Europe are established.”

All these attempts at gaining the support of Nazi Germany proved unsuccessful. The notes and comments written by an anonymous German official in the margins of Goyheneche’s memorandum were unequivocal: expressions like “incorrect,” “a lie,” or “trash” indicate that he at least felt that the Basques did not deserve any kind of special consideration. The German official reacted to Goyheneche’s attempt to play down Basque nationalist support for the Allies and his claim that the Basque people were experiencing the world war as “observers,” as follows: “First help France and the USA, and then continue as an observer?” Numerous other documents in German archives lead to the same conclusion: the few initiatives to make friends with Nazi Germany did not produce any remarkable result. For the mainstream National-Socialist discourse, Basque nationalists remained political and military enemies of Nazi Germany. This reality was somewhat smoothed by the influence of a personality like Dr. Werner Best, who had a special intellectual sensibility for ethnic and racial issues and was convinced of the important role that Basque and Breton movements were predestined to play in the New Europe under German hegemony. During Best’s rule in Paris, Basque-German contacts took place and, on some occasions, Basque exiles were protected from persecution by the Spanish police. Yet, Best was an outsider in the Nazi hierarchy, and apparently, his transfer to Denmark was also due to the fact that his ideological ethnicism was becoming more and more contradictory to Hitler’s more realistic strategy of assuring German hegemony by cooperation with Franco and Vichy France. Best’s intellectual opponent, the jurist Carl Schmitt, who worked at the German military administration in Lyon, mocked Best for feeling “a special predilection for Bretons and Basques,” for trying to “protect these relics of the original Nordic people from their violation by the French.” Within a terror regime, whose raison d’être was the permanent multiplication of power, the kind of utopian reasoning defended by the SS official was looked upon as an extravagant intellectual fantasy without any concrete returns in terms of power consolidation.

Dr. Werner Best was also one of the most prominent advocates of close collaboration between Nazi Germany and Breton nationalists. As we have seen, in the Breton case this was apparently easier to implement, since during the 1930s Breton nationalism had adopted some core ideas of the

55. Mees, El profeta pragmático, 41–64.
56. Herbert, Best, 269.
Völkisch and fascist ideology. Best was one of the most important contacts, but not the only one. As Völkisch thinking expanded in Germany during the 1930s, the German Society for Celtic Studies (Deutsche Gesellschaft für keltische Studien) was founded in Berlin. Behind the academic facade of the society, there was a clear dependence upon and subordination to the services of the German military intelligence service (the Abwehr), whose officers were interested in establishing relations with “the separatist movements of European minority nations like the Flemish, the Breton, the Irish, the Basques, the Tyrolese, and the Corsicans,” among others.57 The members of the society published numerous reports and articles about the Breton question, defending the “fight of the Bretons for their liberty” as an important contribution to the “evolution of Europe” in terms of Völkisch restructuring.58

The cordial reception of Breton leaders by members of the German Society for Celtic Studies and other Nazi office-holders in Berlin seems to corroborate the expectation of German intervention in favor of an independent Brittany. How could the National Socialists deny help to unconditional friends like the Breton separatists, whose conversion to fascism had been carried out by conviction and not as a consequence of strategic calculation? Indeed, at the beginning of the war, there were reasons enough to believe that independent Brittany was no longer only the utopian idea of some enlightened nationalists. In August 1940, Otto Abetz, the German ambassador in Paris, after meeting Hitler on the Berghof, declared that the Reich should have “the possibility of detaching Brittany from France.”59 At the same time, the EAJ-PNV’s leaders had convinced the Germans to set up special camps for Breton war prisoners. Debauvais visited these camps with the authorization to recruit volunteers for the formation of a Breton military force that would return to Brittany and help the Wehrmacht organize the new civil administration. Debauvais was not really successful: his campaign among the Breton POWs only convinced about 150 soldiers to accompany him to occupied Brittany.

58. Weisgerber, Das Bretonentum nach Raum, Zahl und Lebenskraft, 40; Krogmann, Breiz da vreiziz! (Die Bretagne den Bretonen).
Together with this embryonic national army, a provisional Breton government was founded: the Conseil National Breton. One of the new organization’s first initiatives was to draft a memorandum to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as another attempt to persuade the Germans of the advantages a Breton state would bring to Hitler’s regime. The arguments combined ideological issues (i.e., the historic relationship between the Celtic and the German races) with strategic ones (i.e., the importance of the Breton harbors for the control of Europe and the British coast). Unlike the Basque memorandum written by Goyheneche, the Breton document left no doubt about the pro-Nazi and fascist character of the new Breton state, which was to be organized in a manner “similar to the National Socialist state.” This new state would be under German protection. Best backed these arguments with remarkable enthusiasm in two papers delivered to his superiors in July and December 1940. In both documents, the author once again developed his theory of a New Europe based on the Völkisch principle, in which the Bretons, like the Croats or the Slavs, would be loyal allies of Nazi Germany. Best added a new argument in order to defend some kind of autonomy for Brittany: The Breton movement was considered as a “pace-maker for the awakening of the minority people in Western Europe.” A “Völkisch autonomy” of the Bretons would have a direct impact on the Celts of Great Britain, inciting the Irish, Scots, and Welsh to rise up against their “deadly enemy, the Anglo-Saxons.”

The content of the document written in December proves very clearly that the head of the civilian administration of the German Military Command in France was indeed convinced of his theory about the New Europe based on racial cleavages. When Best delivered his second paper on the Breton question, a profound change in the German strategy of occupation had already taken place. At the end of October, during a personal encounter in the village of Montoire, Hitler and Pétain had defined the conditions for close cooperation between the two regimes. On this occasion, the German dictator agreed to grant the territorial integrity of the French state, but did not abandon completely the idea of playing the Breton card as a means of putting pressure on Vichy France if problems

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60. Denis, “Le mouvement breton pendant la guerre: Un bilan.”

arose. One of the first consequences of this new entente was the resignation of Mordrel as president of the Breton Nationalist Party (BNP), owing to his anti-Vichy campaign in the party's new journal, L’Heure Bretonne. The new president, Raymond Delaporte, banned all criticism of Vichy, which was rewarded by the Germans with money for the party and its journal, and by the Vichy regime with some gestures of goodwill toward the regionalist sector of the movement.

After Mordrel’s resignation and owing to the increasingly serious health problems suffered by Debauvais—who died in 1944 of tuberculosis—Célestin Lainé was the only one of the original radical triumvirate who still was able and willing to maintain the project of a fascist and independent Brittany. In early 1941, he resumed his predilection for paramilitary activities, organizing the Lu Brezon (Breton Army), which was immediately banned by the German occupiers but operated underground. This unit was renamed twice, finally adopting the name of Bezen Perrot (Perrot Unit), in honor of Abbé Perrot, a famous nationalist and pro-Nazi priest who had been assassinated by members of the Breton resistance in December 1943.62 This now open and direct military compromise with the German occupiers was formalized at a moment in which doubts about a German victory were increasing daily within the moderate sector of the PNB under Delaporte. That was why, after the turning point of Stalingrad in the winter 1942–1943, Delaporte himself adopted a more neutral position toward Nazi Germany, while looking for contacts with several members of the resistance. This divergent evolution led to the split of the Breton Nationalist Party in March 1944, when Lainé, who previously had been declared leader of Breton nationalism in the political testament of Debauvais, founded his own PNB.

With D-Day drawing nearer, however, it was not the time for political contention but rather for military combat. Due to the growing problems on nearly every front of the war, the Sicherheitsdienst (SD, the German security service) of the SS was desperate to recruit collaborators for counter-insurgence work. In this new context, the Germans changed their initial attitude toward Lainé’s paramilitary group, accepting it as a separate Breton section of the SD. Although both the Germans and Lainé agreed on the need to conceal this organic collaboration from the public, any doubt about the SD-PNB relationship soon vanished: from March

1944 onward, the thirty to forty members of the PNB group dressed in the typical SS uniform (SS-Feldgrau) devoid of any Breton insignia. Nothing could have better symbolized the role of Bezen Perrot as German police auxiliaries. This public identification of Breton nationalism with the German security service gave rise in part to the increasingly violent activity of organized, armed resisters (maquisards) against members of the Breton nationalist movement.63

One of the official tasks of the Bezen Perrot was to protect the nationalists against attacks by the resistance. Yet, from early 1944, the operational history of the unit included other, more sinister activities, such as the arrest of resisters and evaders of the STO (Service du Travail Obligatoire, Vichy’s obligatory work service in Germany, established in February 1943), the interception of parachute drops intended for the organized resistance, and the infiltration of resistance networks. In August 1944, and with the Allied troops already in sight, Breton paramilitaries were forced to prepare their escape in the company of German security service (SD) units. At the end of the year, they had an opportunity to celebrate the first birthday of the Bezen at their new quarters in Germany, at which time several of its members were decorated with SS-ranks. Lainé himself was appointed Untersturmführer (SS officer rank, equivalent to a second lieutenant). After this celebration, however, there was no time left to implement the reorganization of the paramilitary force into four units, each with different tasks. As the American army approached Bavaria, a new retreat—now an individual and definitive one—had to be carried out. The main objective was now no longer to create an independent and fascist Breton state but to ensure the survival of those who had tried to achieve it with the help of the totalitarian German hangman.

The Völkisch ideology had a long history in German political culture. Under the influence of National Socialist rule, it became the regime’s official ideology. Moreover, a large number of “academics” and “intellectuals” worked hard to shape the Völkisch principle as a new scientific paradigm. As we have seen, at the time when the appeal of this particular way of interpreting history and organizing the world was becoming stronger in Germany and all over Europe, core elements of this ethno-racial thinking were present in the traditions of both Basque and Breton nationalist movements. Sabino Arana had defined the Basque nation according to

racial cleavages, and this doctrine had not been formally substituted by any alternative approach. Similar conceptions concerning the singularity of the Breton nation as part of a broader Celtic and Nordic culture were already elaborated during the early regionalist phase of the Breton movement. Later, in the 1920s and 1930s, these initial ideas were developed further in a racist and anti-Semitic direction. Nonetheless, despite the presence of certain ethno-racial elements in Basque and Breton nationalist ideology, the reaction to the Völkisch appeal was quite different in the two cases. On the one hand, as Michel Nicolas puts it, “the truth is that nearly the whole politically organized Breton movement collaborated in one or another form during the war.”64 On the other hand, the temptation of the Völkisch theory for the Basque nationalists was not really very great. Their attempts to establish some kind of relationship with Nazi Germany were isolated and highly selective initiatives, and these never did explicitly spell out what the Bretons had no problem expressing: namely, the claim for political independence with authoritarian or even fascist rule and under German hegemony. One might have expected a little more congruence between two movements that were not completely unlike one another. Basque nationalism had always looked into the Celtic mirror, albeit the Irish one.65 On the other hand, the Basque case has always been an important reference point for Breton militants.66 What then, was the reason for this discrepancy? In what follows, and in conclusion, I would like to outline very briefly five possible responses to this question. The first concerns homeland and occupation. The necessity and the incentive to get in touch with Nazi Germany were much greater in Brittany than in the Basque Country. In the summer of 1940, the complete Breton homeland was under German military control. In Euskadi, nationalism was born in Bilbao and the surrounding area, whereas in the French Basque Country, nationalism had always been a minority phenomenon, and total occupation by Germany did not take place until November 1942. Support for Basque nationalism increased somewhat owing to the thousands of Spanish Basque refugees who had crossed the border to escape Francoist repression. Yet, only a few of the Basque nationalist leaders had remained in France in 1940, either in the

64. Quoted in Cadiou, L’hermine et la croix gammée, 247.
66. Rojo, “Breiz Atao y la mitificación de los vascos en Bretaña (1919–1939),” and “Prensa bretona y nacionalismo vasco durante la Guerra Civil.”
German occupied or unoccupied French Basque provinces controlled by Vichy. Most leaders were well aware of the danger posed to their lives if they were captured by the Germans and consequently preferred a second exile in London or America. In short, the main concern among Basque nationalists was what happened on the Spanish side of the border. The German connection was not really a conditio sine qua non for conducting any kind of politics. It could however be considered a useful instrument for putting pressure on the Franco regime. It was not by chance that some militant Basques made contact with the occupiers in order to save the lives of Basque resisters arrested by the Germans after the dismantlement of the “Alava Network,” among others.

The second possible response concerns the notion of “the enemy of our enemy is our friend.” During the World War II, Basque and Breton nationalists defined “the enemy” quite differently. For both nationalist movements, the principal enemy was, of course, the central (Spanish or French) state. In Euskadi, the political confrontation with the central power and its government had only recently been concluded with a military conquest of the Basque Country, the abolition of autonomy, and the installation of a violent dictatorship. On the other hand, moderate nationalists had already learned to relativize the definition of the enemy, since in 1936 they had reached the most important political triumph in the movement’s history after negotiating the Statute of Autonomy with a Spanish state governed by leftist parties. Thus, the enemy was Francoist Spain who had won the war thanks to the support of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. The Basques had been a special victim of this Franco-Hitler-Mussolini triumvirate, when in March and April 1937 German and Italian bombers destroyed the cities of Durango and Gernika, facilitating the conquest of the north a few months later.

In Brittany, however, the situation was different. Even the most moderate claims for a regional decentralization and measures aiming at the protection of the local language had been rejected by the different French governments who all stuck to their Jacobin tradition. When Hitler invaded France, he struck against the state that Breton nationalists had always considered their oppressor and enemy. The German military victory after the “phony war” (drôle de guerre) and the rapid occupation of France created a power vacuum in which new opportunities for Breton claims came up. But the enemy-enemy-friend formula only worked as long as the first—French—enemy did not mutate into being a friend of the occupiers. This happened with the establishment of the Vichy government and the agree-
ment between Hitler and Pétain at Montoire. From that moment on, there was no need for the German dictator to make any deal with the Breton separatists: the Wehrmacht had all Breton harbors under control, and Vichy guaranteed a pro-German strategy in the rest of the country. Due to this rational choice in terms of power and hegemony, the concern for Breton nationalism became an exotic extravagance for intellectuals and Völkisch daydreamers like Dr. Werner Best, who was soon removed from his leadership position in occupied France. This situation was only altered during the final crisis, when Allied troops advanced, Vichy France decayed, and resistance activity increased. As in other parts of occupied Europe, the SS urgently needed any kind of military support to combat the resistance, and within this new adverse context the mobilization of the Bezen Perrot and the integration of the unit’s Breton paramilitaries into the German security service (SD) can be understood. Yet, this military collaboration was exclusively a consequence of German military weakness—and Breton fascist fanaticism—and did not suppose any kind of revaluation of the Breton cause in the National Socialist strategy.

The third possible response concerns economy and society. Another important difference between the Basque and the Breton cases is the socio-economic development of both territories. Basque nationalism developed in the urban context of a major capital city, Bilbao, at a time when Bilbao itself, the province of Bizkaia, and in part adjacent Gipuzkoa enjoyed an accelerated process of industrialization and socioeconomic modernization. Even though Basque nationalism had expanded its influence among the middle classes in smaller towns and even in some rural areas, Bilbao and the surrounding area remained its stronghold during the 1930s. Within this context of accelerated economic growth and social change, new ideologies like nationalism or socialism could spread, whereas more traditional political options like Carlism entered a phase of increasing decay. One consequence of this societal transformation was the emergence of the new middle classes, which soon took charge of the nationalist movement. Generally Catholic and conservative in terms of morals and customs, the new middle classes were modern, because they were a product of modernization. They clamored for the democratization of existing political structures through decentralization and the eradication of corruption, and they were profoundly committed to the daily exercises of bargaining and negotiating in the parliaments. They had a lot to win (political power, self-government) but also a lot to lose (their political and social status). The political culture of these layers of Basque society was republican or nationalist. There was
no significant pre-fascist tradition, and the war of 1936 served as a strong disincentive for any fascist temptation.

On the contrary, at the time of German occupation, Brittany remained an agrarian society of peasants and fishermen with only very few and weak industrial enclaves (Nantes, Saint-Nazaire, Brest). Instead of economic growth, the 1920s and 1930s brought a period of crisis for Breton agriculture, forcing thousands of peasants into emigration. The consequences of this lack of development were evident: the traditional power elites of the landowners and the Catholic Church retained their influence, the modern middle classes remained extremely weak, and the political space for new ideologies was very narrow. Contrary to what happened in the Basque Country, Breton nationalism was not really able to challenge the dominating (French) political options. It was a minority phenomenon focusing more on the activity of its leaders than on broadening the movement’s social and political base. These leaders did not have a chance to receive an education in parliamentary democracy, because they mostly remained outside institutions. They did not learn the lesson of negotiating and bargaining, and therefore did not understand how to make pragmatic and gradual advances and success in politics. Of course, this was not only due to the movement’s political weakness but also to the inflexible and centralist attitude of the French government. Instead, the Breton leaders could only make maximalist claims without translating them into feasible strategies. They had nothing to lose but everything to win. Many of them

67. An analytical comparison between the role of the Catholic Church and its attitude toward the nationalist movements in the Basque Country and in Brittany remains to be done. Actually, in both territories the church retained a remarkable influence on society. Yet, as a hypothesis, we might forward an important difference: whereas in the Basque region the church was exposed to the consequences of a radical socioeconomic modernization, nothing similar happened to the Breton Church. Basque nationalism was one of the new ideologies that emerged out of this process of modernization, and many lower clergymen had not only ideological but even familiar bindings with nationalist thinking. Thus, in Euskadi a—minority—sector of the Catholic Church supported nationalism and some clergymen became nationalist ideologues. In the backward agrarian Brittany, this relationship between regionalism/nationalism and the church was extremely weak. Abbé Perrot was one of the very few exceptions of a clergyman who publicly articulated a Breton nationalist discourse. This attitude attracted the hostility of several bishops of Quimper, who blamed Perrot for “separatism” and forced him to back down and turn away from nationalism. Concluding, Sharif Gemie underlines the “ambiguity” of the Breton Church in this context: “The official attitude of the Church hierarchy was essentially pragmatic: where the defense of Breton culture and Breton language could strengthen Catholic culture, then the Church would campaign on these issues. Where, however, such issues appeared to be lost causes, the Church was more likely to revert to its traditional role as a force of cultural modernity, and therefore of the ‘Frenchification’ of the region.” Gemie, The Invisible Nation, 190.
thought that National Socialist totalitarianism provided an opportunity to win everything.

The fourth possible response concerns leadership and the rank-and-file. In such a context, it is obvious that the voice of a minority movement leader has a stronger and more direct impact on his followers than the attitude and opinion of a leader of a mass movement like the Basque one. In the Basque case, the leaders’ voices were previously filtered through a system of checks and balances, meaning that they were contrasted with the opinions of other party leaders and sectors. In the 1930s, Basque nationalism was already a complex mass movement, in which different political and regional sensibilities competed with one another. This system of checks and balances produced, for example, the sidelining of extreme political options that were not considered representative of the movement’s core. This happened to Luis Arana, brother of the charismatic founder of Basque nationalism, when he rejected the nationalist involvement in the Civil War against Franco, arguing that the war was not a Basque but a Spanish problem. This also happened to the deputy and union leader Manu Robles, who during World War II confessed his sympathy for Nazi Germany.

In Brittany, nationalism was too weak, and the conditions did not permit the implementation of a system of checks and balances. The movement was in the hands of very few leaders, and the one who controlled the press also controlled the movement. Hence, when fascist thinking grew stronger among Breton nationalist leaders, there was no real internal counterbalance to stop or at least to challenge this evolution. The fascist separatism of Mordrel, Debauvais, and Lainé surely did not represent the thinking of all Breton militants and sympathizers, but since it was the only publicly articulated type of nationalism, both for militants and for other observers such as those in the resistance, fascist separatism became synonymous with Breton nationalism.

Finally, another imbalance between Basques and Bretons was to some extent a consequence of all the other imbalances that I have already mentioned. When German soldiers marched into France (surprising President Agirre in Belgium and forcing him underground), the Basque Nationalist Party (EAJ-PNV) was the most important political party in the Basque territories. Its influence was supported by a broad network of formal and informal organizations, groups and initiatives on the sociocultural level. The solid roots in Basque society had been the base for the nationalists’ political ascension, which had been crowned with the achievement of regional autonomy in October 1936. War and dictatorship had put an
end to all this. Nationalism, like all the other democratic parties, had been banned and its leaders thrown into prison or driven into exile. Any feasible strategy to recover lost liberty, influence, and self-government had to take into account that it had not been the authoritarian right who had enabled the progress toward regional self-government; on the contrary, they had abolished it. Thus, proposals to channel the struggle for freedom and autonomy through an entente with Franco’s ally were not at all plausible. The nationalist leaders knew that self-government was linked to democracy and that the recovery of the former would necessarily pass through the establishment of the latter. This reasoning, together with their democratic credo, placed them irremediably on the side of the Western Allies in their fight against fascism.

The situation of the Breton nationalists was completely different. If there is nothing really at stake, if there is no opportunity to destroy the result of many years of political commitment, simply because there is no result at all, then the choice for one or another strategy does not matter too much. In such a situation, leaders are likely to choose extreme strategies that promise a maximum of rewards in a minimum of time, even if that means running high risks. In the best of cases, the outcome might replace a long past of political inefficacy and frustration by the sudden implementation of the final political objective: Breton independence. In the worst case, the breakdown of the strategy will bury all political perspectives jeopardizing the future of the nationalist movement for many years. This is exactly what happened to postwar Breton nationalism, which for decades has still been unable to cut the Gordian knot that linked nationalism to collaboration and fascism.

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Rudolph Mosaner’s “Wanderjahre”: Irony and Impunity in Nazi Europe

Andrew Stuart Bergerson and Maria Stehle

Plastic Man

Listening to Rudolph “Rudi” Mosaner’s tape-recorded autobiography could lead to the conclusion that he was a man wholly without unique characteristics of his own. Rudi was born Austrian in 1912 in the village of Leifers, a few kilometers south of Bozen in the southern part of the Austrian-Habsburg province of Tyrol. South Tyrol was given to Italy as part of the settlement of World War I, so Rudi became an Italian citizen. Rudi resented being called “Tailor Rudi” because of his father’s trade, which earned his family only hunger and an apartment in social housing. Rudi learned to disrespect the Walscher—Austrian-Tyrolian slang for Italians—from an early age; it was his way of overcoming his roots in rural poverty. He would spend his life adjusting his identity to changing historical circumstances and in the hopes of upward social mobility.

Rudi was eigensinnig. This German term refers both to the kind of stubborn disobedience one expects of a child, as well as the sense of oneself (the Eigen-Sinn) one feels when that unruliness is being expressed. As soon

1. M005.01-04 Miscellaneous Interview Collection. Robert Mosaner, Autobiographical Testimony, tape recording (four 90-minute audio cassettes), Kaufbeuren, Germany, 1993. Digital files available from Andrew Bergerson. The authors would like to thank Jens Ole Schneider for assisting them with the transcription of this challenging testimony.

2. Generally we use interview references to bring the reader to the starting point of long anecdotes; we place these references at the beginning of our treatment of them. We provide more precise references only for direct quotations. In this introduction, however, we are summarizing a large segment of his testimony: 1a 00:00 to 3a 25:50.
as Rudi completed his schooling in 1928, he distanced himself from his authoritarian and often abusive parents. Rudi left home so he did not have to become a tailor like his father. “Hmm, a starvation profession like you have?” he told his father. “No, I won’t even start down that path.” Eigensinn is a consistent feature of Rudi’s character, at least until 1945. Determined to better his situation, Rudi became a self-made, modern man.

In the autobiography he tape recorded for his family in 1993 Rudi creates a character with a remarkably malleable identity and, at the same time, a rather consistent sense of his own eigensinnig personality as he finds his way through the world of work and leisure, everyday life, and interwar politics. Rudi cycled through jobs becoming a day laborer, a gardener, a lifftboy, an apprentice, and a barber. Conscripted into the Italian army he became a radio operator, a mountain soldier, and a private first class. Fearing deployment to Abyssinia in 1935, Rudi deserted. Crossing the Alps he became an Austrian, a Tyrolian, or a German as the situation required. Rudi depicts himself in almost heroic terms when it comes to his agility in accommodating changing circumstances in the pursuit of his autonomy and a better life.

The overriding trope of Rudi’s memoirs is irony. In the tape’s 135 minutes, Rudi describes ironic situations with which his protagonist was confronted, like being conscripted into the Italian army even though he detested the Walscher. He also recounts ironic strategies on his part to negotiate these contradictory circumstances, like when he exploited an order from his Italian superior—to fetch Austrian cigarettes from a village on the other side of the Austrian border—to desert the Italian army. And, looking back at his life, he narrates his life story in an ironic mode, not only with a sense of distance from his own actions but also with his stories’ surprise endings undermining our assumptions about the protagonist himself. On his way across the Alps, an Austrian farmer gave him a Nazi pin along with this advice: “You can put it under your collar, and when someone asks you . . . you can show it. But not over here—not in Austria. You never know in whose lap you might fall.” Rudi took his advice and the pin. He revealed the Swastika, together with a strategically timed Heil Hitler, to some SS (Schutzstaffeln) at the border to smooth his way into the Third Reich. This parody of Nazi enthusiasm transformed Rudi into an ethnic German from

3. 1b 04:10.
4. 2a 37:30.
Austria who had come “home” to the Reich. The way his character, seemingly by chance, acquired this Nazi insignia and the way in which Rudi tells the story, however, make it seem as if this new Nazi identity was, like all of the others, merely a situational performance.

The core of Rudi’s autobiographical testimony describes his travels across Nazi-dominated Europe from 1935 to 1945. His “Wanderjahre” (literally, “years of wandering”; figuratively “journeyman’s travels”), amounting to two hours and fifteen minutes of storytelling,5 is effectively a memoir of a life lived on the margins. With a permit to move around the Third Reich in search of work, Rudi inhabited a social role somewhere between a journeyman and a vagrant. Ambling all over southern Germany and up the Rhine, Rudi cut hair, picked hops, painted, or whatever the situation demanded. He began to reenter society when he met Emilie in Kaufbeuren, Bavaria; he became her fiancée, a mountaineer, a tour guide, and a steady barber. Another ironic encounter led to German citizenship in 1939 allowing him to marry. Sometime around 1939 he also joined the Nazi party, though he never mentions this fact in his memoirs.6 Their plan for a big wedding was stymied by the outbreak of Hitler’s war: they literally could not get a train to Emilie’s hometown due to mobilization. They got married in Kaufbeuren, but even their honeymoon was interrupted by politics.

We went to bed early, but there was one Special Report after another thanks to the invasion of Poland. [This happened] there and there. My God, they just kept winning and winning and winning!

Rudi was conscripted into Hitler’s army in August 1940, just five years after deserting Mussolini’s and less than a year after becoming a citizen again—yet another ironic situation.

Taking Irony Seriously

It would be easy to dismiss Rudi’s ironic narrative mode as an elaborate postwar deception. In this reading, ordinary people like Rudi use irony to reassert control over their past in a postwar context of defamation. They were collaborators when Europe was dominated by the Third Reich; they use irony afterward to forestall our ability to draw any certain analytic con-

5. From 2b 21:30 to 4a 21:45.
clusions about their “real” relationship to the Third Reich. Rudi’s complaint about Hitler’s victories in Poland, that it interrupted his sleep during his honeymoon, seems to fit this model. It leaves us wondering whether or not he supported the German conquest of Poland. It seems clear to us that Rudi did use irony to these ends—of obfuscating his personal Nazi past.

It would be a mistake, however, to reduce Rudi’s irony simply to a postwar fabrication. Irony was also essential to surviving everyday life in Nazi-occupied Europe. Confronted with a terrorist regime engaged in a genocidal war for “living space,” or Lebensraum, a regime that promised lavish rewards for collaboration and harsh punishments for disobedience, the cultivation of an ironic self afforded ordinary people like Rudi a way to negotiate complex ethical-political postures that preserved a sense of moral distance from the very violence in which they were participating. Said in other terms, irony informs the way Rudi deals with the Nazi past in the present (Vergangenheitsbewältigung) because Rudi had long used it to deal with the Nazi present in the past (what we call Gegenwartsbewältigung). Rudi creates his autobiographical protagonist as a man who approaches situations ironically and who uses irony as a strategy to navigate the circumstances of his life.

Figure 11.1. Wedding photo, Kaufbeuren, Germany, 1939. Source: Courtesy of Margarete Stehle.

Rudi never traveled to Basque Country, but his memoirs can be of great use to scholars interested in making sense of the ambiguities of self-
hood in Nazi-dominated Europe and its memory. Consider his description of the image in figure 11.1, his sole wedding photo. Rudi laughs at the irony that the town gave them a copy of *Mein Kampf*, thus marking the beginning of what proved to be a rocky marriage with a book called “my struggle.” By drawing his audience’s attention toward the personal ironies at stake in this photo, however, Rudi also draws our attention away from the larger political framework in which this marriage was operating. Rudi and Emilie were obliged to confirm their Aryan ancestry through genealogical research before they got married, so they were perfectly aware that their marriage was part of eugenic policy whether or not they wished it to be. Were they framing their marriage in terms of the Third Reich or mocking it? Did Rudi become a Nazi? Or was he really a nonconformist? We would like to suggest that these are the wrong questions to ask. It makes little sense to try to nail down the *quantity* of Rudi’s Nazism because Rudi never let himself be rigidly tied down to one set of political convictions. We need to look at the *qualities* of his irony as a strategy for both telling his life story and living it in everyday life.

This chapter builds upon a new, interdisciplinary approach to the problem of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* developed by the chapter’s coauthor Andrew Stuart Bergerson and three other German scholars in *The Happy Burden of History*. An integrative analysis of the lives and letters of both ordinary and intellectual Germans, *Happy Burden* seeks viable ways for ordinary people to act responsibly in the face of terror and genocide in the past and the present. The book argues that irony is a cornerstone of responsible selfhood; yet it is in the converse case that the model is interesting to us here. Irony also helps account for the irresponsible behavior of typical collaborators during the Third Reich. In this model, ordinary Germans used irony to cultivate *sovereign impunity*, a bid for autonomous mastery through violence that insulates its practitioners from ethical considerations for their deeds.

Rudi fits this model perfectly. He wants us to believe that he is not responsible for Nazi violence thanks to his posture of an ironist; as we shall show here, it was precisely his ironic performance of self that implicated him as a collaborator in the Nazi program for Aryan mastery in Europe. In this chapter, we are interested in investigating what histori-

7. See Ott, “Duplicity, Indulgence and Ambiguity in Franco-German Relations.”
ans and literary critics can learn from one another about the relationship between the ironic ways that people lived their lives under Nazi rule and the ironic ways that they narrate those life stories in its memory. We propose that interpreting everyday life in Nazi-dominated Europe requires taking irony seriously as a way to integrate history and memory, fact and fiction, causation and aesthetics. Moreover, we want to suggest that irony has played a large, if subtle, role in shaping both official and private memories in postwar Germany because of its popularity as a strategy for sovereign impunity among ordinary Germans during the Nazi bid for mastery in Europe.

This chapter was conceived at the University of Tennessee–Knoxville when Andrew Bergerson presented material from Happy Burden and Maria Stehle was struck by the similarities to the autobiographic recordings of Rudi, her mother’s father. This chapter marks a first attempt to make sense of Rudi’s life story. Methodologically we move between our respective training in literary and historical criticism as well as between our emic and etic perspectives vis-à-vis the Mosaner family. Our interpretation is based mostly on Rudi’s richly detailed, tape-recorded, autobiographical narrative, but it also draws on a few documents written and photographs taken by Rudi during the war. Admittedly, these are very different kinds of sources. In some cases, Rudi added captions on the back of the images; he even signed some of them, suggesting to Margarete Stehle, his daughter, that he had sent them home to his family as a kind of visual record of his irony.10 This combination of sources allows us to demonstrate similarities between ways of being and behaving, narrating and living. In recognition of the limited space available to us and in keeping with the theme of this book, we focus here on Rudi’s travels in Europe as a soldier in World War II from 1940 to 1945.

As Joan Ramon Resina argues in chapter 5, we believe that the truth about Rudi lies not in historical or literary criticism taken in isolation but in understanding the complex ironic relationship between living one’s life and narrating it. The richness of Rudi’s memoirs and photographs allows us to reconstruct how he narrated his life story to fit the changing politi-

10. Conversation between Maria and Margarete Stehle on July 18, 2010, as per email to Andrew Bergerson July 19, 2010. Rudi later compiled these images in a photo book, obscuring the captions he had originally written on the back of the images and adding new descriptions. In the larger, book version of this project that we are planning, we will explore these and other sources—available to us through Margarete, Maria’s mother, as well as German archives—in more detail.
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cal and ethical circumstances of World War II. A close reading of these sources suggests that Rudi began his storytelling long before the collapse of the Third Reich. Rudi turned to irony to tell the story of his life while he was still living it; it proved to be a reliable means to negotiate the conflicting demands of everyday life in Nazi Europe. Rudi then narrates his story for posterity in an ironic mode to provide a sense of continuity to a life lived through extremely violent, ethically challenging, and rapidly changing political conditions. The work of memory involved constructing a tale of autonomous and coherent selfhood from the fragments of a life lived in ethical compromise. The contribution of this chapter is to suggest that this work of memory—that is, making sense of one’s own actions and experiences by creating a viable story of the self—takes place not only after violent deeds but in anticipation of them.

Living Like God in France

Rudi began his career in the German military in the army base in Landschut in August 1940.11 Instead of discussing his military activities, however, he talks about how he used to borrow a bicycle from a friend and ride back home. He took leave from the military on Sundays according to the rules, but he also escaped at other times against regulations.12 Rudi thus depicts himself as a habitual nonconformist and ironic trickster. This image from June 1940 was taken shortly before or after conscription. It shows a piece of artillery and is annotated: “With this [piece], England will be knocked out.” Should we read this sincerely or ironically? In his memoirs, Rudi wants to convince us that we should believe his sincerity now that he had been insincere back then, as if this caption proves his mockery of the Nazi project of imperial conquest. The opposite reading is just as plausible: that the photographic evidence shows that he really meant to conquer England in 1940 and only reconstructed his memory in ironic terms after the fact. The whole point of irony, however, is that it is ambiguous. Neither the photograph and its inscription nor the tape-recorded narrative offer us certain truths as to how Rudi felt about the war or the beginning of his career in the German military—except, perhaps, for the irony itself.

11. 3a 25:50.
12. Ibid.
Rudi uses irony to depict himself as an ill-fitting critic of the very enterprise in which he was participating. At first Rudi mentions only in passing that his unit was deployed in France. He often depicts himself as smarter than his officers, like the “old warhorse” of a sergeant to whom he was first assigned, who kept getting their company to the garrison headquarters days after the rest of their battalion had already moved out. “He understood things perfectly,” Rudi comments. “It took us four days before we found our unit.” We cannot be sure if Rudi considered his commanding officer to be a good sergeant or a bad one—and by extension, if Rudi was a good soldier or not. Irony keeps us wondering.

Rudi also tries to downplay his involvement in violence. They finally caught up to their unit in Chemillé de Loire, a village between Tours and Nantes close to the demarcation line separating occupied and Vichy France. As the only trained barber in the unit, Rudi started to cut hair. The way Rudi tells the story, he makes it seem as if he were somehow opting to cut hair instead of soldiering. Rudi also insists that he served French customers in spite of the fact that it was forbidden. Yet his unit had requisitioned this barbershop from two French brothers who had been imprisoned and shipped off to Memmingen, Bavaria. Rudi obviously understood that even his sideline was conditioned on violence, and yet he depicts his activities in France as if he stood apart from the system of violence in which he was obviously benefiting.

As Sandra Ott argues in chapter 12, German occupiers and locals in the French Basque Country and Béarn negotiated the terrain of collabora-

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13. 3a 28:30.
14. 3a 29:30.
tion through inherently ambiguous relationships of conviviality and reciprocity. Rudi used the fact that he cut the hair of a French butcher to ask this man to help him “organize a bit of something” for his trip back home. The French butcher insisted that he would take care of everything. “Don’t think twice about it.”

Not thinking captures Rudi’s attitude about his entire experience in France. In his memoirs, Rudi describes his return home like the arrival of Santa Claus. By the time he got to Kaufbeuren, he was carrying so many groceries he had to transport them with a sleigh to his family. During his four days of leave, they could not eat up all the food, many of which were luxuries. Providing such a feast to his family must have made him feel like he had finally climbed out of poverty into the bourgeoisie. Yet Rudi depicts his sudden good fortune in his memoirs as if it had nothing to do with Hitler’s conquest of France.

Rudi enjoyed the life of a German in occupied France. He and his comrades each resided with French families, so they did not have to report to their unit for dinner. As Rudi explained to his commander, “we all have something at home,” as if these French residences were now homes for German masters and their French servants. These were “good times,” Rudi reiterates in his memoirs. Rudi expresses here the fundamentally narcissistic perspective through which he interprets his entire wartime experience. Rudi never discusses what he did in the occupation as a soldier. “It was nice there. Did some [military] exercises. But my [God], that was no real war. The war was over already, and the French, yes, they did nothing [to us].”

Wholly absent from his reflections is any sense of consideration for the impact of his rule on the ruled. To adapt a German expression, Rudi lived “like God in France” (wie Gott in Frankreich)—that is, not just opulently, like the Gothic Cathedrals of France, but here meaning with impunity as well, as if his sovereignty could not be judged in terms of the laws of mere mortals. Irony afforded him the luxury of sovereign impunity.

**Living the Good Life**

Rudi’s next deployment was in a motorized unit travelling through Belgrade, Budapest, and Croatia. His memoirs do not mention any military engagements. He insists that the fighting was concluded by the time his unit arrived and that the SS were responsible for most of the destruction.

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15. 3a 30:44.
16. 3a 34:10.
This claim corresponds to a common trope of official postwar memory that makes an artificial and largely untenable distinction between the ideologically committed, genocidal SS units and the politically indifferent, military-minded *Wehrmacht*. In fact, Rudi’s behavior as a soldier corresponded in subtle but significant ways to Nazi racial policy. Penetrating into an ethnically mixed region where Germans were a small minority, Rudi identified with lost elements of ethnic Germans. As in figure 11.3, he used his camera to capture lost German ethnic groups rediscovered in Serbia. His youth in South Tyrol prepared him for making these kinds of distinctions, but they also correlated to the racial policies of the Third Reich.

Rudi’s experiences in France became the model for his behavior for most of the rest of the war. Speaking of the Balkans, he says:

> Life was good for us there. Afterward we often thought, “Yes, my God, if the war continues this way to a conclusion . . .” Well then here and there we had to fight, but nothing serious.

Rudi wants us to read his comment about fighting “here and there” ironically, as if he never really wanted to fight and did so as little as possible.

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Yet he enjoyed his newfound position of mastery in Europe nonetheless: “Life was good for us there.” This seeming contradiction brings us to one of our main points. For all their ambiguity, these anecdotes reveal a Rudi hoping that he could continue to live “the good life” without having to take personal responsibility for the violence on which his continued prosperity rested.

In part, this “positive” attitude was an element of Rudi’s self-characterizations: One of his main goals in making these recordings seemed to have been to depict himself as the kind of person who always only looks on the bright side of life. At the same time, Rudi’s construction of himself as a protagonist was also influenced by the way that he had narrated his life story during his own past. This kind of autobiographical narration is called *anticipatory memory*, and it refers to the way that we construct plausible stories of ourselves before and during our actions. We usually think of memory as stories of past events recounted after the fact, but we often ignore the work of memory, including autobiographical narration, that takes place while events are still in motion.19

Rudi often tells stories from his life in retrospect in order to suggest that he was not wholly invested in the Nazi war for *Lebensraum*. Yet the story he tells about himself in 1940–1941 belies this disinterest, for he remembers thinking and even saying: “Yes, my God, if the war continues this way to a conclusion—.” The fact that he does not conclude this train of thought suggests that, in the postwar context of his tape recording, his anticipatory memory was disruptively dangerous. He was remembering how, in the imperial moment, he had been acting in ways that still either presumed a Nazi victory in Europe or was at least hoping that he could continue to live the “good life” during the war. Either way, his definition of the “good life” not only includes relative luxury, power, and status but also avoids responsibility for the terror, destruction, and expropriation on which that lifestyle was predicated.

It is this connection between irony and sovereign impunity that interests us most. Rudi may not have actually wanted the Nazis to win the war; his autobiographical testimony suggests considerable misgivings. Yet his everyday life as a soldier had him supporting that war effort, and he clearly relished his life as an Aryan *Übermensch*. The category of “the good life” is itself rather ambiguous, conflating the benefits that he drew from being

19. A more extensive treatment of these issues can be found in Bergerson et al., *The Happy Burden of History*; see also Bergson, *Matter and Memory*. 
German in Nazi-dominated Europe with his desire to avoid fighting. The point is not to determine once and for all which of these postures was the real Rudi, for it is clear from these sources that he is constantly renegotiating them. Rather, we wish to draw attention to the way that an ironic posture enabled Rudi to negotiate between these contradictory positions and still tell a coherent story of himself. As both a strategy for narration and for living, irony afforded him both the luxury of a good life together with a feeling of sovereign impunity.

**War for Living Space**

In part, Rudi describes the “good life” in France and the Balkans in contrast to his experiences in the Soviet Union. After the Balkans, Rudi’s unit was redeployed to Russia, but Rudi mentions the invasion only briefly. Instead he tells an anecdote about how, as a prank, he once shaved the heads of his whole unit, only to be given an order to do so the very same day. Where he almost got into trouble at first, it turns out that he did just the right thing—in this case, to deal with the growing problem of lice among the troops. Thanks to his prank, Rudi boasts, his unit had an advantage over the other soldiers. Instead of having to fight against lice they could simply wash their bald heads. Rudi depicts it as ironic, even funny, that a nonconformist like him followed an order even before the order was given. Yet this kind of nonconformity actually contributed to the war effort in its small way—both in terms of anticipating the orders of superiors and in smoothing the operation of the war through comic relief.

Rudi seems relatively disinterested in Jews, in sharp contrast to the central place held by Italians in his life story. Yet that marginalization may itself be part of the problem: ignoring anti-Semitism could very well have been Rudi’s way of showing that he was disinterested in Nazi politics. Either way, Jews appear only once in his memoirs: “Oh yes, I remember it like it was today. We were the radio operators, and we set up, high up in an apartment building in the attic, a communications center, no?” From this communications center somewhere in the Balkans, he and his comrades had been receiving and transmitting orders for the German army for three or four weeks. “And in the third floor,” he continues, “a family lived there. And one day I finally went in there, no?” As it turns out:

20. 3a 38:30.
It was a Jewish family, no? But they did nothing to us, no? They were always really scared. But they did sense that we were not SS. My God, the SS would have done their work there in a completely different way than we did.\textsuperscript{21}

We can safely assume that these Jews did not see Rudi as the clever trickster or ironic nonconformist; if they probably would have been more terrified of the SS, they were certainly not reassured by the occupation of the German army. In the 1993 recording, Rudi makes it seem ironic that they feared for their safety since he was such a nonconformist, and in 1941, Rudi may very well have had mixed feelings or ethical concerns about the genocidal core of the Nazi program. Our point is that he used an ironic posture vis-à-vis the Nazi war for \textit{Lebensraum} to imagine that he could continue to thrive in this system of terror as an Aryan \textit{Übermensch} without taking responsibility for it.

Rudi uses irony in his memoirs to avoid responsibility for Nazi crimes, but it would be a mistake to conclude that he suddenly became an ironist after the war. Our point is that Rudi creates a self who responded to situations with irony and who employed ironic strategies vis-à-vis his life as he was living it. In the expectation of an Aryan Europe, he used irony to circumscribe his ethical concern from the victims of this genocidal war to “us” Germans. To be sure, this attitude was encouraged by both the Nazi regime and the \textit{Wehrmacht}. During World War II, the culture of the German military combined intense solidarity within units with a profound sense of superiority over outsiders, whether based on racial distinctions or not.\textsuperscript{22} Accordingly, Rudi focuses his account narrowly and almost exclusively on his fellow soldiers, thinking first about what the Jews did or did not do to them.\textsuperscript{23}

Rudi rarely mentions specific combat situations involved in the conquest of Aryan “living space.” In spite of extreme violence and ruthless tactics employed on the Eastern Front to destroy not only armed resistance but entire populations, states, and societies,\textsuperscript{24} Rudi depicts the conquest of the Soviet Union as if it went smoothly. Some Russians submitted immediately while others “fight a little.”\textsuperscript{25} Rather than the actual military opera-

\textsuperscript{21} 3a 36:45.
\textsuperscript{23} Bartov, \textit{Hitler’s Army}.
\textsuperscript{24} Jarausch and Geyer, 138–43.
\textsuperscript{25} 3a 41:45.
tions, he describes the paintings he worked on just before the invasion. He even claims in his memoirs that he could have often sold them but instead kept them for himself. This displacement is particularly disturbing in light of the fact that the Nazi regime often justified its war of annihilation as a necessary defense of a superior *Kultur* against an inferior race. 26 Here again, Rudi’s ironic posture for distancing himself from the Nazi war effort corresponded closely to Nazi propaganda. Irony made it possible for Rudi to effectively coordinate (*gleichschalten*) his everyday behavior to the Nazi war effort with a sense of casual disregard for his role in it.

**Rudi on Vacation**

Rudi had been reluctant to join the war effort, but it was nonetheless relatively easy for him to adjust to the demands of the Third Reich. After all, he had been a soldier in Mussolini’s army not five years before. Irony enabled him to rearrange his experiences to fit his new life story. By 1941, he was still maintaining an ironic attitude, but now he was serving in Hitler’s army to build a new “thousand-year” German empire in Europe. Irony also came to his rescue insofar as it allowed him to imagine that he was somehow different from the “real” Nazis while reaping the benefits of Aryan mastery. Yet the military situation began to change in 1942. In the final years of the war, Rudi had to twist his memories into Gordian knots to adjust his sense of self to the prospect of a Nazi defeat. Rudi continued to turn to irony to ensure his sovereign impunity, but it became increasingly difficult to deny the evidence of his own memories.

Wounded in September 1941, Rudi was eventually shipped back home and decorated. In his reserve unit in southern Germany in 1942, Rudi met a former friend from the mountain guard who suggested that Rudi could volunteer to become a guard in a prison camp for a while. We do not yet know what kinds of people he actually guarded, the role he played in this camp, or precisely how long he stayed there; it will require further research. Still it is interesting how Rudi treats this period of his life in his autobiography: he discusses how he used the birth of his daughter as a way to trick his commander. Rudi asked a friend to send a telegram about the baby’s birth after he had already been home for the actual birth. Rudi is proud of his ability to work the system: “My daughter, she is born twice, I managed

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to get vacation days twice. This is how that had to be done.”27 Of course the birth of a daughter is a major life event; it makes sense that he would emphasize it in his autobiography. Like his return home from France, however, telling this story of how he worked the system to get extra leave effectively silenced any stories of his activities within the camp system. Here again, Rudi constructs his impunity through irony. The Rudi of his story is a trickster and a strategist.

In 1942, Rudi somehow got himself retrained as a translator, he implies, in order to avoid service on the Russian front. Rudi depicts his next deployment to an Italian company on the Isle of Lemnos in Greece as if he was the passive pawn of military authorities. “This is how we were shipped around.”28 Yet Greece offered Rudi a chance for advancement, as well as an opportunity to once again live the good life. Again arguably comparing Greece to the war against the Soviet Union:

Yes, my God, that was like a vacation. There were practically no threats down there. And the few people there on the Island, yes, they did nothing to us. We even traded with them, no? We had a rather cozy war down there.

Rudi describes Greece for the most part in terms of the landscape and the food. “I have never eaten that much lamb in my life.” He also explicitly remembers a shark soup that tasted better than anything he had ever eaten before.29 Rudi conquered Greece as much as a tourist as a soldier. Even the Italians treated him like someone important. The sixty Italians had a chef with them who prepared meals for them. “And they always invited me to eat with them, no? That is obvious. I was their translator.” Clearly, Rudi had no problem with the new social hierarchy of Nazi Europe in which he was well fed, respected, and feared.

Figure 11.4. Rudi with inset of Emilie and son, Salonika, Greece, June 1943. Source: Courtesy of Margarete Stehle.

27. 3b 01:25.
28. 3b 05:30.
29. 3b 07:30.
Still, the fact that Rudi was assigned to an Italian company required him making certain adjustments. Where Rudi admits to having traded with the Greeks, he blames the Italians for being arrogant in the way that they treated the Greeks, as if it was the Italians rather than the Germans who were the cause for inhumane treatment during the occupation. “[The Italians] still sent the [mostly female] peasants out—they just had to work in the field, no?” In fact, Rudi did not really trust his Italian allies. “We had this Italian lieutenant. Oh, they were good guys, no? We got along ok down there, the Italiker, most importantly that there was no shooting, because if there had been, all of them [the Italians] would have run away.”

Growing up as an ethnic German in South Tyrol, Rudi had spent much of his life casting aspersions on Italiker. Not only were Italians now his comrades but he was also responsible for ensuring good communication between the forces of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany since he spoke such excellent Italian. Rudi suggests that they got along rather well, but he does not mind pointing out that the Walschen were unwilling and poor soldiers. Here again we see irony’s utility as a way to cultivate a self in changing political, military, and ethical circumstances. An ironic posture in response to an ironic situation embedded in an ironic narrative allows Rudi the flexibility to negotiate this complicated situation in which former enemies became friends and even allies.

Retreat through Irony

Rudi is adjusting the way he was telling his life story in response to changes in his historical situation. In Greece by 1943, Rudi began to tell a new story of himself oriented toward a future with Italians as allies and friends rather than enemies. The rapidly changing circumstances of European politics, and the high stakes of these decisions, made irony into a useful tool for these reconstructions of the self. Yet we can already see some foreshadowing of the problems to come. Rudi seems subtly aware of the fact that his current friendship with Italians stands in stark contradiction to his rabid hatred of them in his youth. From 1942 to 1945, Rudi’s posture vis-à-vis the war became increasingly absurd as the prospect of final victory dissipated.

Rudi began to redirect his irony accordingly. Compare the image in figure 11.5 to the one in figure 11.2. The new one shows a dead Serbian soldier, probably taken sometime in 1943; the old one a German artillery
piece ready for war. As we have come to expect, Rudi annotated this image ironically as well: “A Serbian soldier who went to [his] death for England, Rud[o]l[ph].”

Notice how what began an ironic criticism of the machinery designed to defeat England when Germany was winning the war became an ironic treatment about the sacrifice of Allied soldiers when Germany was no longer so confident. We suspect a certain resentment on Rudi’s part, that England is able to solicit such loyal service on the part of a Serb where Germans face hardened resistance on the part of Yugoslavian partisans, and perhaps also a mockery of that loyalty. Of course these are not the only readings one can make of these images; after the war, both images can be reread as antiwar statements. Our point is that irony enabled Rudi to make these subtle adjustments in his position to accommodate shifting political and military terrain.

In the final years of the war, however, Rudi had to contort his story more and more so that it could make sense when caught between the rock of his experiences and the hard place of rapidly changing contexts. Probably in the winter of 1944–1945, Rudi fell back with his Italian comrades from Greece through Yugoslavia. Rudi describes it as miserably cold and very dangerous. One problem was the partisans. They were skilled at killing anyone who revealed their position by first firing a shot. This situation inclined soldiers like Rudi to want to avoid firing any weapons whatsoever. Sure enough, his letters to Emilie from September 10, 1944, and October 23, 1944, reveal a rather scared Rudi who only wants the war to end, no
matter how; reading between the lines, they seem to anticipate Germany losing the war.\textsuperscript{31}

A more immediate problem, however, were his Italian comrades—at least the way Rudi tells the story. Recognizing that the war was lost, the Italians were switching sides to the partisans or simply deserting if the Germans did not keep a close watch on them. So Rudi suggested to his captain to test a few of the Italian soldiers and ask them to defend the post over night. By the morning the soldiers had in fact disappeared and supposedly joined the partisans.\textsuperscript{32} Rudi presents himself proudly as one of the first to be aware that the Italians were at best unreliable and perhaps even going to draw the German soldiers into unnecessary danger.

We read Rudi’s litany of earlier accounts concerning untrustworthy, oppressive, and thieving Italians—of which we could include only a small sample in this essay—as a literary foreshadowing designed to excuse Rudi for what he did next. Together with another communication officer and two accompanying soldiers, Rudi was ordered to bring the Italians to a port city somewhere on the Adriatic so that they could be shipped home. Rudi decided to disobey this order. He accompanied the Italians part of the way through the partisan-infested region but abandoned them. He then lied to them, telling them that their orders were to travel the rest of the way on their own.\textsuperscript{33} Here then was the revenge of the translator from South Tyrol who in effect controlled the fates of his Italian comrades—ironically, thanks to his excellent command of Italian.

Rudi was able to avoid the partisans and make it back to his unit by not firing his guns, but he faced some heavy questioning from his commanding officers as to what had happened. In response, he simply lied to his commanders saying that he had been in a battle with the partisans. The tragic irony here is that, in his official yet largely falsified report on the incident, Rudi nonetheless recognized just how much danger he had placed his Italian comrades in,\textsuperscript{34} but he still made himself out to be the hero of the story. “My buddy got a medal, and he was really excited about it. But I had that medal already and I was never too keen to earn such metal-crap.” That he can laugh at this irony—that his buddy was awarded for betraying his

\textsuperscript{31} Letters, Rudolf to Emilie Mosaner, September 10, 1944, and October 23, 1944, though we suspect that the latter was never sent. Stehle Family Papers.

\textsuperscript{32} 3b 09:30.

\textsuperscript{33} 3b 11:20.

\textsuperscript{34} 4a 00:00.
comrades—is tragic and twisted. It shows to what lengths Rudi was willing to go to preserve his sovereign impunity, and the close correlation between the ironic way that he lived and narrated the story of his life.

This anecdote is the crux of Rudi’s entire autobiography. In part Rudi is engaged in a complicated ironic play with postwar expectations. He tells this story—of a fabricated report about being shot on by partisans, compelling him and his friend to not fire a shot—in order to demonstrate that he was always antiwar. Crucially Rudi frames this critical incident in other anecdotes of military abuses. Rudi begins his autobiography with his earliest memory: of his uncle’s patriotic service to the Habsburg Empire. He moves immediately to another incident during World War I, this time from 1917. Rudi recalls how two Bosnian soldiers were hanged upside down from the archway behind his house as punishment for disobedience. Comparing his family’s patriotic service to the emperor with this hanging incident gives the impression that Rudi had somehow learned from an early age to be critical of military authorities for the way they treat ordinary soldiers.

The purpose of these anecdotes is to recontextualize Rudi’s betrayal of his Italian comrades in the final stages of the war. These two incidents from World War I stand in parallel to the two stories of desertion: one from 1935, when Rudi fled Mussolini’s army to avoid military service in Abyssinia; and the other from 1945, when Rudi “deserted” the German army on the day before his unit was about to be captured by the Allies. On his trek by foot back across the Alps, Rudi once again reinvents himself. Though captured by the Americans, he escapes this prisoner of war camp by making friends with an Italian-American, whom he convinces that he is an Austrian. This ironic ending to his career in the German army raises doubts in our minds whether Rudi had not been against the war after all. Framed in these anecdotes of desertion, it almost seems plausible that Rudi was more of a friend to Italians than the incident in Yugoslavia suggested.

Finally, Rudi subtly reinforces this interpretation of himself as a quasipacifist by shifting, rather suddenly, the way he narrates his life story once he gets to the postwar era. In the remaining forty-five minutes of his audio recording, Rudi links his successful reintegration into civilian life to the

35. 1a 00:00.
36. 4a 03:30.
37. 4a 21:45 and continuing on 4b 00:00.
official narratives of the Federal Republic. Like Konrad Adenauer, West Germany’s first chancellor, Rudi seems to have adopted the ways of peace and democracy by subordinating himself to American occupation—literally by working for their occupation forces. Here Rudi inverts his criticism of German military authorities by comparing them to his willing cooperation with the American occupation. As a result, Rudi was able to enjoy the right to both domestic bliss and the fruits of a mass consumer society. This narrative is disturbing enough in the way it buries his troubled family life in a veil of sentimentality, but it is more significant in terms of how Rudi once again used irony to establish his sovereign impunity. Rudi finally accomplished what he had always set out to achieve—a bourgeois lifestyle. Yet notice this sleight of hand, as if the bourgeois lifestyle he achieved under the Americans is validation for his efforts to the same end under the Nazi regime. Moreover, Rudi’s utter sincerity at this stage in the narrative serves as a shocking stylistic break with an otherwise ironic narrative. Once again raising doubts in our minds about what we thought we knew about Rudi, these twists at the end open the possibility that he just might have been a man of peace all along.

By flipping the signs of our ethical expectations into double, triple, even quadruple negatives, these many layers of ironic inversions undermine our ability to pass judgment on Rudi’s behavior. Bereft of all ethical and political guideposts with which to judge his behavior, we are left admiring the skills of the ironist for so adeptly negotiating these complicated situations. Rudi was certainly charming in this way. Thanks to irony, Rudi has done the impossible: he not only survived World War II, but he is also able to believe that he preserved his integrity as the protagonist of his own story.

**Lords of the World**

Rudi’s example can perhaps help us make sense of the ambiguity inherent in everyday life in a period of terror, war, and genocide. His travels through Nazi-dominated Europe from 1935 to 1945 marked a prolonged liminal period during which he maneuvered at once inside and outside of formal institutions. Rudi adopted this ironic posture to all authorities in order to exploit them for what he needed while never letting them get the best of him. His ironic posture was highly effective in this regard. It gave him vastly increased opportunities to travel the world, taste new foods, conquer other lands, and ultimately escape prosecution. When describing
this period in his life, Rudi almost completely erases the violence from his story and turns a war of conquest, in which he participated in murder and occupation, into nothing but a journey of opportunities.

In his autobiography, Rudi creates a protagonist who is only “playing” the role of Aryan Übermensch, and yet it is precisely this kind of ironic posture that helped him survive and thrive during the Nazi war for Lebensraum. Figure 11.6, from 1943 is a good illustration. Note the caption he gave it: “In the dining car. That is how the lords of the world travel.” Through irony, Rudi distanced himself from the Nazi project of conquest in which he was involved; yet the Nazis enabled Rudi the luxury of not only seeing distant parts of the European continent but also living “the good life” in them.

Figure 11.6. “Dining” car, probably Yugoslavia, 1943. Source: Courtesy of Margarete Stehle.

Because it facilitated a feeling of sovereign impunity, irony actually made Rudi into a better soldier for Hitler. Rudi probably really felt like he was a nonconformist; this image probably reflects a running joke among his comrades about the shabby way that the German military transported its troops. Yet the irony that the Aryan masters of the world travelled by freight car seems much less funny in light of the way these same kinds of freight cars were used to transport Nazi victims into bondage and extermination. Rudi spoke solely in terms of what people could or did do to him. He systematically ignored the human consequences of his actions—which as a radio operator on multiple fronts, he was in a good position to grasp. Rudi’s highly circumscribed criticism about the way he was being treated only reinforced his sense of entitlement as part of Europe’s new Aryan aristocracy. In a very real sense, his irony allowed him to adopt a
casual disregard for the people who died as a result of his rise to power, status, and wealth.

What Rudi’s memoirs show us is that, in the context of the rapid-fire transformations of modernity, individuals must constantly adjust their actions and experiences to changing circumstances in order to imagine a coherent self. Storytelling in both its literary and historical sense is one of the crucial ways in which this memory work takes place. Rudi’s political identity changed multiple times over the course of his life, each time responding to changing historical conditions. As the Nazis began to lose the war, Rudi once again had to reinvent his identity, this time in anticipation of a post-fascist world, and irony once again came to his aid. He cynically dispatched his Italian comrades to an unknown and dangerous fate. He then rewrote his own life story yet again to make this betrayal make sense.

We see Rudi’s “Wanderjahre” as a sincere effort on his part to make sense of the contradictions in his life. Irony solved Rudi’s problem of finding a way to narrate a coherent autobiography from these radically divergent selves in radically fluctuating political-moral regimes. The truth about Rudi lies not in this or that self that he constructed in each given situation but that he acted as if he was not responsible for any of his violent forms of self-cultivation by narrating a life of and in irony. Rudi used these literary techniques to square the circle of his historical deeds: to fit a necessarily fragmented and contradictory set of experiences into a story of a coherent individual. He manages to create a protagonist who is consistent in his Eigensinn but constantly shifts allegiances. In the long term, it was the strategy of irony itself that provided him with the coherence he needed to explain his behavior.

Popular and literary culture probably provided Rudi with both ammunition and justification for his irony. As a literary character, Rudi is reminiscent of similar protagonists in internationally popular antiwar novels like Ernst Marie Remarque’s *Im Westen Nichts Neues* from 1929, filmed by Lewis Milestone as *All Quiet on the Western Front* in 1930, as well as the famous interwar novel by Jaroslav Hasek, *The Good Soldier Švejk*, from 1923, with multiple film adaptations appearing in Czech and German since the 1950s. Though these novels were written about World War I, this tradition of the ironic soldier dates back centuries to the Baroque picaresque novel published in 1669 by Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus Teutsch*. Rudi may or may not have read these literary works, but when he presented himself to the listener as the
clever, unruly private who knows better than the officers, he was in part making new use of old tropes readily available to him. This aesthetic trick keeps with what we know of ironists in general: they have no shame in manipulating existing forms to their own ends.

Conversely, Rudi’s experiences were common to many people in Nazi-dominated Europe, and not just Germans. Similar responses to similar historical conditions arguably evoked similar expressions in terms of popular and literary culture after the war. In the German case, the ironic soldier appears as the protagonist in the bestselling trilogy of novels and films from the 1950s by Hans Helmut Kirst, 08/15. In the American case, it was followed by the internationally acclaimed antiwar satire *Catch-22*, written by Joseph Heller in 1961 and filmed by Mike Nichols in 1970. The Kirst novels are particularly relevant as they are themselves quasi-autobiographical. It suggests that Kirst was like Rudi in that he used irony in his postwar novel to deal with the Nazi past. Both create characters that confront ironic situations and use ironic strategies to deal with the Nazi present. To be sure, Kirst’s novel and Rudi’s autobiography are only partially critical of official postwar accounts of World War II; both still insist to a large degree on their sovereign impunity. Nonetheless, these individual aesthetic responses could readily shape public memory and popular culture when they are grounded in historical behaviors, when these ordinary people first used ironic strategies to deal with the ironic situations of everyday life.

The boundary between fact and fiction, collective and personal memories, political and literary culture, blurs precisely when ordinary people respond to the same kinds of situations in similar ways. For scholars interested in making sense of everyday life in the Nazi period anywhere in Europe, Rudi’s example offers a model for an integrative analysis of autobiographical testimonies that draws our attention to storytelling as a means to make sense of our experiences and give meaning to our actions. In this model, irony becomes both cause and consequence of the survival strategies of the modern self in genocidal times.

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38. Numerous comparative examples are available in Bergerson et al., *The Happy Burden of History*, esp. the chapter on irony.


Remarque, Ernst Marie. *Im Westen Nichts Neues*. Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1929. Many modern English language editions are available titled, *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

The Enemy as Insider: German POWs as Trial Witnesses in the Basses-Pyrénées, 1944–1946

Sandra Ott

In the far corner of southwestern France during the early hours of October 20th, 1944, a bomb exploded in the Palace of Justice in Pau as an act of protest against the judiciary. The search for truth and post-liberation justice had just begun, for the court in Pau had heard its first six cases only a few days earlier. Consistent jurisprudence would be difficult to achieve. The second case focused on a young woman accused of having denounced her father to the Germans in Biarritz during the occupation. She had befriended a German officer, who knew that her father regularly beat and sexually assaulted her. Police reports indicate that the father “had a violent character . . . a mean streak . . . and was always looking for a fight.” The German also knew that the man kept guns in his house, contrary to Nazi orders. The Gestapo quickly found out and executed the woman’s father a few weeks later. By making use of these German sources for their

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* Generous grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities (2009) and the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Nevada, Reno (2009), funded the research upon which this chapter is based. The author is extremely grateful to these institutions for their support and to Andrew Bergerson for his detailed, helpful critique of this chapter in an earlier draft.

1. *La IVième République*, 20, 1944, 1.

2. Archives départementales des Pyrénées-Atlantiques in Pau (hereafter AD, P-A), 30W102, the case of Mlle. R.S., police commissioner to prosecutor in Bayonne, PV no. 285-1, April 8, 1936 (the report relates to the father’s arrest for drunken disorderliness in Biarritz before the war began).

3. AD, P-A, 30W102, testimony of W. P., PV no. 285, German officer to police commissioner in Biarritz, August 31, 1944.
postwar investigation, the Court of Justice found that she “might be held responsible for the execution of her father” and sentenced her to two years in prison.⁴

In his testimonies to the French police, the German officer wanted the authorities to believe that he was not responsible for Nazi violence; he insisted that he “had never been a supporter of the Nazi regime” and had never hidden his anti-Nazi sentiments from the French people he knew in Biarritz.⁵ At the young woman’s trial, the prosecutor brought the German into court as one of his key witnesses. Thus, from the first day of its operation, the Court of Justice in Pau used the testimony of a German POW in its search for justice. The practice was not uncommon there, for a number of select Germans figure prominently in the trial dossiers of suspected collaborators held in the departmental archives of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques.⁶

This chapter provides a preliminary analysis of evidence given by another German POW, Lt. Gustav Hammer, to the Court of Justice in Pau. I explore the ways in which the authorities assessed and utilized that evidence, and how Hammer created positions of power for himself both during and after the occupation. Why give credence to the testimonies of the enemy? What motivated German POWs to identify men and women who had aided and abetted them? To what extent were POWs reliable witnesses? In order to address such questions I have made an ethnographic reading of the trial dossiers of certain suspected collaborators who lived in the inland Basque market town of Sustary: a shopkeeper, Mme. Etxart; the postmaster; and an exiled Spanish Republican, Ángel López.⁷ In each case, the authorities repeatedly used Gustav Hammer as a witness.⁸

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⁴. AD, P-A, 30W102, sentence by the Court of Justice, Pau, October 16, 1944.
⁵. AD, P-A, 30W102, testimony of W. P. to commissioner of territorial surveillance, Biarritz, Villa Ongi Etorri, no. 85/2, September 19, 1944.
⁶. On October 10, 1969, the department of the Basses-Pyrénées was renamed Pyrénées-Atlantiques.
⁸. In response to the stipulation by the archives that the privacy of individuals and their families should be respected, I have changed the names of most people who figure in this narrative (unless their cases became publically known in the regional press or were public figures about whom others have written), as well as the name of the town known here as Sustary.
Ethnography entails the close study of people in a particular cultural setting and a detailed description of their customs, institutions, daily habits, psychological dispositions, behaviors, complex interactions, values, and primary concerns in life. Ethnography is usually but not exclusively the product of extensive anthropological field work. (Fiction, autobiography, and other period accounts of local life can supplement the ethnographies of the cultural anthropologist and historian.9) My own fieldwork in the French Basque Country now spans thirty-five years and has enabled me to become well acquainted with a range of individuals who had direct experience of the German occupation and the postliberation period. Such opportunities and my knowledge of Basque culture have informed my reading of the trial dossiers, which are often rich in ethnographic detail about everyday life. Many dossiers in Pau are interconnected with overlapping casts of characters, including Germans like Hammer. Quite often the dossiers show how the personal exploited the political as the occupied and occupiers pursued their own self-interests and made the best of their circumstances in such extraordinary times.

Reading trial dossiers and other period documents through an ethnographic lens is a process as painstaking as fieldwork, and one in which history and memory constantly intertwine. Postwar testimonies are fragmented, incomplete but valuable works of memory in which people variously tried to make sense of their own actions and experiences, concealing (inadvertently or not) some parts of their stories while revealing others in a blend of fact and fiction. Ambiguity, self-interest, opportunism, and the sometimes questionable justice of post-liberation judgments are themes that continually emerge from the dossiers. As a contribution to the growing literature on everyday life in occupied and post-liberation France, this chapter charts new territory by exploring the use of German POWs as witnesses and the ways in which one German used his status as a POW to create positions of power for himself in changing regimes and subsequently in a changing sociopolitical climate.

When the German occupation of France began in June 1940, the line of demarcation divided the department of the Basses-Pyrénées into an occupied zone along the Basque coast and Pyrenean foothills and an unoccupied or Vichy zone that included the inland Basque province of Zuberoa and the former Gascon province of Béarn. Inside the “forbidden zone”

along the Franco-Spanish border, Sustary fell within the Vichy zone until Germany occupied all of France in November 1942. Sustary had a resident population of around one thousand people, as well as a substantial transient population of Spaniards, Spanish Basques, and Portuguese workers, and an increasing number of fugitives fleeing both Nazi persecution and, from 1943, Vichy’s obligatory work service in Germany (the STO, Service du Travail Obligatoire).

During the occupation many citizens in the pays basque deeply opposed and resented the Germans in their midst. A multitude of escape networks for Jews, Allied pilots, and STO evaders existed in the Pyrenean borderlands, and organized resistance groups operated effectively in Zuberoa and neighboring Béarn. Only a small proportion of the total population in the department was pro-German and/or willingly helped the enemy. As happened elsewhere in France, citizens responded in a variety of ways to the occupiers: from icy silence to a measure of civility, especially in the early days of occupation when the Germans behaved correctly. Both sides often made mutual adjustments in order to cohabit with as little tension as possible. Official post-liberation orthodoxy maintained that close, voluntary contact with Germans was reprehensible. What constituted “too close” proved to be a problematic, vague boundary open to too much manipulation. As Robert Gildea once pointed out, relations between the French and the Germans under occupation “cannot be reduced to German repression confronted by French patriotism . . . interactions between the two were multifaceted, subtle and complex.” The occupation of the Basses-Pyrénées was far from benign. The Germans deported more than 1,500

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10. This observation is based mainly upon fieldwork carried out in 1976–1977 and again in 2002–2005, when I had extensive conversations with Basques who had direct experience of the occupation.

11. See the works of Jiménez de Aberasturi, En passant la Bidasoa; Lormier, L’épopée du Corps-Franc Pommiès des Pyrénées à Berlin; Lormier, Le livre d’or de la Résistance dans le Sud-Ouest; Lougarot, Dans l’ombre des passeurs; Martin, Résistances en Haut-Béarn; Ostrum, The Surgeon and the Shepherd; Ott, War, Judgment, and Memory in the Basque Borderlands, 1914–1945; and Poullenot, Basses-Pyrénées.

12. The departmental purge commission assembled nearly 2,700 (0.65 percent of the department’s total population of 415,000) dossiers of suspected collaborators between August 22, 1944, and June 30, 1946. See Poullenot, Basses-Pyrénées, 273.

13. Ibid., 147.

14. Burrin, France under the Germans, 197.

15. I am very grateful to Andrew Bergerson for this observation.

citizens, of whom some 900 survived.\textsuperscript{17} German military action against the resistance and reprisals against civilians increased sharply during June and July 1944, when more than two hundred local people died as a result of German violence.\textsuperscript{18}

The extent to which Franco-German accommodation took place varied enormously across the department. When Germans remained in the same small, face-to-face community for an extended period they had opportunities to become acquainted with its residents and, in some cases, to form highly complicated relationships. Hammer spent a year and a half in Sustary, a community already deeply divided by political differences and personal animosities long before the Germans arrived. A tall, heavy-set, bespectacled officer, Hammer arrived in April, 1943, to work as an interpreter for German customs officers and to provide the SS (Schutzstaffeln) and the SD (the SS intelligence service, the Sicherheitsdienst, attached to the security police) with information about anti-German activities. Hammer circulated daily in and out of the main square; the town's hotels, bars, and restaurants; the post office; and the grocery owned by Mme. Etxart. The wife of a POW in Germany, Mme. Etxart ran her shop with considerable success and enjoyed her independence. She also reveled in intrigue and rumor-mongering and made no attempt to conceal her close social and commercial relations with the occupiers. From the spring of 1943 until the liberation, people often saw her in the company of Hammer. Like so many men and women in occupied France, Mme. Etxart used denunciation as an instrumental means of gaining revenge, and she enjoyed the power it entailed. Driven by self-interest and opportunism, she targeted her commercial rivals, social enemies, and people she simply disliked.

Gregarious by nature, Hammer made concerted efforts to engage citizens in conversation. He was a skilled manipulator with remarkable linguistic skills that enabled him to blur the boundaries between friend and enemy and thus to create ambiguity in his relationships with the local population.\textsuperscript{19} Hammer gauged public opinion about the war, the resis-

\textsuperscript{17} Poullenot, \textit{Basses-Pyrénées}, 148.

\textsuperscript{18} AD, P-A, 1031W182 contains lists of those shot by Germans and killed in village massacres.

\textsuperscript{19} Trial dossiers show that Hammer spoke French and Spanish fluently. The German security and intelligence service (SD) in southwestern France tended to keep interpreters like Hammer in the same vicinity for a year or more. Borderland intelligence relied upon such multilingual expertise. One dossier suggests that Hammer had some fluency in Basque as well: AD, P-A, 30W123, dossier of P. E.
stance, and about the occupiers themselves. Some people variously feared, tolerated, and tried to avoid him; others, like Mme. Etxart, clearly found it exciting to be involved in the positions of power he created for himself as he socialized and performed his duties for German security and intelligence. Hammer established a network of relationships with a wide range of people—some of whom (like Mme. Etxart) regularly gave him information about anti-German activities; some of whom (like the postmaster) balanced on the brink of serving the Germans in an official capacity while also serving the resistance; while others (like Ángel López and the Urrutys) knowingly played a dangerous double game by helping both the resistance and the Germans. The challenge in interpreting their behavior lay precisely in the ambiguity of these relationships.

López is a good example of the problem. He worked both as a clandestine guide for Allied pilots and STO evaders and as one of Hammer’s main informers. López sometimes denounced the people he was paid to help; Hammer arrested him twice for passing fugitives to Spain without his knowledge. Similarly, M. Urruty specialized in helping pilots reach Spain, while his wife served as the key liaison agent for Captain Garat, head of the provincial resistance for the FFI. 20 Yet the Urrutys both had close relationships with the German commander, Hans Ressel, who lodged in their house, and Mme. Urruty became a trusted friend of the head of the Gestapo, through whom she negotiated the release of numerous Basque resisters during 1943–1944. 21 Intense rivalry and personal animosity made Mme. Urruty and Mme. Etxart arch enemies. I have demonstrated elsewhere how the French manipulated relationships of sociability and conviviality to their benefit during the German occupation. 22 Here I will demonstrate as well that Hammer variously used these mutually manipulative relationships to create positions of power for himself not only during the occupation but also during the transitional period of postwar justice in August–October 1944, before the courts operated, and even during the postwar trials of certain suspected collaborators. The very ambiguity that made these relation-

20. Officially established in June 1944, the FFI (Forces Françaises de l’Intérieur) had the task of bringing together and coordinating the many disparate and often rival resistance groups across France.


ships so useful for survival in changing political regimes was ironically also the very thing that condemned its participants as collaborators.

During the occupation, Hammer enjoyed his dual power to harm and to help local citizens. Often ruthless, he was responsible for numerous arrests and deportations. Yet he often addressed people in familiar terms and sometimes strategically “turned a blind eye” to acts of resistance. Sometimes he ignored an anti-German action reported by Mme. Etxart, in order to frustrate her and thus to exert his power over her. As an Allied victory became ever more likely in 1944, Hammer increasingly projected himself as a sympathetic individual who was “not always hard” on wrong-doers, as a kind of insurance policy for his postwar situation. Several trial dossiers suggest that he enjoyed his stay in the pays basque. Nearly every Friday he had lunch with an elderly Basque farmer who ardently supported Vichy and read collaborationist publications.23 Exploiting Basque traditions of hospitality and conviviality, Hammer negotiated the terrain of collaboration through his inherently ambiguous relationship with the farmer. The farmer’s son worked as an informer for Hammer until the son died in the mountains in mysterious circumstances.24 Hammer also made weekly forays to another household in a village south of Sustary, through which he routinely drove on his inspection of the countryside. Hammer met the couple by chance after his vehicle broke down on the mountainous road and struck up a lively conversation with them. Hammer left their house with a basket full of food. From then on, Hammer visited them weekly and smoked cigarettes, ate heartily, and drank cognac with them. He and his host chatted about banal subjects such as hunting and fishing.25 His hostess was on excellent terms with Mme. Etxart.26 Both women remained openly on good terms with Hammer, even as the process of liberation started and transitions in power began to take place at grassroots as well as at national levels.

For most communities, liberation came when German troops left of their own accord in late August 1944, with little or no military engage-
ment. As his position shifted to the margins as the vanquished rather than the victor, Hammer cleverly created a new position of power for himself in circumstances that were changing rapidly. As the last town in the province to be liberated, Sustary had a garrison of 165 Germans. Although now isolated from the retreating German troops, German Commander Ressel “vowed to fight to the finish.” During a tense three-day period, the Sustary priest, aided by Hammer, acted as an intermediary for the provincial FFI leader, Captain Garat, to negotiate terms of surrender with Ressel. Garat still operated clandestinely. When a rowdy crowd gathered in the square to criticize the FFI leader, a local resister found himself standing next to Hammer, who expressed his wish—anticipating surrender—to “have a few days off before being sent to a POW camp.” Hammer then chatted with the priest, who asked him to identify local collaborators. “There aren’t any traitors here any longer,” Hammer replied. “There were two of them, but they’ve gone to Switzerland.” That evening the Sustary mayor and an FFI captain also talked to Hammer about collabos in the town. They specifically asked whether Mme. Etxart had been “a German agent.” Hammer evasively replied that she had “rendered certain services” to him. Initially, Hammer chose to deny that Mme. Etxart had denounced her fellow citizens. Nonetheless, he quickly realized that he had a part to play in the local purge, and once again he held the dual power to harm or to help local people, to reveal or to conceal information likely to affect their future.

By eight o’clock that same evening, with the terms of surrender still not yet agreed, an angry crowd “of bellicose citizens” had gathered in the square to criticize, once again, Captain Garat. Commander Ressel then asked to meet him in the priest’s house, with Hammer, the mayor, and the priest in attendance. Aware of the crowd, Ressel asked Garat if he “still hoped to

27. Arricar, “Reddition des 165 Allemands cantonnés à Sustary, le 22 août 1944.”
28. An unpublished document, Titres de Mme. Sagardoy Danielle, written by the mayor of Sustary, claims that Captain Garat asked Mme. Urruty to persuade the German commander to surrender and credits her with his decision to do so.
29. AD, P-A, 34W45, folders compiled by the local liberation committee, testimony of H.H. to an FFI officer, case 463, Sustary, September 6, 1944.
32. The priest’s memoirs provide a fascinating account of events leading up to the surrender, including an unexpected visit by the German commander to return a button the priest had lost
maintain order” in the town.”33 Shortly after midnight on August 23, the two men finally agreed upon fourteen “required conditions and benefits to be accorded at the time of the German garrison’s surrender.” According to the priest, the German commander was “very dignified” when he accepted the terms of surrender and “asked permission to keep his revolver” until he left Sustary as a POW.34 Later that day, members of the FFI arrested Mme. Etxart, but the local head of the FFI ordered her release so that the matter could be handled by the proper authorities.

On the following day, the Sustary mayor sought out Hammer a second time and asked if he would help identify the “bad French.” Hammer claimed that he had had only two paid double agents, the exiled Spaniard Ángel López and a certain Basque shepherd; he made no mention of Mme. Etxart. Hammer added that he never had the funds to pay his informers—that task fell to the Gestapo. In saying so, Hammer sought a moral distance from the violence used by the SD and Gestapo.35

When news of the surrender spread the church bells rang out in celebration, and Communist resisters flocked to the town calling for the summary execution of collabos.36 In an attempt to prevent violence, the mayor called for calm and order, while Captain Garat tried to make it clear to resisters and civilians alike that no one had the authority to carry out acts of popular justice.37 Sustary was in carnival mode, with collective jubilation alongside the threat of violence, transgressions, the inversion of power

34. Arricar, “Reddition des 165 Allemands cantonnés à Sustary, le 22 août 1944.”
35. AD, P-A, 30W23, testimony of P.J. to a criminal police inspector, document 16, December 21, 1944. In a postliberation report on the behavior of Germans in the Basque Country, the authorities do not attribute any act of torture or violence to Hammer, although they note that he arrested two resisters denounced to him by a German customs officer posing as a fellow resister. The two resisters were subsequently tortured and killed in the St-Michel prison in Toulouse: information in AD, P-A, 1031W182, a file containing photos and reports relating to German atrocities committed in the department of the Basses-Pyrénées.
36. Amicale des Anciens de la Résistance du Secteur IV, Août 1944, 24. No summary executions took place in Sustary. A report to the National Assembly on September 4, 1951, claimed that twenty summary executions had occurred in the department, cited as one of sixteen departments in which such executions were less numerous than elsewhere in France. (See AD, P-A, 1031W172, the Purge, Justice at the Liberation.)
relationships, and the revelation of identities while rival resisters (actual and self-acclaimed) argued over revolutionary hopes and what to do about collaborators.\textsuperscript{38} In the chaos, the FFI were not able to disarm the Germans completely until nightfall.\textsuperscript{39}

The French made it easy for Hammer to assume his new position as an informer to help distinguish between the good and the bad French. The terms of surrender included an FFI promise to protect and take care of the Germans until POW camps were ready to receive them. One of the “benefits” accorded to the German officers is particularly interesting: Article 9 stated that German officers, including Hammer, would be “prisoners on parole who would remain in their usuallodgings on condition that their local hosts did not object. The officers would continue to cook and eat at home” and to retain the housekeeping staff assigned to them for as long as they remained in Sustary.\textsuperscript{40} By according—however fleetingly—such domestic privileges to a vanquished enemy, this term of surrender treated German officers more as insider-houseguests than as outsider-enemies, in a manner reminiscent of the indulgence and “misplaced generosity” sometimes accorded to German POWs by both French citizens and American soldiers elsewhere in post-liberation France.\textsuperscript{41} Although domestic generosity toward German officers was short-lived in newly liberated Sustary, creating a transitional category of “prisoners on parole” who enjoyed domestic “benefits” in the private sphere of home and hearth meant that there was no immediate, comprehensive overturning of power relationships but rather a brief, liminal period in which German officers were not yet full-fledged prisoners of war.

Following a week of confusion and tension between Communist and non-Communist resisters, the FFI finally interned the 165 German POWs at nearby Gurs, which had held more than twenty-two thousand Jews as

\textsuperscript{38} Kedward, “Introduction,” 5–6. For an excellent application of carnival theory to the liberation period, see Brossat, Libération, fête folle.

\textsuperscript{39} Amicale des Anciens de la Résistance du Secteur IV, Août 1944, 24.

\textsuperscript{40} These are given in a pamphlet produced by the Amicale des Anciens de la Résistance du Secteur IV. Amicale des Anciens de la Résistance du Secteur IV, Août 1944, 23.

\textsuperscript{41} Koreman, The Expectation of Justice, France 1944–1946, 54, 56–57, cites examples from the Savoie and Cantal in which both locals and “foreigners” were denounced for having given German POWs cigarettes, food and clothing, for socializing with them in bars, and worse still, for inviting them into their homes for a meal. In the post-liberation period, many French often objected to the Americans’ scandalously generous treatment of German POWs in their care.
a Vichy transit camp for Drancy and Auschwitz. While the FFI leaders were in Gurs, three youths shaved the heads of Mme. Etxart and two women who had had German lovers. Shortly thereafter the authorities interned Mme. Etxart on suspicion of treason. In the weeks that followed, a multitude of accusations and counteraccusations of wrongdoing tore the town of Sustary even further apart. Rival members of the same resistance movement sought to discredit and, on occasion, to denounce each other for “playing a double game.” Some supporters of Mme. Etxart called for the arrest and internment of Mme. Urruty, Mme. Etxart’s arch enemy, claiming that she too had enjoyed close relations with the occupiers, especially the Gestapo. While Hammer was in Gurs, he and Mme. Urruty corresponded daily, using an FFI guard at the camp as their intermediary. Their letters have not survived. Their precise agenda remains unknown. Yet, like so many others, Mme. Urruty helped Hammer create a new position of power for himself as a German POW.

During the first tumultuous months of liberation the Court of Justice did not yet function in southwestern France. Responsibility for the orderly management of the purge initially rested with de Gaulle’s seventeen Regional Commissioners of the Republic. The judiciary purge began at once, with joint cooperation by the government prosecutor, the new prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées, and the president of the departmental liberation committee (CDL). The CDL included prominent members of the resistance and their supporters and assumed the urgent task of identifying collaborationists and collaborators. The CDL first met on August 28, 1944. As a matter of priority, the CDL formed a purge commission to oversee the round-up of those who had aided the Germans and hindered the resistance.

43. Personal communication, G. Harriguileheguy, Santazi, March 1977. Public rumor and several testimonies claimed that Mme. Etxart had also practiced “horizontal collaboration” on numerous occasions. AD, P-A, 30W23, testimony by J.S. to judge Alibert, February 28, 1945; report by division commissioner to the Minister of the Interior, Pau, November 30, 1949; letter from the Sustary notary to Mme. Etxart’s attorney, November 11, 1943; report by Fonlupt-Esperaber to the division commissioner of mobile police, Pau, October 28, 1944.
44. AD, P-A, 34W13, the Purge, list of individuals arrested on suspicion of collaboration.
45. AD, P-A, 30W23, trial dossier of Mme. C., letter by the former head of the Secret Army in Sustary to the retired tax collector in Pau, February 12, 1945.
46. AD, P-A, 34W9, administrative purge (prefecture, police, army, judiciary), 1944–1946; judiciary purge, Pau, August 25, 1944.
47. Poullenot, Basses-Pyrénées, 272.
purge commission then formed an “internment consultative committee” that gathered information about suspected collaborators, largely through the police but also from local citizens. Through the purge commission the committee had the power to arrest and sentence suspects to periods of internment in camps at Gurs, on the Basque coast and at Idron near Pau. In some cases the accused served their sentences without ever facing legal justice in a post-liberation court. Faced with the daunting task of identifying “traitors” quickly and rendering equitable judgments, the “men of good will” responsible for the purge commission were not “technicians of justice”; and they sometimes made highly questionable decisions.

During this first, transitional phase of postwar justice when the courts did not yet function, Hammer attracted the attention of a wide variety of individuals as a potential source for reliable information about the actions of their neighbors during the occupation. He was interviewed by the police, FFI leaders, members of local and departmental liberation committees, victims of denunciation, and intriguingly, one suspected collaborator (Mme. Etxart’s brother) who was determined to use Hammer to clear his name and that of his sister. He continued to enjoy a position of power as a POW because he, and the French, all placed him in this position. As one Sustary police officer noted in a statement to his superiors:

At the liberation no official procedures for identifying collaborators existed . . . and until instructions were circulated people used their own initiative—failing all else—to gather such information. The enormous task (of identifying collaborators) had already been delayed by several weeks, with precious intelligence lost by not having been gathered in a timely fashion. With these concerns in mind, I went to Gurs one day in September 1944, with two inspectors from the mobile police brigade. I thought I might as well take advantage of the Germans’ presence there, so we posed certain personal questions to Hammer and Weiland [another German POW] . . . with the aim of identifying compatriots who had betrayed our country. I never received any orders to do so. But since no one knew how long the Germans would remain at Gurs, we went ahead and interrogated Hammer and Weiland, who spoke French fluently and who knew the Sustary people very well. . . . I asked them about Mme. Etxart, and they

48. AD, P-A, 34W17, liberation committee, September 1944 (no date).
49. Poullenot, Basses-Pyrénées, 272.
50. AD, P-A, 30W23, testimony by Hammer to a criminal police inspector, Pau, November 4, 1944.
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unanimously declared that she had only ever had commercial relations with them and that she had been a nuisance, constantly pestering them for passes to leave the “forbidden zone.” . . . Independently, they denied having had sexual relations with her.51

In September 1944, a Basque pharmacist and a police captain also went to Gurs to question Hammer about denunciations in Sustary. During the occupation, Hammer knew that the pharmacist (a first cousin of Mme. Etxart) was active in the resistance and once warned him to leave town in order to avoid arrest. As a POW, Hammer told the pharmacist that Mme. Etxart had never betrayed anyone.52 Seeking information about “collaborators and informers,” both civil and military police also questioned Hammer and other German POWs on several occasions. In all interrogations recorded by the police, the Germans consistently identified Ángel López and a certain Basque shepherd as their sole “agents” and lied about Mme. Etxart’s behavior during the occupation.53 Hammer’s initial loyalty to her did not last.

In October 1944, FFI Captain Garat wrote to the president of the purge commission about information he had gathered during a recent inspection of German POWs at Gurs. The FFI leader had gone there to question Ressel and Hammer about the “bad French.” He claimed that Hammer had identified Mme. Etxart as the denouncer of the Urrutys, and that Ressel had identified the postmaster as someone “who had always been very, very good to us, too good from your perspective.” According to Garat, Ressel claimed that the postmaster had facilitated German postal censorship at all hours of the day and night and had told Hammer where the maquis was located. Garat continued his letter: “As head of the FFI, I accuse the postmaster of also having tried to provoke an incident in Sustary on the eve of the surrender that would have had very serious consequences. The Germans had not yet relinquished their weapons. The terms of surrender promised they would be protected from any hostile crowds. And there was the postmaster, in the main square, violently criticizing the way in which negotiations had been conducted. The German commander at once asked

51. AD, P-A, 30W23, testimony by P.M., gendarme in the Oloron brigade to a police commissioner, undated document, no. 245.
52. Ibid., testimony by A.G. to Judge Alibert, Pau, document 65, February 19, 1945.
53. Ibid., 30W123, testimony by Hammer (G.D.) to a gendarmerie nationale, camp Andernos, number 146, February 15, 1945; Ibid., 30W36, testimonies by Hammer from a Bordeaux military prison and by Weiland in camp Polo, both given September 18, 1945.
if I would be able to keep my promise to protect them.” For personal as well as political reasons, Captain Garat had long been on bad terms with Mme. Etxart and her family. The postmaster belonged to a rival branch of the resistance in Sustary that challenged Garat’s leadership and Mme. Urruty’s wartime relations with certain members of the Gestapo. These two mutually antagonistic groups often sought to discredit each other in post-liberation testimonies. Trial dossiers are always subject to certain problems of credibility and interpretation when used as historical evidence, and it is often difficult to determine whether resisters or Germans gave accurate accounts of events. However, the authorities eventually concluded that the FFI leader sometimes lacked impartiality when dealing with cases that implicated his rivals and enemies. Garat based his case against the postmaster primarily upon statements made by Ressel and Hammer as POWs who had agendas of their own.

Three days after Garat’s trip to Gurs, the Court of Justice in Pau officially convened for the first time on October 16. The minister of justice in Paris underscored “the importance of acting immediately” to identify suspected collaborators. As happened elsewhere in France, magistrates and jurors sometimes delivered disproportionate judgments. The initial slowness with which the court operated frustrated both authorities and civilians, many of whom also resented the leniency accorded to well-known collaborators. In this second phase of postwar justice before the courts were established, the judiciary and the police regulated access to German POWs and thus put an end to the random visitations made to camps in the Basses-Pyrénées by so many interested parties.

A “consultative committee” of former resisters arrested the postmaster on October 23, on charges of facilitating German postal censorship, of having amicable relations with the enemy, and for having told Hammer where the local maquis was located. The judicial police finally investigated the postmaster’s case in late December 1944; they asked Hammer whether the postmaster had ever told him where the maquis was located.

54. Ibid., 30W23, report by C.J. to the president of the purge commission, document 9, Pau, October 14, 1944.
55. Ibid., 34W14, report on the Sustary postmaster by the departmental liberation committee, under P.B., December 21, 1944.
56. Ibid., 1089W, circular from the regional commissioner of the Republic in Bordeaux on how to form the Court of Justice in Pau, September 26, 1944, un-coded.
57. Ibid., 34W14, liberation committee, individual reports on the Purge, case of P.B., the postmaster.
Hammer said that the postmaster had once gestured vaguely toward the mountains, saying “Bah! You know the maquis is over there somewhere, in the mountains!” The case went before the lesser court (chambre civique), which promptly released the postmaster. The court decided that he had been a victim of bitter infighting by two rival groups of resisters in Sustary and that he had been wrongly accused by Garat of betraying the resistance. The police also decided that Hammer had been an unreliable witness, since he contradicted himself three times as to whether the postmaster had in fact ever told him the location of the maquis. On this occasion Hammer had unsuccessfully positioned himself in the moment and did not have his claims legitimized by the police.

In the French inquisitorial system of criminal justice, the prosecutor decided whether to release the accused or to send the case to an examining magistrate, who carried out an extensive pretrial investigation involving the police, the accused, and witnesses. His primary aim was to search for the truth and to collect evidence not only with which to prosecute but also to acquit. The prosecutor then decided whether the case should be brought to trial. The names of four lay jurors and two substitutes were drawn from a list of twenty French citizens of both sexes “who had never ceased to make manifest their patriotic sentiments.” The presiding judge guided the jurors during the trial, but both judge and jurors jointly determined the verdict and sentence by majority decision. In Pau the judiciary consisted of only four presiding judges. Another three judges took turns serving as the government prosecutor, and a further four men served as examining magistrates. With so few members of the judiciary handling the trials and the fact that cases often had overlapping testimonies, the

58. Ibid., 34W14, report on the postmaster by the departmental liberation committee, under P.B., December 21, 1944; Hammer made the same claims when shown a testimony by the PTT controller in Pau relating to the postmaster, undated but followed the statement taken on March 28, 1945 by the controller.


61. AD, P-A, 1089W, orders from the minister of justice to the Regional Commissioners of the Republic, August 9, 1944.


63. AD, P-A, 1089W5, statistics relating to examining magistrates, 1945–1948; 1257W9, Court of Appeal, Pau, jury lists from October 16, 1944 to July 21, 1947.
judges, prosecutors, and examining magistrates were well placed to determine the reliability of witnesses, including German POWs.

In February 1945, the authorities once again tested the consistency of Hammer’s testimonies when an examining magistrate from Pau initiated pretrial discovery in the case of Mme. Etxart, who faced judgment in the Court of Justice. The authorities had arrested and interned her on September 9, 1944, on charges of denunciation and “amicable, commercial and intimate relations with the enemy.” By 1945, the authorities had transferred Hammer to an internment camp near Bordeaux. On unfamiliar territory and under scrutiny by magistrate intent to dissect every statement made, Hammer now found it much more difficult to create a position of power for himself. He faced more deeply probing interrogations as the magistrate began to question him about his relationship with Mme. Etxart and other citizens in occupied Sustary. Pretrial discovery also entailed formal confrontations, controlled by the magistrate, with Sustary witnesses and the accused herself. The magistrate first interrogated M. Urruty about the denunciation of two Canadian pilots. Urruty accused Mme. Etxart, and his account of events closely corresponded to one given by Hammer on a separate occasion. Then the magistrate called Hammer into the room and read Urruty’s deposition, in Urruty’s presence. Hammer confirmed its veracity and was led away, whereupon the magistrate followed the same procedure with Mme. Etxart, who vigorously denied the accusation.

In Hammer’s version of events, he cast himself as a benign occupier, prone to favors rather than violence, and did not treat his former friend’s words as a denunciation: “I ran into Mme. Etxart in the street. She said the Urrutys had accommodated two American pilots in the Hotel du Fronton and ... that M. Urruty had tried to pass them to Spain. She did not ask me to arrest the Urrutys or to take any action against them. I replied, ‘I’ll handle it.’ I went to see M. Urruty at his garage, and I said to him, ‘I gather you tried to pass two American pilots to Spain. Don’t try it again; otherwise I’ll be forced to arrest you.’ I told the head of the Gestapo what had happened and asked him not to pursue the matter. But he investigated the Urrutys anyway. But at my insistence nothing ever came of it,” Ham-

64. Ibid., 30W23, dossier of M. C.

65. Ibid., interrogation of Hammer by Judge Alibert, the examining magistrate, document 74, February 28, 1945.
mer noted, without mentioning the close relationship between the Gestapo officer and Mme. Urruty.  

In March 1945, the same magistrate focused on a September 1944 testimony Hammer had made to the police at Gurs, in which he claimed Mme. Etxart had never denounced anyone. “I don’t deny that I said that,” Hammer admitted, “but the question really concerned Sabalot, another Sustary man, who had been denounced by a Spanish muleteer, Ángel López.” Having tried to deflect the question, Hammer then lied: “I wasn’t interrogated about Mme. Etxart by anyone other than the Sustary police officer and an FFI captain in Gurs.” The magistrate reminded Hammer that he had told other police officers that Mme. Etxart had denounced several people and asked Hammer to “explain” himself. Lamely, Hammer claimed that the police already knew the details of those denunciations before they ever questioned him. “I was rather surprised by that,” Hammer remarked, “and wondered how they had come to know so much.”

Hammer continued to portray himself as a “good German.” When the magistrate asked him whether Mme. Etxart had also denounced her neighbor, M. Sabalot, the German replied: “One day she told me she suspected him of listening to the BBC. I knew that already, having heard it as I passed by his front door one day. When I ran into M. Sabalot on the street a few days later I advised him not to do it again.” Later on, in the same lengthy set of questions and answers exchanged by Hammer and the magistrate, the latter asked Hammer whether Mme. Etxart had denounced her cousin as a resister. “One day I met Mme. Etxart in front of a café,” he recalled, “and she unthinkingly said to me in passing, ‘My cousin, it seems, is in the resistance.’ I was quite shocked by that statement and immediately went into the café to warn her cousin’s aunt. I advised her to go find her nephew at once and gave her my word of honor that if he ever returned home he should not worry. A few days later I heard that he’d turned up at his house (in another town), and no actions were ever taken against him.” By distancing himself from both Nazi violence and his former friend, Hammer positioned himself as a man of honor.

66. Ibid., testimony by Hammer to Judge Alibert, February 28, 1945. The exact nature of the relationship between the Gestapo and Mme. Urruty remains unknown, but it was the controversial focus of numerous heated arguments in post-liberation Sustary for many years. See Ott, War, Judgment, and Memory in the Basque Borderlands, 1914–1945, chapter 12.
68. Ibid., testimony by Hammer to Judge Alibert, February 28, 1945.
By February 1945, Hammer was portraying his former friend as a silly woman who intended no harm. In his closing observations to the examining magistrate, Hammer admitted that Mme. Etxart had denounced certain citizens to him “but clearly never thought about the consequences of her actions. The circumstances in which she made the denunciations to me showed just how frivolous she was. She almost always made her revelations to me while we were in the street. I reckon that she felt comfortable telling me things because she knew I would not take severe, repressive measures against the people she denounced . . . I don’t think that any malevolent spirit motivated her to denounce her victims. She acted thoughtlessly,” he recalled.69 The magistrate then brought Mme. Etxart into the room for a “confrontation” with Hammer and read his deposition aloud. Once again, she contested Hammer’s version of events and declared: “I stand firmly by my own account of what happened.” Once again, Hammer used this situation to paint himself as a tolerant occupier who did not engage in Nazi violence.

Hammer had again created a position of power for himself, as he had hoped to do, but without knowing the outcome. In May 1945, in his trial summary, the prosecutor underscored the fact that Hammer had kept his word about not turning a known resister over to the Gestapo—and thus had kept a secret from his own side.70 Hammer figured prominently in the prosecutor’s call for the conviction of Mme. Etxart on four counts: endangering the lives of French citizens in wartime with the intention of aiding the enemy, commerce with the enemy, relations with the enemy, and knowingly carrying out other acts that endangered national security.71 Mme. Etxart vigorously denied every accusation brought against her and insisted that she had “rendered services to the resistance” by providing them with food and, on several occasions, had accommodated fugitives en route to Spain.72 The judge and four lay jurors found Mme. Etxart guilty of commerce with the Germans, of relations with them, and of threatening national security, though on this last charge they found extenuating circumstances. The court sentenced her to two years in prison with national degradation.73 Hammer was not present, and it is unlikely that he ever

69. Ibid., testimony by Hammer to Judge Alibert, February 28, 1945.
70. Ibid., exposé des faits by the government prosecutor, court of justice, Pau, April 20, 1945.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., trial dossier of M.C.
knew the role he had played in the prosecutor’s argument or the prosecutor’s portrayal of Hammer as a man of honor. Like the police officer who first interviewed Hammer at Gurs in September 1944, as a “technician of justice” the prosecutor validated Hammer’s claim to arbitrate objectively in the internecine squabbles of Sustary by authorizing him to do so.

Not all of the post-liberation authorities shared that prosecutor’s view of Hammer. As “men of goodwill” rather than “technicians of justice,” two senior figures in the resistance had once again begun to doubt the veracity of his testimonies. Both men had a close knowledge of the rivalry and animosity that divided Sustary; both had been involved in the investigation of the postmaster, who (they concluded) had been wrongly accused by FFI Captain Garat of telling Hammer the location of the local maquis.74 Just as the pretrial discovery process in the Etxart case got underway in February 1945, the president of the departmental liberation committee testified in another case that Hammer “did not hesitate to make false accusations about patriots . . . and had disgraced himself . . . [it was] no longer possible to trust Hammer’s statements.”75 In March 1945, the president of the purge commission also decided that Hammer was “not an honest witness” and that his statements “must be treated with caution and verified,” because the German officer had given contradictory statements about Mme. Etxart’s actions during the occupation.76

Hammer also figured in the trial of Spaniard Ángel López, whom the Gestapo deported to Germany in April 1944, following his arrest for passing fugitives to Spain. When the Allies liberated López he made his way back to Sustary in May 1945, only to be arrested by the authorities following allegations by Hammer that he had been his paid informer and had been responsible for the denunciation and arrest of many fugitives.77 A statement by a local farmer corroborated Hammer’s accusations.78 In his three-page, single-spaced testimony (itself a source of empowerment)

74. Ibid., dossier of P. B., arrested by the purge commission 21 December 1944 and released on December 22, 1944.
75. Ibid., testimony of G.B. to the president of the CDL, February 16, 1945.
76. Ibid., note by Pierre Couret, president of the purge commission, March 27, 1945, no code.
77. Ibid., 30W36, trial summary of examining magistrate in the case of A.M. Note that Mme. Etxart’s trial took place in May as well, thus involving Hammer in both trials within a narrow timeframe.
78. Ibid., dossier of A.M., testimony of M.L., case 528, no. 2910, July 10, 1945.
written for the divisional police commissioner in 1945, Hammer claimed that López paid him a “personal visit” in October 1943:

He called himself López and, entirely of his own accord, he offered to help us arrest people trying to get into Spain. He volunteered the information that he worked for M. Sabalot as a muleteer and that he passed people to Spain with M. Sabalot, with whom he had some disagreement. I don’t know why. López seemed to be very agitated, and that’s why I reckoned he was acting out of vengeance rather than denouncing his boss. Until then, we hadn’t suspected Sabalot. I accepted López’s offer without fixing the amount of remuneration he’d receive. A few days later he came to see me in the Kommandantur. He brought his laissez-passer, to make it seem that the purpose of his visit was to extend it. He told me that he was going to lead a group from a certain Basque village to Sustary that same night. He told me where and when I could find them and that he would be a few meters ahead of the group. Situations like this enabled us to arrest numerous people on two occasions, and each time López received a thousand francs. We turned those people in to the SD [the German security and intelligence service, Sicherheitsdienst] in Sustary. I don’t know what became of them. López disappeared for a few weeks. Then, one evening when Weiland and I were dining in a local restaurant, an officer came to tell us that several people had been arrested while trying to reach Spain. When I got back to headquarters I found five British pilots and López, sitting in the kitchen. Inspector Krutz had already searched them and told me that López had denounced the group. That’s why we released him that same night. I told López to return the next day to collect his payment but he never reappeared.79

Once again, a member of the French police system validated Hammer’s claim to arbitrate objectively in the messy affairs of Sustary.

Unusually, the divisional police commissioner (rather than an examining magistrate) interrogated all five German POWs involved in the case and oversaw “confrontations” between them and López. In July 1945, the police commissioner gave credence to the testimonies of Hammer and Weiland, who had formally identified López as their agent. López denied all the accusations made against him. The police report also observed that a deposition by a local farmer “shed light on the evil activities in which [the Spaniard] had engaged as a clandestine guide” and concluded that the German POWs should be heard as witnesses. Thus the police com-

79. Ibid., testimony of G.D. in camp Andernos, Gironde, case 528, no. 2910/7, July 11, 1945.
missioner found that the Spaniard was “definitely guilty of denunciations, responsible for the deportation of fifteen youths and perhaps for their deaths.”

During the López trial, the prosecutor likewise validated Hammer’s claims when he noted that the Spaniard “was believed to be a double agent responsible for the denunciation and deportation of many patriots. The Germans arrested and deported him because he only told them about insignificant convoys seeking passage to Spain.” The prosecutor emphasized that five German POWs (including Hammer) had “formally accused” the Spaniard of acting as an informer, facilitating the arrest and deportation of several youths, and denouncing his employer for helping fugitives. In his concluding remarks the prosecutor regarded the testimonies of the Germans as “indispensable” to the case and “urgently” asked that three German POWs, including Hammer, be sent to Pau to testify against López. Once again, Hammer convinced the “technicians of justice” that his claims had legitimacy, and he created a position of power for himself by gaining credibility with a prosecutor.

In January 1946, the Allies repatriated Hammer from the British zone to a Prisoner of War Temporary Enclosure (Rheinwiesenlager) in the Rhineland; and in February he was sent back to a POW camp in the Gironde in connection with the López trial. On February 20, 1946, the Pau Court of Appeal finally heard the Spaniard’s case. The prosecutor called four German POWs as witnesses. They had worked alongside Hammer, but he was not among them. A key testimony in López’s favor had been made in September 1945, by a Frenchman allegedly denounced by López. A survivor of German deportation, the man wrote to the judge to express his uncertainty about the Spaniard’s guilt. Although the judge and jury found the Spaniard innocent of all four charges brought against him, a close examination of other trial dossiers, in which Hammer and others

80. Ibid., police commissioner in Pau to the government prosecutor, July 16, 1945.
81. Ibid., exposé des faits by the government prosecutor, Court of Justice, Pau, undated.
82. Ibid., note by Lt. Col. Braniat, regional director of Axis POW depots to the government prosecutor in Pau, January 1, 1946.
83. It is not known why the authorities decided not to bring Hammer into the court, after having gone to such considerable lengths and expense to relocate him.
84. AD, P-A, 30W36, testimony of T.D. to the national police, no. 1333, September 23, 1945.
consistently testified against López, strongly suggests that the Spaniard did indeed work as a double agent and was wrongly acquitted.85

On familiar terrain within the context of Sustary before the courts were established, Gustav Hammer gained power from his close knowledge of the community, its internal divisiveness and so many local people. He cultivated and manipulated ambiguous relationships with many of them, who moved along the resistance-accommodation-collaboration continuum so usefully articulated by Philippe Burrin.86 By asking Hammer to identify the “bad French” in their midst, some Sustary resisters and ordinary onlookers treated him as an insider before the surrender had even been finalized. Still in uniform and still armed, Hammer gave an ironic situation an additional twist by expressing hope for a short holiday before his own inevitable internment in a camp that had so recently sent thousands of Jews on the path of destruction. In the immediate aftermath of liberation, Hammer’s interrogators were not “technicians of justice”: they were mainly ordinary, immensely curious people with no legal training who, for personal and political reasons, wanted to confirm their suspicions about the collaborators in their midst. By “turning a blind eye” to resistance activity often enough, Hammer hoped to build a reputation for leniency that might improve his postwar circumstances. After all, he had also proven his occasional willingness to protect resisters from the Gestapo—in much the same way as the “Mme. Etxart” of post-liberation France used their occasional acts of goodness toward resisters as an insurance policy. As the liberation approached Hammer could have easily slipped across the frontier into Spain, as so many Germans did. Akin to Rudi Mosaner, whose wartime experiences are described in the previous chapter, perhaps he wanted to “enjoy the good life” for as long as possible in that small corner of southwestern France, where hospitality, conviviality, and excellent food are cornerstones of Basque culture.

Once the courts and formal legal procedures for dealing with “collaboration” were fully in place, the authorities moved Hammer onto unfamiliar terrain in internments camps outside the Basque Country and far from the people with whom he had cultivated multi-stranded relationships. Once the Court of Justice operated, trained professionals continu-

85. Ibid., 30W123, dossier of P.E.; 30W23, dossier of M.C. The same judge presided over the trials of Mme. Etxart and Ángel López but was aided by two different government prosecutors and different juries.
86. Burrin, France under the Germans.
ally tested the consistency of his testimonies and his reliability as a witness. Although Hammer contradicted himself in Mme. Etxart’s and other cases and thus lost a large measure of credibility, he produced consistent testimony for the trial of López and figured prominently in the prosecutor’s argument for conviction. Given the attention that the authorities paid to Hammer in relation to that trial, the German derived power, once again, from the margins.

From late August 1944 until the spring of 1946, a wide range of individuals questioned Hammer repeatedly as he moved from camp to camp in France, to an Allied camp in Germany, and then back to France to play his part in the post-liberation search for truth and justice.87 Rather than becoming invisible as POWs, Germans like Hammer paradoxically became “insiders” during the process of liberation. The Court of Justice in Pau provides the first known example of this intriguing phenomenon in postliberation France.

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87. It is not yet known what happened to Gustav Hammer. Some other German POWs went before military tribunals (AD, P-A, 30W39, dossier on Germans in Oloron, Basses-Pyrénées, who were also interrogated extensively as POWs).


British Soldiers and French Civilians, 1944–1945

Richard Vinen

The wind was still from the south-west, bringing the same steady low rumble and the same cloying smell [of dead bodies]. As far as the army was concerned, Bastille Day was an irrelevance; but to the inhabitants of Bayeux—a place suspended in time, cut off from most of France, the railway line silent, deprived of news (the Germans had long before collected all the wirelesses)—it meant something: the promise at least of a return to more normal conditions, the resumption of everyday life, the end of what the Bayeusains referred to, rather ironically, as their little town’s “heure de gloire.”

— Richard Cobb, “Bastille Day, 1944”

Richard Cobb, a sergeant in the British army, rose early on July 14, 1944, to walk into Bayeux and deliver copies of a news sheet. He drank with local journalists, swapped cigarettes for calvados, and ate buttery biscuits—of which there was no shortage because the fighting had disrupted the normal patterns of trade that might have taken these desirable commodities out of the region. He lunched with some communist railway workers and then attended a football match, where he was arrested by the Military Police for having mentioned Bayeux, and thus, apparently given away valuable military information, in his news sheet. His essay underlines the peculiarity of the moment. The area in which Cobb was stationed was neither a battlefield nor a country of peace; the casualties, who filled the local hospital and sustained the prosperity of the town undertaker, were mainly peasant children who had stepped on landmines in the long grass. Normandy was not France, and this was particularly obvious on a day when a Catholic and conservative area marked a revolutionary anniversary. Most
of all in his essay, Cobb suggests that few British soldiers, other than himself, had much interest in the lives of French civilians, whom they were, ostensibly, liberating.¹

For all its self-conscious eccentricity, Cobb’s essay remained, for many years, one of the few pieces of historical writing that paid any attention at all to relations between British soldiers and French civilians in France in 1944. Indeed, there is a curious divergence in studies of France in the year after June 1944. One the one hand are military historians (mostly Anglophone) who describe D-Day and the subsequent Battle for Normandy. Such historians are mainly interested in the large armies of the Americans, Germans, British, and Canadians (usually in that order). With the notable exception of Hilary Footitt,² historians who are interested in Allied armies tend not to be very interested in French civilians. If the French come into the picture at all, it is usually in the form of Charles de Gaulle and his Free French Forces. The French resistance is alluded to briefly and usually in tones of polite condescension.³

On the other hand are scholars (largely French and mainly writing for an academic audience) who describe the “liberation.” Few of these writers would make great claims for the military impact of the resistance or, perhaps, regard debate on this subject as being very interesting. What does mark their work is an interest in conflict and the settling of scores amongst the French. They write about the French Civil War (the “guerre franco-française”) and in fact, strikingly absent from their work is attention to the military conflict between armies. French historians often write about areas removed from the main battlefields and treat the course of the war as a kind of natural phenomenon (like the weather); something that provides the backdrop to history but with which the historian is not directly concerned. Some years ago, a witness at the Papon trial complained that Robert Paxton’s emphasis on the autonomy of the Vichy government had produced a vision of an “occupation without the Germans.”⁴

². Footitt, War and Liberation in France.
³. See, for example, the recent dismissive remarks by Max Hastings about the French, and indeed all European, resistance movements. Hastings, Finest Years, 451–75; and Beevor, D Day.
⁴. As secretary general of the Gironde prefecture in 1942–1944, Maurice Papon oversaw the deportation of Jews. In 1983, he was charged with crimes against humanity —ed.
One might say that some recent work seems to portray a “liberation without the Allies.”

Particularly important in recent writing on the liberation has been the fate of the women (“femmes tondues”) who enduring head-shaving and other humiliations as punishment for the relations that they were alleged to have had with Germans. Written evidence for the study of these woman is hard to come by, but there are numerous photographs, which have influenced historians. Indeed, the most famous photograph of the liberation—perhaps of wartime France—is probably Robert Capa’s image of a shaven woman being marched along the rue du Cheval Blanc in Chartres in August 1944. Such photographs have raised questions about the identity of the victims and their tormenters. They ought also, however, to raise questions about those people who were standing outside the frame, because the photographs were almost invariably taken by people attached to, or serving in, the Allied armies. The collection of pictures by British soldiers kept in the Imperial War Museum has, in fact, been especially important for historians writing on the subject.

In this chapter, I want to try to link up the history of Allied armies and that of French civilians by looking at day-to-day interactions between British soldiers and French civilians. I should stress that this is a limited project. I am suggesting that my work might add a footnote to existing work, but not that either the military historians of World War II or the social historians of France would need to revise any of their major conclusions. I should also stress that the scale of British involvement in France was limited. The total number of soldiers involved was small—compared to the number of American soldiers who landed in 1944 or compared to the number of German soldiers who had been present in France at their peak activity. Equally, the presence of British soldiers in France did not last long. For the Germans, their presence in parts of France began in June 1940 and ended when their last garrisons surrendered on May 8, 1945. For the Americans, June 1944 marked the beginning of a large-scale military presence in France that would not end until de Gaulle withdrew France from NATO’s combined command structures in 1966. The British, by contrast, were always passing through. For most of the time, British soldiers in France were either fighting in a small area of Normandy or moving quickly eastwards in order to get out of France altogether. Indeed, one of the key

5. A concentration on Franco-French relations is characteristic of Luc Capdevila. Capdevila, Les Bretons au Lendemain de l’Occupation; and Brossat, Libération, Fête Folle.
respects in which my own approach differs from that of Hilary Footitt lies in the fact that my angle of vision is narrower. She is looking at Americans and Canadians as well as British soldiers, and she sometimes treats all Allied troops together. I am focusing on the British. I have things to say about how the British saw the Americans—but I have not worked on the American army as a subject in itself. Indeed, for my purposes, part of the interest of British army comes precisely from the fact that it was a comparatively small cog in a large machine.

What kind of contact British troops had with French civilians depended on a variety of circumstances. Large numbers of British soldiers—combat troops and the support troops who followed closely behind them—were either fighting or moving quickly for most of the time that they were in France. They might, if they were lucky, get a few hours in some town—admiring the architecture in Bayeux or surveying the carnage in Caen. Often, however, they just swept on to the next destination. F. M. Campbell recalled: “After about a fortnight, le Havre was captured but we did not get into the liberated town, the big push was now on and all forces were heading rapidly to Belgium.” The advancing forces often moved through areas that had been, or were still being, heavily bombarded. Sometimes French civilians were invisible—having fled or hidden in cellars. David Powis was a British infantry soldier with special responsibility for field intelligence. If his autobiography is to be believed, his closest contact with French civilians came before the invasion—when he looked at aerial photographs so detailed he could see into houses. He does not mention speaking to a single civilian once he arrived in France and, indeed, remarks that a Russian interpreter would have been more useful to his battalion than a French one—because of the number of Russian soldiers, fighting with the German army, who surrendered.

Ordinary soldiers experienced the most contact with French civilians when something went wrong that disturbed the rapid pace of military advance. Groups of parachutists did sometimes, more or less literally, drop on top of French civilians and, when they landed too far behind German lines, they depended on civilian help to get back to their own comrades.

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Stuart Hills had his first real encounter with French civilians when his tank broke down, giving him and a comrade a few hours to kill in a hotel bar, where the locals plied them with drink. Peter Elstob’s tank broke down in the Normandy bocage country for three days, thus trapping him and his crew in a small village at a time when all the other Allied troops had moved on. This gave them a “unique opportunity of seeing a French village’s first reactions to liberation without the restraint or artificiality evoked by occupying officialdom.” A. J. Lane’s engineering unit deliberately dragged out the time that it took them to construct a temporary bridge because the resulting two-day halt gave them a chance to get to know the inhabitants of a nearby village.

It should also be stressed that the relation between British soldiers and French civilians was always a triangular one because the Americans were such an overshadowing presence. Indeed, in some respects, British soldiers and French civilians both had the same feeling of being crushed under the leviathan of American military and technological power. Both commented on the same things: the huge military camps, the extraordinary feats of engineering, the sophisticated weaponry, and the generosity of American rations. For many British soldiers their sense of encountering an alien world actually began when they first met American troops or saw American equipment back in southern England before the invasion. A noncommissioned officer with a signals unit recalled that his arrival in France was mainly notable for his encounter with American machines rather than French people:

As regards my feelings for France on the first day or two, I recall particularly that with the motley assortment of tanks etc. on the move, nothing surprised me. I felt that everything on the move had a beach-head purpose, but I had no curiosity as I might never find out. If an elephant had appeared with wings and a gun on top, I would have given a glance, wondered why it was there, but assumed it was one more cog in the assault force with a specific use to assist us on the road to Caen.

9. Hills, By Tank into Normandy, 147.
11. IWM, 17, Box Reference 88/19/1, unpublished memoir by A. J. Lane.
There were, of course, specific units detailed to deal with French civilians. Civil Affairs Units were, in France at least, composed of British and American soldiers who worked together; they had to be “unbundled” before they moved on to administer the separate zones of occupation in conquered Germany.\textsuperscript{14} In practice, the Americans were more numerous and they made up the more powerful element in such units.\textsuperscript{15} Civil Affairs Units tended to recruit relatively old officers—sometimes men with expertise in particular areas, such as policing or sanitary engineering, that were seen as potentially useful.

Civil Affairs could certainly be a relatively comfortable form of service, and its officers were painfully aware that once the French themselves had taken over the civilian government, such units did not always have much to do. Major Nunn served in Cherbourg and then in Paris. The first of these postings involved useful, though unglamorous, activities—such as rounding up the dogs that had been released by the Germans as they withdrew. However, Nunn himself recognized that his unit’s purpose was less obvious once it reached Paris. Much of their time was spent dealing with wealthy French people (such as tradesmen from the Place Vendôme) who assumed that Allied forces would provide protection against political enemies or business rivals. Nunn eventually refused to attend dinner parties with French civilians because he knew that he would always be lavishly entertained (even French officials would provide black-market food)\textsuperscript{16} and that the evening would always finish with a request for a favor.\textsuperscript{17} In the South of France, material advantages from serving with units that dealt with civilians could be embarrassingly obvious. Captain Routledge, an English officer attached to the Bureau of Psychological Warfare, wrote to his superiors in revealingly defensive tones: “First, I should make it perfectly clear that Nice is not a rearward area, but is an operational theatre

\textsuperscript{14} Flint, “The Development of British Civil Affairs and its Employment in the British Sector of Allied Military Operations during the Battle of Normandy, June to August 1944.”

\textsuperscript{15} Major Nunn, as he then was, seems to have served in a typical Civil Affairs Unit. Half of the twenty-five officers in it were English but all of the twenty-five enlisted men were American. IWM, 11231, Box Reference Con Shelf, Lt. Colonel Nunn, unpublished memoir.

\textsuperscript{16} On the provision of black-market food by French officials see London, National Archives (hereafter NA), WO 219/3673, “A history of Civil Affairs in operation Dragoon (Southern France), August 15—December 1, 1944.”

\textsuperscript{17} IWM, 1123, Box Reference Con Shelf, Lt. Colonel Nunn, diary entries for October 2 and October 16 and memoir pages 67 and 91–2.
with a divisional CP in the town itself and I am not desirous of staying here merely because of the amenities of the Côte d’Azur.”

Some Civil Affairs officers seemed to have a view of military-civilian relations that was particularly removed from the lives of ordinary soldiers. They were, in particular, notable for their belief that it would be possible and desirable to prevent the one form of contact that was most common—trade between soldiers and farmers for food. Pamphlets told British soldiers that they would be inflicting starvation on French children if they bought milk from farmers, and Civil Affairs officers congratulated themselves on advertisements placed in the French local newspaper telling peasants not to sell their products to Allied soldiers.

There were also some units that were especially likely to come into contact with French civilians—even if this was not their primary function. Logistic units, made up of men who stayed behind lines to organize supplies and communication routes were one such group, though British logistics was less advanced than its American counterpart and also lacked the special dimensions that were imparted to American rear units by race. Women attached to the British army also had a particular kind of role. It is commonplace to describe relations between the Allied armies and French civilians in terms of male soldiers encountering a population that was largely made up of women and children (because so many men were away in prisoner of war camps or in Germany factories or in the maquis). There were, however, small numbers of women—typists and nurses—attached to the British army. These women’s view of French civilian life was more intimate than that of men because they were more likely to be billeted on French families. Their view of French civilian life seems odd to anyone who is used to conventional military views. Their contacts were often with other women and with households regarded as “respectable,” and their view of the whole war was often marked by grief at the death or absence of men. Mrs. A. Radloff was a nurse attached to the British army. She made friends with a Norman family, with whom she was to remain in touch for many years, and later lived with a group of Belgian nuns—NOTING that the more patrician nuns spoke French whilst their more plebeian sisters spoke Flemish, to which they occasionally added the Anglo-Saxon.

18. IWM, 8609, Box Reference 01/57/1, Routledge papers, Routledge to Clark, October 4, 1944.

19. NA, WO 219/3727, 21 Army Group Civil Affairs Information Summary for week ending August 5, 1944.
obscenities that they had picked up from British soldiers. British women were, however, forbidden from moving about without military escort and they rarely had public encounters with French crowds that were experienced by male soldiers.

The first encounters between British soldiers and French civilians were marked by two kinds of surprise. The first involved refugees. Allied planners were concerned that roads might be blocked by people seeking to flee from fighting. They anticipated that 250,000 people would be displaced from their homes in the ninety days that followed D-Day and that 35,000 people would be displaced just in the period leading up to the fall of Caen. British officers—who had memories of the scrambled evacuations from Dunkirk and Cherbourg and who had, in some cases, personal experiences of the French exodus of 1940—were particularly worried about this problem. It was assumed, in fact, that dealing with displaced persons would be the primary function of Civil Affairs Departments, and the British had even established a refugee camp, at Sompting near Brighton, on the assumption that French refugees would have to be shipped over the channel. These large-scale movements did not happen. The population of Normandy was relatively dispersed and largely rural. Peasants had good reasons to want to stay close to their land and no particular reason to flee the Allied armies—though civilian populations were sometimes keen to escape from the more short-term problems caused by bombardment. As has been stressed, the point that struck British soldiers as they advanced was often the eerie absence of a visible population rather than roads clogged with fleeing people.

The second surprise concerned food. British soldiers had been told that the French population was starving. The Handbook for British Troops in France warned:

20. IWM, 147, Box Reference 89/19/1, memoirs by Mrs. A. Radloff.
21. IWM, 1972, Box Reference 92/22/1, papers of Mrs. S. P. Wild, a typist with the British army.
23. Ibid.
24. “Like every other Normandy village we fought our way through: it had been bombed and then smashed up by the guns of the tanks. If any civilians were still there, they would have been hiding deep in their cellars.” Hills, By Tank into Normandy, 121.
Almost all French civilians (including many children) are undernourished because the Germans have eaten the food. The Germans have drunk the wine or distilled it into engine-fuel. So there are only empty barrels to roll. A good many people are likely in any case to lack the energy or the mood to do much celebrating, however great their joy and relief at being freed. France has developed under the German occupation much of the physical depression of a sick room and much of the mental stress of a concentration camp.\textsuperscript{25}

Troops arrived in Normandy did not, on the whole, encounter an undernourished population. This was a fertile agricultural area, and the Allied armies arrived at a point in the agricultural year when fruit was being picked and milk production was high. Furthermore, the disruption of transport caused by the fighting meant that food that might normally have been transported to the cities was still in the region. Indeed, sometimes British soldiers were faced with problems apparently caused by surplus supply. Livestock wandered loose across the battlefield, and the Civil Affairs officers (who had issued stern orders against taking milk from the mouths of French children) sometimes ended up organizing British troops to milk cows that were in agony.\textsuperscript{26} Some journalists who accompanied the Allied armies wrote scandalized articles about the relative abundance of food in Normandy. They concluded that the French had done well out of the occupation, and that Allied soldiers resented their good fortune. Occasionally such sentiments were echoed by British soldiers. One officer recalled that the people of Normandy were “fat, fit and cheerful. They resented us—anyhow, at first: we were spoiling the land and it was getting near the harvest.”\textsuperscript{27} However, most British soldiers were more sensitive to local realities. They appreciated that food shortage was not the only hardship of occupation and were often sympathetic to French peasants’ fears of damage to their property by armies of either side. Captain Cross of the Oxfordshire and Bucks Light Infantry wrote to his wife in July 1945:

The French people that we have met have been marvelous . . . pleasure mingled with apprehension because they knew when we arrived that it might mean shelling, it might mean we should have to raid their houses

\textsuperscript{25} NAM, \textit{Handbook for British Troops in France} (1944).
\textsuperscript{26} Puttock, \textit{First Things First}, 19.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 17.
to protect ourselves, it would assuredly mean the death of a lot of their livestock.\textsuperscript{28}

British soldiers also understood that the French were frightened by the prospect that the Allies might withdraw and that people who were seen to have been close to them might suffer German retribution—British and Canadian troops had staged a large-scale, but impermanent, landing at Dieppe in 1942. John Shaw, a glider-born soldier in Normandy, recalled:

While we halted in this small village, small groups of French began to appear in doorways and look at us. They did not seem friendly or demonstrative. I think that they were apprehensive both of further fighting and of whether this was only a raid and we would again withdraw or be driven out—no doubt they remembered how that had happened at Dieppe two years before.\textsuperscript{29}

Most importantly, many soldiers understood the economics of the Norman countryside fairly well—it was not, after all, very different from the countryside of southern England from which many of them came. J. R. Harris wrote in his diary on July 7, 1944: “The famers are starting to get the hay in and the lads [i.e. his own comrades] are giving a hand.”\textsuperscript{30} Soldiers also understood that Normandy was an unusual area. Civil Affairs officers who had to deal with shortages in Paris or, even more, in the cities of southern France knew how unevenly food was distributed. However, even private soldiers grasped the distinctions. R. F. Songhurst expressed his surprise that the Normans were not thinner, and one his comrades answered that “the country regions are not all that badly off . . . it’s the city folk who have felt the pinch.”\textsuperscript{31}

Furthermore, British troops very quickly became involved in the agricultural economy themselves because they traded with Norman peasants, and thus had a sense of what was scarce and what was plentiful in France. Generally, British soldiers acquired eggs, butter, cheese, fruit, and cider. In return, they gave cigarettes, chocolate, and soap (the last being almost impossible to come by for French civilians). Two bars of lifebuoy

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28} IWM, 771, Box Reference 91/81/1, The World War II letters of Captain Cross, letter from Cross to his wife, June 23, 1944.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Shaw, \textit{Memorable Days}, 48.
\item \textsuperscript{30} IWM, 1893, Box Reference 86/5/1, J. R. Harris.
\item \textsuperscript{31} IWM, 2373, Box Reference 86/24/1, R. F. Songhurst, “One for the King,” unpublished memoir, 224.
\end{itemize}
soap bought eight eggs; a “few cigarettes” bought “plenty of apples, pears or tomatoes.” British soldiers were, in theory, forbidden to trade with French civilians. In practice, however, no serious efforts were made to stop them. Officers as well as other ranks were involved in such transactions, and the frankness with which they were discussed in letters home suggests no sense of embarrassment and no fear of retribution from the military authorities. Trade with farmers was a victimless crime. Each side had large supplies of commodities that the other wanted and that could not, realistically, have been disposed of in any other way. Often the arrangement seems to have been perceived as an amicable exchange of gifts rather than as the product of bargaining. Even when British soldiers took things without asking, French peasants (sometimes veterans of the World War I themselves and hardened by several years of German requisitions) often seem to have regarded this as legitimate behavior.

British soldiers appear to have operated (or at least recalled their operations) with reference to an implicit moral economy. Trade in food and in perishable goods that did not have any military significance was legitimate. Trade that involved the exchange of money, that took place on a large scale, or that involved items that did have military value—especially petrol—was not.

Trade seen as illicit was more common in towns than in the countryside. British soldiers were also prone to attribute large-scale, illicit trade to the Americans. Americans, of course, had access to more impressive goods, and a larger number of US troops were involved in the kind of logistical functions that provided them with an opportunity to do serious business with French civilians. In addition to this, many of the American troops who worked in support units behind the lines were African American, and their denunciation seems to have fitted into a stereotype created by British soldiers that lumped the most despised elements of the American army with the most despised elements of the French population (also often identified in racial terms). British documents contain lurid accounts of illegal American deals. In Paris, it was said that American goods, including a jeep

32. IWM, 1507, Box Reference 87/35/1, D. Cooper diary, entry for September 29, 1944 and September 26, 1944.

33. Major Vernon reported that “one enterprising rogue” in Bayeux had demanded a liter of petrol in return for a liter of cider. IWM, 339, Box Reference 90/25/1, unpublished memoir by D. R. Vernon, p. 5.
and a machine gun, had been sold in the area around the Eiffel tower;\textsuperscript{34} in Cherbourg it was said that the entire contents of a sunken Liberty ship had been looted.\textsuperscript{35} A report claimed that 20 percent of all goods arriving in Marseilles (a region whose inhabitants excited particular contempt from the British and one where the Americans provided the great mass of transport) had been looted.\textsuperscript{36}

More generally, British relations with French civilians were influenced by perceptions of national and regional stereotypes. Official military guidance emphasized that the behavior of French civilians would vary from area to area and that, for example, the Lyonnais would be the reserved with “sudden outbursts” of emotion. Normandy’s residents were described as undemonstrative, and it was implied that they were, in some ways, closer to the British than to the population of southern France. Ordinary soldiers were struck by what they believed to be the peculiar characteristic of the Normans. One said that they were the “Scots of France”\textsuperscript{37}; another expressed the belief that they were more like people of the eighteenth century than Frenchmen of the twentieth.\textsuperscript{38} If the British had positive images of the rural Norman population with whom they had most dealings, however, they also had negative images of civilians from outside the area (or the social class) with whom they had most dealings. They were prone to attribute crime and disorder to “outsiders” who had been brought into Normandy and Brittany by the Todt Organization\textsuperscript{39}—particularly when such people were drawn from Paris or Marseilles, or when they were Algerian.

\textsuperscript{34} IWM, 11231, Box Reference Con Shelf, Lt. Colonel Nunn, unpublished memoir, 65
\textsuperscript{35} IWM, 2373, Box Reference 86/24/1, R. F. Songhurst, “One for the King,” unpublished memoir, 231.
\textsuperscript{36} NA, WO 219/3673, “A history of Civil Affairs in Operation Dragoon (Southern France), August 15, 1944–November 1, 1944.”
\textsuperscript{37} “The Norman is as shrewd as the Scotsman.” The writer was an English officer. NA, WO 219/3727, Captain EG de Pury, “First report on US zone of operations in France,” June 25, 1944.
\textsuperscript{38} “I do not know that I particularly like the French as a nation, but the Normans never seemed to me to be quite French, but more like the English must have been in the early 18th century.” IWM, 2373, Box Reference 86/24/1, R. F. Songhurst, “One for the King,” unpublished memoir, 274.
\textsuperscript{39} (The Todt Organization was created after Hitler ordered the construction of fortifications along the Atlantic coast —ed.) Du Pury reported that looters were “chiefly Algerians of the Todt organization.” NA, WO 219/3727, Captain de Pury, “Recce report on Cherbourg,” June 30, 1944. Law and order was said to be a problem in St Mère-Eglise: “It was a district HQ of the Todt organization.” Ibid. 219/3727B, report by Boulton June 10–11.
British troops were influenced by two other kinds of stereotypes. The first, which has already been discussed, related to the Americans. The British rarely expressed hostility to the Americans themselves, but they often reported on the hostility that their French interlocutors felt and they often seemed to take it for granted that some American soldiers (African Americans ones in particular) would be sources of trouble. The other stereotype that influenced the British concerned the Germans. British reports often made much of the belief that the Germans had been “correct” in their dealings with French civilians, and that it was especially necessary that the Allied armies should also be well disciplined. There was, however, a paradox in such reports. British expressions of respect for German correctness went alongside graphic reports of German atrocities against French civilians. Sometimes this divergence seems to have been the result of differences between units; men preparing reports before the invasion tended to emphasize “correctness” while front-line troops reported on atrocities. Sometimes, however, the same author (or even the same document) would report on atrocities while also emphasizing German “correctness.”

Perhaps, in part, the British here were responding to confusion among their French civilian informants. So far as the genteel and “respectable” population of prosperous rural areas was concerned, the Germans had indeed behaved with relative restraint for most of the occupation—however, this image was punctured by reports of how the Germans had behaved to less fortunate groups and also by the extent to which German behavior changed during the last few weeks of the occupation.

Ordinary British soldiers knew comparatively little about the politics of occupied and Vichy France. They rarely mentioned Pétain and generally divided the population into collaborators, resisters, and “others.” They admired the French resistance—while frequently expressing alarm at its lack of discipline and the brutal treatment of its enemies. There was no direct conflict between Allied troops and French collaborators. The only French people that British forces came across in Normandy who were actively helping the Germans were the occasional “stay behind agents”—

40. Referring to the views of the prefect of the Manche, de Pury wrote that the French wanted the military police reinforced and that “nearly all the complaints referred to the conduct of Negro troops.” NA, WO 219/3727, report by de Pury, July 29, 1944.

41. On August 29–30 Routledge reported that alleged rapes in the St. Raphael area had caused particular problems because the Germans had been so “correct” though, in his report to Major Keates of September 8–18, he described a large-scale German massacre. IWM 8609, Box Reference 01/57/1.
desperate, young men who resembled Lucien Lacombe [of the film by Louis Malle, —ed.], who were easily caught and who often turned out to know less about French right-wing organizations than their interrogators.42

Civil Affairs Departments were more heavily involved in dealing with French political divisions. They were particularly concerned with controlling the FFI (Forces Françaises de l’Intérieur). British perceptions of French politics owed much to the conservatism of the French armed forces and something to their own pre-invasion dealings with the Free French. Generally, they accepted Gaullism as the lesser of the various evils with which they might be confronted in France, and they came rapidly to acknowledge that this was the position of most conservative French people.

Civil Affairs officers were also influenced by the early encounter with Normandy and, to a lesser extent, Brittany. These were conservative Catholic areas; the British recognized “the moderate right-wing tendencies of the Normans” and the fears of a communist or Popular Front government.43 Furthermore, officers tended to draw their information from established local notables. In July 1944, in Bayeux, they talked to a conservative farmer, who was “against a return of the Popular Front.” The principal of a lycée, and wounded veteran (“grand blessé”) of World War I, expressed similar opinions, as did the owner of a local porcelain factory and “leading doctors.” Civil Affairs officers also talked to the inspector of primary education, the mayor, and a number of lawyers.44 An officer in Cherbourg talked to the head of the local resistance who was a “solid person” and large-scale wholesale grocer. He was “against wholesale reprisals and wanted no dirty linen washed in public. The obviously bad hats he wanted liquidated without fuss or noise.”45 Churchmen were important in providing advice. The British came from a culture in which there was an established church and very little open anticlericalism—so it may have seemed natural to them that priests and bishops should be treated as exponents of public opinion. In any case, senior churchmen stayed in place at a time when there was a high turnover of state officials, as Pétainists were purged by the incom-

42. NA, KV 2/552, KV 2 210 and KV 2/211/. All of these files concerned the interrogation of captured French agents.
44. Ibid., “Report on Civil Affairs Recce of Second Army areas from June 12 to June 18,” June 19, 1944.
45. Ibid., “Recce report from Cherbourg,” June 30, 1944, signed Captain de Pury.
ing Gaullists, and as people seen as excessively radical were then discreetly eased out in turn. During the first few weeks after D-Day, British officers talked to bishops and priests in Coutances, St. Lô, Rennes, and Bayeux. The bishop of Quimper told the British that the fishermen in his town had communist leanings but that he was “hopeful that the war years will teach that revolutionary ideas do not pay.”

In Normandy, British officers often enjoyed amicable relations with officials who had served Vichy. They worked with such men in the immediate aftermath of the liberation and often regarded them as competent. Later, in Paris, more ambiguous figures from the fringes of collaboration sought out the British in the hopes that they might be afforded protection. A Civil Affairs officer in Paris reported approaches from a woman whose son was fighting on the Russian front with the German army, who apparently believed that the British might be able to extract him; by a woman whose daughter had married a German; and by a woman who wanted the FFI to be removed from her house and who drew attention to the arrest of her “brother or cousin.” The officer concluded, with reference to this last case, that there was a “smell about the whole business.”

British soldiers did make general attempts to contain violence by the FFI and did occasionally extract people from illegal imprisonment by men who claimed to be members of that organization. However, interventions to stop any particular part of the postwar purges were very rare. Officers recognized that the dismissal of Vichy officials, even those who had been most helpful to them, was inevitable. In Bayeux, Civil Affairs officers were approached by local resistance leaders and asked whether Rochat, the sous-préfet and, allegedly, a Vichyite and pro-German, should be removed. However, the British refused to provide advice: “Our reply had to be that they must act as they thought best.” Not surprisingly, the French authorities then dismissed Rochat. The British authorities recorded that he had been an “able man who worked successfully with local officials and civil

46. Ibid., on Coutances and St. Lô: “Recce Report on St Lô and Coutances coastal area,” July 31, 1944; on Rennes: “Special Civil Affairs Report, for Brittany,” August 10, 1944.
47. Ibid., Reconnaissance Report on Finistère, August 17, 1944.
48. Nunn recalled that the sous-préfet in Cherbourg, Monsieur Bourdin, who had recently been deposed for having supported Vichy, came to pay his respects before leaving. IWM, 11231, Box Reference Con. Shelf. Lt. Colonel Nunn, unpublished memoir, 31.
49. Ibid., Lt Colonel Nunn, diary, entries for September 27 and November 2.
affairs at Bayeux,” but they recognized that his sacking was inevitable and did nothing to intervene on his behalf.\textsuperscript{51} They never sought to overrule French authorities. British soldiers often knew about the “barbarous purge” (épuration sauvage, the public heading-shaving of women alleged to have slept with Germans, —ed.) that followed the liberation but rarely intervened to stop it—partly because they knew about the suffering inflicted on the French and felt that it was not their place to stop acts of revenge, even if they found those acts distasteful.\textsuperscript{52}

Most of all, British soldiers were governed by the decision—passed down from their commanders—that they should not intervene in French “internal” quarrels. British officers took an interest in the operation of French courts and sometimes sent observers to political trials.\textsuperscript{53} However, their main concern was with the mundane business of ensuring that French courts prosecuted civilians who were accused of crimes that had some direct effect on the Allied war effort—which meant, in the main, the theft of petrol.\textsuperscript{54} Their principal interest in the purges sprang from a desire to not see French courts clogged up with political trials.

Insistence on nonintervention by British officers could take extreme forms. Major Nunn of the Civil Affairs Department arrived in Paris and installed himself and his fellow officers at the Hôtel Louvre. He then went to see the enlisted men in his unit (all Americans) who were staying at the less-grand Hôtel Normandie. He walked through streets in which fighting still took place, “apparently between the Milice and the FFI.” On arrival at the Hôtel Normandie he found that his men “were taking pot shots at men, presumably the Milice, who occasionally appeared on roofs. As I did not think that this domestic quarrel was our business, I ordered them to desist.”\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{51} Rochat was the son-in-law of Gaston Bruneton, an important Vichy official. Ibid. 219/3727, “Report on Civil Affairs Recce of Second Army areas from June 12 to 18 June,” June 19, 1944.

\textsuperscript{52} Bill Bellamy reported a rumor that the local FFI in Bethune had put thirty-five prisoners (apparently all SS men and collaborators) down a mineshaft and were slowly starving them to death. He quoted a letter from a fellow officer: “what they [the French] have suffered seems to me to justify their attitude.” Bellamy, \textit{Troop Leader}, 108–110.

\textsuperscript{53} By the end of September 1944, British legal officers had been withdrawn, except from Lille, where one had been retained “in view of the possibility of serious industrial relations trouble in that area.” NA, WO 219/3727.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid. 219/3735A, Brigadier DCCAO, December 7, 1944.

\textsuperscript{55} IWM, 11231, Box Reference Con Shelf, Lt. Colonel Nunn, unpublished memoir, 61.
The matter of “domestic quarrels” at the liberation bring us to the attacks on French women who were deemed to have been too close to the Germans. British soldiers had been told much about French women before they arrived. They were, in particular, sometimes given the impression that levels of sexual “collaboration” between French women and German men had been high. One officer believed that he had passed a village in which “at least a dozen women” had been associated with Germans.56 A handbook issued to British soldiers warned them that up to one in eight French women in the vicinity of German bases was infected with venereal disease (though, in private, the British authorities seem to have known that the figures that they issued on venereal disease were exaggerated).57

In addition, views about female collaboration haunted the invading British army. Seven of thirteen prominent collaborators listed in one of Captain Routledge’s reports from the South of France were women, and Routledge’s commentaries on their sexual morality were often intertwined with his views on their supposed political associations. An Indochinese restaurateur was said to have been the mistress of a Gestapo officer. Two female hoteliers were said to have “frequented” the Germans. One woman was blamed for having worked with the Gestapo to extract her lover from prison and then for having taken another lover who was Jewish (Routledge argued that the mere fact that the Jew had been able to live openly in the occupation showed that he had dubious associations).58 Officers in Normandy also investigated rumors that women who had been camp followers of the Germans would serve as snipers attacking the invaders—rumors that, not surprisingly, turned out to be without foundation.59

One might expect British soldiers to develop relations with precisely the women who had previously been associated with German soldiers, and this was indeed what some people in France in 1944 did expect. A French

56. Watney, The Enemy Within, 140.
57. NAM, pamphlet, “Advice for British Soldiers.” It was reported that the Prophylactic Insitute had estimated syphilis cases in France at 5 million but that “other authorities consider this estimate exaggerated.” NA WO, 219/3547, Field Handbook for civil affairs, France, revised edition August 1944, section 246.
58. IWM, 8609, Box 01/57/1, Routledge report dated September 25, 1944.
59. NA, WO 106/4278, Foreign Office to ambassador in Algiers, June 17, 1944: “Female snipers could only be wives of German soldiers.” Ibid. July 21, 1944, Report from liberated Normandy: “Early press reports about French women snipers and the hostility of the younger generation were carefully investigated and proved to be entirely unfounded.” It was, however “reported by 5 Corps that 3 girls, followers of the German army, fired on our troops,” ibid. WO 219/3727, Report by Boulton, June 10–11.
woman who watched girls having their heads shaved in Chartres in August 1944, said: “These are soldiers’ women: tomorrow they will be with the Americans.” It is, of course, hard to know what really happened between British men and French women. Sexual relations raise particular problems of sources. Historians rely on personal accounts, which occasionally give glimpses of such relations between British soldiers and French women. J. R. Harris wrote in his diary about walking around Bayeux with men from his unit and added, “Jimmy got his eyes on something so we lose him”—one assumes that the “something” in question was a woman. A. J. Lane wrote that “these were the days when two bars of chocolate was sufficient wealth and payment to satisfy the most lustful soldiers”—though he insists that his own affair (the only one of which I have found a first-hand account) was of a noncommercial variety. R. F. Songhurst recalled that the women he encountered in Cherbourg were mainly the “camp follower type”—though he claimed that he personally had never taken advantage of such possibilities.

However, such references are comparatively rare, and most men who wrote accounts of their time in Normandy recall the women that they actually met—as opposed to those that they heard about—as having been respectable. This may just be a problem of sources. The kind of men who were most likely to write such accounts (and to deposit them in public archives) may have been unusual. In any case, it is hardly surprising that men did not mention, say, visits to brothels in letters to their mothers. In terms of official documents, sexual relations attracted attention when they were seen as problematic by the military authorities and/or the civilian population. This was obviously the case when German soldiers or African-American troops in the US army were seen to be close to French women. It may be that relations between British troops and French women left no record because they offended no particular taboos.

It is, however, also possible that British troops simply did not develop the same kind of relations with French women that German soldiers had done. This was partly a matter of time. The Germans were in France for four years, and for most of that time, most of them lived in barracks located

60. Cited in Kershaw, Blood and Champagne, 216.
61. IWM, 1893, Box Reference 86/5/1, J. R. Harris diary, entry for August 3, 1944.
62. IWM, 17 Box Reference 99/19/1, unpublished memoir by A. J. Lane.
63. IWM, 2373, Box Reference 86/24/1, R. F. Songhurst, “One for the King,” unpublished memoir.
in towns. The British army, by contrast, passed through France. Soldiers were constantly on the move. They were mainly in the countryside and slept in tents or, more commonly, in canvas-covered trenches alongside their tanks—not comfortable places to be during the rains that came in July 1944. Few of them had much chance to frequent bars or even just to strike up conversations in the street. If they met women, they usually encountered them as members of families—with fathers and mothers present. Rear-echelon troops do seem to have had rather different relations with French women. This was, for example true of soldiers who stayed behind to manage communication links in Cherbourg. These troops, however, were more likely to be American (particularly, in fact, African-American) than British. British Civil Affairs officers who discussed questions of prostitution seem sometimes to have assumed that this would be a problem affecting American soldiers.

British soldiers most often encountered women who were seen as “unrespectable” when they witnessed female head-shaving of the “tontes” conducted by other French people. What was the British attitude to these? As I have stressed, British soldiers were frequently present when women had their heads shaved. Hilary Footitt suggests that accounts of such events are in fact one of the most common themes in descriptions of the liberation by British soldiers.64 When they recalled such events, they usually did so in terms of disapproval. Fabrice Virgili has argued, however, that Allied soldiers rarely intervened to stop such attacks and that their interventions were rarer than their recollections sometimes suggested.65 My own sense is that the attitude of British soldiers was complicated. Senior officers certainly knew that head shavings were going on and seem to have accepted such events. Captain Routledge wrote that

Some women had been shorn outside the Mairie [townhall —ed.] on 27 August (Draguignan), as in most towns; it is understood that some form of general policy is being introduced whereby only the non-professional elements are affected.66

Ordinary soldiers frequently witnessed such events and did not intervene to stop them, but this is not quite the same as saying that they approved. Often they disliked what they saw, but also recognized that the

64. Footit, War and Liberation in France, 53.
65. Virgili, La France 'Virile,' 131–3.
66. IWM, 8609, Box 01/57/1, Routledge, Routledge to Major Hackett, August 29–30, 1944.
French might have reasons for seeking revenge that were not apparent to people who had not lived through four years of occupation:

Yesterday was another celebration—35 women became hairless for consorting with the German soldiers, one of them the wife of a French POW with a little Boche [German —ed.] around the house. It seems to me a rotten way to treat women but I suppose it’s a different mental make up from the French.\textsuperscript{67}

Often there seems to have been division within units—ordinary soldiers wishing to intervene while their officers (mindful of their orders to not intervene in French internal struggles) refused them permission to do so. British units often refrained from the straight use of force against French crowds, but they did intervene in more limited and/or discreet ways. F. M. Campbell wrote of an incident close to the Belgium frontier:

On liberating a small town we noticed quite a commotion. We decided to investigate. In the centre of the crowd we noticed a young woman sitting on a wooden stool hands tied behind her back. She was having her hair shaved off as she had been a collaborator. The sight was most degrading and we tried to put a stop to it, but our officer forbade us interfering. The people, particularly the women, wanted their revenge after five years and retribution was being exacted. Eventually she was stripped to the waist and left to the public gaze. Late at night after she collapsed, we released her and handed her to the local police station.\textsuperscript{68}

Peter Elstob’s accounts of his own experiences as a corporal in a small community in Normandy were similar. He and his tank crew saw three women (a woman of sixty-five with her daughter and granddaughter) paraded at the liberation. All three were alleged to have had sexual and/or commercial relations with German officers. Elstob told the French that he did not approve: “c’est brutal et ce n’est pas juste.” (“It’s brutal and not fair.”) His working-class tank driver wanted to intervene, but Elstob recalled, “My orders had been most explicit. Do not intervene in any way,” and he restrained his men while the two young women were shaved. He himself intervened, in terms that said something about how the British sometimes regarded French masculinity, when they proposed to shave the

\textsuperscript{67} Letter to by Alan Howard to his brother, September 7, 1944. Quoted, by one of Howard’s comrades, Bellamy, \textit{Troop Leader}, 109–11.

\textsuperscript{68} IWM, 9794, Box Reference P 182, autobiographical letter, dated December 7, 1973.
grandmother. He told the leader of the village resistance, “a cruel brute” of about twenty:

War … is bad, but it is for men, it is not for women. Men make it and they must suffer. Now—you—you are a man and you are young and strong. The Boche is young and strong too. If you want to fight the Boche—well there are many Boches five kilometres to the South.69

What general conclusions can we draw about the relations between British soldiers and French civilians? First, and not surprisingly, the two groups were relatively sympathetic to each other. Journalists sometimes portrayed an army that was bitter that the French seemed so prosperous or a French civilian population that regarded the arrival of the Allies as simply another occupation. In fact, however, British soldiers usually understood something of the extent to which the French (even the rural population of Normandy) had suffered; the French, in turn, were favorable to the British, even when British soldiers displayed a cavalier attitude to property. Second, soldiers and civilians interacted extensively—particularly when it came to the exchange of food and other goods. Third, the British took care to avoid interfering in anything that might be defined as an internal political quarrel in France, but that noninterference was never quite uniform or universal. Orders were passed down from above and had a considerable effect when it came, for example, to British acceptance that Vichy officials, even those who had been helpful to the Allies, must be dismissed. However, ordinary soldiers did not always like this noninterference and sometimes, particularly when seeing women ill-treated, did find limited and discreet ways to intervene.

It should also be stressed that the British did not regard the population of France as a unified whole. They were, in particular, very preoccupied by regional and ethnic differences. They often distinguished Normans (the group with whom they had most contact) from the rest of the French. They were also particularly prone to blame problems on small groups of people who could be presented (and no doubt were presented by those bourgeois notables who provided the British with their information) as being not properly French.

Finally, drawing a simple line between the Allies and the French does
not always work well. In all sorts of ways, the British were very close to
the Americans. They fought on the same side. British troops sometimes
served in the same units as Americans (notably in the very units that had
most formal dealings with French civilians). Ordinary soldiers frequently
arrived in France on American ships and ate American rations. Having
said all this, there were certain respects in which the British soldiers some-
times felt that their experience was closer to that of French civilians than
their American comrades in arms. Like the French they felt that they were
reaching the end of a long war in which they had been badly battered, like
the French they were very conscious of having been victims of bombing,
and like the French they sometimes felt overawed and slightly humiliated
by the scale of American resources. One Civil Affairs Unit in Normandy
in 1944 arrived with both the American and British flags. They refrained,
however, from hoisting them—perhaps because they discovered that the
Stars and Stripes with which they were equipped was twice the size of the
Union Jack.70

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70. NA, WO 219/3727, report from Captain de Pury, July 1, 1944.


Displaced Persons, Displaced Possessions: The Effects of Spoliation and Restitution on Daily Life in Paris

SHANNON L. FOGG

As a symbol of the Nazi desire to remove all traces of the Jews in Europe, the stripping of apartments perhaps best represents the insidious and all-encompassing nature of wartime anti-Jewish measures in France. Nearly two-thirds of the 330,000 Jews in France lived in Paris in 1939. Most of them—rich, middle class, or poor, French natives, naturalized citizens, or foreigners—fled the capital at the time of the Nazi invasion in May 1940 contributing to the estimated 6.2 million internally displaced persons in the country at the time of the exodus.¹ Some returned after the armistice with Germany in June, but many apartments remained empty especially after the Germans’ September 27, 1940, ordinance that forbade Jews from returning to the occupied zone. More Parisian homes were deserted when roundups began in 1941 and 1942 and Jews sought safe havens elsewhere or they were arrested and deported. These so-called abandoned properties were first sealed and then systematically emptied by the German authorities despite the Vichy government’s protests (for largely economic and sovereignty-related reasons). The complete pillage of Jewish personal property went beyond the Vichy regime’s original desire to remove all Jewish influence from the economy and is unprecedented in history.

Only when the war ended could people begin to come to terms with their losses. Jews who returned to Paris often found themselves in a polit-

¹. Authorities estimated the total number of refugees in France during the exodus to be 8 million with 6.2 million French refugees, 1.8 million Belgian refugees, and 150,000 from Holland and Luxembourg. See Diamond, Fleeing Hitler, 150.
cal, bureaucratic, economic, physical, material, and psychological nightmare. This chapter explores what the loss of physical possessions meant for individuals, families, French society at large, and the French government both during and after the war, and argues that competition was a key factor in both the spoliation and restitution processes. It builds on the belief that dispossession was a fundamental aspect of genocide and seeks to demonstrate that restitution was an essential component in rebuilding postwar republican society and politics. Ultimately French laws based on principles of equality failed to do justice to the dispossessed, further fragmenting society and silencing victims in the name of national unity.

This chapter also reinforces many of the findings advanced by other contributors to this volume. For example, studying the effects of spoliation and restitution on the Jewish population further demonstrates the “disillusion” of the liberation. In 1944–1945 there was a return to private and professional life that was largely unaided by the French government, and in many cases the provisional government actively erased individual contributions and suffering from the postwar national narrative. Scott Soo (chapter 6) and Guillaume Piketty (chapter 7) find this disillusionment in the treatment of Spanish GTE workers and resistance fighters in the aftermath of war. Joan Ramon Resina demonstrates the ways that exile lasts beyond liberation and becomes a permanent situation even after the exiles’ return. Many of these chapters also show the clear disconnect between propaganda (both during and after the war) and lived reality, such as Santiago de Pablo’s chapter on the German documentary *Im Lande der Basken* (chapter 9) and Brett Bowles’ chapter on “Terrorists” in Retirement, a theme touched upon here (chapter 8). Furthermore, chapters throughout the book explore identity and the ways it is contingent and malleable, as Sandra Ott (chapter 12), co-authors Andrew Bergerson and Maria Stehle (chapter 11), and Virginia López de Maturana (chapter 3) show, and we often see how the political is mediated through the personal and material, especially in chapter 15 by Sarah Fishman. This chapter echoes these topics and shows how the treatment of “outsiders” (such as foreigners and Jews) in the postwar period challenged identities, did not reflect daily realities, and led to feelings of bitterness in the return to ordinary life.

Until the 1990s, many scholars viewed property issues as a secondary byproduct of the Holocaust rather than as an object of study in itself. More recently, historians have shown the central role economic concerns (including the confiscation of property) played in facilitating the Holo-
caust.\textsuperscript{2} Seizing property was vital to the dehumanizing effect of persecution and was closely linked to emigration and deportation. Its effects have also become a major concern of modern governments. In 2000, a government study group in France (Mission d’étude sur la Spoliation des Juifs de France, or Study Group on the Despoilment of French Jews) published the reports of its research in the country’s spoliation and restitution archives. The commission’s publications are invaluable for the historical context and the raw data they provide. They have also been an important step in the French government’s coming to terms with the Vichy era and in aiding victims of Nazism and its collaborators, but they are meant as a starting point for further study.

Thanks to the work of the Mission d’étude sur la Spoliation des Juifs de France, also known as the Mattéoli Commission, we have a clear idea of the extent of economic Aryanization and pillaging in France during World War II. This important quantitative work must now be expanded and nuanced to understand its effects on the lives of individuals and its role in shaping modern politics. Much of the analytical work that has been published to date has focused on traditional economic Aryanization in France and focuses on the liquidation of Jewish businesses, banks, or artwork rather than examining effects on private lives.\textsuperscript{3} These studies also tend to focus only on spoliation, although looting and restitution go hand in hand.\textsuperscript{4} While economic Aryanization certainly had a profound effect on livelihoods, the spoliation of personal possessions violated the supposed safety of home and challenged the idea of property as a fundamental right first protected in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in 1789. As Hélène Berr’s poignant wartime journal detailing life in occupied Paris reminds us, “The imposition of these general measures [against Jews] means a whole world of suffering specific to each individual affected

\textsuperscript{2} See Hilberg, \textit{The Destruction of the European Jews}; and Dean, \textit{Robbing the Jews}. In the French context, see Billig, \textit{Le Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives, 1941–1944}.

\textsuperscript{3} See, for example, Lacroix-Riz, \textit{Industriels et banquiers sous l’occupation}; Dreyfus, \textit{Pillages sur ordonnances}; and Feliciano, \textit{Le musée disparu}. A notable exception to this is the current work of Leora Auslander that draws on postwar restitution records to explore issues related to material culture, Jewish identity, and the state in France and Germany. See Auslander, “”Jewish Taste?,” 299–318, and “Coming Home?,” 237–59.

\textsuperscript{4} When the Mattéoli Commission published its findings in 2000, it noted that in the French context, “Restitution has not up until this point interested any professional or amateur historian. No dissertations, no university studies, no books.” See Prost et al., \textit{Aryanisation économique et restitutions}, 10.
by them.”

By examining the so-called Furniture Operation, which began in Paris in January 1942, I am attempting to place private, individual experiences at the heart of the story of spoliation and restitution.

The looting of private apartments was initiated in France by the German occupation authorities, immediately creating competition with French organizations that wanted both control over and the economic benefits of such actions. After its creation on March 29, 1941, the French Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives (the Commissariat General for Jewish Affairs, or CGQJ) administered anti-Jewish programs throughout France and was responsible for coordinating economic Aryanization and the despoilment of Jewish assets until 1944. The German-run Furniture Operation created consternation within the French administration, which viewed the removal of home furnishings as impinging upon its legal right to liquidate the possessions of French citizens stripped of their nationality.

A report sent to the finance minister in June 1942 noted that “full trains” of furniture emptied from Jewish apartments were being shipped to Germany and that a recent, secret circular from Baron Von Behr, the head of the operation in France, ordered the “complete removal of furniture without compensation.” This decision came despite earlier French suggestions that a sum equal to the estimated value of these items be allocated to a designated fund and deducted from German requisition demands. By the war’s end, the Germans had emptied at least thirty-eight thousand apartments in Paris and transported almost twenty-seven thousand wagons (or 674 full trains) of pillaged goods to Germany.


7. For example, see Archives Nationales (AN, National Archives) F 37-38. Monsieur de Montalembert, “Note sur les saisies de biens sous séquestre par les Autorités d’occupation” (July 24, 1942).


9. Ibid., Le Secrétaire d’Etat à la Production Industrielle à Monsieur le Délégué Général aux relations économiques Franco-Allemandes (May 1, 1942), 2. As part of the armistice, the French were to pay the costs of occupation at a rate of 400 million francs per day.

10. Wieviorka and Azoulay, Le pillage des appartements et son indemnisation, 17. Götz Aly argues that the material benefit of the distribution of looted furniture helps explain the widespread “satisfaction” most Germans felt towards the Third Reich and the lack of major resistance inside the country. Without satisfying the Germans’ material needs, he claims, anti-Semitism
After the liberation of Paris in August 1944 and before the war officially ended in May 1945, the French provisional government's order of January 30, 1945, created the Service de restitution des biens des victims des lois et mesures de spoliation (the Restitution Service of the Goods of the Victims of Despoilment Laws and Measures) under the Ministry of Finance in the attempt to return confiscated goods to their rightful owners. In order to facilitate the process, the new service set up its office in the space formerly occupied by the CGQJ, retained some of the CGQJ's staff, and used its Aryanization records as a starting point for restitution. The process of restitution was thus to take place within the context of postwar bureaucratic continuity. It was also firmly entrenched in the French Republican spirit of equality and national reconciliation. The term restitution itself represented “the material restoration of property with no moral connotations” (as opposed to reparations), and no legal distinctions were made between Jewish, resistance, or bombing victims in the restitution of goods. This point was further emphasized by the fact that Henri Frenay, the minister for prisoners, deportees, and refugees, issued the restitution ordinance. Due to the secular nature of French Republicanism, postwar restitution policy could not refer to Jews specifically as a religious group, but Claire Andrieu argues that the French government dealt with restitution early and clearly precisely because expropriation was experienced by both Jews and non-Jews.

However, the experiences of these different victim groups were markedly different both during and after the war and need to be examined in addition to the quantitative analyses. A key element to explore is the competition and divisions engendered by the spoliation and restitution

alone was not a sufficient motivating factor for the Holocaust. See Aly, Hitler’s Beneficiaries, 2–3, 6.


13. Renée Poznanski analyzes Frenay’s contributions to clandestine resistance newspapers during the occupation. Poznanski, Propagandes et persécutions. While denouncing the Nazi’s racial anti-Semitism, Frenay acknowledged a “Jewish problem” in France with xenophobic and economic dimensions. See, for example, 195–6.


15. Both Claire Andrieu and Leora Auslander make this point. See Andrieu, “Two Approaches to Compensation in France,” 136; and Auslander, “Beyond Words,” 1,044.
process within the broader context of anti-Semitism. Not only was there competition between the French and German authorities for the profits from the expropriation process but there were also additional claims for benefits from private individuals and organizations. During the war, the CGQJ received requests that empty Jewish apartments be put at the disposal of bombing victims who had lost their homes. The CGQJ also fielded inquiries from groups working on behalf of prisoners of war. In June 1943, Louis Darquier de Pellepoix (head of the CGQJ) answered a query from the leader of the Repatriated Prisoners of War and Families of Prisoners of War association with a letter stating, “My Services do not deal with the renting of apartments and it has no current knowledge of vacant apartments.” Individual apartment owners also asked that furniture be removed from empty apartments so that the premises could be re-rented, and they often demanded that personal items be sold in order to pay back rent. An abandoned apartment could be re-rented provided the owner followed the proper procedure, which required both German and French approval. Back rent could be claimed through legal proceedings. If, however, an absent renter was continuing to pay rent on a property, the apartment could not be let to another tenant.

Some people did not find these laws to be sufficient in the wartime climate of shortages. Despite the arrests of thousands of Jews and the ability to use French law to free up additional housing, the number of available apartments in Paris still could not meet demands. During the war, France faced a housing crisis with over 1.2 million residential buildings destroyed or damaged, and Jews became easy targets for public frustration over the shortages. Despite the fact that the CGQJ was not responsible for handling housing issues, it received letters laced with anti-Semitic sentiments from people seeking accommodations. One plumber who wrote to the agency in search of apartments for two young households asked which service handled “apartments left vacant by departed Jews [les juifs disparus].”

16. Letters in AN AJ 38-815.
17. Ibid. Le Commissaire Général aux Questions Juives à Monsieur le Commissaire Général aux Prisonniers de Guerre rapatriés et aux Familles des Prisonniers de Guerre (June 18, 1943).
18. For examples, see AN AJ 38-801.
19. Procedure outlines available in AN AJ 38-815. See also AJ 38-323.
He went on to note, “We have purged Paris of a *bande de métèques* that had invaded it, and it is desirable that the places thus recuperated return to the French.”21 Charles Richard was particularly persistent in his letter-writing campaign, sending at least three long missives to the CGQJ in the fall of 1943. Richard explained that he and his wife had delayed their wedding due to the war and now lived in his simple, single-room apartment. While recognizing the difficulties facing bombing victims, Richard hoped the government would also do something to aid lower-income households. He complained that his inability to procure a larger apartment meant postponing starting a family. He had tried everything in his power including contacting the Rehousing Services of the Prefecture of the Seine, the German authorities, and individual housing societies all to no avail: the Rehousing Services reserved empty apartments for war victims, the Germans referred him back to the French, and the housing societies required bribes or gave priority to friends and family. His situation was particularly frustrating in light of the two empty Jewish apartments in his own building. He now hoped the CGQJ would act on his behalf and/or change the laws so that even Jews who were up-to-date on their rent would lose their Parisian homes if they occupied a second apartment in the southern, unoccupied zone.22 Richard’s letters raise several issues including the importance of family for the Vichy regime, the difficulties of working with the bureaucracy, and the government’s commitment to its own brand of legality. Perhaps most noticeable, however, is the competition within society over scarce resources and the perceived hierarchy of aid. Thus, claims to rights and calls for the exclusion of so-called outsiders often centered on the physical, tangible space of the home.

The divisions within society persisted after the liberation and affected the process of restitution despite the provisional government’s attempts to ignore differences and enforce equality. Some scholars have termed the postwar period the “long” liberation and have studied the political, economic, and social conditions facing the French population in the late 1940s.23 The provisional government attempted reconciliation and reconstruction in all areas of life within a difficult material situation. The end

23. For example, Knapp, ed., *The Uncertain Foundation*; and Adler, *Jews and Gender in Liberation France*. 
of the war, however, did not mean an end to differences or an end to the physical suffering created by the war years. In addition to housing shortages, fuel was scarce and rationing continued until 1949. Queuing for food remained a fact of life, and there was less food to be had: The bread ration was reduced to two hundred grams per day in August 1947, which was even less than occupation-era rations. Overall food production was at 61 percent of its prewar level, and the destruction of trains and rail lines made distribution of goods nearly impossible. Many people could not afford the little food that was available since a worker’s purchasing power in the immediate postwar period was about 60 percent of what it had been before the war.\textsuperscript{24} Worsening shortages coupled with increasing inflation (the high point of inflation came in 1946 with prices rising by 64 percent) made economic concerns paramount for many people, and led to competition between various groups, lingering economic anti-Semitism, and frustration with the government and its bureaucracy.

The majority of Jews who fled Paris between 1940 and 1944 remained in France when the war ended.\textsuperscript{25} They returned, however, to a city that had not been purged of anti-Semitism. Fliers circulated in the capital calling for a “De-Jewified France” and urging people to refrain from selling to or buying items from Jews.\textsuperscript{26} Some people found derogatory graffiti scrawled across metro walls while others discovered tiny posters plastered to city walls such as the one that stated,

\begin{quote}
The Jew has returned more vile, more arrogant than ever. FRENCH-MEN! Before the Boche, you did your duty; Parisians! 75,000 of your own were shot, but the Jew disappeared, well hidden on the Riviera or in our countryside where the black market was his only job. Today, he demands rights, he becomes provocative. Before enemy number one, FRENCH-\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{25} HICEM, the organization responsible for aiding Jewish emigration, registered only three thousand emigration requests in 1945. Ninety-eight percent of the requests came from foreigners who had arrived in France after 1933. See Mission d’étude sur la spoliation des Juifs de France, \textit{Rapport général}, 23–4.

\textsuperscript{26} See, for example, “La chaîne antijuive, c’est la chaîne de salut public” and “Devant l’autre péril” in AN 72 AJ-598.
MEN, at the zero hour, you will answer here to finish once and for all with this international vermin.27

Even more simply, a flier with red block letters circulating through the capital proclaimed, “Death to the Jews.”28 Thus, the postwar return “home” occurred within a context in which those persecuted during the war continued to feel unwelcome.

Jews’ inability to recover their apartments and contents further contributed to the sense of alienation from the nation. Leora Auslander has persuasively argued for the strong psychological, emotional, and physical connection between one’s dwelling place and one’s sense of belonging to a more abstract homeland—a connection between the familial foyer and the national patrie.29 The provisional government’s actions related to housing in the postwar period did little to reestablish the bond between Jews and the government. The Ordinance of November 14, 1944, acknowledged that while it would be fair to assume that everyone would be able to reclaim their homes, the destruction caused by the war, the number of people in need of housing, and the current transportation difficulties made such a scenario impossible. The ordinance itself stipulated that renters could reclaim their apartments if they had been “obligated to leave the habitation . . . without consent,” effectively excluding Jews who had left of their own accord in search of safety. Furthermore, the current occupants could not be expelled until they had found a suitable new home if the occupants were bombing victims, evacuees, or refugees or if they were the spouse or close relative of a mobilized soldier, a prisoner of war, or a political or labor deportee.30 As a result, no effective process was created for the restitution of stolen homes, leading to feelings of bitterness, betrayal, and frustration for returning victims.

27. AN 72 AJ-598. This postwar anti-Semitism continued to draw on stereotypes prevalent during the war. On Jews and the black market, see Fogg, The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France, 128–43.

28. AN 72 AJ-598.


30. Copy of Journal Officiel de la République Française (November 15, 1944), 1309–10, reproduced in Andrieu, Klarsfeld, and Wieviorka, eds., La persécution des Juifs de France 1940–1944 et le rétablissement de la légalité républicaine, 164–65. The original ordinance was modified on January 9, 1945, and a time extension granted on November 2, 1945.
The story of Mademoiselle Tovarowsky illustrates this point. Tovarowsky had lost her parents as well as a sister and a brother during the war, and upon her own return from deportation she discovered that her parents’ apartment had been emptied of its contents and re-rented. She had spent seven months trying to recover both the apartment and its furnishings all in vain. She explained all of this to the French Restitution Service when she renounced her rights to a sideboard that she believed had belonged to her parents but was now the object of multiple claims. She felt her health took priority over bureaucracy and competition over items. Yet the inability to recover any physical remnants of her past life further compounded her sense of loss, forcing her to deal with the effects of a sort of “memocide” in addition to genocide. Mademoiselle Tovarowsky was not alone. Studying restitution documents reveals that nearly 40 percent of Parisian Jews no longer lived in their looted wartime apartments in 1946.

When the government did order a legal expulsion in favor of a Jewish resident, things were often complicated by local residents’ actions. Throughout the spring of 1945, newspapers reported on large demonstrations of people protesting Jews’ attempts to reclaim their homes. When they would try to recover their apartments, Jews also faced physical violence. Monsieur Weiner, the Jewish former resident of an apartment located at 3, rue des Guillemites in the Marais, secured an expulsion order against the current resident (who was actually the building’s wartime concierge). On the morning the moving truck arrived to remove the current occupant’s furniture, a group of about thirty people broke through the police barriers and returned all the furniture already loaded in the truck to the apartment. The attempted eviction grew into a demonstration with four to five hundred participants shouting “France for the French” and “Death

32. Scholars of material culture have examined the ways in which the dead remain present for the living through items of daily life. See Hallam and Hockey, Death, Memory & Material Culture. Wieviorka and Azoulay use the term “mémocide” in their introduction to Le pillage des appartements et son indemnisation, 8.
33. Statistic based on the list of people who reclaimed a looted piano. AN AJ 38-5941. Copie des listes des personnes ayant retrouvé leurs pianos à la date du 30 novembre 1946 remises au ministère de la Reconstruction et de l’Urbanisme et complétées le 31 décembre 1946, classées par ordre alphabétique des noms des spoliés. There are 1,059 names on the list, and 388 have a different address in 1946 than the address of the looted apartment for a total of 37 percent. A more extensive study of the thousands of restitution inventories is still required.
to the Jews.” The demonstration then quickly degenerated into a street brawl, with Monsieur Weiner’s son (a former POW) and a handful of other Jews being arrested, and at least five men injured.\(^\text{35}\) A Jewish cobbler who attempted to recover the workshop in Paris’s fourth arrondissement that he had abandoned out of fear for his life also found himself the object of a demonstration. Monsieur Haberberg had approached the man who had acquired the shop and invoked the law to justify his right to reclaim the property. Monsieur Veyssié replied, “I don’t give a damn about the current government’s ordinances. Anyway, that will all change soon.” A few days later an angry crowd gathered outside the cobbler’s shop and tried to remove him from it. The police did eventually respond, but there was an ugly scene and the next night, the shop and surrounding buildings were vandalized and plastered with anti-Jewish slurs.\(^\text{36}\)

Thus the laws passed by the provisional government intended to be fair and just clearly did not end the competition and divisions between Jews and non-Jews that had marked the occupation. The scattered reports also seem to indicate that authorities were not especially committed to aiding displaced Jews, suggesting a continuation of wartime decisions to not draw too much attention to Jews’ fate while emphasizing the new government’s desire to create a “hero” rather than “victim” vision of France.\(^\text{37}\) The restitution laws also fostered competition between Jews as they sought to recover lost items. After the January 1945 order that created the Restitution Service, an ordinance passed on April 11, 1945, was the first to address the restitution of personal property abandoned by the enemy in France. Items deemed of “primary necessity” but impossible to positively identify such as kitchenware, sheets, mattresses, and other items were to be distributed automatically by a state aid agency to the neediest victims.\(^\text{38}\) Other domestic-use, identifiable furniture items were eligible for restitution by either filing a claim with the Restitution Service or by following a more complicated procedure with a justice of the peace. The ordinance further specified that any aid received in the form of material goods would

\(^{35}\) AN 72 AJ-598. “Affaire rue des Guillemites, Rapport de Monsieur Frenkel” (n.d. probably spring 1945).

\(^{36}\) Ibid., “Note sur la manifestation de la rue de Saintonge” (April 10, 1945). There are multiple additional examples in this file, including the incident regarding Fanny Lustman that Adler writes about in “Surviving Absence,” 197.

\(^{37}\) See Poznanski, Propagandes et persecutions; and Buton, “Occupation, Liberation, Purges.”

\(^{38}\) Goods were distributed by the Entr’aide Française, the postwar name for the Secours National that operated during the war.
be deducted from future indemnity claims. Demands for restitution had to be filed within a year of the war’s end, and if identifiable items remained unclaimed after two years, those items would be sold with the money received going to the state.39

It is important to note that the Restitution Service dealt solely with identifiable, domestic items recovered in France. It was assumed that possessions such as clothes, bedding, and basic kitchenware were lost because there was no way they could be identified. If missing items had been taken out of the country, the owner contacted another government organization—the Office for Private Goods and Interests (Office des biens et intérêts privés, or OBIP). Cars and bicycles had a separate administration. So did pianos, books, artwork, jewelry, and bank accounts. One could spend all of one’s time chasing things within the time limits set for filing for restitution. The government collected the few identifiable domestic pieces recovered inside France and put them on display in depots throughout Paris. In order to receive permission to visit the depots in search of stolen possessions, the owner had to first send a detailed inventory of the home to the Restitution Service along with certification of the apartment’s contents and its pillage from the building’s concierge. This certification then had to be legalized by the police, and one also had to estimate the date of the theft. In other words, victims faced a complicated bureaucratic procedure and had to rely on some of the same people who may have played a role in their earlier despoilment. These difficulties certainly added to the postwar sense of disillusionment.

With over 80 percent of the confiscated goods shipped to Germany, there was little to recover inside France making it highly unlikely that most victims would ever find their personal possessions. As a result multiple individuals often recognized and claimed the same item after viewing the recovered furniture on display in the depots established by the Restitution Service throughout Paris. If this happened, all the claimants were called back to the depot to try and resolve the dispute amicably. Sometimes the description provided by a victim on their original inventory did not match the item in question, and they lost the “custody” battle. Some people vol-

untarily relinquished their rights to a contested item because it was not worth the stress and hassle, like Mademoiselle Tovarowsky. One man gave up his claim to a disputed armoire, even though he said he had proof that it belonged to his mother, because he no longer lived in Paris and did not want to pay to have the item transported eight hundred kilometers to his new home in Nimes.\textsuperscript{40} Others found creative ways to resolve the question of ownership. Two individuals had recognized a chest of drawers on display. They decided to let the Restitution Service judge whose it was by providing a detailed description of the chest along with a drawing and agreed in advance that they would accept the Service’s decision as final. While some differences were settled by withdrawing a claim or through a friendly decision, others recognized the bitter irony of the situation. One man noted, “I find it sad that co-religionists who have undoubtedly suffered similarly from the war have seized such a poor occasion to quarrel with each other before the law.”\textsuperscript{41} Often the same individuals were involved in these disputes, which begs the question of whether or not people actually believed the items were really theirs or if they were just trying to get anything they could in the difficult postwar situation. In any case, one had to have the time and the inclination to follow these affairs through to the end. Many found it easier to just stop the process and move on. Perhaps this was part of an emotional recovery that was further encouraged by the government’s officially sanctioned policy of forgetting the past.

Despite the emotional, bureaucratic, and physical difficulties involved with restitution procedures, thousands of the Jews who had fled Paris during the war participated in the postwar process. Recovering their missing items was about more than material compensation; it was about rebuilding their lives in the wake of the Holocaust and in a new France. For some, like Mademoiselle Tovarowsky, the pain associated with starting over and reclaiming lost items was too great and they simply gave up their claims. Others, like Lucien Ariel, used the restitution procedure as an opportunity to emphasize their French identity. Ariel prefaced his inventory by explaining he had been born in France in 1907, was mobilized on September 1, 1939, taken prisoner in June 1940, and escaped at the end of 1943. He returned home at the liberation to find his apartment completely emptied because he was an “Israelite.”\textsuperscript{42} He chose to emphasize his Frenchness,

\textsuperscript{40} AN AJ 38-5935.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} AN AJ 38-5909.
his status as a former prisoner of war, and chose the term “Israelite” rather than “Jewish” to describe his religion. All underscore his sense of belonging to the French nation despite the years of persecution.43

While emphasizing republican values of equality, the postwar government still differentiated between French and foreigners in the restitution laws, echoing the exclusionary politics of the Vichy regime. If items could not be restituted, French pillage victims had the possibility of receiving compensation for lost items. However, the 1946 indemnity law for war damages did not cover items considered “sumptuous” or “lavish.” This indemnity law—again—did not single out Jews as particular victims of the Nazis and explicitly emphasized the “equality and solidarity of all French before the war’s burdens.”44 Your status as an outsider also mattered for restitution and reparations. The law specifically excluded foreigners from receiving reparations from the French government even though the majority of Jewish victims in France were also foreigners. In examining the quantitative results of restitution, Claire Andrieu notes that, “The larger the assets, the more likely it was that restitution was made.” In the case of small workshops, the liquidation value was close to nothing so there was little material compensation to be had.45 It seems, then, that this would disproportionately affect many foreign immigrants who worked and lived in the same small space. The nineteen cartons of postwar inventories sent to the French Restitution Service now held by the French National Archives make it abundantly clear that the German seizure of apartments did not differentiate between large apartments and small studio workshops. In the end, authorities estimated that at least 90 percent of the recuperated looted items had come from Jewish apartments, but only 30 percent of the goods were redistributed to Jews in the process of restitution, further underlining the shortcomings of a republican process that promised equal treatment for all war victims.46 Everyone who was a target did not have equal access to restitution and reparations when the war was over.

When the reparations procedures reopened in France in the late 1990s it became obvious that despite the immediate postwar restitutions, there was still much to be resolved. The Mattéoli Commission focused on the complex issues of art and financial assets, yet more than 80 percent of the

43. Ibid. See also Auslander, “Coming Home?,” 251.
44. Wieviorka and Azoulay, Le pillage des appartements et son indemnisation, 41.
46. Wieviorka and Azoulay, Le pillage des appartements et son indemnisation, 33.
letters the commission received were requests for compensation related to the plunder of private homes. Studying the Furniture Operation reveals the ways in which personal possessions and apartments were the sites of contest between the Vichy regime and the German occupation authorities and between Jews and non-Jews during the war. Examining the postwar restitution system reveals the importance of republican principles in guiding the process, the lingering and new divisions in French society, and the bureaucratic continuities between Vichy and the provisional government. Even decades after the event, the importance of home, displacement, and dispossession remained the main concern for victims. There is still much for historians and scholars to explore within this realm to understand the meaning of these actions for politics, society, and individuals.

Bibliography


47. Andrieu, “Two Approaches to Compensation in France,” 148.
Shannon L. Fogg


Gender and Domesticity in War and Peace: France in the 1940s and 1950s

Sarah Fishman

In November 1947, the French magazine *Elle* conducted a poll of some 1,200 men from a wide variety of professions, including artists, actors, intellectuals, athletes, managers, business men, civil servants, and merchants. *Elle* asked each man if it would be acceptable, “for the women you love to...” followed by a list of options that jumped from the ridiculous—wear black (1,176 yes); color her hair (623 yes); wear hair curlers in the morning (1,020 no); read women’s magazines (998 yes); wear a tight-waisted dress (1,101 yes)—to the practical option that reflected postwar budgetary reality. Would it be acceptable for her to keep you apprised of problems with her housekeeping budget (616 yes). Two seemingly contradictory opinions buried in this list are emblematic of the era’s ambiguities regarding women: Men agreed, 1,020 to 180, that the women they loved should vote according to “her own and not your” opinions. However, only 240 men agreed that it would be acceptable for the woman they loved to become politically active (960 said no).

Just two years earlier, in 1945, *Elle* had bragged that France, having elected thirty-four women to its 575-seat Constituent Assembly, held the “world record” for politically involved women, beating the United States, with nine women in a 426-member Congress, and England, which elected only twenty-four women in its most recent election. Such crowing led

2. “France record du monde en députées,” *Elle* 1, November 21, 1945, 3. Actually, the percentages favored England, the twenty-four joined twenty-six women already seated in the 667-member House of Commons, for a total percentage of 7.5 percent for England versus 6 percent for France.
Claire Duchen, in *Women’s Rights and Women’s Lives in France, 1944–1968*, to describe the period just after the war as one filled with “tremendous hopes” for women. However, Duchen argues those hopes were “gradually disappointed” as the French government, obsessed with improving the birthrate, “concentrated on encouraging women to be mothers. . . . The postwar ideal of femininity revolved around the home, which was heavily promoted as the place where women could be happy and fulfilled. Housewifery was said to be a science, an art, a profession as worthy as any other; motherhood was the crowning achievement of a woman’s career, her ‘métier de femme.’”

Having ceased publication at the liberation in 1944 but reinaugurated a decade later, the women’s magazine *Marie-Claire* celebrated these seemingly contradictory trends, describing 1954 as “The atomic age but also the age of abundance, of emancipation, of social progress, the age of bright homes, healthy children, of refrigerators and pasteurized milk, of washing machines, the age of comfort, qualities, good buys.” In those ten years, as Kristen Ross points out, “a rural woman might live the acquisition of electricity, running water, a stove, a refrigerator, a washing machine, a sense of interior space as distinct from exterior space, a car, a television, and the various liberations and oppressions associated with each.” For Ross, this unprecedentedly rapid change explains not just why women’s magazines but also leading intellectuals like Barthes and Baudrillard directed their theoretical reflections to the topic of everyday life.

Thus, the decade after World War II provides rich material for exploring women, gender, domesticity, and everyday life. Yet most cultural histories of the period, relying on sources I would define broadly as “top down”—public policy, popular media, novels, films, writings by intellectuals—describe attitudes in those sources that would hardly strike someone familiar with the history of social attitudes about women and gender as new or unique to the era. Most explorations of the postwar in France start at the liberation, as if it represented a reset button, without reference to the Vichy years. To understand changes in gender ideology in mid-twentieth-century France, to delineate both its conservative and progressive elements, we must reconnect postwar social/cultural history to the war years because,

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6. Ibid.
for one thing, contemporaries lived their lives across these artificial historical periods. Looking at postwar material in its longer context, contrasting it with Vichy, helps clarify the continuities as well as the real breaks in how people thought about women and domesticity after 1944.

During and for several years after the war, domestic skills that were critical but usually invisible in normal times became tremendously important in explicit ways; many men and women from across the social scale emerged from the war years with a new attitude toward domesticity, a greatly enhanced appreciation of the value of women’s domestic skills, and I would even suggest a willingness to reconsider women’s capabilities and envision other alternatives.7

In other words, those very wartime domestic experiences partly explain why critical immediate feminist victories of suffrage, an equal wage law, and other achievements long-sought by women’s groups went hand-in-hand with the romanticized revival of female domesticity. At the top, French political leaders continued to act on strongly conservative impulses related to longstanding fears of population decline. For women, that meant the continuation in less extreme form of Vichy (really prewar) family policies encouraging women to stay home and have lots of babies. In a March 1945 speech, Charles de Gaulle famously called on women to make 12 million babies for France.8 Yet, in spite of the similarities in rhetoric, critical changes took place as France passed from the Third Republic to the Vichy regime, and back to a republic after the liberation.

While the Third Republic had long worried about the birthrate and passed an extensive family code, the Vichy regime embedded it in a regressive worldview that blamed women in part for France’s defeat. Vichy rhetoric and policy censured women for selfishly following feminism, avoiding marriage, and refusing maternity. Vichy passed harsh and restrictive laws limiting divorce and cracking down on abortion. At the moment of liberation in 1944, the public shamed certain women (as chapter 13 in this book details) accused of denunciation but also said to have slept with German soldiers.9 Yet at the same time, the media and

7. Duchen laments the postwar promotion of domesticity for women, leaving no doubt as to her opinion of this profession: “Housework itself held few charms and nobody pretended that it was fun. It was boring, repetitive, monotonous and unrewarding.” Duchen, Women’s Rights and Women’s Lives in France 1944–1968, 66.


many political leaders celebrated French women in general, both for their role in the resistance and for their ability to take over their households in the absence of so many men. Thus women benefitted from the Gaullist myth of heroic resistance and also from a new and explicit recognition and appreciation of their skills. Women’s cunning (*astuce*) in figuring out how to put food on the table and keep home/family together, and their suffering and endurance, generated a new respect for the gender and for its specific, domestic skills.

Further, as my research on prisoner of war wives revealed, this apparent “Great Leap Backward” to home, children, and domestic life was wanted by at least some women. For many prisoner of war wives, the severe hardship of the war and separation from husbands fed a desire not for autonomy and leadership in their families but for “going back” to an idealized life of pure domesticity, relinquishing the heavy burdens of the war and rebuilding, in the physical and metaphorical senses, their families and homes. The domestic ideal of the 1950s at least in part grew out of men’s and women’s desires created by their war experiences.

But the postwar validation of women’s skills brought new ideas about domesticity, leaving room for a consideration of feminist points of view. Feminism and domesticity had never been entirely contradictory impulses. In fact, links between feminism and domesticity in France can be traced back to the nineteenth-century works of Auguste Comte and feminist Flora Tristan. However, nineteenth-century feminists envisioned women as free and empowered within the domestic sphere, whereas the post-1945 celebration of domesticity incorporated the idea that not every woman would or should conform to a traditional domestic life. Women, with their knowledge and skills, needed to be part of larger political discussions, and a few might reasonably choose not to focus on home and family.

**Domesticity and Survival**

In an article titled “Women and the Holocaust,” Sybil Milton suggests that domestic skills, whether valued or not under normal conditions, can be a matter of life and death in extreme circumstances. Clearly, the serious hardships most people living in France during the war faced pale in comparison to the extremes in concentration camps, or even in places like

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10. Fishman, *We Will Wait*.
Poland or the Soviet Union. Still, while all occupied areas were expected to supplement the German population’s standard of living, Germany’s occupation of France rested on the specific premise that French people should have less to eat than Germans, in part, to repay the suffering France had inflicted on the German civilian population after World War I.12 Making matters worse, Vichy’s systems ultimately “discouraged the delivery of goods and compliance with price and quantity controls;”13 as Ken Mouré argues and Shannon Fogg demonstrates. As a result, while the Vichy government celebrated an idealized vision of female domesticity completely divorced from the dire realities, practical domestic skills became exceptionally important for many families in France. The burden of obtaining adequate food, fuel, and clothing fell, for the most part, on women who had traditionally fulfilled that role in their families.

The Cycle of Life

Ordinary French people experienced the war through a series of oscillations: periods of intense trauma cycled with long stretches of low-grade misery. After years of mounting tensions with Germany, in France the first real shock came on September 3, 1939, with the declaration of war, followed by mobilization orders for millions of men, and the trauma of separation for both them and their families. That shock subsided into the phony war, an eerie period of suspended animation and uncertainty that ended abruptly on May 10, 1940, when a German attack launched the Battle of France. Given the changed nature of warfare by 1940, the conflict extended well beyond a limited battle front and impacted not just French troops but also much of the French population. In June 1940, some 8 million civilians took to the roads hoping to escape advancing German armies, an episode that came to be known as “the exodus.” The complete breakdown of ordinary society and governance threw France back “to prehistoric times,” as contemporary observer Anne Jacques wrote in her journal.14 The massive scale of these events touched nearly all corners of France: local authority disintegrated, and regions that did not evacuate experienced air raids or witnessed the miserable corvée passing through or washing up.15

15. Ibid., 69. “En juin 1940, la France a traverse le mois le plus pénible de son histoire.” See also Diamond, Fleeing Hitler.
Slowly, however, after the armistice was signed June 22, the trauma of the summer of 1940 gave way to a slow and painful return home for most people, although the German occupation forbade some people from returning to specific areas along the border. In the northern occupied zone, people slowly adjusted to the presence of German occupiers, and across the country, the French braced themselves for a long period of grinding hardship. The “trauma/misery” cycle did not end in 1940 but continued throughout the war years, varying over time and, as Shannon Fogg’s book reminds us, by region and social category.16

Some people experienced extreme conditions from the very start. Starting with the Alibert Law in October 1940, Jews experienced property confiscations, employment restrictions, and quotas.17 Their children expelled from public schools, Jews were barred from public parks, pools, movie theaters, and eventually in 1942, targeted for arrest and deportation. Joining the resistance meant being cut off from normal life and risking arrest, deportation, and even execution. People living in some parts of France experienced heavy aerial bombing as early as 1942. In the spring of 1944, the approach of the Allied landings, preceded and accompanied by heavy Allied bombing, extended trauma to a much wider area, hitting hard in coastal areas, industrial regions, and transportation nodes. Once again evacuations, combat, and air raids turned peoples’ lives upside down.18 By contrast, a fairly small number of collaborators lived the high life practically untouched by everyday wartime concerns. By her own account in Ma drôle de vie, Corinne Luchaire, mistress of Otto Abetz and daughter of collaborator Jean Luchaire, remained completely oblivious to the hardships experienced by ordinary people.19

However, for the vast majority, the period from fall 1940 through spring 1944 was one of grinding misery. According to one survey, 30 percent of the French population, primarily urban dwellers with limited means, described procuring basic necessities of food, clothing, and fuel as “impossible.” Another 45 percent described provisioning as either “difficult but sufficient” or just “difficult.” Only about one-quarter, mostly rural

17. See Conklin, Fishman, and Zaretzky, France and Its Empire since 1870, 227. (Raphaël Alibert served as Vichy’s minister of justice in 1940 and was the driving force behind the regime’s comprehensive anti-Jewish Statute, normally referred to as the Alibert Law —ed.)
18. For information on civilian evacuations, see also Torre, For Their Own Good.
19. Luchaire, Ma drôle de vie.
farmers, reported “sufficient” provisions.\(^{20}\) Daily life with its complicated rationing system, long lines, and an illegal but nearly unavoidable black market presented a series of challenges just to obtain food, clothing, shoes, and fuel. As Dominique Veillon points out, food shortages had a particular resonance in France, one reason France had avoided rationing until 1917 during World War I. In fact, French negotiators tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade Germany to increase France’s bread ration above 350 grams a day, arguing that bread served as the foundation of the French diet.\(^{21}\) For one of Europe’s largest agricultural producers with a population unaccustomed to hunger, the daily ration of 1,327 calories—supplemented, in theory, with unrationed goods—was a huge change from the prewar adult average of 3,000 calories a day.\(^{22}\) According to historian Richard Vinen, while rare, a few people in France did starve to death.\(^{23}\)

Mostly however, French people struggled to get by, using every strategy they could. Women’s magazines provided helpful recipes such as 1,001 ways to prepare rutabagas, or suggestions for making bread pudding by gathering up bread crumbs left on the table after a meal. The complicated rationing system rendered simply shopping for food an all-consuming daily challenge, with a ration ticket functioning like a hunting license, without guarantee. Various accounts, testimonies, memoirs, and school essays include stories of women rising at four o’clock in the morning, waiting in long lines, arriving at the head of the line to discover nothing left, starting over, returning home empty-handed after a full day of effort, gathering snails after a rainfall, cutting up and cooking house plants.\(^{24}\) The interminable lines in front of shops led families to take shifts standing in line, and inspired new forms of sociability. Those who could afford to pay linked up with those who desperately needed extra income to create a new occupation, “line sitter” (queutière) at seven francs an hour.\(^{25}\) For people with

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21. Veillon, *Vivre et survivre en France 1939–1947*, 109, 116. “Le pain . . . joue pour les Français le rôle d’un aliment de lest (ballast).” Also note the rule of July 31, 1940: bread could not be sold until it had been out of the oven twenty-four hours.


23. An unemployed man in Alpes-Maritimes in 1942, and according to a letter intercepted by Postal Control four women in the Gard starved during the harsh winter of 1942, which was rare enough to arouse comment. Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 215, 178; Zaretsky, *Nimes at War*, 175.

24. 1,200 calories a day winter of 1942–1943

insufficient resources and no one to share the burden, working-class families, single mothers, or POW wives for example, the process could become overwhelming. In the Gard archives Robert Zaretsky found a suicide note from a mother of two who hanged herself in 1942: “I am tired of standing in a line outside the market.”26 Even for women involved in the resistance, much of what they did represented an extension of their domestic roles: feeding, housing, hiding, or disguising resisters or other people whose lives were threatened.

On an individual basis, farming families often sent food packages to their urban friends and relatives.27 In The Politics of Everyday Life, Shannon Fogg notes the reversal of the usual “farm to market” pattern. With urban dwellers scouring the countryside looking to buy food, increasingly farmers saw no reason to bring their goods to market, exacerbating urban shortages in an ever-worsening spiral.28 Food packages, easy targets of theft, if they did arrive, often presented housewives with a new set of problems. Several prominent women, including Simone Martin-Chauffier (a woman whose resistance connections placed her in constant danger) and Simone de Beauvoir, wrote in their memoirs about receiving, reclaiming, preparing, and serving their loved ones meat that had clearly spoiled or was infested with maggots.29 In fact, de Beauvoir discovered that obtaining and preparing food, a new occupation for her, required energy and dedication, becoming, as she put it, a “full-blown obsession.” Having procured the ingredients for a vegetable soup and while enjoying the aroma as it cooked, de Beauvoir, wrote, “though I was not in the true sense of the word a housewife, I had a glimpse of a housewife’s joys.”30 Perhaps her experience and new appreciation of women’s undervalued skills and of their ceaseless, unpaid toil prompted her to consider the “second sex.”31

In theory intended to ensure equal access to basic necessities in short supply, rationing fell far short of equalizing the hardships. Equally feeble

26. Zaretsky, Nîmes at War, 175.
27. Cépède, Agriculture et Alimentation en France Durant la Ile Guerre Mondiale, 331.
29. Martin-Chauffier, A bientôt quand même, 180; de Beauvoir, The Prime of Life, 405. Other elite women normally exempt from mundane concerns also described finding themselves involved in the arduous process of procuring and preparing food. See Tessier du Cros, Divided Loyalties.
30. de Beauvoir, The Prime of Life, 399.
31. de Beauvoir published The Second Sex in 1949.
were Vichy’s attempts at price controls. Thus more and more goods found their way onto the black market, and real prices skyrocketed during the occupation. However, wages remained frozen, increasing the hardship particularly on families of wage earners at the low end of the social scale. Alfred Sauvy, prominent French economist and demographer, calculated the cost of food as a percentage of average family incomes during the war. For a couple without children, food took up 95 percent of the average income if the wife was not employed, and if the family included two children over the age of six, food took up 91 percent of an average family income with two salaries. With only one salary, it took up 126 percent. Thus numerous families found it impossible to make ends meet, prompting many married women, despite Vichy’s “femme au foyer” ideology and rhetoric, either to work outside the home or to take in work, like laundry and sewing. In addition, tens and maybe hundreds of thousands of wives took over family shops or farms in their husbands’ absence adding to the burdens of being the primary housekeepers in the extremely difficult conditions of the war years. For most families, women were the glue that kept things together.

In spite of the hopes raised by the liberation, severe material hardship did not come to an end in France in 1944. Destruction cut a wide swath across France. The Germans and the Allies conducted air campaigns, causing massive disruption of France’s infrastructure of roads, railroad, bridges, and factories, destroying dwellings and farms. It took four to six years for French production to recover to depressed prewar levels. Rationing of food and fuel continued until 1949 and even 1950, in the case of some goods.

The destruction seemed to put a full stop to France’s general economic development. Of critical importance to France’s ultimate recovery, the Marshall Plan did not lead to immediate improvements for ordinary people’s lives because the French government focused its first five-year plan (1947) almost entirely on rebuilding and updating infrastructure, basic industrial plant and machinery, transportation, and communication. After years of hardship French people waited even longer for life to get better, with many families living as squatters in bombed-out buildings.

32. Sauvy, *La vie économique des Français de 1939 à 1945*, 204.
33. Voldman, *La reconstruction des villes françaises de 1940 à 1954, histoire d’une politique*.
Only France’s second five-year plan (1952) shifted the focus to housing and consumer goods.

This full decade of misery created a longing for and appreciation of what before the war had seemed like mundane aspects of lodging, food, clothing, comfort. Thus, and in contrast to Vichy in 1940, after the war the popular press spoke of a new appreciation for French women, not just owing to their participation in the resistance and their taking over their families in the absence of husbands who were POWs, deportees, or forced laborers, but also for the domestic skills that enabled them to keep their families fed and clothed when faced with such severe shortages. Just as nineteenth-century feminists used assumptions about women’s special nature to argue for women’s rights, the conservative rhetoric of domesticity for women in post–World War II France contained within itself the seeds of change. In contrast to the Vichy-era rhetoric of yearning for a return to “traditional” ways, writings by and for women in the 1950s were open to exploring new ideas and bringing new technologies and approaches into the home.35

Postwar sources clearly expressed the era’s powerful emphasis on domesticity for women and its reaffirmation of traditional gender roles. But the war’s validation of women’s domestic skills and roles imparted a new tone to the postwar celebration of female domesticity. Postwar women’s magazines, while highly conventional in appearance and ideology, differed in surprising and possibly profound ways from Vichy-era women’s magazines. Domesticity for women was no longer about a return to tradition, Vichy’s big theme, but about how hopes for improvements would be a path to modernism. Giving women access to new domestic technologies would allow them to introduce science, rationalism, and efficiency into what had been viewed as a traditional art handed down through generations.

To some extent, such rhetoric served the needs of the newly rising and eventually critical economic sector of consumer durables. The housewife as consumer reached its apotheosis in the decades after World War II across Western Europe and in the United States. In France economic recovery was slow and it took longer for lower-middle-class and working-class families to have access to consumer goods. No doubt, by the late 1960s, consumerism fueled economic growth, and new forms of advertising spurred desire for appliances. However, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, working-

35. For a discussion of the postwar woman as “consumer” see Pulju, The Good Buyer.
class wives, most of whom faced the double burden of working for wages and doing much of the housework, were not mere dupes of advertising. Women in several cities protested food and other shortages after the war. As France’s postwar welfare provisions slowly raised the standard of living, working-class women began to form cooperatives to gain access to critical time- and labor-saving devices, in particular washing machines. Middle-class women organized as consumer advocates, promoting access and education about the new domestic technologies, thus advancing the concept of a modern, efficient home. Women’s direct engagement in public and political activities in the immediate postwar years emerges once the definition of politics includes domestic and consumer issues.

Clearly, most popular publications of the late 1940s and early 1950s defined women primarily by their domestic roles, as housewives and mothers. However, unexpectedly, postwar publications also exhibited a willingness to reconsider gender roles and explored feminism without alarm. For example, in his preface to a 1947 home economics textbook, Roger Cousinet, lecturer in psychology at the Sorbonne, celebrated feminism, both for opening doors for women to enter new fields and for validating domestic life and the importance of the work women do in the home. This text, whose tone differs dramatically from Vichy-era texts, represents just one example of a feminism that celebrated both domestic skill and broader avenues for women.

In a 1951 issue of Elle, the journalist, founder of France-Soir and spouse of Elle’s director Hélène Gordon-Lazareff, Pierre Lazareff wrote about the history of women in journalism. He lamented the fact that women held only 731 of the 6,614 journalists’ cards and sketched a brief history of famous female journalists, including Mme. de Sevigné in the seventeenth century, Marguerite Durand in the nineteenth century, and his contemporary, Andrée Viollis. Lazareff, himself married to a leading journalist, warned his male readers that journalism was “the last career they should let their wives take up. A journalist has to live for his paper from sunrise to sunset, and since a wife should also live for her husband from sunrise to sunset, and there are only 24 hours in a day, things don’t always work out so well.” Patronizing and sexist? Yes, but also tongue-in-cheek. “That said,” Lazareff concluded, “if someone asks me honestly which journalist of

either sex I most admire, I always say it’s my wife, and I promise you it’s not solely in the interest of domestic harmony.” Lazareff encouraged interested young women to pursue a journalism career and suggested how they might get into the field.\(^\text{38}\)

Another individual who celebrated female domesticity while acknowledging changing roles for women, Robert Prigent, was active before the war in Christian social movements (JOC and MPF) while in Algiers and submitted the law granting women the vote. After the war, as minister of population and health, Prigent was responsible for maintaining/expanding familial and pro-natalist policies. He promoted the creation of a marriage loan for young couples to “encourage the establishment of young and fertile households,” and insisted that women’s true fulfillment lay in “accepting their feminine nature” as expressed in domestic life. However in a 1952 essay titled “Evolution of Ideas on the Family,” Prigent also noted that the contemporary family was experiencing a renaissance, and enumerated what he viewed as the three most important contemporary tendencies in the family: the liberation of the child, the liberation of women, and a break with past.\(^\text{39}\)

In 1955, one of the two founders of Elle, Françoise Giroud used de Beauvoir’s Second Sex as an analytical tool in “The Women of Today,” lamenting that women as objects were defined by their husbands and not their own terms.\(^\text{40}\) However, Giroud saw a revolution underway, not just among the few vocal feminists loudly demanding equal rights but also among the masses of women who were simply taking them. Giroud outlined three categories of contemporary women: first, women happy to be objects, whose goal was to marry and whose only desire was to please their husbands and raise children. The second and largest group of women lived between two worlds, wanting both independence and protection, total freedom and total security. They wanted children but not to be tied down by them, and to have a profession that did not demand too many hours. For such women Giroud had little patience. Giroud celebrated the third group, the one in ten women who understood that the only true freedom

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\(^{40}\) Françoise Giroud joined the resistance, was arrested and imprisoned, and after the war joined with Hélène Gordon-Lazareff to found Elle. Conservative feminist.
is “that of choosing one’s life.” Giroud insisted women could marry, stay at home and raise children, and be truly “free (liberated) women who know it . . . ” because they chose that role and decided that the home is where they could best use their talents. Giroud concluded, “It would be fair to say that they live like men.”

The 1950s were hardly a progressive era in France, and it would be misleading to overplay the era’s feminism and overlook its strongly conservative aspects. To use a domestic metaphor, it is not clear whether these authors were just rearranging the furniture or building a new kind of a house for men and women. In a poll by a major French polling organization conducted in 1957, 69 percent of the respondents answered that for a woman the best orientation was to “devote herself to her home.” However one in four, 24 percent, responded that a woman’s best choice was to “have an activity outside the home.”

Thus, postwar published sources exhibited a clear undercurrent of openness to feminism and to new possibilities for women. Other sources suggested changing attitudes toward fathers and fatherhood. The social workers writing family case reports after 1944 suddenly began including richer, more detailed portraits of fathers and not just mothers; a guidebook published in 1958 for expectant parents included a section for “fathers-to-be” urging them to not only to help out with new babies but to also forge a real relationship with their children from infancy. Fatherhood, increasingly understood as a relationship, was becoming more than a status. Attitudes towards male sexuality were also shifting.

Few attitudes indicate the relative power relations between the sexes better than the double standard. During the war years, normative literature like women’s magazines clearly and forcefully expressed the double standard. Married men who strayed had merely given in to their appetites. The offense was not serious, because men can have sex without emotional commitment. Wives who wrote in the 1940s for advice about how to respond

41. Françoise Giroud, “Femmes d’aujourd’hui,” Elle 486, (April 4, 1955) 28–9; Giroud also claimed that eight-six of every one hundred people in the liberal professions were women, a change she labeled a seizure (mainmise) of professions that shape the nation’s destiny, not a promotion but an irreversible revolution.

42. “Les résultats de l’enquête effectuée par l’Institut Français d’opinion publique pendant le dernier trimestre de 1957” (a poll cited in Giroud, La Nouvelle Vague), 334.

43. Based on case files from the Archives Départementales de Paris (Paris Departmental Archives), 1418 W 1-40; Archives Départementales de la Drôme (La Drôme Departmental Archives), 1385 W 43-9.
to their husbands’ adultery were repeatedly advised not to break up their marriages, rather to consider how they might have contributed to their husbands’ straying. In stark contrast, married women who confessed an extramarital attraction and asked what to do were told in a clear and judgmental tone that a wife’s adultery was an offense of an entirely different magnitude. Women could not separate sex from emotional commitment. Thus even an unfaithful thought on the wife’s part posed a serious threat to a marriage. That was the 1940s.  

In 1957, Marcelle Auclair responded to a reader’s question: “Is an adulterous wife guiltier than an adulterous husband?” Auclair echoed the earlier view that men who cheat are waylaid by circumstance, ceding to temporary temptation without placing much meaning on a sexual encounter that they can forget about the next moment. Wives, however, often commit adultery in their hearts long before finding an actual lover. But this time around, Auclair shifted the blame. A woman’s heart, she claimed, hates a void. Ninety-nine percent of wives mean to be faithful, but if a wife’s heart is not filled by her husband, she’ll look elsewhere. Auclair insisted that a husband’s adultery has serious consequences: setting a bad example for the wife who then may also cheat, or causing her to become bitter, mistrustful, and cold. She scolded men for excusing themselves with such nonsense as the idea that men are polygamous by nature and can’t stop themselves, a sign of weakness, not strength. Auclair belittled husbands unable to control their appetites as “little old men.” She concluded that in a world where responsibilities are shared, “men have no more right than women to give in blindly to their instincts.” Here the 1957 poll suggests Auclair’s changing views reflected broader changes. Only 9 percent of the respondents still maintained that faithfulness was most “essential to love” for just the woman, while a full 82 percent insisted that faithfulness was essential “for both the man and the woman.”

Under the veneer of traditional heterosexual marriage between male breadwinners and female homemakers, deeply held norms and attitudes about husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, and family life were beginning to shift as early as the late 1940s. No doubt discrediting those domestic norms and attitudes were contributing to the shift in views on faithfulness.

44. Fishman, *We Will Wait*, 131–2.
45. Auclair, “Pourquoi les femmes sont-elles moins libre que les hommes?,” 67.
46. Ibid., 68.
standards was the fact that the extreme right and even traditional conservatives emerged from the war badly tainted by their association with Vichy and collaborationism. But new attitudes also emerged from ordinary French people's experiences of daily life, which placed new value on women's domestic skills that had long been celebrated in the abstract but taken for granted in practical terms.

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List of Contributors

Peter Anderson is lecturer in Spanish studies in the Department of European Studies and Modern Languages at the University of Bath in the United Kingdom. During 2007–2010, he was a British Academy postdoctoral fellow at the London School of Economics. His publications include *The Francoist Military Trials: Terror and Complicity, 1939–1945* (Routledge, 2010). “The Chetwode Commission and British Diplomatic Responses to Violence behind the Lines in the Spanish Civil War” will appear in the *European History Quarterly* in 2011.

Andrew Bergerson is professor of History and German Studies at the University of Missouri–Kansas City. His books include *The Happy Burden of History: From Sovereign Impunity to Responsible Selfhood* (de Gruyter, 2011), coauthored with K. Scott Baker, Clancy Martin, and Steven Ostovich, and *Ordinary Germans in Extraordinary Times: The Nazi Revolution in Hildesheim* (Indiana University Press, 2004), which was short-listed for the Modernist Studies Book Prize. In 2006, the History News Network named him “Top Young Historian.”

Brett Bowles is associate professor of French studies in the Department of French and Italian at Indiana University, Bloomington, and the author of *Marcel Pagnol* (Manchester University Press, 2011). His second book, an edited collection of essays on French and German cinema between 1930 and 1945, is forthcoming from Berghahn Books in 2012, as is a monograph on Marcel Ophüls for the University of Illinois Press. He sits on the editorial boards of *French Historical Studies, Modern & Contemporary France*, and the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television*.

Sarah Fishman is associate dean for undergraduate studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and professor of history at the University of Houston. Her numerous publications include *France and Its Empire since 1870* (Oxford University Press, 2010), coauthored with Alice Conklin and Robert Zaretsky; *The Battle for Children: World War II, Youth Crime and...*


Xabier Irujo is assistant professor in Basque studies at the Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, Reno. In addition to numerous publications in Basque and Spanish, he has two books in press: Gernika 1937: The Market Day Massacre (University of Nevada Press) and The Code of Laws of Estella (Barandiaran Basque Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara). He received junior faculty research awards from the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Nevada, Reno, in both 2010 and 2011.

Virginia López de Maturana is a PhD candidate in contemporary history and a researcher at the University of the Basque Country in Vitoria-Gasteiz. Her coauthored book (with Igor Barrenetxea), Los niños de la Guerra: Entre la historia oral, el cine y la memoria, is in press. In 2009, she published “Sancho el Sabio: Historia de una revista al servicio de la cultura vasca” (Fundación Sancho el Sabio). Her doctoral research focuses on the evacuation of Basque children during the Spanish Civil War and their experience of exile.

Marijo Olaziregi is associate professor and vice dean of the Faculty of Letters at the University of the Basque Country in Vitoria-Gasteiz. She is also Director of the Promotion and Diffusion of the Basque Language in the Etxepare Basque Institute. Her publications include Six Basque Poets (Arc Publications, 2007) and Waking the Hedgehog: The Literary Universe of Bernardo Atxaga (The Center for Basque Studies Press, 2005). Among other volumes, she also edited An Anthology of Basque Short Stories (The Center for Basque Studies Press, 2004).

Sandra Ott is Co-Director and associate professor of Basque studies at the Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, Reno. Her books include The Circle of Mountains: A Basque Shepherding Community (first edition, Oxford University Press, 1981; second edition University of Nevada Press, 1993) and War, Judgment, and Memory in the Basque Borderlands, 1914–1945 (University of Nevada Press, 2008). In 2007, she received the Millstone Prize in French History and a Faculty Summer Stipend from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2009.

Santiago de Pablo is professor of contemporary history at the University of the Basque Country in Vitoria-Gasteiz and was the William A. Douglass Distinguished Visiting Scholar at the University of Nevada, Reno, in 2009–2010. His numerous publications include En tiera de nadie: Los nacionalistas vascos en Álava (Ikusager, 2008) and Tierra sin paz: Guerra civil, cine y propaganda en el País Vasco (Biblioteca Nueva, 2006). His forthcoming book, ETA on Screen: Basque Political Violence and Cinema, will be published by the Center for Basque Studies Press in 2012.

Guillaume Piketty is professor of history and senior researcher at the Center for History at Sciences Po in Paris. During the past year he has been a visiting scholar at Yale University, where he codirects a research seminar on the history of twentieth century postwar transitions. He coedited the book Retour à l’intime au sortir de la guerre (The Return to Private Life in the Aftermath of War, Tallandier, 2009). His recent edited books include Français en résistance: Carnets de guerre, correspondences, journaux personnels (Robert Laffont, 2009).

Joan Ramon Resina is professor of Iberian and Latin American cultures and director of the Iberian Studies Program at Stanford University. His numerous books include Del Hispanismo a los estudios Ibéricos: Una propuesta federativa para el ámbito cultural (Biblioteca Nueva, 2009) and Barce-
Iona’s Vocation of Modernity: Rise and Decline of an Urban Image (Stanford University Press, 2008). He has also published numerous edited collections of essays and has received the prestigious Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung Fellowship as well as a Fulbright Scholarship.

Maria Stehle is assistant professor in modern foreign languages and literatures at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Her recent publications include “The Whole World is in an Uproar: Discourses of Fear, Instability, and Global Change in West German Media, 1977–1980” in German Politics and Society. Her research and teaching focus on German and European cultural studies, gender and media studies, and cultural histories of Germany since 1945. She is also coeditor of the Women in Germany Newsletter.

Scott Soo is lecturer in French studies in the School of Humanities at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom. His book, The Routes to Exile: Spanish Civil War Refugees and their Hosts in Southwestern France (University of Wales Press), is forthcoming. His other publications include “Between Borders: The Remembrance Practices of Spanish Exiles in the Southwest of France” in At the Border: Margins and Peripheries in Modern France (University of Wales Press, 2008), Sharif Gemie and Henrice Altink (eds.).

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Navarre

Lower Navarre
Iparralde
Hegoalde

Occupied Zone
Vichy Zone

France, circa 1942

Atlantic Ocean
Mediterranean Sea

Germany
Italy

Brest
Bordeaux
Caen
Cherbourg
Dieppe
Dunkerque

Pau
Toulouse
Marseille
Argelès
Gurs
Barcarès
Vichy
Paris

Pau (Bearn, France)
Mount Intxorta

Vitoria-Gasteiz
Iruñea-Pamplona

Baiona

Bilbao
Durango
Gernika
Lekeitio

Detroit

Hegoalde
Iparralde

occupied Zone
Vichy Zone

France, circa 1942