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## Origins of the "Jewish Problem" in the Later Third Republic

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WHEN FRANCE declared war on Nazi Germany in 1939, between 300,000 and 350,000 Jews resided within the limits of the hexagon. Five years later, more than a quarter of them had perished. These Jews figured as the victims not of Nazi extermination policies alone, but also of Vichy government collaboration amid the indifference of much of the French population. How can this complicity be explained?

The war came at an inauspicious moment for the French nation. The country had not yet recovered from a half-decade of latent civil war. A defensive bourgeoisie and an increasingly numerous and militant proletariat faced each other across the chasm of class at a time when parliamentary institutions no longer functioned well. The unstable governments of the 1930s—whether of the center or the left—had not coped effectively with the Great Depression. They had imposed successively the rigors of deflation and the losses of devaluation without achieving the economic recovery now manifest across the Channel and the Rhine. Even more important, they had failed to rearm France quickly enough for the test of battle that lay ahead. In the first autumn days of the war, no one who observed the dispirited *poilus* as they mustered at the Gare du Nord for the train trip out to the Maginot Line could sustain much optimism about the prospects.<sup>1</sup>

In view of the brutalities already visited on German, Austrian,

<sup>1</sup> For a striking description of the scene, see Robert Murphy, *Diplomat among Warriors* (Garden City, N.Y., 1964), pp. 27–28.

and Czech Jews, the fate that lay in store for Jews in France in the event that the French army met defeat seemed plain enough. Hitler had prophesied openly in the Reichstag in January 1939, "If international finance Jewry within Europe and abroad should succeed once more in plunging the peoples into a world war, then the consequences will not be the Bolshevization of the world and therefore with a victory for Jewry, but on the contrary the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe."<sup>2</sup> Yet who would have predicted at this time that the Nazi authorities, in the worst of cases, would find large numbers of Frenchmen prepared to acquiesce and even to cooperate in that endeavor?

In Eastern Europe, where the majority of world Jewry still lived, popular prejudice against them might form an integral component of national self-identity. But France was not Poland. Nor was it Rumania. The virulent antisemitism that had surfaced at times during the ancien régime seemed to have little place in its mainstream contemporary culture. Indeed, the opposite case obtained. The public schools of the Third Republic had for sixty years inculcated in the minds of every young citizen the egalitarian ideals of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment values embodied in the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Thus the indifference of Frenchmen to the persecution of the Jews under the Nazi occupation so contravened the professed ideals of the dominant stratum in their society that it invites special attention.

The most congenial explanations have to do with moral deficiencies and strategic miscalculations among the particular men who held power under the Vichy regime. Robert Paxton has framed the indictment in terms that command assent both among survivors of the period and historians who study it. The decision makers at Vichy, he charges, exploited the 1940 defeat for narrowly partisan purposes. Consumed by enmity against the Popular Front and by fear of social upheaval, they blinded themselves to the impossibility of carrying through a truly conservative national revolution under Nazi auspices. Not only did they initially misjudge who would win the war, but they continued to deceive themselves about the chances of shielding France from the worst Nazi depredations through limited collaboration. In the end they sacri-

<sup>2</sup>Speech of 30 Jan. 1939, in Max Domarus, ed., *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen, 1932-1945*, 2 vols. (Neustadt a.d. Aisch, 1962), 2:1058.

ficed interest as well as honor. The betrayal of the Jews figured as one of numerous squalid compromises that brought no recompense.<sup>3</sup>

The argument rings true—as far as it goes. Yet hostility to the Jews under Vichy extended far beyond the circles of those whom Resistance adherents stigmatized as the "anti-France." The historian who takes for granted the moral lessons of the period can now afford an uncongenial line of inquiry. Did the political behavior of both native and immigrant Jews in the later Third Republic contribute to the equanimity with which, at least until 1942, many French citizens regarded their suffering?

About the facts little doubt now remains. Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, Georges Wellers, and other historians who have studied the issue reach analogous conclusions.<sup>4</sup> The Vichy authorities imposed an indigenous antisemitic program in 1940-42, and the French bureaucracy furnished much of the manpower that enabled the Germans to pursue their more extreme plans for identification, expropriation, and annihilation of Jews in the occupied northern half of the country. The process that took place in the occupied zone resembled what happened elsewhere in Nazi-ruled Europe. The Reich Security Office or Gestapo (which carried out Jewish policy with the collaboration of the Foreign Office and Wehrmacht) first mandated a census of Jews in September 1940. It then moved forward step by step. It seized and aryanized Jewish property in October 1940; excluded Jews from most occupations in April 1941; incarcerated those who had violated regulations during the rest of that year; forced the wearing of the yellow star in February 1942; and began the next month to deport the Jews from the Drancy detention camp to Auschwitz. Between that time and August 1944, the Germans despatched more than 75,000 men, women, and children to the extermination camps simply for being Jews. Perhaps another 10,000 Jews—an astonishingly high percentage of total casualties—met death as members of the Resistance.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (New York, 1972), esp. pp. 165-85, 380-83.

<sup>4</sup>Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York, 1981); Georges Wellers, *L'Etoile jaune à l'heure de Vichy: De Drancy à Auschwitz* (Paris, 1973); see also the splendid colloquium summarizing new research, Georges Wellers, André Kaspi, and Serge Klarsfeld, eds., *La France et la question juive, 1940-1944* (Paris, 1981).

<sup>5</sup>Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, p. 363, after reviewing various estimates, endorse the conclusions of Serge Klarsfeld, *Le Mémorial de la déportation des juifs*

The impetus for extermination came from the Germans. But French officials directed the census. Frenchmen stepped forward—all too eagerly—to serve as trustees for the 38,000 confiscated Jewish businesses and properties. And French police carried out the roundups of foreign and stateless Jews in 1942. They served as the intermediaries who watched over the hapless victims at the Vélodrome d'Hiver, and they mounted the guard until mid-1943 at Drancy, Pithiviers, and Beaune-la-Rolande.

Of course historians ought not to exaggerate the consequences of this collaboration. Vichy sympathizers frequently claimed after the war that through their participation they had slowed or moderated the process, on the model of the forest ranger who sets a backfire to control the flames. Marrus and Paxton assert on the contrary that the Germans would have accomplished far less in the north without local assistance.<sup>6</sup> Most probably, the positions taken by Frenchmen in the occupied zone made little difference either way. Where German forces administered a territory directly, their success in exterminating the Jews depended principally on the resources they were prepared to devote to the task. That explains why they proved almost as successful in the Netherlands as in Poland. Obstruction by the native population might sustain national honor, just as resistance by the Jews themselves might help maintain their self-esteem. Such heroics could affect the outcome but marginally.<sup>7</sup>

Still, putative diplomatic allies of the Nazi regime or indigenous governments that preserved some degree of independence could, and did, make a difference—particularly if they avoided direct control by German troops. Italy constitutes the most obvious example, although the cases of Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, and Finland all prove instructive in their separate ways. Mussolini, despite his ostensible conversion to racialism, shielded Italian Jews from the worst effects of Nazi extermination policy until his fall in

*de France* (Paris, 1978), who identifies 75,721 specific deportees and lists 2,000 more who died in detention. Wellers, *L'Etoile jaune*, p. 257, points to a minimum of 86,119 deportees. Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War against the Jews, 1933–1945* (New York, 1975), p. 363, lists all deaths including those of Jews in the Resistance as totalling 90,000. The figures advanced by David Caute, *Communism and the French Intellectuals, 1914–1960* (New York, 1964), p. 161, suggest the conclusion that perhaps half of those executed as Communists were also Jews.

<sup>6</sup>Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup>See especially Dawidowicz, *War against the Jews*, p. 359.

1943. (Some 84 percent of them survived the war.) The Italian authorities, often demonstrating remarkable local initiative, extended this protection to all Jews in the eight departments of southern France that their forces occupied in 1942–43.<sup>8</sup> The leading figures in the Vichy regime, like others who acknowledged the realities of power after 1940, uneasily walked a tightrope as they sought to make a place for themselves in Hitler's New Order. Yet, as the Italian model suggests, their margin for independent maneuver on the Jewish question remained far from negligible up to November 1942, and it did not wholly disappear thereafter even though German soldiers moved across the zonal demarcation line. Here again, the record speaks for itself. The Vichy government moved to circumscribe the social role of the Jews without German prompting. Its first measures commanded substantial popular support, for the humiliation attendant on defeat worked as a profound shock upon public opinion. The majority of Frenchmen, however confusedly, aspired toward a national renewal along lines quite different from the *République des camarades*. The popular mind lumped the Jews with Communists, Freemasons, anticlerical schoolteachers, and left-leaning corrupt politicians—all of them, according to conservative publicists, sources of the moral decadence responsible for the country's collapse.<sup>9</sup>

Within days of taking office the first Pétain cabinet sealed the borders. Shortly thereafter, Vichy cancelled the April 1939 decree-law that had forbidden antisemitic statements in the press. A panel to review naturalizations of foreigners was established. A fundamental statute of 3 October 1940 excluded Jews from major public offices, banned them from teaching and the mass media, and established a *numerus clausus* in the liberal professions. Supplementary legislation facilitated the internment of foreign Jews and withdrew citizenship from the Jews of Algeria.<sup>10</sup>

Nor did the disabilities visited on the Jews in the autonomous

<sup>8</sup>Meir Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy, 1922–1945* (London, 1979). On policy in the Italian zone in France, see Philippe Erlanger, *La France sans étoile: Souvenirs de l'avant-guerre et du temps de l'occupation* (Paris, 1974).

<sup>9</sup>Henri Amouroux, *La Grande Histoire des français sous l'occupation*, vol. 5, *Les Passions et les haines* (Paris, 1981), pp. 149–50.

<sup>10</sup>The process is described in Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, pp. 3–21, and in Wellers, *L'Etoile jaune*, pp. 50–64.

southern zone stop here. The Germans continued to dump dispossessed Jews over the border. The harsh measures taken in the north motivated many Paris Jews to traverse the demarcation line. Soon, according to official estimates, 180,000 crowded into the southern zone.<sup>11</sup> Even forced labor battalions set up by Vichy could not handle the inflow. The economic burden on localities grew. Vichy then took the initiative in setting up a General Commissariat for Jewish Affairs in March 1941. The first commissioner, Xavier Vallat, was a Royalist deputy who, like most of his colleagues in Action Française, held anti-German views. But Vallat expressed willingness to cooperate with the Germans in so far as their mutual policies ran along parallel lines.<sup>12</sup>

Vallat sought to eliminate the role of foreign Jews in France entirely pending their emigration and to erect a legal barrier that would circumscribe the influence of the sort of native Jews whom conservatives held to have poisoned public life in the 1930s. Vallat promulgated a new fundamental law in June 1941. Vichy lawyers now sought to define who counted as Jewish. (Anyone with three Jewish grandparents or with two such grandparents who could not prove membership in another religion qualified.) A series of decrees between June 1941 and June 1942 then limited Jewish participation by quota in most professions and excluded them entirely from finance, the media, and agriculture. Only Jews resident in France for five generations and families of some war veterans received exemption from these stipulations. A census of Jews and their financial holdings then took place in the unoccupied zone. Finally, the General Commissariat won authorization to seize Jewish property and assets. Vallat intended to use this authorization in the first place mainly against foreign Jews. But the process got out of hand. The Germans forced the creation of a central communal organization—the Union Générale des Israélites Français (UGIF)—and through it levied a tremendous fine on the community's assets. This required liquidation of Jewish property in a more disorderly fashion than even Vallat had contemplated.

Gradually in 1942 the Vichy regime lost control of its Jewish policy. The Germans forced Vallat out and imposed the fanatic

<sup>11</sup> Amouroux, *Les Passions*, p. 159.

<sup>12</sup> For a revealing description of Vallat, see Pierre Pierrard, *Juifs et catholiques français: De Drumont à Jules Isaac (1886–1945)* (Paris, 1970), pp. 301–5.

Louis Darquier de Pellepoix, a rabble-rousing journalist who had lived off German subsidies before the war, as his successor.<sup>13</sup> From the summer of 1942, the Germans made increasing demands for the roundup of Jews for deportation in the southern zone. The Vichy authorities, beset by difficulties of higher priority, consented to the deportation of foreign Jews (including their French-born children) and attempted to save native Jews alone. Yet at this point the public mood began to change. The Catholic church hierarchy found its own breaking point with the brutal roundups of children in the summer of 1942. The harshness of direct German occupation after November 1942, the removal of young Frenchmen to forced labor service in Germany during 1943, and the increasing difficulties of everyday life thereafter fostered a turnabout in French attitudes.<sup>14</sup>

The events of 1943–44 made manifest the limits to Vichy's hostility against the Jews. Earlier Laval and the circle around Marshal Pétain had banked on German victory. Although Laval's postwar apologia provides a defense of his actions by no means devoid of logic, historians have treated him uncharitably.<sup>15</sup> Political heir to Aristide Briand, the "apostle of peace" in the 1920s, Laval was no more lacking in moral integrity and just marginally more slippery than many Third Republic politicians who did not end before a firing squad. Yet his experiences as premier in 1931 and 1935 left him with deep-rooted convictions about Russia's perfidy and Britain's unreliability. His assumption up to the battle of Stalingrad that France had somehow to come to terms with the Nazis followed from these experiences. Devoid of personal antisemitism, Laval bent with the winds of Nazi racism where necessary to safeguard France's other interests. He acquiesced in the deportation of foreign and stateless Jews to their deaths, but by avoiding discussions of principle managed by tactical delay to shield most French Jews from the worst. As for Marshal Pétain, who never spoke publicly on Jewish policy, he seemed to share the prejudices of his con-

<sup>13</sup> For a somber-hued portrait of Darquier, see Jean Laloum, *La France antisémite de Darquier de Pellepoix* (Paris, 1979).

<sup>14</sup> This account follows the careful description of the process in Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*.

<sup>15</sup> Pierre Laval, *The Diary of Pierre Laval* (London, 1948). For a negative evaluation, see Geoffrey Warner, *Pierre Laval and the Eclipse of France* (London, 1968). My judgments rest also on consultation of Laval's diplomatic papers for 1931 and 1935 at the Archives Diplomatiques, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris.

servative, Catholic milieu. Presumably he did not differ fundamentally from his homologue in the Free French movement, General de Gaulle, who a generation later would still castigate Jews as a self-assured people eager for domination. For both Laval and Pétain, then, Jewish policies were instrumental, not matters of ideology.

In evaluating Vichy's Jewish policy one can largely discount the fanatic antisemitism expressed by *Je suis partout*, *Au pilori*, and *Le Cri du peuple*. These collaborationist sheets appeared in the shadow of the Hotel Meurice and reflected the sentiments of the German authorities far more than they did the French.<sup>16</sup> Nor need one tarry to explain the mentality of Darquier de Pellepoix or his sinister henchman, Joseph Antignac, for marginal individuals who would do the Nazis' bidding appeared in all countries in occupied Europe. The genuine popularity of Vichy's indigenous antisemitic legislation of 1940-42 appears far more interesting—and frightening. These measures, it is clear, corresponded to what large numbers of Frenchmen (not merely at Vichy, but also some who later sympathized with the Resistance) considered reasonable.

The area governed by Vichy corresponded to the departments that had voted to the left under the Third Republic. Yet the prefects' reports leave little doubt about the tremendous anger that welled up against the Jews there in 1940-41.<sup>17</sup> The desperate Jews fleeing German rule in Paris overtaxed the resources of the south. In areas like the Côte d'Azur (where cynics began to talk "Kahn" instead of Cannes), wealthy Jews were accused of using their resources to monopolize the black market and hence of raising prices charged to others. Poor Jews, critics argued on the other hand, had become a burden in the localities on which they imposed themselves.<sup>18</sup> Marrus and Paxton conclude that "the Jews became a kind of lightning rod for generalized urban-rural tensions, merchant-consumer tensions, fears about future scarcities and price increases, envy at certain not clearly specified 'others' who were rumored to have it easy, and even guilt about practices widespread within the general public."<sup>19</sup> Much can be said for this explanation. Undoubt-

<sup>16</sup> On Robert Brasillach, Jean Lestandi, and Jacques Doriot, the publishers of these sheets, and their milieu, see Bertram M. Gordon, *Collaborationism in France during the Second World War* (Ithaca, 1980).

<sup>17</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, pp. 179-214.

<sup>18</sup> Amouroux, *Les Passions*, pp. 303-4.

<sup>19</sup> Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, p. 185.

edly specific economic grievances generated great hostility to these hapless refugees. And yet resentment against the Jews touched circles far beyond those suffering from privation. As the writer Paul Léautaud put it typically if unfairly, the Jews had constituted themselves a "privileged class" when they were on top some years before. Now the wheel had turned.<sup>20</sup>

Antisemitic measures of the Vallat stamp won surprisingly broad political support. On both sides of the spectrum Léon Blum and his Popular Front became the object of opprobrium. Months after the Allied landings in North Africa, for instance, the governor-general there still cited Blum's misdeeds as a reason why citizenship should not be restored incautiously to the Jews.<sup>21</sup> Attacks on Blum from the extreme left had their origins in the period of Nazi-Soviet collaboration, when Maurice Thorez denigrated his character in language on which Vallat himself would not have wished to improve.<sup>22</sup> Thorez's charges had a resonance in the working class that endured long after the party line had changed. It is no wonder that the clandestine *L'Humanité* discussed anti-Jewish measures only abstractly most of the time and relegated reports of Nazi deportation policy to special publications like *L'Université libre* targeted at Jewish intellectuals. Despite the thousands of sabotage actions launched by the Communist resistance against the Nazi rail network in 1941-44 and the prominent role of Jews in these operations, never did the party hierarchy seek to block one of the eighty-five convoys that carried Jewish deportees from Drancy to Auschwitz. This circumspection suggests how fearful party leaders were of testing the patience of the militants by diverting priorities even temporarily from the welfare of the Soviet Union and the class struggle against Vichy.<sup>23</sup>

Nor did the noncommunist Resistance wish to make a crusade out of protecting the Jews. Prevailing sentiment in the clandestine

<sup>20</sup> Paul Léautaud, *Journal*, 31 Oct. 1940, quoted by Amouroux, *Les Passions*, p. 301.

<sup>21</sup> For the views of Governor-General Marcel Peyrouton, see Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, pp. 195-96.

<sup>22</sup> For excerpts from Thorez's remarkable 1940 pamphlet, *Blum tel qu'il est*, see Philippe Robrieux, *Histoire intérieure du parti communiste, 1920-1945* (Paris, 1980), pp. 510-11.

<sup>23</sup> See Annie Kriegel, "La Résistance communiste," in *La France et la question juive*, pp. 348-51, 359-60; also comments by former militants Abraham Rayski and David Avram in *ibid.*, pp. 382-83 and 397-98. Kriegel notes that *L'Humanité* did publish nine articles, all limited to the one period May 1941-Sept. 1942, touching on persecution of the Jews.

tine Socialist party, according to its Jewish secretary, was at best "asemitic," and mild expressions of antisemitism surfaced frequently. Many in the Maquis who lacked clear knowledge of German policy professed not to consider the Jews more at risk than other Resistance groups.<sup>24</sup> Those who joined de Gaulle in London covered the whole political spectrum, and consequently Free French views on Jewish policy also varied. The general himself behaved correctly toward Jews who rallied to his side, but his entourage held decidedly mixed views. Georges Boris, a thick-skinned financial journalist who had shown few scruples as a propagandist for the Cartel des Gauches or the Front Populaire, found it expedient to remain in a position of restricted visibility running a press review because as a Jew he did not want to compromise the cause. His intimate Pierre Mendès France similarly opted for a low profile at first.<sup>25</sup> The political analyst Raymond Aron, who helped run Gaullist radio, later explained why he and his fellow Jews working for *Ici Londres* remained quiet about Vichy policy right up to the roundups of August 1942. "As Frenchmen we obviously opposed all these antisemitic measures," he recalled. "But a sort of tacit agreement obtained to speak of them as little as possible." Precisely because he felt himself a Frenchman before being a Jew, Aron considered it a necessary emotional precaution to "think as little as possible about what certain Frenchmen were doing to the Jews."<sup>26</sup>

In short, Jews appeared unpopular among their fellow citizens for various reasons, some of which had nothing to do with the specific privations endured by Frenchmen after the 1940 defeat. While relatively few condoned the brutality of Nazi methods, a larger number wished to reduce the numbers of Jews in France and to circumscribe their place in French life. Yet after the successive waves of immigration in 1919–39 Jews still totaled less than 1 percent of the population. The refugees who arrived from Spain in the single month of February 1939 outnumbered them by a considerable margin. What motives could possibly justify such virulent hostility against them?

Marc Gerschel, a regional leader of the partisan movement Franc-

Tireur, would later comfort himself with the notion that large sections of the population—especially in rural central and southern France—had never met a Jew and possessed but a hazy notion of the Jewish "problem." That, he maintained, enabled unscrupulous Vichy propagandists to fill the void with caricature.<sup>27</sup> In light of the close-knit intracommunal social ties that Jews cultivated in some provincial centers, the argument may have considerable merit even where they lived in significant numbers. Pierre Pierrard, later to become the leading historian of Jewish-Catholic relations in France, recalled that middle-class adolescents growing up in his clerical milieu in Lille during the 1930s had no contact whatever with Jews. Comments dropped by their teachers at the local *collège* led them vaguely to conflate Jews and Socialists and to associate the hated "Blum-Blum" with the equally despised Roger Salengro ("sale en gros et en détail"), the Lille mayor and Popular Front interior minister. Yet for these youngsters the soot-blackened synagogue on the rue Auguste-Angellier remained as mysterious a place as the nearby masonic lodge, the rumored scene of sacrilegious rites that shocked the imagination.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, a good deal of evidence suggests that most adult Frenchmen in urban areas had considerable contact with Jews. Their dislike of Jews in the late 1930s did not rest primarily on ignorance. Members of the conservative bourgeoisie who embraced what they called a "reasoned antisemitism"<sup>29</sup> rooted their feelings in politics. They perceived the Jews as taking one side in a convulsive social struggle. While Jewish confessional leaders remained resolutely nonpolitical, the Jewish political class in the late Third Republic stood overwhelmingly on the side of the left. Those who held the left responsible for the economic and military decline of the nation blamed these developments in part on the Jews. Moreover, recent Jewish immigrants, to a far greater extent than natives, belonged to Communist-affiliated groups that appeared to be sapping the state from within. It goes without saying that, in a society based on the rights of the individual, the sociological distribution of opinion in a subgroup provides no logical warrant for reproach against any individual. But logic played less of a role in French

<sup>24</sup> See the testimony of Daniel Mayer and Claude Bourdet in *La France et la question juive*, pp. 375, 380–81.

<sup>25</sup> Georges Boris, *Servir la république* (Paris, 1963), pp. 285–99; Jean Lacouture, *Pierre Mendès France* (Paris, 1981), pp. 142–46.

<sup>26</sup> Amouroux, *Les Passions*, pp. 308–10.

<sup>27</sup> See Dominique Veillon, "Franc-Tireur et les juifs," in *La France et la question juive*, pp. 315–28; also Gerschel comments in *ibid.*, pp. 384–85.

<sup>28</sup> Pierrard, *Juifs et catholiques français*, pp. 297–98.

<sup>29</sup> For the genesis of the phrase, see *ibid.*, pp. 262–63.

politics during the 1930s than passion. It is therefore a useful exercise for the historian to explore to what extent prevailing stereotypes about the Jews conformed to reality.

The more closely one examines French antisemitism in the 1930s, the more different it appears in inspiration and character from the type of Jew-hatred that had marked public life in France during the late nineteenth century. Hostility to the Jews has assumed such a variety of forms that historians have often found it heuristically more useful to focus on persistence rather than on changes in the phenomenon.<sup>30</sup> Even those who distinguish clearly between the medieval Christian hostility to the Jewish religion and the secular nineteenth-century ideology that ascribed to the Jews an inner nature different from that of other people tend to treat the period 1880–1945 as a bloc.<sup>31</sup> In this view the nationalist awakening of European peoples heightened their perceptions of Jews as unassimilable outsiders precisely at the time when Jews were first beginning to assimilate; the antisemitic parties of the 1880s are frequently pictured as forerunners of the antisemitic political movements of the interwar era. Yet whatever the truth of this model for Central Europe, it clearly has limited applicability in France.<sup>32</sup>

Antisemitism flourished as an ideology on both the right and the left in nineteenth-century France. But outside Alsace-Lorraine (and Algeria) the movement had only a tangential connection to the presence or social role of actual Jews. Paradoxically, at the height of Edouard Drumont's campaign against *la France juive*, fewer flesh-and-blood Jews inhabited that country than any major nation in the Western world.

France had indeed figured as the first continental state to grant the Jews full citizenship. Yet the community released from the ghetto's bonds by the Constituent Assembly in 1791 was small. Two sequential expulsions had left only a few thousand Marranos

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Léon Poliakov, *Histoire de l'antisémitisme*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1968), and James Parkes, *Antisemitism; A Concise World History* (Chicago, 1968). The semantic analysis by Ben Halpern, "What is Antisemitism?" *Modern Judaism* 1 (1981), pp. 251–62, proves most helpful in facilitating a clear definition.

<sup>31</sup> See for example Paul W. Massing, *Rehearsal for Destruction: A Study of Political Antisemitism in Imperial Germany* (New York, 1949), which examines the antisemitic parties of the 1880s as forerunners of the political movements of the interwar era.

<sup>32</sup> See Hannah Arendt's incisive analysis in *Antisemitism*, part 1 of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1951), pp. 48–50.

within the Bourbon realm proper by the mid-seventeenth century, and the growth of the Jewish population derived thereafter from peripheral annexations by the French state in Lorraine, Alsace, and the Comtat-Venaissin. Napoleon's consistorial census of 1808, the first really reliable count, turned up only 46,663 Jews—a bare 0.16 percent of the French population. To be sure, this tiny minority (which subsequently experienced a demographic expansion more characteristic of the general European than the French pattern) increased to 89,047 persons by 1866. Almost half that number, however, lived in parts of Alsace and Lorraine ceded to Germany after the Franco-Prussian War. A mere 49,439 remained in France in 1872. Although 15,000 Alsatian Jews moved back within the country's truncated borders during the next decade and a few thousand Eastern Jews joined them after the Russian pogroms of the 1880s, the Jewish population in 1897—just before the Dreyfus Affair engaged public passions—had climbed back to just 71,249, still under 0.19 percent of the total population.<sup>33</sup>

By the turn of the century the Jewish community had amassed nothing like the power imputed to it by *La Croix* and *La Libre Parole*. Still, in the three generations that had passed since Napoleon convoked the Great Sanhedrin and recognized Judaism as a religion deserving state support, this group had made considerable strides toward integration in the body politic. In 1808, four-fifths of French Jews still lived in Alsace-Lorraine. Isolated in small villages by ancient restrictions, the Alsatians eked out a precarious living as horse and cattle dealers, peddlers, and small-time moneylenders. With the exception of a few score Bordeaux merchants who had grown rich in the Atlantic trade, Jews elsewhere in France stood on but a marginally higher financial plane.

The end of legal disabilities, however, led to a remarkable evolution in the economic status and the mental outlook of the Jews. Barred from most cities under the ancien régime, the Jews now urbanized quickly. Increasingly they moved to Paris—which grew to contain two-thirds of the community as a consequence of the loss of Alsace. The first generation became storekeepers. The second

<sup>33</sup> Doris Ben Simon-Donath, *Socio-démographie des juifs de France et d'Algérie, 1867–1907* (Paris, 1976), pp. 19–91; Béatrice Philippe, *Etre juif dans la société française: Du Moyen Age à nos jours* (Paris, 1979), pp. 69–177; Zosa Szajowski, "The Growth of the Jewish Population of France: The Political Aspects of a Demographic Problem," *Jewish Social Studies* (July and Oct. 1946), pp. 179–96, 297–315.

often established itself in the garment, fur, or furniture business. And the most talented representatives of the third aspired to the liberal professions or joined the state bureaucracy. Social integration proceeded apace. The Jews adopted Western modes of dress, adopted French as their mother tongue, and took advantage of the educational opportunities offered by successive school reforms at a faster rate than the population at large. In gratitude for their emancipation, Jews characteristically exhibited a fervid patriotism, and the majority expressed ostentatious loyalty in turn to the Orleanist monarchy, the Bonapartist empire, and the Opportunist plurality of the early Third Republic. In short, no Jewish community in any major nation made more rapid progress toward assimilation. None adopted more wholeheartedly the ethos of its host society.<sup>34</sup> In view of the decline in religious practice, some advanced thinkers like Théodore Reinach went so far as to predict the eventual disappearance of any Jewish particularity or identification in France.<sup>35</sup>

The currents of modernization that drew the Jews steadily into the mainstream of French life during the nineteenth century also undermined traditional social structures. Yet the connections between these two phenomena appeared only circumstantial. Those on the left who deplored the injustices accompanying urbanization and industrialization, like those on the right who anathematized the chaos of a social order based on wealth instead of hierarchy and religious sanction, frequently demonized the Jew. For utopian socialists in the 1840s, as for opponents of the lay Republic in the 1890s, the Jew served as a convenient symbol—the emblem of the grasping financier, the subverter of the social bond. But did hostility to the mythical Jew also involve as a practical consequence active prejudice against individual Jews? The evidence cuts two ways.

Most early French socialists taxed the Jews with responsibility for the excesses of finance capitalism. Proudhon, Leroux, Fourier,

<sup>34</sup> See the statistical data by Ben Simon-Donath, *Socio-démographie des juifs*, pp. 19–201, and the analysis in Robert F. Byrnes, *Antisemitism in Modern France: The Prologue to the Dreyfus Affair* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1950), esp. pp. 95–102, 253–61.

<sup>35</sup> Michel Winock, *Edouard Drumont et Cie: Antisémisme et fascisme en France* (Paris, 1982), p. 88; see also the description of the community in Michael Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation: A Study of the French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (London, 1971).

and Toussenel vied in casting imprecations on them. “The Jew is the enemy of humanity,” Proudhon wrote in 1847. “This race must be sent back to Asia or exterminated.”<sup>36</sup> Yet the shock value of such statements diminishes when one considers that Jewish socialists such as Karl Marx and Moses Hess also flayed Hebraic egoism and materialism in unmeasured terms and that Alexandre Weill and Dr. Terquem attacked the Rothschild family from within the Jewish community as vigorously as other radicals denounced them from without.<sup>37</sup>

In fact, certain Jews or ex-Jewish converts did possess a mental outlook that prepared them to embrace the business opportunities of the July Monarchy and the Second Empire. If the Rothschilds amassed the only outsized fortune, a dozen other families joined the new financial elite; and Jews, like Protestants, continued to play a disproportionate role in merchant banking down to the end of the Third Republic. But the success of individuals, most of whom had severed any formal communal connections, scarcely affected the mass of their coreligionists. Significantly, only 124 Paris Jews felt wealthy enough to contribute to the Comité de Secours et d’Encouragement in 1840, while a quarter of the community received alms from that organization.<sup>38</sup> It is at least arguable that the Jew qualified as the ideal symbolic representative of the evils of modernity not because he stood at the center of the new society, but because he remained peripheral to it.

The French, after all, have long maintained an inward-looking culture. They show interest chiefly in themselves. Under the ancien régime, however, the censorship had frequently impelled intellectuals to make points about their own society obliquely. They put their criticisms in the mouths of foreigners, projected their hopes and fears on outsiders, and discoursed on other peoples’ social arrangements to cast veiled aspersions on their own. Postrevolutionary literary practice perpetuated this convention. A direct line links Montesquieu’s Persian travelers and Voltaire’s anthro-

<sup>36</sup> Quoted by Stephen Wilson, *Ideology and Experience: Antisemitism in France at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Rutherford, N.J., 1982), p. 334.

<sup>37</sup> George Lichtheim, *The Origins of Socialism* (New York, 1969), pp. 176–78; Philippe, *Etre juif dans la société française*, p. 204.

<sup>38</sup> On the role of Jewish bankers, see Theodore Zeldin, *France, 1848–1945*, vol. 1, *Ambition, Love, and Politics* (London, 1973), pp. 77–86; on the Comité de Secours, Philippe, *Etre juif dans la société française*, p. 179.



pophagous Indians with twentieth-century theatrical depictions of spiritual impoverishment in industrial America.<sup>39</sup> Given the limited number of Jews in France, antisemitic rhetoric at times served an analogous function. The stereotypical Jew—the miser, the money-lender, the social climber, the parvenu—who emerges from the pages of Vigny, Balzac, or Hugo exemplified traits that the French did not comfortably acknowledge in themselves as they passed through the strains of early industrialization.<sup>40</sup> Significantly, some antimodernist writers employed the terms *Jew* and *usurer* interchangeably, without a specific “racial” connotation.<sup>41</sup>

Of course the wave of ideological antisemitism that engulfed the country in the last two decades of the nineteenth century seemed real enough to its victims—particularly to those who suffered in the Algerian pogroms and the less violent anti-Dreyfusard riots that coursed through thirty French towns in 1898.<sup>42</sup> But most Jews in the *métropole*, if we can believe the testimony gathered by Paula Hyman, felt nothing more than temporary anxiety. They never doubted the solidity of the political institutions that protected their rights. Nor did they experience much discrimination in their personal or professional lives.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, not all political antisemites—however virulent their rhetoric—exhibited active prejudice against Jews as individuals. As Charles Péguy later put it, “the antisemites talk about the Jews, but the awful truth must be told: The antisemites know nothing about the Jews.”<sup>44</sup> Increasingly, historians have come to interpret the events of these decades as a many-sided conflict among opposing political forces vying for control of the state. The principal issue was the fate of the Republic, not the status of the Jews. Much to the frustration of ardent republicans, Jewish communal institutions kept a deliberately low profile in the

<sup>39</sup> For an instructive reading of eighteenth-century Utopian thought, see Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), pp. 413–52; for analysis of French theatrical preoccupation with the United States before World War I, consult Charles William Brooks, “America in France’s Hopes and Fears, 1890–1920” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard Univ., 1974).

<sup>40</sup> See the sensitive reading in Philippe, *Etre juif dans la société française*, pp. 206–17.

<sup>41</sup> See Jeannine Verdès-Leroux, *Scandale financier et antisémitisme catholique: Le Krach de l’Union Générale* (Paris, 1969).

<sup>42</sup> Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, pp. 106–24.

<sup>43</sup> Paula Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906–1939* (New York, 1979), pp. 9–10.

<sup>44</sup> In *Notre jeunesse* (Paris, 1910), quoted by Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, p. 666.

battle, as did the mass of individual Jews outside intellectual circles. Léon Blum would later ask acidulously whether, under other circumstances, the proper, bourgeois Captain Dreyfus would have become a Dreyfusard.<sup>45</sup>

Stephen Wilson’s survey of the geographical sociology of antisemitism at the peak of the Dreyfus controversy confirms how difficult it is to fix the movement’s etiology. In Paris and some eastern departments traces of apprehension about Jewish economic competition appeared. In certain strongly Catholic areas the laity and lower clergy held the Jews partly responsible for secularizing education and loosening divorce restrictions. But elsewhere antisemitism’s strength did not correlate either with the presence of Jews or with objections to concrete political views attributed to them. Instead, it reflected displaced grievances relating to agricultural distress, diminished regional autonomy, and strains occasioned by depopulation in the countryside and unbalanced growth in the towns. It also mirrored the unfocused resentment of those who felt that economic and social changes promoted by the republican political class had worked against them.<sup>46</sup>

Given the large symbolic component in turn-of-the-century Jew-hatred and the diffuse nature of the practical complaints involved, it is scarcely surprising that antisemitism dissipated as a mass movement as rapidly as it had arisen. The years 1899 to 1905 saw the final defeat of the army, the church, and the rural notables of *la vieille France*. They marked the consolidation of the anticlerical Republic dominated by the social classes and political forces to which native Jews increasingly belonged. The smart set in the faubourg St.-Honoré might still engage in antisemitic banter (like the joke about the Jewish heiress, “as beautiful as Venus, as rich as Croesus, and as innocent . . . as Dreyfus”), but worse could be heard in the drawing rooms of London or New York.<sup>47</sup> While racialist thinking did not disappear, lethal admixtures of integral nation-

<sup>45</sup> Léon Blum, *Souvenirs sur l’affaire* (Paris, 1935). For an elaboration of this interpretation see Douglas Johnson, *France and the Dreyfus Case* (London, 1966), and Marcel Thomas, *L’Affaire sans Dreyfus* (Paris, 1961). On the Jewish response, Marrus, *Politics of Assimilation*, remains the most incisive study.

<sup>46</sup> Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, pp. 655–70. Pierre Sorlin, “La Croix” et les juifs (1880–1899): *Contribution à l’histoire de l’antisémitisme contemporain* (Paris, 1967), p. 221 offers another geographical mapping of antisemitism according to slightly different criteria.

<sup>47</sup> Philippe, *Etre juif dans la société française*, p. 254.

alism and social radicalism appealed mainly on the political fringes during the Belle Epoque. Only in retrospect would they appear as precursors of "fascism."<sup>48</sup> It certainly seemed at the time that World War I had brought the final step in acceptance of the Jews. Their battlefield ardor won general recognition; three figured prominently in the Clemenceau ministry that achieved victory in 1918; and even Maurice Barrès acknowledged them as one of the "spiritual families" of France. As a further augury, *La Libre Parole*, flagship of the antisemitic press, foundered ignominiously in 1924 because of lack of subscribers.<sup>49</sup>

François Goguel's now familiar typology interprets French politics since 1789 as a cyclical conflict between a party of order and a party of movement.<sup>50</sup> Until the early twentieth century, the Jews had always had reason to favor the party of movement. From the Revolution onward, every step forward for that party had fostered new advances for the Jews. The outcome of the Dreyfus Affair, however, freed the Jews from having to take a defensive position on the "left." And the same generation that witnessed the consolidation of the Republic also confirmed the *embourgeoisement* of the various strands in native Jewry. Thus the material interests of most French Jews lay increasingly with the center—that is to say with the parties of order.

One might have expected these developments to facilitate a more normal distribution of the community across the political spectrum. But such a realignment proceeded slowly. The Jews continued to exhibit distinctive political characteristics and to stand, as a voting bloc, predominantly on the left. Two factors joined to produce this result. The predilections of Jewish intellectuals, and of the Jewish political class that came to consciousness during the Dreyfus period, still reflected the struggles of the past. Even more significant, the demographically static native community was submerged by a new immigration, which tripled the number of Jews in France within twenty-five years.

<sup>48</sup> Zeev Sternhell, in *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français* (Paris, 1972) and *La Droite révolutionnaire, 1885-1914: Les Origines françaises du fascisme* (Paris, 1978), provides a brilliant exposition of this ideology but does not always escape the peril of reading history backward.

<sup>49</sup> Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, pp. 49-62; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>50</sup> François Goguel, *La Politique des partis sous la IIIe République* (Paris, 1958).

The new arrivals from Eastern Europe brought with them the chiliastic outlook and radical politics of the shtetl. Moreover, they bore the stigmata of "underdevelopment" characteristic of their homelands, and that would confine at least the first generation to the lowest rungs of French society. Although the cultural gap between the two subgroups grew ever wider in the 1930s, each faction found reasons to support the Popular Front. If antisemites in the 1890s had known little about the Jews, their successors in the 1930s perceived them much more clearly. Of course extreme elements among the new antisemites drew on an irrational xenophobia rich in conspiratorial fantasy as well as on the crude racism in vogue across the Rhine. Yet for moderates who considered that the Popular Front meant social upheaval and economic disaster at a time when France faced the greatest foreign menace in its history, dismay at certain manifestations of "Jewish influence" also represented a pragmatic response to a not wholly imaginary threat.

To speak of Jewish influence is to venture admittedly onto perilous ground. In the absence of scientific polling, one cannot ascertain with precision the normative sentiments of Jewish citizens in particular social categories. Inevitably one falls back upon the views of those identified as Jewish spokesmen. But who, in the later Third Republic, could claim to speak for the Jews? Certainly not the rabbinate: by the 1930s assimilation had progressed so far that less than 4 percent of the Paris Jewish community remained even nominally affiliated with a consistorial synagogue.<sup>51</sup> In practice, those who represented French Jewry in the eyes of the larger public were politicians, intellectuals, journalists, and cultural luminaries.

Yet since the turn of the century, leading intellectuals—men such as the sociologists Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Emile Durkheim, the philosopher Henri Bergson, the social critic Julien Benda, the historians Daniel Halévy and Marc Bloch, and the legal scholar and civil libertarian Victor Basch—had almost all abandoned religious observance and severed their ties to the ethnic community.<sup>52</sup> At most, like Bloch, they felt "neither pride nor shame" in their origins, but insisted that their intellectual development drew nourish-

<sup>51</sup> Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, p. 30.

<sup>52</sup> For a consideration of the religious identification of these and other French Jewish intellectuals, see H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reconstruction of European Social Thought, 1890-1930* (New York, 1958), and *The Obstructed Path: French Social Thought in the Years of Desperation, 1930-1960* (New York, 1966).

ment exclusively from Gallic roots. Others, like Bergson, flirted with Catholicism. For a surprisingly large number, socialism came to represent the true and only church. The occasional younger scholar like Raymond Aron, who spoke of his personal reactions as a Jew to Nazi antisemitism in lectures at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, quickly learned that deviations from universalist values buttered no parsnips in the academy; and few, in any case, felt tempted to follow Aron's example.<sup>53</sup>

In the light of these cultural discontinuities, one can sympathize with Paula Hyman's sense of injustice that the marginal Jew who pontificated in the chic biweeklies received more attention than the Jewish corner merchant, minor state functionary, or consistorial leader. The latter might embrace the ordinary values of family, property, and patriotism as fiercely as the next bourgeois. But that scarcely registered with those disposed by ideology to regard the Jews as an alien race. For such people, the more unconventional and radical the Jewish publicist or intellectual, the more authentically Hebraic.<sup>54</sup> Still, the preoccupation of the extreme right with the importance of Jewish opinion makers in the 1930s did not entirely miss the mark. After all, the French have always accorded more notice to intellectuals than most peoples. And in the interwar period, print journalism did exert a decisive influence on the nation's moral climate.<sup>55</sup>

Why did Jewish political figures, like assimilated Jewish intellectuals, stand disproportionately on the left in interwar France? All over Europe, Jews had obviously taken part in the great nineteenth-century movements for social and scientific "progress"—ranging from socialism to psychoanalysis—out of proportion to their numbers. A small minority everywhere, they had nevertheless played a

<sup>53</sup>For discussion of Bloch's Jewish origins see his *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence written in 1940* (New York, 1968), pp. xiii, 3; the perceptive interpretation by the editor in Marc Bloch, *Memoirs of War, 1914–15*, ed. Carole Fink (Ithaca, 1980), pp. 15–73; and Carole Fink, "Marc Bloch: The Life and Ideas of a French Patriot," *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, 10 (Fall 1983), pp. 235–52. For Bergson's consideration of death-bed conversion, see Hughes, *Consciousness*, pp. 119–20; for the socialist loyalties of Lévy-Bruhl, Halévy, and their circle, see Harvey Goldberg, *The Life of Jean Jaurès* (Madison, 1968). For Aron's atypical outlook and consequent difficulties, see his *Mémoires: Cinquante Ans de réflexion politique* (Paris, 1983).

<sup>54</sup>Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, p. 22.

<sup>55</sup>On the significance of the interwar press, see Raymond Manevy, *Histoire de la presse, 1914 à 1939* (Paris, 1945).

notable role in stretching the limits of existing academic disciplines and creating a host of new ones. Did some specific feature in Jewish culture predispose members of the group to intellectual ferment and to an irreverent disregard for traditional ways of doing things? Did some fundamental element in Jewish eschatology incline even those who had forsaken religious precepts to sympathize with the economically downtrodden and the socially oppressed? A simple answer appears impossible. If Hannah Arendt is right that the process of emancipation transformed the Jewish intelligentsia into a social group whose members shared psychological attributes and reactions transcending national boundaries, no clear consensus has emerged about the precise content of the psychology to which she refers.<sup>56</sup> At least in France, however, one can account for the majority political preferences of the Jewish leadership class without dealing with issues on this level of abstraction.

The mass of native Jews had secured economic and social mobility for their children in the course of a single generation, namely 1871–1905. The political processes that opened doors for the Jews during this period also brought the cultural homogenization of the French people. The public school emerged as the crucible of social change. In a process that began with the Ferry laws of 1879–86 and culminated with banishment of the Catholic teaching orders in 1902–5, the government imposed exclusively state-run educational institutions at every level from the primary school through the university. Because education became increasingly hierarchical, it afforded predictable mobility to the academically gifted. Jews of modest origins thus found a way to penetrate the elite. But along with the opportunities came considerable ideological baggage. With clerical competition vanquished, a highly indoctrinated teaching corps preached a secular religion of the Republic, and young Jews embraced this secular faith as eagerly as any segment of the population. Moreover, those who reached the pinnacle of the scholastic system—the Ecole Normale Supérieure—often fell under the spell of its remarkable librarian, the socialist Lucien Herr. The doctrines of Jean Jaurès exerted an attraction on idealistic youth at the universities as well (particularly before the cultural shift that set in around 1905). No wonder, then, that the bulk of the Jewish intelli-

<sup>56</sup>See Arendt's insightful but elusive discussion in *Antisemitism*, pp. 56–68.

gentsia developed left-republican, anticlerical, and even socialist sympathies, and that they maintained these values long after they had ceased to be fashionable in other circles.<sup>57</sup>

In view of this background, the prominence of Jews in radical politics during the 1930s should occasion no surprise. Yet historians sympathetic to the left have persistently sought to minimize Jewish involvement in the Popular Front. Marc Bloch, so scrupulous in his medieval scholarship, initiated the exculpatory process shortly after the 1940 collapse. "It is the fashion to say that the Jews were behind the Left-Wing movement," he observes in *Strange Defeat*. "Poor Synagogue—always fated to act as scapegoat! I know, from what I saw with my own eyes, that it trembled even more violently than the Church."<sup>58</sup> Bloch's disingenuousness seems the more peculiar because he elsewhere acknowledges how utterly marginal religious institutions had become for educated Jews of his generation.

Joel Colton, the distinguished American biographer of Léon Blum, engages in similar special pleading. Colton finds "not the shadow of justification" for charges that the first Blum cabinet of 1936–37 had a predominantly Jewish complexion, and he taxes the journalist Raymond Recouly with "complete inaccuracy" for having asserted that five Jews sat in it as ministers or undersecretaries.<sup>59</sup> As a matter of fact, the first Blum cabinet contained only four Jews (Blum, Cécile Léon-Brunschwig, Jules Moch, and the militant freemason Jean Zay—who by some reckonings counted as a Protestant atheist rather than a Jewish atheist because his father alone was Jewish). But the second Blum cabinet did have five

<sup>57</sup> On the general processés, see Mona Ozouf, *L'Ecole, l'église et la République, 1871–1914* (Paris, 1963); Antoine Prost, *Histoire de l'enseignement en France, 1800–1967* (Paris, 1968); Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, Calif., 1976), esp. pp. 303–38; and Katherine Auspitz, *The Radical Bourgeoisie: The Ligue de l'enseignement and the Origins of the Third Republic* (Cambridge, 1982). For a concrete description of educational integration for the Jews, see Julien Benda, *La Jeunesse d'un clerc* (Paris, 1936). For the connection between republican ideology and the new orthodoxy in a representative discipline, see William R. Keylor, *Academy and Community: The Foundation of the French Historical Profession* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975). On the influence of Lucien Herr see Hughes, *Consciousness*, pp. 60–61; and Robert Smith, "L'Atmosphère politique à l'Ecole Normale Supérieure à la fin du XIXe siècle," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 20 (1973), pp. 248–69.

<sup>58</sup> Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, p. 165.

<sup>59</sup> Joel Colton, *Léon Blum: Humanist in Politics* (New York, 1966), p. 144.

Jews (Blum, Moch, and Zay again, plus L.-O. Frossard and Pierre Mendès France).<sup>60</sup>

Finally, Jean Lacouture, the latest Blum biographer, concedes that his subject moved personally in "a very Jewish milieu" but tries to demonstrate that *Le Populaire*, the party newspaper, possessed an interdenominational staff. Yet after identifying Louis Lévy, Georges and Charles Gombault, Salomon Grumbach, and Daniel Mayer among the obviously Jewish contributors, Lacouture takes refuge in the improbable claim that chief editor Oreste Rosenfeld was not Jewish after all; aside from that, he finds but three certifiable non-Jews to balance the scales (one so obscure that he cannot discover his Christian name). Considering the percentage of native Jews in the age cohort from which these journalists were drawn (under 0.25 percent), this clearly amounts to less than perfect equilibrium.<sup>61</sup>

Of course, prevailing attitudes in an ethnic subgroup do not necessarily coincide with the views expressed by individual politicians or journalists. A scientific investigation must begin the other way around. Significantly, however, a prosopographical survey of all Jews who served in the 1936–40 legislature confirms in striking fashion the impression that elected officials from this background supported the Popular Front en masse. Henri Amouroux identifies ten Jews who remained members of the Chamber of Deputies in 1940 (after the exclusion of the Communists) and five such members of the Senate.<sup>62</sup> Perhaps Amouroux missed one or two other legislators with Jewish antecedents (for politicians of anticlerical orientation rarely admitted to religious affiliation). He has, in addition, overlooked Jules Moch and misidentified one deputy who, his name notwithstanding, seems to have come of Breton stock. As revised, the list includes the following ten deputies (along with the departments that they represented): Léon Blum (Aude); Jean Pierre-Bloch (formerly Pierre Bloch, Aisne); Ludovic Oscar Frossard (Haute-Saône); Max Hymans (Indre); Charles Lussy (formerly Charles Ruff, Vaucluse); Georges Mandel (formerly Louis Rothschild, Gironde); Pierre Mendès France (Eure); Jules Moch

<sup>60</sup> Jean Jolly, ed., *Dictionnaire des parlementaires français, 1889–1940*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1960–78), 1: 140–47.

<sup>61</sup> Jean Lacouture, *Léon Blum* (New York and London, 1982), pp. 526–27.

<sup>62</sup> Amouroux, *Les Passions*, p. 166.

(Hérault); Raymond Vidal (Bouches-du-Rhône); and Jean Zay (Loiret). In this company, nine supported the Popular Front fully; the tenth, the Clemenciste maverick Georges Mandel, stood generally with the center on economic and social issues but drew increasingly close to Blum after 1936 on matters of foreign policy.<sup>63</sup>

The list includes men with some variation in social background. Yet one can generalize with fair accuracy that the typical Jewish deputy was a solidly middle-class, Paris-born Jew of Alsatian origin who had risen in the Socialist party hierarchy and won assignment to a safe seat in the left-leaning section of the country below the Loire river. Six were born in Paris; seven held seats on or south of the Loire. Eight could trace their ancestry to Ashkenazic origins; the exceptions were Vidal, who came of a family long established in Marseilles, and Mendès France, the grandson of a Sephardic fertilizer salesman who had migrated from Bordeaux to the capital. The political homogeneity of the Jewish deputies mirrored their social similarities. Blum, Pierre-Bloch, Hymans, Lussy, Moch, and Vidal all held membership in the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO). Frossard left that party so that he could serve as labor minister in 1935–36 and considered himself henceforth an independent socialist, but his failure to anticipate the sit-down strikes of June 1936 made him nevertheless a bogeyman of the right. Mendès France and Zay both stood on the extreme left of the Radical-Socialist party that had advocated the Popular Front with the Socialists and Communists.<sup>64</sup> (The one identifiable Jewish Communist deputy, incidentally, seemed out of place among his proletarian party comrades but fit the Jewish Socialist social profile precisely.<sup>65</sup>)

Admittedly the Jewish senators formed an older and more conservative group than the deputies, but that reflected the relationship

<sup>63</sup>Biographical data are taken from Jolly, *Dictionnaire*. On Mandel's political evolution and rapprochement with Blum, see John M. Sherwood, *Georges Mandel and the Third Republic* (Stanford, Calif., 1970), pp. 165–221.

<sup>64</sup>This material derives from prosopographical analysis of the material in Jolly, *Dictionnaire*. For the genealogy of Mendès France, see Jean Lacouture, *Pierre Mendès France* (Paris, 1981), pp. 27–41. On Zay, see his *Souvenirs et solitude* (Paris, 1946); for Frossard's rightward evolution from Communism to moderate Socialism, see his *Sous le signe de Jaurès: De Jaurès à Léon Blum. Souvenirs d'un militant* (Paris, 1943).

<sup>65</sup>The Alsatian-born medical doctor Georges Lévy, deputy for the Rhône and PCF public health specialist, was one of three Communists of bourgeois origin among the twenty-six legislators expelled from the Chamber in January 1940. For the complete list, see Jacques Fauvet, *Histoire du parti communiste français*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1964), 2: 41–42.

between the Senate and Chamber as a whole. Alexandre Israël, the most radical among them until his death in 1938, had helped animate the Cartel des Gauches in 1924 and 1932. Four of the remaining five—Moïse Lévy, Pierre Masse, Abraham Schrameck, and Georges Ulmo—belonged to the large, amorphous center-left grouping known as the *gauche démocratique*. Schrameck, as interior minister under the Cartel in 1925, had used the prerogatives of his office for party purposes (as interior ministers often did) and incurred the wrath of Action Française; and Masse, who had served as Painlevé's undersecretary of war in 1917, also retained a vaguely left coloration in the public mind. But by the 1930s Schrameck and Masse, like Lévy and Ulmo, had really become local notables and left active politics behind. That was a fortiori true of the more conservative Maurice de Rothschild, who avoided the rostrum and devoted himself to charities and the fine arts. Interestingly, while Rothschild fled the country in July 1940, all four of his confreres voted to grant Pétain full powers (compared with only two out of ten Jewish deputies). The moderation of the Jewish Senate contingent should have served to soften the public perception of Jews as uniformly radical. That it failed to do so testifies to the political passions aroused by events in the Popular Front era.

Pierre-Bloch figured as the only one among the ten deputies to espouse Jewish particularist causes during his parliamentary career.<sup>66</sup> But most of the others displayed themselves prominently on the left side of the barricades during the ideological and political struggles of the mid-1930s. In retrospect it seems fairly well established that the February 1934 Paris riots involved no "fascist" plot to overthrow the Third Republic. Rather, these disturbances reflected primarily the frustration of numerous uncoordinated groups at the somnambulant maneuverings of the Chautemps and Daladier cabinets in face of the deepening financial crisis. They mirrored also the public's dismay at the extent of parliamentary corruption revealed by the mysterious death of Serge-Alexandre Stavisky, a swindler and confidence man who happened to be Jewish. In fact

<sup>66</sup>Pierre-Bloch coauthored a sympathetic book on David Frankfurter, a Jew who in 1936 had murdered a Nazi official in Switzerland. The Ligue Internationale contre l'Antisémitisme tried unsuccessfully to turn the case into a cause célèbre. See Pierre Bloch and Didier Meran, *L'Affaire Frankfurter* (Paris, 1937). In his postwar career as a journalist, Pierre-Bloch returned frequently to Jewish themes. See, e.g., his *Les Causes politiques de l'antisémitisme en France* (Paris, 1954).

neither the riots, nor the subsequent activities of the larger extra-parliamentary leagues in 1934–36, posed a serious threat to republican stability.<sup>67</sup> But that was not how matters appeared to the left in those years.

As Socialists, Communists, and left-wing Radical Socialists moved toward formation of a Popular Front, the rhetoric of the left grew increasingly violent. At the same time, anti-Jewish sentiment revived on the extreme right on a scale unparalleled since the Dreyfus era. But which phenomenon was cause, and which merely effect? It is at least arguable that antisemitic outbursts in the right-wing press—however offensive in tone—constituted one element in an essentially defensive reaction by conservatives in the face of the vituperative campaign mounted by the left against the Doumergue, Flandin, and Laval cabinets.

Numerous signs bear witness to this change in mood. For example, in the pre-Depression years elderly clericals had often nurtured an obsession about Jews as progenitors of Freudianism, nudism, the cocktail, jazz, cubism, and other aspects of modern life that they abhorred. But more or less active philosemitism had also made significant headway among the adherents of Social Catholicism and among younger Catholics generally. Now the balance reversed itself.<sup>68</sup>

In the Royalist Action Française, which spawned most of the far-right *groupuscules* that emerged in the 1930s, the older leaders had manifested prior to the advent of the Popular Front what Eugen Weber calls a pragmatic or incidental antisemitism—largely aimed at increasing visibility. After Léon Blum aligned his SFIO

<sup>67</sup> See most recently Serge Berstein, *Le 6 février 1934* (Paris, 1975); also René Rémond, *The Right Wing in France: From 1815 to de Gaulle* (Philadelphia, 1969), pp. 254–94; Peter Larmour, *The French Radical Party in the 1930's* (Stanford, Calif., 1964), pp. 140–54; and Eugen Weber, *Action Française* (Stanford, Calif., 1962), pp. 319–40. Max Beloff's older view of a military plot in 1934 no longer seems plausible ("The Sixth of February," in James Joll, ed., *The Decline of the Third Republic* [London, 1959], pp. 9–35). Larmour, p. 150, minimizes corruption in the Radical party and rejects André Tardieu's charge that 14 deputies were involved. But Lord Derby, the usually well-informed former British ambassador, reported to London that up to 160 deputies had taken money from Stavisky. See Neville Chamberlain Diary, 3 Feb. 1934, NC 2/23A, Neville Chamberlain Papers, Birmingham University Library.

<sup>68</sup> For a discussion of the turning point from a different point of view, however, see Lazare Landau, *De l'aversion à l'estime: Juifs et catholiques en France de 1919 à 1939* (Paris, 1980), pp. 162–202. On Catholic sentiment, Pierrard, *Juifs et catholiques français*, pp. 245–85, also proves very helpful.

with the foreign-controlled Parti Communiste Français (PCF) a metamorphosis took place. In early 1936 the government dissolved Action Française and the paramilitary Camelots du Roi (whose strength the Ligue Internationale contre l'Antisémitisme [LICA] had always ludicrously exaggerated) after a mob no longer connected with either organization had roughed up Léon Blum. Charles Maurras, the revered elder statesman of the movement, would shortly suffer trial and imprisonment under a hastily drafted press law for having verbally menaced Blum and other supporters of sanctions against Italy. Subsequently, right-wing newspapers increasingly conducted their vendetta against Blum and the Popular Front in antisemitic terms.<sup>69</sup> Yet the essentially political nature of this campaign appeared patent from the outset.

Georges Mandel, for instance, had won the repeated plaudits of the far right for his no-nonsense treatment of the postal union as posts and telephones (PTT) minister in 1934–35. Only after he deserted his long-time ally Pierre Laval over the Ethiopian issue and became the linchpin of the center-left Sarraut combination that guided France through the elections did the right begin to dwell on his ethnic origins. *Le Canard enchaîné*, the satirical weekly, commented with suitable irony: "When Georges Mandel was a Lavalist, he was called an Israelite. . . . But now that he has become a Sarrautist, he is a dirty kike. . . . Soon [the right] will admit that the telephones worked even before he came to power."<sup>70</sup>

After 1936, anti-Jewish sentiment came to focus increasingly on the person of Léon Blum. As premier in 1936–37 and again in 1938, Blum could not escape ultimate responsibility for the economic stagnation and social disintegration attributable to Popular Front policies. Quite apart from this, moreover, Blum emerged as a symbol of everything that conservatives disliked about the Jewish intelligentsia. Representatives of the Jewish community had feared such a development. Indeed one prominent spokesman for the Paris Consistory reportedly appealed to Blum to abjure office in order to spare his coreligionists from reproach.<sup>71</sup> But the Socialist

<sup>69</sup> Weber, *Action Française*, pp. 194–201, 360–74. For a surprisingly favorable view of LICA and its president, the intemperate Bernard Lecache, by Jewish historians, see Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, pp. 205–6 and 227–30; and David H. Weinberg, *A Community on Trial: The Jews of Paris in the 1930s* (Chicago, 1977), pp. 26–27, 164–65, and *passim*.

<sup>70</sup> *Le Canard enchaîné*, 29 Jan. 1936, quoted by Sherwood, *Mandel*, p. 178.

<sup>71</sup> Weinberg, *Community on Trial*, pp. 81–82.

leader, who had recently castigated the Jewish bourgeoisie for pusillanimity at the time of the Dreyfus Affair, brushed this appeal aside.<sup>72</sup> Probably he did not fully realize how close the tradition of political civility had already come to breaking down.<sup>73</sup> When Xavier Vallat told the Chamber in June 1936 that to govern this “peasant nation” it would be better to choose someone whose origins sprang from French soil than to select a “subtle Talmudist,” Blum exploded in anger. Yet far worse would follow. The right continued to propagate the story (which had originated as political satire) that Blum was really a Bessarabian named Karfunkelstein. By 1938 the Royalist historian Pierre Gaxotte would call him a man accursed: “He incarnates all that revolts our blood and makes our flesh creep. He is evil. He is death.”<sup>74</sup>

Foreign observers, while conceding that Blum possessed an unfortunate manner, often expressed puzzlement at the depth of bitterness that he evoked. Both American and British diplomats taxed the bourgeoisie with stupidity for failing to realize that he had kept a social revolution within bounds.<sup>75</sup> Yet in truth Blum contributed mightily to the escalating rhetoric of which he became a victim. During the election campaign he spoke repeatedly of the “military fascism” of the leagues and the “Jesuitical fascism” of Doumergue and Tardieu. Reasonable men might well question the republican credentials of a politician who denounced his centrist

<sup>72</sup>In 1899 Blum had summoned his fellow Jews to be brave and ignore the pinpricks of discrimination; in his 1935 memoir of the Dreyfus period he explicitly attacked middle-class Jews who thought that they could deflect antisemitism through political neutrality. See his *Nouvelles Conversations de Goethe avec Eckermann*, in *L'Oeuvre de Léon Blum, 1891–1905* (Paris, 1954), 1:262–68; and *Souvenirs sur l'affaire*, pp. 24–27.

<sup>73</sup>After Munich, Blum changed his mind and stated publicly that a Jew should not increase the international difficulties of his country by serving as premier. See Sherwood, *Mandel*, p. 214.

<sup>74</sup>Colton, *Léon Blum*, p. 144, quotes the Vallat speech of 6 June 1936. On the origin of the Karfunkelstein story, see Weber, *Action Française*, p. 375. Gaxotte's article in *Candida*, 7 Apr. 1938, is quoted among others by Weber, *Action Française*, p. 411, and Winock, *Drumont et Cie*, p. 125.

<sup>75</sup>The American ambassador, who was sensitive to such matters, described Blum as having “the little fluttery gestures of the intellectual queer ones,” but deemed him as conservative as anyone who could hold the situation together. (See Bullitt to Roosevelt, 24 Oct. 1936, in Orville H. Bullitt, ed., *For the President, Personal and Secret: Correspondence between Franklin D. Roosevelt and William C. Bullitt* [Boston, 1972], pp. 173–74.) Sir Orme Sargent of the British Foreign Office similarly could account for the hysteria of his friends in the Paris beau monde only by reflecting that a Frenchman “is always more frightened for his pocket than he is for his skin.” (Sargent to Phipps, 29 Dec. 1936, Sir Eric Phipps Papers, PHPP 1 2/10/90, Churchill College Archives Centre, Cambridge.)

colleagues as “fascist” while continuing—even in after years—to number the Communists among the “democratic forces” and “defenders of freedom.”<sup>76</sup> In retrospect Blum has become a cult figure; his principal biographers accept his professions of humanistic socialism at face value and portray him as a visionary.<sup>77</sup> Those, however, who grappled with Blum in the political arena during the 1930s became conscious of his less attractive attributes. They perceived him as a rigid doctrinaire, an economic innocent, and a vainglorious phrasemaker for whom the betterment of mankind coincided unerringly with the dictates of factional interest. Blum's otherwise vacuous personal papers indicate that the enveloping flattery of his party comrades buffered him from real-world choices, and the recollections of dissident socialists make clear that he encouraged, even required, adulation.<sup>78</sup> Hence those on the right—in 1936 or later during the Riom trials—who targeted Blum as the “gravedigger” of the regime could point to more than policy misjudgments. Did not some fundamental defect in personality or outlook contribute to the man's willful, almost arrogant, refusal to come to grips with the diplomatic and financial constraints on France in time of crisis? Was it not then a short step for those who already thought in racial categories to associate Blum with his fellow Jews?

At his trial in 1941 Blum would seek to justify his record by claiming that he had “carried out the will of universal suffrage—the supreme authority.”<sup>79</sup> This was a curious argument. In a democracy, a leader is supposed to lead, not merely to gratify the demands of his most benighted followers. By any objective mea-

<sup>76</sup>See Blum's retrospective discussion of the Popular Front, written in 1941, in *For All Mankind* (London, 1946), pp. 84–85. Blum's ambivalence toward the Communists is all the more remarkable in view of the abuse that the party lavished on him. See Annie Kriegel, “Léon Blum et le parti communiste,” in Pierre Renouvin and René Rémond, eds., *Léon Blum, chef de gouvernement, 1936–1937* (Paris, 1967), pp. 125–36.

<sup>77</sup>See, e.g., Colton, *Léon Blum*; Lacouture, *Léon Blum*; Gilbert Ziebura, *Léon Blum: Theorie und Praxis einer sozialistischen Politik* (Berlin, 1963); James Joll, *Three Intellectuals in Politics* (New York, 1971). Most of the contributors to Renouvin and Rémond, *Blum, chef de gouvernement*, also take a favorable view.

<sup>78</sup>See the congratulatory letters scattered through sections 1 BL and 2 BL of Léon Blum Papers, Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Paris; also the devastating portrayal by Marcel Déat in “Mémoires, 1<sup>re</sup> partie: Le Massacre des possibles,” ch. 13, MS. at Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>79</sup>Henri Michel, *Le Procès de Riom* (Paris, 1979), p. 112. In view of Michel's partisan defense of Blum and the other Riom defendants, it is worthwhile reading Blum's notes for his defense and the whole of this extraordinary testimony in 3 BL 5–6, Blum Papers.

sure, the economic and defense policies championed by Blum (whatever their attractions in another time and place) set France on the road to catastrophe. How could Blum (and with him virtually the whole of the Jewish political class) fail to understand that, in the circumstances prevailing in 1936, inflated wages, reduced hours, paid vacations, and disorder in the workplace would push up costs and price French goods out of world markets unless accompanied by drastic devaluation? It took no great foresight to predict that this program would lead—as it did—to diminished production and a disabling inflation just as Nazi Germany was gearing up for war.<sup>80</sup>

On national security matters Blum and his epigones gave proof of even greater folly. For years Blum had voted against the defense budget and championed unilateral disarmament in the hope of setting a moral example (even for Nazi Germany).<sup>81</sup> In 1936 he acquiesced in some modest rearmament. Yet during his second ministry (it did not pass unnoticed that he acted on the advice of his coreligionists Mendès France and Georges Boris), he sought to make a major rearmament program dependent on confiscatory capital taxation.<sup>82</sup> Meanwhile, he promoted belligerence against Italy and appeasement of Germany—the opposite of what prudent calculation would dictate. In 1938, he indulged the naive hope that the Soviet Union would save Czechoslovakia.<sup>83</sup> Proponents of realpolitik might well despair of ideological posturing such as this. There was much to be said in favor of the resolute defense of French interests against Nazi aggression. There was something to

<sup>80</sup>For a sensible survey of the economic consequences of Popular Front policies, see Jean-Marcel Jeanneney, "La Politique économique de Léon Blum," in Renouvin and Rémond, *Blum, chef de gouvernement*, pp. 207–32, and the index graphs in *ibid.*, pp. 298–304. For a revealing display of the Popular Front mentality, see Pierre Mendès France's spirited reply in *ibid.*, pp. 233–40. For evidence that leading industrialists considered the Matignon accords "pure madness" and foresaw all their consequences, see Jean-Noël Jeanneney, *François de Wendel en République: L'Argent et le pouvoir* (Lille and Paris, 1976), pp. 793–96.

<sup>81</sup>Edouard Daladier, who served as Blum's war minister but loathed him, maintained an extensive file documenting his chief's attacks on preparedness from 1930 onward. See "Prophéties de Léon Blum," in 2 DA 6, Dr. 1, Edouard Daladier Papers, Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques.

<sup>82</sup>Robert Frankenstein's skillful *Le Prix du réarmement français (1935–1939)* (Paris, 1982) makes out the best possible case for Popular Front rearmament policy. For the 1938 capital taxation program, see *ibid.*, pp. 183–87; and Lacouture, *Mendès France*, pp. 95–101.

<sup>83</sup>For Blum's unrealistic view that the Soviet Union, after its army purges, would still intervene to help Czechoslovakia, see Procès-verbal, Comité Permanent de la Défense Na-

be said, perhaps, in support of realistic defeatism (as advocated, for example, by the pacifist Socialists under Paul Faure). But the most skillful dialectical prestidigitation could scarcely excuse those who had labored to undermine the national defense for almost two decades and then, as the cataclysm approached, summoned the nation to stand to its guns. However unfair *L'Action française* was to the security-minded Mandel and Reynaud, its thrust at Blum during the Munich crisis struck home.

S'ils s'obstinent, ces cannibales,  
A faire de nous des héros,  
Il faut que nos premières balles  
Soient pour Mandel, Blum et Reynaud.<sup>84</sup>

The dismal truth is that most French Jews took positions—if not with the unanimity ascribed to them by right-wing publicists—roughly analogous to those of Blum. As internationalists, they had embraced a fashionable antimilitarism through the mid-1930s. They had, oblivious to diplomatic consequences, supported the social reforms of 1936. They did come to believe, particularly after Munich, that only through the destruction of Nazism could European Jewry find its salvation. Jewish communal leaders felt acutely sensitive to charges of "warmongering," and their press organs spoke elliptically and often with great embarrassment. In the nature of things, however, Nazism could be destroyed only through war.<sup>85</sup> In short, French Jews, despite their patriotism, found that their outlook and interests diverged from those of other Frenchmen. Their fellow citizens would not forget this after the 1940 debacle. When the search began for scapegoats, the consciousness of these differences would remain. Here we have not a rationalization but at least a partial explanation of the widespread indifference to the anti-Jewish legislation of 1940–41.

The anti-Jewish animus that engulfed most sections of French

tionale, 15 mars 1938, in Carton 2N 20, Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, Château de Vincennes. For his equally illusory notion that Belgium remained loyal to the French alliance in 1936, see the note on the Blum–Delbos–Van Zeeland–Spaak conversation of 17 Dec. 1936 in Carton 11, 179–3, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et du Commerce Extérieur, Brussels.

<sup>84</sup>*L'Action française*, 29 Sept. 1938, quoted in Sherwood, *Mandel*, p. 212.

<sup>85</sup>See Weinberg, *Community on Trial*, pp. 178–88; and Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, pp. 229–32.



opinion in 1940 derived in part from the political stands of highly visible native Jews. But this irritant figured largely as a backdrop for the most proximate cause of public feeling—the presence on French soil of some 200,000 recent Jewish immigrants or refugees from Eastern and Central Europe. Between 1914 and 1939 the newcomers overwhelmed the demographically static native Jewish community. The number of Jews in the country tripled. Yet only a small minority of the new arrivals had achieved French citizenship by the time World War II broke out. Fewer still had genuinely assimilated. A substantial number of the newest refugees had settled in France illegally, simply because the nation did not maintain effective border controls; they had evaded expulsion on a variety of pretexts. The politics and culture of the Eastern Jews rendered them highly unpopular in conservative circles. The French people generally felt neither an affinity with them nor a responsibility for them. Why, then, the Vichy authorities might well have asked themselves, should they sacrifice their limited bargaining power with the Nazis in order to safeguard people who neither in fact nor in law were wholly French?

The answer may seem at first glance obvious to those whose humanitarian sensibility reflects a retrospective knowledge of the Jewish Holocaust in all its horror. And yet the question deserves examination in context—as it presented itself to political authorities at the time. Pierre Laval would argue before his execution that the government had one primary duty: “to protect French Jews.” It could not hope also to guarantee the wider right of asylum in a country occupied by the German army.<sup>86</sup> No doubt, Laval made concessions that he did not have to make.<sup>87</sup> Still, the distinction that he drew between French and “foreign” Jews remained fundamental—not least for the Jews themselves.

The Jews, to be sure, divided further along the axes of class, religious belief, political affiliation, and degree of assimilation. A scrupulous sociologist would undoubtedly prefer to speak of a continuum rather than a sharp split and would note that correlations of belief and ethnic origin are never perfect when individuals think

<sup>86</sup>Laval Diary, pp. 91, 99.

<sup>87</sup>See the review of the evidence in Fred Kupferman, “La Politique de Laval, 1942–1944,” in *La France et la question juive*, pp. 31–56; and in Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, esp. pp. 261–69 and 343–46.

for themselves.<sup>88</sup> But on a political level, the distinction between natives and immigrants manifested itself clearly. Between the wars social divisions between the two groups actually widened, and the resentment of the one and the jealousy of the other frequently surfaced in public hostility. The native-dominated consistorial organizations distanced themselves sharply from the extremist politics of immigrant Jews in the 1930s, just as the accommodationist Jewish notables who ran the Union Générale des Israélites de France followed a wartime strategy entirely opposed to that of the foreign militants who enlisted in the Communist-affiliated *Main d’Oeuvre Immigrée* (MOI).<sup>89</sup> Characteristically, some natives responded to the restrictive legislation of October 1940 by railing at the injustice of measures formulated so that “Frenchmen of old stock find themselves mixed up with those recently naturalized.” Immigrants reacted by deriding the natives as PIAFs—*Patriotes-Israélites-Antisémites-Français*.<sup>90</sup>

The perpetuation of these quarrels even in the face of Nazi persecution should alert the observer to the presence of long-standing grievances. Yet many French writers have drawn a discreet veil over the subject, preferring like Béatrice Philippe to treat these tensions with lighthearted delicacy, like Anny Latour to dwell on the heroism of all Jews, or like Georges Wellers to rehearse the villainy of the Nazis and their Vichy accomplices.<sup>91</sup> David Weinberg and Paula Hyman, the most distinguished American students of Jews in twentieth-century France, do focus frankly on native-immigrant differences. Both, however, embrace wholeheartedly the immigrant point of view.<sup>92</sup> Those sympathies may seem perfectly natural to historians whose roots lie in a culture that celebrates “immigrant gifts” and romanticizes the experience of Eastern Jews making

<sup>88</sup>This view is expressed persuasively by Pierre Vidal-Naquet in his introduction to Maurice Rajsfus, *Des juifs dans la collaboration: L’UGIF (1941–1944)* (Paris, 1980), p. 17.

<sup>89</sup>Compare the account in Rajsfus, *Juifs dans la collaboration* (which after a third of a century still exhibits raw hostility to the native community) and the nostalgic discussion of MOI by Annie Kriegel, “La Résistance communiste,” pp. 345–47, 354–70.

<sup>90</sup>For native Jewish reaction to the 1940 legislation, see Amouroux, *Les Passions*, pp. 166–68, and Rajsfus, *Juifs dans la collaboration*, pp. 59, 63–67; for the term PIAF, see Rajsfus, p. 14.

<sup>91</sup>Philippe, *Etre juif dans la société française*; Anny Latour, *La Résistance juive en France (1940–1944)* (Paris, 1970); Wellers, *L’Etoile jaune*.

<sup>92</sup>Weinberg, *Community on Trial*; Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*.

their way in a new land.<sup>93</sup> But the French have little notion of immigrant gifts. They hold no brief for pluralism. In the best of times they maintain a relentlessly assimilationist culture. In a period of tension like the 1930s such attitudes could easily shade into xenophobia. We cannot hope to see the immigrants as native Jews perceived them—still less to appreciate how ordinary Frenchmen felt about their presence—unless we acknowledge the cultural assumptions of French society.

France had remained largely outside the turbulent population movements of nineteenth-century Europe. Few potential Jewish migrants from the Romanov and Hapsburg empires even thought of going there. Why should an observant Jew from the shtetl want to enter the cross fire between intolerant Catholic clericals on one side and antireligious republican zealots on the other? And since France industrialized slowly, it offered in any case little employment opportunity to newcomers without skills.<sup>94</sup> Between 1881 and 1914 almost 2 million Jews immigrated to the United States, and 120,000 went to Great Britain. Scarcely 30,000 arrived in France, and Sephardic refugees from parts of the Ottoman Empire or North Africa touched by Gallic cultural influence made up fully a third of these.<sup>95</sup> Paris could not compete with New York as the “promised city.” Any number of New York neighborhoods boasted more Jews from the Pale of Settlement than peopled all of France.<sup>96</sup>

After World War I, however, conditions governing both the push and pull of population movements changed. The United States followed Britain's lead in restricting immigration. At the same time France, because of its frightful battlefield losses, experienced a labor shortage that grew most acute during the industrial spurt of

<sup>93</sup> As a measure of the romanticization of the immigrant experience, note the popular response in the United States to Irving Howe and Kenneth Libo, *World of our Fathers* (New York, 1976). On the beginnings of the American notion of immigrant gifts, see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (New York, 1973), pp. 116–30.

<sup>94</sup> Louis Chevalier, *La Formation de la population parisienne au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1950); A. Armengaud, *La Population française au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1971); G. Mauco, *Les Etrangers en France* (Paris, 1932).

<sup>95</sup> Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, pp. 63–64; Weinberg, *Community on Trial*, pp. 2–10; Michel Roblin, *Les Juifs de Paris* (Paris, 1952), pp. 52–73. The several estimates made in the absence of firm census data do not coincide perfectly.

<sup>96</sup> Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870–1914* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962).

the later 1920s. Meanwhile, Poland, Rumania, and the Austrian succession states once more made life difficult for Jews. The Eastern Jews who arrived in France during the interwar period joined a stream that included in all almost a million foreign workers. The newcomers initially found work in the mines and factories as well as in certain “preindustrial” crafts and the ethnically traditional clothing and textile trades. But when the Depression struck, their presence became unwelcome. The Laval government succeeded in placing quotas on the employment of aliens in 1934–35, yet the Popular Front repealed those measures, and the renewed tightening of employment regulations in 1937–38 came too late to discourage additional migrants (many of them Eastern Jews long resident in Germany and Austria who now moved on for political reasons). A discontented Jewish subproletariat developed, reduced to eking out a living on the margins of society.<sup>97</sup>

About three-quarters of the immigrant Jews eventually found their way to Paris. There they lived, often packed six or eight to a room in scarcely imaginable squalor, concentrated in the Pletzl section of the Marais, the area behind the Bastille, and especially in the Yiddish-speaking ghetto located in the *bas quartier* of Belleville. A large number did not even try to assimilate into French society. The representative shtetl Jew who emigrated to America before the war had carried with him the institutional supports of small-town life—the *landsmanshaftn*, the burial society, the synagogue—that cushioned his acculturation. By contrast, the characteristic emigrant in this later cohort had undergone urbanization and a degree of deracination in Poland. Frequently he had become radicalized in the Polish trade union movement and arrived in France with an identity forged in the heat of class struggle at home. (Indeed, the typical Paris militant of the 1930s had suffered expulsion from Poland in his youth for underground activity.) Yet whatever their background or skills, Jews who had not already obtained a residence permit in the prosperous 1920s could not aspire to industrial employment in France. Most new arrivals found themselves relegated to home labor under exploitative conditions in the clothing trades, while others survived as rag merchants, tinkers, or

<sup>97</sup> For an account of general migration and employment trends, see Colin Dyer, *Population and Society in Twentieth-Century France* (Sevenoaks, Kent, 1978). For the Jewish perspective see Weinberg, *Community on Trial*, pp. 14–19; and Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, pp. 65–68.

repairmen of second-hand goods. Under the circumstances, the chiliastic element in traditional Judaism could easily resurface as a chiasm of despair. Although the immigrant community remained segmented into a welter of competing organizations riven by ideological animosities and personal rivalries, one common denominator united virtually all: a radical approach to the issues of contemporary French politics.<sup>98</sup>

Immigrant Jews typically adhered to some variation or permutation of Zionism, socialism, or communism. Traditional Jews often belonged to one of the seven Zionist parties, while their secularized coreligionists transferred their enthusiasm to one or another of the socialist faiths. To French conservatives in the 1930s, all of these doctrines seemed pernicious. Native Jews had earlier won acceptance by acknowledging the unitary quality of French culture and ostentatiously repudiating any notion of dual allegiance. During World War I they had opposed the Balfour Declaration so vigorously that the Zionist leader, Nahum Sokolow, declared in despair that "talk of Jewish nationalism in France was like attempting to win converts for Luther at the Vatican."<sup>99</sup> The immigrant Jews, by contrast, went well beyond verbal sympathy for Zionism. In the 1930s they actively campaigned for a boycott against goods from Nazi Germany and proselytized in favor of various forms of intervention to aid their persecuted brethren abroad. Their mounting sense of urgency proved wholly realistic. All the same, their expressions of concern and outrage fanned the flames of suspicion among xenophobes that persons with a shaky legal right to stay in France at all sought to embroil the nation in foreign quarrels.<sup>100</sup>

The Ligue Internationale contre l'Antisémitisme, headed by the former communist Bernard Lecache, linked the militant defense of Jewish interests abroad to what it defined as the struggle against "fascism" within France. In practice this degenerated into an attempt to align the pro-Zionist forces in the immigrant community with the extreme left in politics. A petty but revealing contretemps over the holding of an interfaith ceremony to commemorate

<sup>98</sup> This analysis draws heavily on Weinberg, *Community on Trial*, pp. 11–44, but the material in Weinberg's notes often proves more helpful than his text.

<sup>99</sup> Florian Sokolow, "Nahum Sokolow's Paris Diary: Some Extracts," *Zion*, Nov. 1952, pp. 44–48. The diary covers Sokolow's negotiations with native Jews in February 1918.

<sup>100</sup> Weinberg, *Community on Trial*, pp. 45–148.

France's war dead illustrates LICA's tactics and its long reach in the immigrant community. A small organization of moderate native Jewish veterans, the Union Patriotique des Français Israélites, sought to undercut LICA's propaganda and to revive the spirit of the *union sacrée* by inviting Colonel de la Rocque's Croix de Feu to participate in its annual ceremony, held in the synagogue on the rue de la Victoire. A prominent consistorial rabbi presided over this ceremony for several years in the mid-1930s, but LICA's oft-repeated, albeit wholly spurious, charges of antisemitism against La Rocque forced abandonment of the practice after 1936.<sup>101</sup>

Political sentiments among immigrant Jews clustered in the part of the spectrum running from the democratic far left to the revolutionary extreme left. Admirers of the French SFIO, adherents of the Polish Bund (Medem-Farband), anarchists, left Zionists, Stalinists, and Trotskyites distinguished themselves sharply from each other. Yet bourgeois Frenchmen who did not care to analyze matters closely might well perceive in the positions of these sects, so hotly debated in the Yiddish press, an array of nostrums all equally dangerous to the health of the existing social order. The Fédération des Sociétés Juives, a loosely structured umbrella organization for Jewish mutual aid societies and cultural groups, represented moderates and religious traditionalists. Its leaders possessed socialist leanings, but their exposure to Communist and Bundist tactics in Eastern Europe had impressed upon them the perils of cooperation with the hard left. On the whole they preached political neutrality and concentration on ethnic issues. At the other extreme stood Polish and Rumanian militants who considered the Parti Communiste Français insufficiently revolutionary and decried its apparent petty bourgeois aversion to violence. In this peculiar context, the PCF assumed what looked like a centrist stance, particularly after the Comintern, for its own cynical reasons, sanctioned the tactics of the United Front. The new reformist orientation of the PCF Yiddish-speaking subsection and its concentration on bread-and-butter issues won it much sympathy among homeworkers in the clothing trades. Building on this success, the party seized the lead-

<sup>101</sup> The accounts of this question in Weinberg, *Community on Trial*, pp. 77–81, and in Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, pp. 203–28, take the LICA point of view and reflect the partisanship of the sources on which these authors rely. For a demonstration that La Rocque was not antisemitic, see Philippe Machefer, "La Rocque et le problème antisémite," in *La France et la question juive*, pp. 95–100.

ership in creating the Mouvement Populaire Juif in 1935–36. If the Communists never commanded majority support among the immigrants in a strict numerical sense, they capitalized on their organizational skills to dominate the community's politics in the Popular Front era—even to the extent of making inroads on the normal constituency of the Fédération.<sup>102</sup>

In the 1936 elections, Jewish voters provided the margin of victory for at least ten Popular Front candidates—including seven Communists—in the Paris region alone. In a particularly revealing contest in the Pletzl, the Jewish voting bloc cast its second-round ballots overwhelmingly for the hard-bitten proletarian apparatchik Albert Rigal in preference to the centrist native Jew, Edmond Bloch, founder of the Union Patriotique des Français Israélites. The result seemed the more extraordinary because the normally pro-Socialist Yiddish daily, *Parizer Haint*, and Israël Jefroykin of the Fédération, who was fighting to stem Communist infiltration of his organization, had issued categorical warnings about Rigal's extremism.<sup>103</sup> (The irony of the outcome would become fully manifest only in September 1939, when Rigal signed the Communist manifesto for immediate peace with Nazi Germany while still sitting for his Jewish constituency.<sup>104</sup>)

The striking electoral successes of the Jewish Popular Front gave only a partial indication of the drift to political extremism within

<sup>102</sup>Weinberg, *Community on Trial*, pp. 103–47. For the crucial shift in Comintern policy in 1934–35 and a clear demonstration of its purely tactical nature, see Julius Braunthal, *History of the International, 1914–1943* (New York and Washington, 1967), pp. 415–46; and Edward Hallett Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930–1935* (New York, 1983). This account of Communist power holds most true for Paris. The PCF apparently achieved dominant standing in provincial Jewish centers with some lag. Monique Lewi suggests in her path-breaking local study of Roanne, for example, that the 35–40 Jewish families in that community included only a dozen “virulent” Communists in the 1930s, not counting the large number of fellow travelers who had belonged to the Marxist-Zionist youth movement Hashomer Hatzair in Poland but never formally joined the PCF. Lewi's local data indicate that the Communist-front Union des Juifs pour la Résistance et l'Entraide (UJRE) did not become the predominant force among Roanne Jews until after the Liberation. Nevertheless, her account does not at all substantiate Weinberg's contention (pp. 156–57) that, as of 1936–37, the Jewish left had “little or no influence among Jews outside of Paris.” See Monique Lewi, *Histoire d'une communauté juive: Roanne. Etude historique et sociologique d'un judaïsme* (Roanne, 1976), esp. pp. 64–72.

<sup>103</sup>Weinberg, *Community on Trial*, pp. 114–16, 141–42; Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, pp. 214–15.

<sup>104</sup>On Rigal's later role, see Jacques Fauvet, *Histoire du parti communiste français*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1964–65), 2:41; and Stéphane Courtois, *Le PCF dans la guerre* (Paris, 1980), pp. 60, 439.

the immigrant community. The illegal newer migrants, many of radical persuasion, could not seek citizenship at all, and the number of Jews who adopted French nationality under the 1927 legislation facilitating naturalization turned out to be less than half the number commonly assumed.<sup>105</sup> Yet lack of civic enfranchisement did little to dampen political ferment among immigrants. Native Jewish spokesmen admonished them repeatedly that their activities contributed to the recrudescence of antisemitism. Robert de Rothschild, head of the Paris Consistory, issued a pointed warning in 1934 and 1935. If his coreligionists from Poland and Rumania were not happy in France, asserted Rothschild, “let them leave.” “One does not,” he added, “discuss the regime of a country whose hospitality one seeks.”<sup>106</sup> The expression of such sentiments, however, had a counterproductive effect. Among the sorely tried foreign residents of the Pletzl and Belleville, they merely exacerbated feelings of frustration and alienation.

In 1937, disappointment with the economic achievements of the Popular Front drove Jewish militants further to the left. Meanwhile the PCF dissolved its Yiddish subsection as a response to the growing xenophobia of the party's mainstream working-class constituency, and this too augmented the prevailing sense of isolation. In the last two years before the war the immigrant community became increasingly factionalized and demoralized. While a further Communist endeavor to seize the leadership of Jewish cultural organizations and to group them in the Farband fun yidishe gezelschaftn in 1938 fell somewhat short of success, no constructive political alternative emerged. The months after the Munich conference witnessed the expression of various forms of despair. Some urged an impractical “return to the ghetto”; others argued that, as far as Jews were concerned, little remained to choose between the democracies and the totalitarian states. The Daladier government began for the first time to imprison illegal immigrants or to force them to volunteer for the army as an alternative to peremptory deportation.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>105</sup>The Vichy denaturalization commission concluded in 1943 that only 23,648 Jews had won citizenship from 1927 through 1940. This compared with the 50,000 who the Germans earlier estimated had taken out papers from 1927 through 1932 alone. See the discussion in Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, pp. 323–28.

<sup>106</sup>See the differing renditions of these speeches in Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, p. 203; and Weinberg, *Community on Trial*, p. 76.

<sup>107</sup>Weinberg, *Community on Trial*, pp. 131–211.

While the plight of the immigrants worsened distressingly as war approached, the situation inevitably looked different from the point of view of the French government and people than it did from the vantage point of the Jews. When a social reaction to the Popular Front, accompanied by a justified panic about the state of French defenses, took hold in 1938–39, beleaguered conservatives were not disposed to overlook the actual role played earlier by immigrant, or native, Jews. Meanwhile, the Nazi invasion of Austria and then the German *Kristallnacht* pogrom brought two new waves of desperate Jewish refugees fleeing westward. This time the French government remained stonily unsympathetic. Though it could not deter a certain amount of infiltration, Paris declared itself “saturated.”<sup>108</sup> American officials who at the Evian Conference and afterward argued that, with a modicum of goodwill, the nations of the world could absorb the German refugees expressed dismay at the refusal of the French and other states bordering on the Reich to do their part. “Whatever one may think individually about Jews,” wrote the responsible State Department official, “the suffering that these people are going through cannot but move the humanitarian instincts of even the most hard-hearted.”<sup>109</sup> The posture adopted by the French government seemed all the more hypocritical because, in February 1939, Paris admitted willy-nilly almost half a million Spaniards who came pouring over the Pyrenees as a result of Franco’s victory.<sup>110</sup>

And yet French hard-heartedness, however reprehensible in moral terms, possessed a certain logic. For the Nazi propaganda minister Goebbels, the assassination of a German embassy secretary in Paris by a Polish Jew served as a mere pretext for launching the November 1938 pogrom.<sup>111</sup> In view of the ethnic tensions of which Paris had become the scene, however, it is scarcely surprising that most Frenchmen drew a perverse conclusion. Even Radical-Socialist newspapers now joined the clamor that the government deal sternly with refugees who sought to carry on the struggle against their persecutors from French soil. The incident lent an

<sup>108</sup> See Joseph Cotton memorandum for the president, 3 Sept. 1938, U.S. State Department (US) file 840.48 Refugees/809½, Record Group 59, National Archives.

<sup>109</sup> T. C. Achilles memorandum, 15 Nov. 1938, US 840.48 Refugees/900½.

<sup>110</sup> Louis Stein, *Beyond Death and Exile: The Spanish Republicans in France* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), pp. 5–54.

<sup>111</sup> Helmut Heiber, *Goebbels* (New York, 1972), pp. 246–47.

appearance of verisimilitude to charges made by the right after Munich that the Jews, even if they denied it, secretly wanted war.<sup>112</sup>

Moreover, despite the Americans’ optimistic prognostications, the refugee problem did not really admit of a solution. Poland demanded to be relieved of its Jews on a basis of parity with Germany; Rumania and Hungary watched its maneuvers with undisguised interest; and the millions of potential emigrants from all those states could not be placed anywhere.<sup>113</sup> The French knew that the mass expulsion of Jews from Central Europe, with its inevitable confusion, provided Germany with an easy opportunity to infiltrate agents into France. Although the Nazi “fifth column” never became as grave a problem as some anticipated, French leaders had no wish to become the victims of “war by refugee” while preparing belatedly for armed conflict.<sup>114</sup> That the fear of such infiltration did not entirely lack substance received unhappy confirmation during the war, when the Nazis employed the Viennese Jews Léo Israëlowitz and Wilhelm Biberstein to monitor the activities of the Union Générale des Israélites de France.<sup>115</sup> But the greatest danger to national security in 1939 came from the Communist side, particularly after the signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact. The disorderly roundup of enemy aliens (many of them Jews) that took place when war broke out in one sense reflected French paranoia; in another it represented a confession of inability to control the vast number of refugees of various provenance now resident in the country.

The historian’s evaluation of French government policy in this period must depend on the individual historian’s reading of later

<sup>112</sup> See the superb analysis by Edwin Wilson of the American Embassy on the growth of antisemitism in France after Munich: Wilson to State Department, 8 Nov. 1938, US 862.4016/1809.

<sup>113</sup> For Polish representations and direct threats to foment antisemitic outbursts, see Messersmith memoranda, 3–19 Nov. 1938, in US 840.48 Refugees/884, 949, 952, 1056; on attitudes of the other Eastern European states, see Truman Smith report, 16 Dec. 1938, US 862.4016/2064.

<sup>114</sup> For discussion of “war by refugee” and evidence that American officials suspected Germany of taking advantage of the refugees’ continued plight after the fall of France to send agents on to the United States, see Fred I. Israel, ed., *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long: Selections from the Years 1939–1944* (Lincoln, Neb., 1966), pp. 114, 133–35, 154, 174 (26 June, 28 Sept.–3 Oct., 20 Nov. 1940, 28 Jan. 1941).

<sup>115</sup> For the role of Israëlowitz, Biberstein (incorrectly identified by Marrus and Paxton as Bigerstein), and Kurt Schendel, see Rajsfus, *Juifs dans la collaboration*, pp. 69, 145, 151–52, 265–83; and Latour, *La Résistance juive en France*, p. 46.

events. The role played by immigrant Jews in the armed struggle against Nazi Germany after 1939 remains, even today, a sensitive question. The dispute centers on the policies of the Communist party and its affiliate, the *Main d'Oeuvre Immigrée* (MOI), which coordinated the resistance activity of most Eastern Jews. By all accounts younger Jews from this background gave proof of extraordinary heroism once Germany had turned against Russia; according to Annie Kriegel, they may have undertaken half of all urban guerilla actions against the Nazi invader in 1941–42. But despite the evocative force of her recollections, Kriegel views the stirring events of those years through the astigmatic lens of nostalgia.<sup>116</sup>

The Gaullist resistance, both for security and social reasons, did not, Kriegel maintains, accept foreign adolescents like herself. The MOI offered to immigrant Jews a way out of their isolation and the single realistic alternative to the negative identity thrust upon them by the Nazis. The Jews thus enlisted under the Communist flag out of special motives of their own.<sup>117</sup> But did the shock troops of MOI do battle for patriotic reasons or to further the interests of the Soviet Union and the international working class for which it claimed to stand? The anecdotal evidence suggests that some young Jews, at least, considered themselves engaged in a class war against the French and German bourgeoisie and hesitated, for example, to take action against “working-class” German enlisted men.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, as Kriegel herself concedes, a goodly number of MOI leaders departed after the war to carry on the struggle for “socialism” in Poland, Hungary, and Rumania, and returned only in the 1960s when antisemitism drove them out of their leadership positions in these East European utopias.<sup>119</sup>

The acid test of loyalty for Jewish and other Communists came

<sup>116</sup> Kriegel, “La Résistance communiste,” pp. 358–60; for detailed evidence on MOI operations, see also Adam Rutkowski, ed., *La Lutte des juifs en France à l'époque de l'occupation (1940–1944)* (Paris, 1975).

<sup>117</sup> Kriegel, “La Résistance communiste,” pp. 360–65. Kriegel has promoted the theory in other publications also that the Jews, despite their social isolation, were really patriotic and merely “duped” by the Communists. (See for example her *French Communists: Profile of a People* [Chicago, 1972], pp. 129–35.) That interpretation has provided great comfort to Jewish historians. See, e.g., the use made of it by Lewi, *Histoire d'une communauté juive: Roanne*, pp. 68–69.

<sup>118</sup> See the revealing testimony in Robrieux, *Histoire intérieure du parti communiste*, pp. 530–31.

<sup>119</sup> Kriegel, “La Résistance communiste,” p. 347.

in 1939–41, during the period of the Nazi-Soviet alliance. Thirty years later the majority of Jewish Communists interviewed by David Weinberg recalled that, after a moment of confusion, they had decisively repudiated the new Moscow line.<sup>120</sup> But the recent research of Stéphane Courtois into this murky era suggests a more nuanced conclusion. While a substantial number of militants quietly disengaged from the PCF in 1939–40, the central party apparatus held firm. It endorsed the explanation that the security of the Soviet state figured as the precondition of socialist triumph everywhere. In a party where the Comintern overseer Eugen Fried called himself Clément, the Paris leader Ginsburger went by the name Pierre Villon, and the party treasurer Michel Feintuch cast himself as Jean Jérôme, it is impossible to isolate “Jewish” positions with any assurance. Apart from university spokesmen like Georges Politzer, however, the party leadership as a whole promoted sabotage in 1939–40 and turned to collaboration after the national collapse. Individual regional leaders—Charles Tillon of Bordeaux, Auguste Havez of Brittany, and Georges Guingouin of Haute-Vienne, for example—who took a patriotic line in the crisis never won the full trust of the party high command again. Indeed a special party execution squad under a “Colonel” Epstein subsequently carried out the murder of some who had shown unacceptable independence of thought in these years.<sup>121</sup> Given the orthodoxy of the party structure that emerged from this agonizing period, Jews who rallied to the MOI after 1941 should—if they possessed any political sophistication—have had little doubt about the moral quality of the organization for which many of them made the supreme sacrifice.

These dismal undercurrents in the history of the left provide no shred of justification, of course, for the persecution of immigrant Jews by Vichy. No government worthy of the name would hold an entire class of people responsible for the actions of individuals. Still, the paranoia of Frenchmen in 1940 rested on the perception

<sup>120</sup> Weinberg, *Community on Trial*, pp. 203–5.

<sup>121</sup> Courtois, *Le PCF dans la guerre*, esp. pp. 11–202, 473–554; cf. also the earlier study by David Cauter, *Communism and the French Intellectuals*, pp. 112–61. For an illuminating account of the Epstein murder squad and its victims, see Courtois, *Le PCF*, pp. 254–55, and Robrieux, *Histoire intérieure du parti communiste*, pp. 498–500, 542–44. Jean Jérôme's memoir, *La Part des hommes* (Paris, 1983), recalls the milieu of the immigrant Jewish militants of the 1930s with characteristic discretion.

that events had thrust them into an extreme situation, and extreme situations often lead to the crumbling of the thin crust of civilized behavior. One final group of refugee Jews remains to be considered in explaining the growth of paranoia on the French right. Some fifty-thousand German Jews passed through Paris from 1933 to 1939, but only ten thousand remained in 1939, and most of these escaped in 1940.<sup>122</sup> France served largely as a way station for Jews from the Reich awaiting admission to Britain, the United States, or Palestine. What anecdotal evidence we possess about this population suggests that it included most prominently a self-selected group of left-wing professionals who, for political reasons, could not secure visas or did not relish going to the United States.

The former *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (KPD) youth leader and self-described "humanist Communist" Henry Pachter, for example, comments in his frank memoir of exile that when faced with imminent arrest he chose exile in Paris because it figured as "the birthplace of all European radicalism" and "the probable center of any international action against Hitler."<sup>123</sup> For seven years Pachter lived in a Kafkaesque world carrying on "guerrilla warfare with the French authorities." While he tried to keep a low profile as an illegal, many of his fellow refugees deliberately sought an expulsion order because to be expelled meant to be recognized, and in the process of protesting the injustice they hoped to wangle a permit to stay. In this world of Marxist émigrés few people did sustained work. Most disdained the menial jobs that they could obtain without papers and preferred to live on grants and donations. As the Socialist former finance minister Rudolf Hilferding once asked Pachter with a sigh, "Did you ever have to work for a living?"<sup>124</sup> The ex-Spartacist Heinrich Blücher, then the intimate of Hannah Arendt and the husband of Natasha Jefroykin (sister of the head of the *Fédération des Sociétés Juives*) picturesquely described his occupation as "stringpuller."<sup>125</sup>

In this world of endless waiting in hotel rooms for a counter-

<sup>122</sup> Weinberg, *Community on Trial*, p. 8; Roblin, *Les Juifs de Paris*, p. 73.

<sup>123</sup> Henry Pachter, "On Being an Exile: An Old-Timer's Personal and Political Memoir," in his *Weimar Etudes* (New York, 1982), pp. 312-13. On Pachter's political loyalties, see also "Empire and Republic: Autobiographical Fragments," in *ibid.*, pp. 3-92.

<sup>124</sup> Pachter, "On Being an Exile," pp. 314-18.

<sup>125</sup> See Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (New Haven, 1982), p. 135.

revolution that never came, politics and literature became the chief preoccupations. Not all émigrés saw eye to eye, of course. The Zionist proselyte Hannah Arendt, who moved in a circle of Brandlerite opposition Communists that included Blücher and Erich Cohn-Bendit (later the father of Daniel), distinguished sharply between her crowd and those who directed German Communism after 1924, when, as she put it, "the gutter opened, and out of it emerged . . . 'another zoological species.'"<sup>126</sup> Pachter complained acidulously about the herd of independent minds in the German Exile Writers' Club who followed every twist and turn of the Soviet line and cooperated with their French confreres in the "anti-fascist" writers' conferences orchestrated by the Comintern agent Willi Münzenberg.<sup>127</sup> But whatever their differences, all the German Jewish émigré intellectuals thrilled to the excitement of the Popular Front in France and Spain. "Never again was I to feel so close to the masses," Pachter later recalled sententiously, "never again did I experience a similar unity of thought and action. Here was the great cause that allied the future of European culture, the achievement of social justice, the rise of the masses to a share in power, and the fight against the evil dictators and usurpers."<sup>128</sup> One can imagine how French conservatives reacted in 1936 or in 1940 when asked to offer hospitality to people who talked like this.

This study has dealt with a familiar subject from an unusual point of view. It presents the terrible tragedy of French Jewry at the end of the Third Republic as a problem of rights in conflict. Specialists generally agree about the fearsome difficulties under which the majority of immigrant Jews labored in the 1930s; the affiliations of native Jews, perhaps, offer greater scope for dispute. The literature, however, does not examine the matter from the optic of conservative Frenchmen who, however mistakenly, cherished "a certain idea of France." Does a nation have the right to control its own borders? Can a refugee minority invoke moral imperatives in seeking to proselytize for a social or a foreign policy that may

<sup>126</sup> Young-Bruehl, *Arendt*, p. 126.

<sup>127</sup> Pachter, "On Being an Exile," pp. 321-22. On Soviet manipulation of French and German intellectuals and the mutual contacts of the latter, see also Herbert R. Lottman, *The Left Bank: Writers, Artists, and Politics from the Popular Front to the Cold War* (Boston, 1982).

<sup>128</sup> Pachter, "On Being an Exile," p. 323.

not lie in the interest of the native majority? To what standard of tolerance can one hold an imperiled nation in a crisis? These questions remain apposite in many historical situations. It is well known that first- and second-generation Jews, for example, made up a large proportion of U.S. Communist party membership during the 1930s.<sup>129</sup> But such was the solidity of American institutions that this fact never became a burning public issue when indications of Soviet infiltration of the U.S. government came to light in the late 1940s. France in 1940, however, experienced not merely a lost war and the collapse of a regime, but a social crisis perhaps without parallel since 1789. In these circumstances the Jews came to play, as so often in history, the scapegoat's role. In this civil war, sadly, no one emerges with an unblemished record.

<sup>129</sup>See Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York, 1984), pp. 378–85; also Melech Epstein, *The Jew and Communism* (New York, 1959).