18 *France Under Semi-Fascism*

THE VICHY STATE

With the abolition of the Constitution of 1875, the structure of French government changed radically. Pétain took over both the presidency and the premiership—a striking parallel with Hitler who did the same after Hindenburg's death. The motivation of the Marshal's proposal for a change of government from parliamentarianism to totalitarianism, adopted on July 10, 1940, was clearly brought out in a "Preamble" outlining the political and social basis of his projected state. "At the most cruel moment in its history, France must understand and accept the necessity of a national revolution. It must see in it the condition on which its present safety and its future security depend." [1] Hence Pétain turned to the chambers so that they might "render possible, by a solemn act characteristic of republican law and order, this immense effort." What, then, did he demand of the dying chambers?

In the first place, the government was to be given *full* powers in order to be able to "save what ought to be saved," to "destroy what ought to be destroyed," and to "construct what ought to be constructed." The government was to "restore to the State its sovereignty and to the governmental power its independence." It was promised that the government would secure "the collaboration of a national representation," one of the many enigmatic phrases which distinguish this strange document. The government would abolish "abuses and routine." Its power, "freed from the pressure by oligarchies," would be used to reconstruct the country "with strictest equity."

In the second place, *national instruction and the protection of the family* was to be reorganized. The "intellectual and moral degradation" had to be fought to improve the birth rate and to protect

[1] Preamble of the Government Resolution Intended to Amend the Constitution of 1875 (exposé des motifs), July 10, 1940, quoted by R. K. Gooch, *The French Counter-Revolution of 1940: The Pétain Government and the Vichy Regime*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1940, pp. 4, 5.

the family. Then followed an interesting interpretation of the significance and role of the state. The government, according to Pétain, "well knows that social groups, families, professions, communes and regions exist prior to the State. The State is only the general organ of national consolidation and of unity. It ought not, therefore, to encroach upon the legitimate activities; but it will subordinate them to the general interest and to the common good. It will control them and will protect them." [1] Very subtly, the power of the state was ascribed to society whose "interest" the state promised to represent. It was not mentioned that the government would determine for this society what the common good should entail. Soon enough it became clear that the government—that is, Pétain—desired a modernized guild system, resembling the Fascist corporativism, in order to create a social hierarchy with representation for the professions and vocations under the supervision of an all-powerful state.

Finally, a new *continental economy* and a new conception of *justice and a scale of new values* was proposed. In the economic field, Pétain accepted Hitler's desire that France, in a Nazi-dominated Europe, should remain predominantly agricultural. The remnants of its industry were to return to "quality production," which meant that the French could not compete with any standardized mass production nor could they hope to restore their big industry. A "rationalization" of production was to be brought about specifically through corporative institutions. Such a new economic order was to produce a new social order. "One aristocracy alone will be recognized—that of intelligence; one of merit alone—work." [2]

The Preamble presented the motivation for the following law:

> The National Assembly grants all power to the Government of the Republic, under the authority and the signature of Marshal Pétain, with a view to promulgation, through one or more acts, of a new constitution of the French State. This constitution shall guarantee the rights of work, family, and native country.[3]

This constitutional law gave Pétain the power to decree whatever

[1] Loc. *cit.*
[2] Loc. *cit.*
[3] Constitutional Law of July 10, 1940, promulgated in Vichy. Note that liberty, equality, fraternity were now replaced by work, family, country.

statutes he desired to promulgate. Since it was approved by both chambers, it has to be considered entirely legal. The French parliament, under the impact of catastrophic events, granted Pétain the right of ruling by decree law; the Constitutional Law of July 10, 1940, was analogous to the German "Enabling Act" of 1933. In both cases, parliament transferred all its powers to a totalitarian government headed by a dictator. The actual revolution, from a legal standpoint, began when the National Assembly, "instead of itself adopting the substantive constitutional changes . . . disregarded its proper constitutional function and turned over the entire *pouvoir constituant* to the Pétain cabinet—in effect to Marshal Pétain himself." [1]

Pétain, after having received the right to rule by decree law, began to proclaim a series of "Constitutional Acts." From the political point of view, the first three were the most important. Act 1 repealed Article 2 of the French Constitution of 1875 pertaining to the presidency; the marshal elevated himself to the position of "Chief of the French State" (corresponding to Hitler's title of *Reichsfuehrer*). Act 2 defined the chief's plenary governmental powers, giving him complete control of the entire French state. He could, from then on, appoint and dismiss all ministers and secretaries of state who, as in Nazi-Fascist practice, were responsible to him alone and not to parliament. He could in ministerial council exercise legislative power, until the formation of a new assembly, and even afterwards in case of emergency. He could promulgate laws and enforce them; fill any important military and civil position; command the armed forces; decide on fiscal and budgetary measures; have foreign envoys accredited to him alone; decree martial law; and negotiate and ratify treaties. The only right not accorded to him was the right to declare war without previous assent of the legislative assemblies.

Act 3 was perhaps the most significant of all. It stated that the two chambers "shall continue to exist until there shall have been formed the assemblies provided for by the Constitutional Law of July 10, 1940." Moreover, "the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies shall be adjourned until further order. They shall hereafter be

[1] Frederic Austin Ogg, *The Rise of Dictatorship in France*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1941, p. 18.

convened only on call of the Head of State." [1] Any articles in the old constitution which were contrary to these three acts were to be repealed. A new constitution for postwar times was promised by Pétain in a radio broadcast of March 19, 1941. As a temporary measure, a so-called National Council was organized (January, 1941), consisting of 188 carefully picked representatives of various professions and vocations, whose task it was to discuss matters submitted to them by the chief of state. No former parliamentarians were included. Forty members of this Council constituted themselves as a committee for the purpose of "reorganizing" parties—with the exception of the Communist Party. It is obvious that this "reorganization" was a step toward the realization of the ideal of the Pétain dictatorship, a one-party system, with a minimum of disturbance. The more rabid French Fascists tried to reach the goal of a one-party system with Gestapo methods of persuasion: brutal force, torture, and murder. They founded the "French Popular Party" along Nazi lines.

Clearly, this organization of the Vichy state was regarded by the people as temporary. The Pétain government realized from the beginning that the progress and outcome of the war would decide the eventual fate of its constitutional experiment. Within one year of parliament's grant of dictatorial power to Pétain to preserve as much of France as was humanly possible, the respect of the people for the aged Marshal began to wane. His weakness in the face of the intrigues of Pierre Laval, Admiral Darlan, the followers of Doriot, and similar Fascists; his compliance with never-ending German demands, shattered the foundation on which Pétain had hoped to rebuild the internal structure of the nation. Laval, first declared successor to the Marshal, then ousted but eventually reinstated, under heavy German pressure, went farther in accepting Nazi rule than Pétain had ever dared. The Chief of State remained silent even when Laval collaborated with the Germans in conscripting French labor to work in German factories. In the end, the Marshal became a powerless figurehead, unable to cope with the Fascist radicals who wanted to develop authoritarianism into a full-fledged totalitarianism of Nazi character.

[1] The translation used here and on previous pages is that given by R. K. Gooch, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 8.

In the pursuit of absolute power for the state, both employers' and employees' associations were suppressed. The French Labor Unions were dissolved and the powerful industrial groups such as the *Comité des Forges*, which had influenced the country's political fortunes for many years and must be regarded as the most guilty groups contributing to France's downfall, were gradually deprived of their standing and finally crowded out by German industrial and banking interests.

The role of the Catholic Church during the life of the Third Republic had been one of subdued opposition; it now found itself confronted with a government which offered some material restitution as well as the promise to reintroduce compulsory religious instruction in French state schools. Hoping for an eventual end of the separation between state and church in all matters of education and social policy, the church now looked to Pétain with great hopes for its political renaissance in France.

The leaders of the Pétain government frankly recognized that they ruled without the people's endorsement. In fact, they admitted that they had to work against the people's will. No doubt, Vichy became increasingly nazified the longer it stayed in power. In a radio broadcast of August 12, 1941, dealing with the apparent unrest of the French people who showed dissatisfaction with the "collaborationist" Vichy regime, Marshal Pétain announced the following principles of his policy:

1. Activity of political parties and groups of political origin is suspended until further notice in the unoccupied zone. These parties may no longer hold either public or private meetings. They must cease any distribution of tracts or notices. Those that fail to conform to these decisions will be dissolved.

2. Payment of members of Parliament is suppressed as of September 30.

3. The first disciplinary sanctions against State officials guilty of false declarations regarding membership in secret societies has been ordered. The names of officials have been published this morning in the *Journal Officiel*. Holders of high Masonic degrees—of which the first list has just been published—may no longer exercise any public function.

4. The Legion of War Veterans remains the best instrument in the free zone of the National Revolution. But it is able to carry out its civil task only by remaining in all ranks subordinate to the Government.

5. I will double the means of police action, whose discipline and loyalty should guarantee public order.

6. A group of Commissars of Public Power is created. These high officials will be charged with studying the spirit in which the laws, decrees, orders, and instructions of the central power will be carried out. They will have the mission of ferreting out and destroying obstacles which abuse of the rules of administrative routine or activity of secret societies can oppose to the work of National Revolution.

7. Powers of regional prefects, the first units of those who will be Governors of provinces in the France of tomorrow, will be reenforced. Their power, so far as the central administration is concerned, is increased. Their authority over all heads of local services is direct and complete.

8. The labor charter designed to regulate, according to the principles of my St. Etienne speech, relations among workers, artisans, technicians, and employers in an agreement reached with mutual understanding, has resulted in a solemn accord. It will be published shortly.

9. The provisional statute of economic organization will be revamped on a basis of reorganization of committees with larger representation of small industry and artisans, with revision of their financial administration and their relations with provincial arbitration organisms.

10. The powers, role, and organization of the National Food Supply Bureau will be modified according to means which, safeguarding the interests of consumers, permit the authority of the State to make itself felt at the same time on a national and regional basis.

11. I have decided to use the powers given me by Constitutional Act No. 7 to judge those responsible for our disaster. A Council of Justice is created to that effect. It will submit its reports before October 15.

12. In the application of this same Constitutional Act, all Ministers and high officials must swear an oath of fealty to me and engage themselves to carry out duties in their charge for the well-being of the State according to the rules of honor and propriety.[1]

These twelve points meant nothing less than the elimination of the last vestiges of civil rights. They constituted the final step toward the liquidation of political parties, the destruction of the chambers, the prohibition of belonging to any order or lodge not endorsed by the regime, the shifting of responsibility to those formerly in power, the preparation of Fascist labor laws, and the concentration of power in the Chief of State.

Comparing these principles with the basic legislation of the

[1] Pétain's broadcast to the French people of August 12, 1941, published in *International Conciliation*, September, 1941, No. 372, pp. 597ff.

Vichy state, one can easily recognize the growth of totalitarianism in France during the first year of the existence of the new regime. The second year, ending with Laval in power, proved conclusively that Vichy had staked its future upon an Axis victory and had arranged its policies accordingly. After two years, the people lost confidence and began looking anxiously to the growing power of America and Britain. To a large extent, the actions of the Vichy regime were dictated by the fact, taking precedence over all others, that Germany was the conqueror and in a position to enforce her will, as Pétain himself explained. But there was, in addition, a whole series of measures which had their origin, not in German pressure and exactions, but in the firm conviction that the France of the Third Republic had been a decadent society which must be restored to an earlier and sounder outlook. Some—patriotic Frenchmen according to their own lights—went so far as to see in the collapse a divinely ordained punishment for the errors of former ways and sincerely believed that out of defeat and atonement would emerge a renovated nation. Such views were those of a minority, but this minority was strongly represented in the Vichy regime. Pétain himself probably shared this outlook.

To effect this renovation, it was essential to enact a thoroughgoing reform of the educational system in order to inculcate the proper outlook into the rising generation. It will be interesting to examine how far the educational reforms followed the Nazi-Fascist example.

VICHY EDUCATION AND INDOCTRINATION

The fundamental philosophy and the organization of the French educational system had changed little throughout the past century. Primary schools more or less followed the outline worked out by Guizot, education minister in 1833, and secondary education remained under the influence of Napoleon's ideas.

Some headway toward greater democracy in education was made after the last war. The *Compagnons de l'Université Nouvelle*, a group of educators and writers, agitated for the establishment of the *école unique* which was to do away with the sharp distinction between elementary and secondary schools and was to assure the children of the masses access to the more advanced forms of edu-

cation. In 1925 a common school for all children up to the age of eleven was created by law which meant the abolition of the special preparatory classes, in which the children of the bourgeoisie had received their education. At the same time it was voted to abolish fees in the secondary schools and to increase the number of state scholarships for gifted pupils. While classical studies continued to form the backbone of all secondary education, a "modern" course was developed which stressed the sciences and modern languages. These reforms were continued in the thirties by Jean Zay who tried to improve the quality of the vocational schools so as to make their curriculums more attractive and equivalent to the curriculums of the secondary schools (*lycée* and *collège*) which prepared for the universities and the *Grandes Ecoles*. He also introduced psychological experiments in the form of special classes *d'orientation* for children aged eleven or older to help parents, teachers, and pupils to determine the students' best talents and capacities. The Popular Front went further in proposing that maintenance grants be offered to poor parents in order to permit them to have their gifted children continue in school instead of helping on farms or in the shops. This proposal never became law.

The Vichy regime showed little sympathy for these reforms and has done its best to undo them. Explaining the reasons for France's defeat, the Pétain government declared that the poor moral conditions in France were a consequence of the French educational system and particularly of the recent reforms. It was not considered beneficial to offer too much learning indiscriminately to all French youth. It was contended that too much "theoretical" and "encyclopedic" knowledge was not the best preparation for life. Consequently, the Vichy regime stressed manual training, sports, and moral, civic, and patriotic indoctrination. Classical culture and "speculative learning" were to be reserved for the few. In this connection it is significant to note that one of the first decrees of the Vichy regime reintroduced fees in all secondary schools.

As has already been mentioned, Pétain himself advocated a "spiritualization" of the schools. However, the attempt to make religious instruction a required subject aroused so much opposition that the Education Ministry decided not to incorporate religion in the curriculum for the time being and to permit religious classes

to assemble outside the school buildings only. A report confirmed that references to God were removed from all curriculums and were replaced by "spiritual values" and "Christian civilization." [1] A deeply rooted tradition of anticlericalism could not be forgotten quickly by the French. Nevertheless, private Catholic schools, the work of which had been severely impeded by the Third Republic, were soon encouraged and received certain hidden state subsidies.

The Vichy regime did not make any changes in the nursery schools, the *écoles maternelles*, which existed mainly for preschool children of working-class families and for those whose parents were too poor to take proper care of them before they began to attend school. In its reform proposals, the government stated that there would not be much change in primary education.[2] Pupils of the primary division continued along familiar lines, in general, until the age of twelve or thirteen when they took the examination for the *Certificat d'Etudes Primaires* (certificate of primary studies). The year during which they prepared for this examination was the first of a series of four years of study which constituted either the *enseignement primaire supérieur* or the *enseignement moderne* (higher primary education or modern education). Pupils could either give up their studies after receiving the C.E.P. or continue with higher primary education. This primary division was dedicated entirely to practical training to the exclusion of the classical languages.

Like the German secondary "special" form, the classical gymnasium, the secondary level of Vichy France's education was devoted to classical studies exclusively. Beginning with the *sixième* class (children aged eleven or twelve), Latin was made compulsory. Greek, too, became a compulsory part of the curriculum; no secondary-school student was permitted to skip the classical languages whatever the final aim of his studies might be. To pass the *baccalauréat*, a very difficult examination preceding graduation, the student had to take two examinations. The first was held one year before the end of his course. If he passed, he could decide whether

[1] See G. H. Archambault, "Coeducation Ban Decreed by Vichy," *The New York Times*, September 3, 1941.

[2] The French *éducation primaire* does not correspond with American elementary education. There were in France two different types of education, *primaire* and *secondaire*, each of which had its own elementary schooling.

to major in classics of science for his second *baccalauréat*. Those students who did not want to study classical languages had but one choice, the higher primary course which did not permit them to go to the university. Only very few extraordinarily gifted students of the higher primary course could be transferred to classes which did not offer classical languages but corresponded to the last two years of the secondary course. In isolated cases, such students were permitted to take the *baccalauréat* and enter the university.

These features did not show any important deviation from the system in use for many years. The government did, however, endeavor to introduce more sports which had been badly neglected in French schools. A training schedule was worked out by Jean Borotra, former tennis champion, incorporating the following types of physical instruction in the general education: (1) general physical training; (2) sports and games; (3) various activities of general educational value—whatever that meant. The primary curriculums had to devote nine hours weekly to physical training; the universities three half days. Medical checkups were to be made at regular intervals.

The new program for "moral teaching" which the former Vichy education minister, Georges Ripert, decreed for both elementary and secondary schools is of particular interest. Subjects to be discussed in elementary schools were, for example, "the duties of the pupils toward their neighbors; respect for family and country; respect for thoughts of others and various religious beliefs." [1] If these suggestions had been followed without Fascist bias, they might have accomplished some good for many young French people who had become cynical and nihilistic.

Moral teaching, of course, was not to be limited to matters of conduct and work. It could be extended to any subject with the definite purpose of political indoctrination. According to reports, history was one of the first subjects to be "revised" by the Vichy government. Professors were asked

> to insist on the continuity of the effort which has been made through centuries to construct, maintain, and rebuild France. Too often political passion takes from the historian the impartiality which is needed to

[1] Associated Press dispatch from Vichy, March 12, 1941.

judge the work accomplished under a very different political regime. . . . Too often nowadays there is a tendency to believe that the civilizing work of France began only yesterday and is bound to a certain policy or philosophy. We must have a more liberal conception of history. If one cannot insist too much on the importance which the Great Revolution of 1789 means to our country, it is not necessary to represent it as breaking completely with the entire past and still less to believe that before 1789 France had not yet possessed a great influence in the world.[1]

This was indeed a subtle way of arriving at a new interpretation of prerevolutionary absolutism. No history teacher would have seriously denied the importance of France under the kings, nor had there been any tendency to belittle the significance of earlier events. What was desired, no doubt, was less emphasis on the Revolution and more on an authoritarian France which ignored the Rights of Man. This shift was called a "liberalization" of history teaching. As the collaborationist tendencies gained momentum, further restriction of objective presentation of subject matter was to be expected, and not only in history. It is known how the children of occupied France, Belgium, and Holland, to mention only some of the German-occupied countries, experienced the Nazi conception of "learning." After France became German-controlled in both military and political respects, Nazi indoctrination, adapted to the French mind, doubtless colored French history and moral teaching considerably.

By far the most drastic change in the Vichy educational plan was the abolition of the normal schools that had been honored training institutions for primary-school teachers ever since the Revolution. They have often been held to scorn, out of a condescending attitude toward them on the part of those who had attended the *lycées*, as engendering the *esprit primaire*, taken to mean a narrow, provincial type of outlook. In pre-Vichy France, access to these schools was through the higher primary schools, frequented by the children of the people. In this way, the primary schools were assured of teachers who themselves were close to the needs and aspirations of the masses. Many of them showed marked left-wing tendencies, which made them unacceptable to the men of Vichy. This may be the reason why since 1942, no student without the *baccalauréat* was permitted to teach. After

[1] John Elliott, report in the New York Herald Tribune of October 20, 1940.

having passed this examination, two or three years of additional study, in the candidate's chosen field, were required. Candidates could be either secondary-school students or graduates of the higher primary school who have been transferred to the secondary level for the last two years leading up to the *baccalauréat*.

This revision was not altogether an invention of Vichy. It had been foreshadowed in the reform promulgated in 1939. At that time it was also decreed that the *baccalauréat* was to be compulsory for all future elementary-school teachers and that future secondary-school teachers would have to have a regular university training. However, there is a fundamental difference. The 1939 reform was meant to enhance the position of teachers and—by way of the *école unique*—further to open access to the higher studies to the sons and daughters of the lower classes. The Vichy reform, coming on top of the re-introduction of fees in secondary schools, was designed to reduce, within the French schools, the influence of the low-born with their subversive ideas.

The over-all picture of education under Vichy authoritarianism is one reflecting its transitional character. It accentuated the outmoded tradition of intellectual selection, and eliminated most of the gains toward a more democratic system of education made during the last twenty years of the Third Republic.

The organization of youth movements along totalitarian lines constituted a much more radical departure from precedent. The outline of the Vichy-sponsored youth movements was not so clear and definite as that of other totalitarian or semitotalitarian countries, but the trends toward authoritarian indoctrination and regimentation were easily visible.

YOUTH MOVEMENTS AND LABOR CAMPS

There existed a number of voluntary youth organization in pre-Vichy France, mainly of Catholic origin. The most important were the scouts (five major groups) and the Catholic Association of French Youth (also comprising five divisions). In addition, there were groups with specialized interests in sports, politics, and youth hostels. It is estimated that about one-seventh of all French male adolescents were enrolled in these groups. After the "national revolution" of 1940 the political youth organizations of left-wing tend-

encies were forbidden; all other organizations were brought under the control of a special director of youth activities within the Ministry of Education. In spite of this attempt at centralized regimentation most of the old established movements, such as the scouts, suffered little, presumably because of their Catholic nature. One may well believe reports that the vast majority of the members of these organizations were not pro-Vichy and certainly not collaborationist, much as the Vichy government tried to sway them to its point of view.

Two new youth groups were founded after the advent of the Pétain government. The first, *Compagnons de France*, was organized in 1940. Their political attitude did not automatically reflect Vichy policies. While sponsored by the Pétain regime, they were not collaborationist. The second was Fascist in character and inclination, influenced by the tendencies of Jaques Doriot, one of France's most radical Nazis. Of its two branches, one was called the *Jeunesse de France d'Outre Mer*, and the other, the smaller, the *Jeunesse Populaire Française*. Little became known about these movements except that they copied the tactics of Nazi storm troopers and Fascist squads. They were armed and aimed to destroy everything associated with the France of yesterday. Apparently even the government was somewhat afraid of them, because they imitated the tactics of the Hitler Youth very closely, getting all the support they needed from the Germans in the former occupied zone where they built their strongholds.

The *Compagnons de France* was a noncompulsory movement of young men between sixteen and twenty who wished to take an active part in the reconstruction of France. The *Compagnons* afforded those who for any reason did not become members of any other youth organization an opportunity to join the ranks of young France. Their rallying cry was "France," their motto, "United to serve," and their oath: "I put myself at the service of France and promise to obey my chiefs and perform the work of the *Compagnons*." In the official language of Vichy, this organization was considered as "carrying a common faith in France." The *Compagnons* "will endeavor in every possible way to revive abandoned or dying villages, to clear wastelands, to assist refugees. Their

mission is one of peace, order, and reconstruction. . . . They want their work to be hardy and invigorating. They want to toughen youths and to give them a taste of hard life. The *Compagnons* are itinerants, traveling around to set up their work or simply to know their country better."[1] Their ethical objectives were to fight the oppression of the weak, general selfishness, slovenliness, the exaggeration of the importance of comfort and money, and the indifference to the country's best interests. To reach these ends, the *Compagnons* were held to the following: respect for each individual, sense of the community, discipline and good behavior, service through work, physical exercises and outdoor life, and discovery of France.

Evidently this program was vastly different from the military setup of the Nazi-Fascist youth movements. In theory, each boy was to be treated as an individual and not as a cog of a gigantic machine; the family retained its importance and, in consequence, the organization could not interrupt family life as was customary in Germany and Italy or in the Soviet Union. To learn altruism and cooperative behavior is necessary for French youth who need more discipline and physical training. Not much could be held against the group, particularly since it was officially claimed that the *Compagnons* were not supposed to be a pseudomilitary, political, or religious movement. They also differed from the scouts and they could definitely not be likened to any Hitlerian, Fascist, or Phalangist organization—according to Vichy assurances.

In addition to the duty of assisting in France's reconstruction, the *Compagnons* were to fight against routine, alcoholism, and venereal diseases. They were to prepare themselves for vocations in specialized workshops of the *Compagnies de Chantiers* which were of industrial, commercial, and agricultural character. According to Vichy claims in 1941, there were 288 workshops for 13 different vocations.[2]

That the glowing accounts of the Vichy government about the *Compagnons* were exaggerated seems to be pretty well established. In 1942, the organization counted not more than about thirty

[1] Official information released by the Vichy government on August 21, 1940.
[2] *L'Espoir Français*, a Vichy youth organ, October 10, 1941, p. 11.

thousand members in the whole of France and her dependencies which is all the more remarkable as the upper age limit for membership was extended to thirty-five.[1]

Perhaps the most profitable aspect of Vichy French youth movements was the stress on vocational training and practical work for the common good. In particular, the organization of the *Chantiers de la Jeunesse*, though noncompulsory, was set up in January, 1941, probably following the example of German labor camps. Work was the ideal of this movement; but civic training remained an essential part of the vocational instruction and practical assignments.

The objective of the *Chantiers* was fourfold. First, they tried to teach young Frenchmen a consciousness of their duty toward the country. Second, they showed them how to collaborate with each other without class distinction in order to accomplish a common objective. Third, they aimed at achieving a material and moral rebirth of the country. Fourth, they wanted to avoid, by means of an intelligent public-works program, an accumulation of unemployed.

Although discipline was strict, there was an effort to avoid the atmosphere of the barracks. While the camps were not supposed to be "monasteries," the young people were to consider themselves members of a social structure in which problems of the hour demanded voluntary subordination to the needs of community and country. In addition to work and civic training, in order to avoid "mental laziness," intellectual pursuits were not to be altogether neglected. Physical education, too, was to be part of the program. Medical examinations for admission were strict.

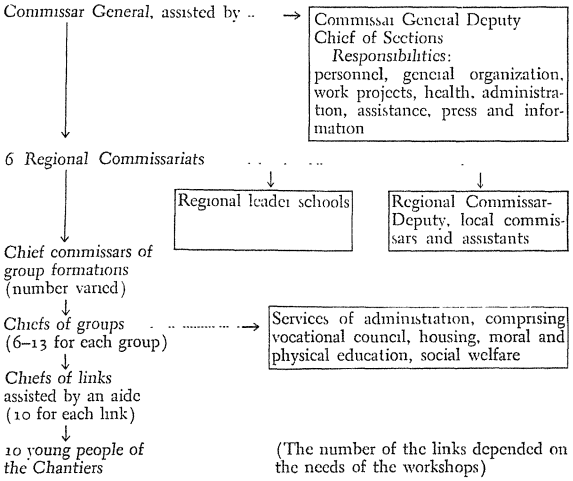
The whole organization was built up to give young people a new feeling of hope and solidarity, thus helping to reconstruct the country through work and a high morale. The *Chantiers* were open to young men who had not yet been called to the colors as well as to those inducted before the armistice. As a permanent institution, the *Chantiers* were to take the place of military service.

The program of the *Chantiers* was basically sound in view of the situation in which France found herself after the conclusion of the armistice. The difficult question is whether these organizations were led in the vigorous manner of traditional French schools

[1] In January, 1944, the *Compagnons* were dissolved, probably on German orders.

—in which discipline was always important—or whether the Vichy authorities tried to transform the *Chantiers* into Labor Camps of German character.

According to reports from Vichy, the *Chantiers* were organized along the following lines:



Among the work projects of the *Chantiers* were the production of charcoal, rebuilding of roads, reforestation and the cultivation of waste land, and many types of agricultural work such as harvesting and fruit picking. Each workshop was permitted to develop independently; its newly created traditions were transmitted from the older members, the *anciens*, to newcomers, the *nouveaux*. Before the complete German occupation of France in November, 1942, the *Chantiers* must have been one of the few groups to which a certain individuality was still permitted.[1]

Quite different were the *Ecoles de Cadres* in which future leaders for youth organizations were trained. These schools were or-

[1] *L'Espoir Français*, Vichy, October 10, 1941, p. 31

ganized, in the words of Vichy, to form a numerous élite of adolescents who were sincerely and profoundly imbued with the spirit of the National Revolution. The young people were to be made "ardent propagandists and intelligent promoters of the doctrine of the Marshal." [1]

Some information on how these theories were put into practice may be gathered from the account of an eighteen-year-old boy who was enrolled for some months at one of these leader schools in 1942. Of ninety students enrolled in the course only thirty-five were able to complete it. Extremely heavy work and marching for many miles formed the nucleus of the curriculum from the beginning. Lectures stressed hero worship, the center of which was Hitler and Pétain. The healthy influence of Nazi Germany was emphasized repeatedly. Education for death was fostered by compelling the students to lecture and write essays on topics like "What is it you would give your life for?", or "To die for one's chief," or "What sort of death do you prefer?" and "At what age do you want to die?". Political indoctrination was only overshadowed by physical work.[2]

Obviously, these *Ecoles de Cadres* were patterned on Nazi models. While not too much weight can be given to the report of an eighteen-year-old refugee, the character of these schools may well be as described for it conformed to what we know of Nazi youth training which the Vichy Fascists no doubt sought to imitate.

VICHY CORPORATISM

Nothing can better illustrate the tendency of the Vichy state toward a totalitarian control over its entire political and economic organization than the French Labor Charter, issued by Pétain on October 4, 1941. It was designed to control and keep in discipline all vocations and professions by putting representatives of twenty-five basic "professional families" under direct supervision of the Superior Council of the Labor Charter.

There were five different types of representatives: employers, workers, white-collar workers, foremen, and technicians. Outlawing trade unions and strikes, the various local, regional, and national

[1] *Ibid.* p. 13.
[2] *Pour La Victoire*, French language weekly, New York, October 17, 1942.

corporations were to form committees, consisting of employers and employees, to work out collective contracts and to fix minimum wages. Labor courts were established to take care of differences of opinion, resembling those in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

It is significant that special corporate organizations were created for agriculture and industry in both of which the German government was particularly interested and which may actually have been established at German suggestion. In agriculture, corporatism was to replace former agricultural societies; in industry, such formerly powerful organizations as the *Comité des Forges* or the *Confédération Générale de la Production Française*, had already been dissolved and were now replaced by sixty committees, each committee representing a specialized industry.[1]

There can hardly be a doubt as to the use of these organizations for purposes of suppressing both labor and management. Highly colored reports from Vichy France stressed the smooth functioning of labor-employer relations and word reached the outside world that unwilling French labor was trying to use the organization for keeping its ranks intact for the time when the liberation would come. Whether France, or, for that matter, any other country, will make use of the better features of corporatism, especially the collaboration between employers and employees or the establishment of corporate representation on behalf of certain vocations and professions, remains open to question. As a characterization of the Vichy state, the establishment of corporations and of a labor charter after Nazi-Fascist examples is significant, testifying to Pétain's leaning toward Fascism along German-Italian lines.

VICHY SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TRENDS

The attitude of the French people toward the Vichy government became clear soon after Pétain's investiture. At the beginning, the nation was so stunned by the extent of its defeat that the arrival of the Marshal was greeted as the only way to solve the most urgent problems. Forgotten was the political past of the aged man which had not pleased most Frenchmen in prewar years. He was now the

[1] For details of the French Labor Charter and the organization of corporations, see Shepard B. Clough, "The House that Pétain Built," in *Political Science Quarterly*, New York, March, 1944.

"grandfather" of the nation just as Gaston Doumergue had been, a few years before, in a less dangerous crisis. Pétain's age did not matter, for the conservative caste of French society has always put a premium on age in political leadership.

During the first months following the military catastrophe, most Frenchmen believed that Pétain would put up at least passive resistance. People thought that "he is lying to the Germans, double-crossing them in order to gain time to fight again if some day a miracle makes that possible." [1] During this period, most French people doubted that a complete German victory could be prevented. Meanwhile, Pétain's policy was one of resignation. Naively hoping for chivalry on the part of the victors, he tried to minimize France's suffering through appeasement. Laval and his group, however, attempted quite openly to make France national-socialist while Hitler himself, contemptuous of "inferior" France, went about exploiting her. French economy was gradually taken over by the Germans; French prisoners of war were not returned and additional man power was recruited for labor in the Reich.

Gradually, Pétain's political importance vanished. It died almost completely after he was compelled to recall Laval whom he had discarded in the beginning, fearing that the shrewd *auvergnat* would interfere with his wait-and-see policy. Laval's attempt to negotiate a Franco-German peace had revealed his true colors and his desire to follow German "suggestions."

Until the Germans forced the reinstatement of Laval in 1942, Pétain sought to rule "unoccupied" France with the help of men like Flandin and Darlan. Probably Vichy wanted to avoid the imposition by the Germans of the rule of French Nazis like Déat or Doriot. Some months later, the aged Marshal stated that Laval had won his entire confidence "not only by his words, but by his deeds. There is no longer the slightest difference between us. . . . When Laval speaks it is in agreement with me. . . ." Laval, however, stated a few days later: "I wish for a German victory." [2] He certainly did his utmost, from this time on, to help the German

[1] André Philip, "Inside France. The Conquered Stir," *The New York Times Magazine*, November 1, 1942.
[2] Léon Marchal, *Vichy, Two Years of Deception*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1943, p. 205.

war effort, particularly by sending French workers to Germany. Pétain had become a figurehead, tottering toward his grave, concluding ingloriously an otherwise brilliant career. "Pétain means Verdun and Verdun means resistance to the last," the French people had said when he took over after the disaster had happened. But he betrayed the people's confidence just as Hindenburg did. Both men, after great military careers, wanted to save their countries; both tried to do it by dealing with the devil. Both lost and thereby jeopardized their good name before the judgment of history.

The majority of the French people resisted passively both the seductions and threats of the Nazi cliques. A number of famous people in the world of arts and letters succumbed to German flattery; certain groups tried to outnazi the Nazis, and a few traitors helped the cause of Hitler and Laval. For example, the former labor leader René Bélin, accepting the post of labor minister in the Pétain government, dissolved the trade unions. But the masses of the people did not give up As the lower middle classes lost their economic status, many of them joined the workers. The French underground developed rapidly with the growth of disillusionment about the Pétain-Laval regime; it grew stronger still after the Germans occupied the whole of France.

The underground was first organized in various groups built around illegal newspapers such as *Combat*, *Libération*, *Franc-Tireur*, *Le Populaire*, *La Quatrième République*, *1793*, and others.[1] Despite heavy Nazi and Vichy pressure and an increasing use of terror by the Germans, these groups became gradually coordinated. Their strongest fighter units called themselves *Les Hommes du Maquis*, or simply *Maquis*. According to a statement of General de Gaulle made in London, on May 27, 1942, the leaders of these fighting groups were, for the most part, new men who had never before been politically important. They greatly contributed to the liberation of France by coordinating their activities with the invading Allied armies.

Needless to say, Laval, emulating Nazi example, introduced Gestapo methods in France: brutal "coordination," labor con-

[1] André Philip, *loc. cit.*

scription mainly for service in Germany, strict censorship of the radio, press, and motion pictures, and a total suppression of civil rights.

THE DE GAULLIST MOVEMENT

Apart from the underground opposition in France proper, there remained a positive source of spiritual strength and hope emanating from the Free French Committee under the leadership of General Charles de Gaulle with headquarters first in London and then in Algiers. In 1942, the name of this organization became "French National Committee of Liberation" and in 1944 it assumed the title of "Provisional Government of the French Republic."

Many observers have wondered why so few French leaders attempted to flee from France to organize resistance from the outside. The answer is probably that they did not realize the nature and extent of France's defeat and that they misjudged the political and ideological nature of their enemy. Also a good many felt that the war was definitely lost and that their place, in that event, was at home. Among the few far-sighted men who refused to give up hope was General de Gaulle, the officer whom the French war ministry overruled when he called for a complete mechanization of the army and an increased air force. When France collapsed, he left for London in order to organize French resistance and to represent France in the continued Allied war effort, thus ensuring his country a voice in a future peace settlement.

Politically, General de Gaulle has never been a liberal. He has never concealed this fact but he has promised that he would not impose his political ideas upon a liberated France. "Once the enemy is driven from their land, all French men and women will elect a National Assembly which will decide in full exercise of its sovereignty what course the future of the country shall take," he stated in a declaration on policy on June 24, 1942. In subsequent years, when de Gaulle forces strove to create a provisional government, this policy was somewhat changed. The National Committee sought recognition by the great powers because it desired to take over the reins of government immediately upon liberation and had in mind ruling France until the danger of civil war should pass, whereupon general elections are to be held.

However, Britain and the United States did not consent until July, 1944, to grant the National Committee limited recognition as the provisional government of France; they insisted that it should remain up to the French people from the very beginning to choose their own government. General Eisenhower, commander-in-chief of the Allied armies, was to have the power of decision so long as France remained a theater of operations.

Of the great Allied nations, the Soviet Union was first to grant the de Gaulle group recognition and actually accredited an ambassador to the Free French. Until 1944, indirect recognition of the National Committee as the only representative group was implied when conquered French colonial territories, originally under Vichy domination, were subsequently administered by both the British and the Free French. Subsidies were also put at the disposal of the Committee whose president remained Charles de Gaulle for all parts of the French Empire.

According to him, the "Fighting French are of no party; they include all parties, all opinions who are agreed on one question: the liberation of France. But that is far from meaning that Fighting France should be purely and simply limited to a military framework." (Interview of May 27, 1942.) The de Gaullist movement, while predominantly military, has tried since its inception to "enlist the French people in the war," an aim which is obviously both military and political. The Free French, or as they have called themselves since July 13, 1942, the "Fighting French," did not claim to represent the whole of France in its political and social aspects. But they looked upon themselves as the trustees of their country. They did not earn this right merely by fleeing France, but by actual participation in fighting the war on all fronts.

In one of his first important statements of policy, de Gaulle expressed his point of view in the following words:

> We want France to recover everything that belongs to her. For us, the end of the war means restoration both of complete integrity to our home country, the empire and the French heritage, and of the nation's absolute sovereignty over her own destinies. . . . As we mean to make France once again sole mistress in her own house, so we shall see to it that the French people be their own and sole masters. . . .[1]

[1] Declaration of Policy, June 24, 1942.

The fact that France cannot be rebuilt without being incorporated into a new world organization has also been recognized by de Gaulle. He stated:

> We want this war which similarly affects the destiny of all peoples and has united the democracies in one and the same effort, to result in a world organization establishing lasting solidarity and mutual help between the nations in every sphere. . . .[1]

Such language, coming from a man whose former political affiliations are known to be conservative, is highly significant. For de Gaulle, like all his followers, does not believe that the political system which ruled pre-Vichy France can ever be used again. The old parliament can never come back. It surrendered to Pétain—a fact which will not be forgotten. Those leaders of France's economy who sold out to Germany will never be allowed to resume their former position. Postwar France is certain to show a considerable change in her social structure, thus creating a new political point of view which will be reflected in its representation.

De Gaulle himself has made this repeatedly clear. In his speech before the Consultative Assembly in Algiers on March 18, 1944, he stated with emphasis that in the political, social, and economic fields, he would not tolerate group interests such as ruled France before her downfall. He forecast the elimination of such groups and the shift toward a social-minded egalitarian state organization.

No doubt, such reorganization is bound to be affected by the form and content of the plans devised by the governments of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. Even the apparent determination of the general to tackle the task of recreating France alone will not prevent such influences from carrying considerable weight. France's historic achievements alone will not suffice to secure her a leading position in the postwar world. She can no longer rest content on the laurels of past achievements. She will have to regenerate her old civilization into a new one. She will have to revolutionize her spirit toward a new interpretation of her most precious heritage: liberty, equality, fraternity. The core of such a new interpretation may perhaps be found in the following words of General de Gaulle:

[1] De Gaulle's Declaration of Policies, cited above.

We want to destroy forever the mechanical organization of mankind such as the enemy have achieved in contempt of all religion, morals and charity simply because they were strong enough to override others. And, moreover, in a powerful rebirth of the resources of the nation and the empire, inspired by methodical technique, we want the age-old French ideal of liberty, equality, and fraternity henceforth to be applied to our land in order that every individual may be free in thoughts, beliefs, and actions, that at the outset all may have equal opportunities in their social life, and that every man be respected by his fellows and helped if in need.[1].

CONCLUSION—THE END OF VICHY

The occupation by American and British troops of French North Africa and the revolt of a considerable part of the French colonial army against the Vichy regime ended what remained of Vichy "independence" by causing the occupation of the "free zone" by German forces in November, 1942. With Admiral Darlan out of the picture, the aged Marshal Pétain weakly protesting, and Laval concentrating on the remnants of a shadow government, the Vichy regime faded into an inglorious obscurity. In spite of Hitler's breaking of the armistice treaty by occupying the former "free zone," the men of Vichy stayed on as German puppets. Only when the Allied armies succeeded in liberating France from German occupation, did the most dismal period of France's history end.

The eclipse of France was as total as her defeat. Her sovereignty re-established, she will have to make great efforts to restore her political, military and cultural prestige. She is certain to be supported by the great Allied powers, especially by the United States and Great Britain, in whose interest it is to have a strong and powerful France help guard western civilization in Europe.

Obviously, France cannot and will not rely on outside help alone to become strong again. General de Gaulle, having re-established the seat of the French government in Paris, made it known that the French people desire to achieve their regeneration with their own means so far as this is possible. However, France's rehabilitation will be no easy matter. In addition to her political and economic problems, she needs to undergo what one might call a "mental revolution." She will have to develop new social and eco-

[1] De Gaulle's Declaration of Policies.

nomic points of view; she will have to discard outworn traditions and change her former way of living considerably. How fast and to what extent she will again acquire prosperity and influence, will depend on the extent of her recuperative powers. Obviously, new strength for a liberated France, so desirable for the Western world, must be generated from within while France consolidates her new ideals.

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Part 4 *The Evolution of Democracy: Great Britain and the U.S.A.*

Introduction

Ideological aggression in the twentieth century is essentially directed "against the three predominant ideas of the nineteenth century: liberal democracy, national self-determination, and laissez-faire economics." [1] The character of these ideologies, their theories and practices, have been briefly described in the previous chapters. Whatever their ultimate goals may be, they have produced similar phenomena in the countries where they have prevailed, which have all united in attacking liberal democracy.

The initial success of the dictatorships made it difficult for defenders of democracy to meet the arguments of absolutism, especially since the most powerful democracies seemed to be unable to show just how their cumbersome, muddling system was superior to the efficiency of dictatorship.

Indeed, despite the totalitarian revolutions, the great democratic nations were slow in recognizing a changed situation. Britain was "still hampered by lingering regrets for the laissez-faire period which was that of her greatest prosperity." [2] Not until 1933, and under the stress of economic collapse, did the United States begin to launch a program of socio-economic reforms. In comparable circumstances, the Popular Front sought to introduce similar reforms in France in 1936. One must turn to some small nations, notably the Scandinavian countries, to find a sane adaptation of democracy to the changed conditions of our time.

Generally speaking, the reforms initiated by the democratic countries were belated and insufficient. They were concessions to the "age of the common man," but they were half-heartedly endorsed compromises, too weak to stand up against ideological aggression. The timidity of the democracies and their futile attempts to buy time with repeated concessions could only result in the catastrophe which has engulfed the world. Totalitarianism,

[1] Edward Hallet Carr, *Conditions of Peace*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1942, p. 11.
[2] E. H. Carr, *op cit.*, p. 13.

being by its very nature universal, disregarded national boundaries and started an ideological invasion long before its armies proceeded to physical invasion. Hence the democracies were not only militarily but also ideologically unprepared when the Second World War broke out. Their effort to rearm and regain strength for eventual action became successful only after the Nazi-Fascist assault resulted in a clear threat to their national existence. For a long time, the resources of the democracies were not developed to their fullest to check the aggressors; the understanding of the "revolution of nihilism" made slow progress, and knowledge of the totalitarian enemy's doctrine and methods remained insufficient. The effective devices of totalitarian propaganda were not parried with an equally effective defense of democratic principles.

The state of totalitarian countries and of those whose total authoritarianism may be regarded as transitional has been described in previous chapters. It is the chief purpose of this book to help clarify the systems and political programs of the non-democratic countries of major importance in their various aspects and implications. To make this purpose even clearer, an appraisal of the two greatest democracies, the United States and Britain, cannot be omitted.

Being in a state of evolution and striving for a postwar settlement worthy of its expenditures in men and material during the Second World War, democracy is losing some of its former characteristics and assuming new ones. These changes began to occur about the time of the First World War, and it may well take many years before new political, social, economic and cultural forms are established. It is therefore impossible to outline with accuracy the coming evolution of democracy.

There are, however, trends observable in Britain and America toward a reorganization of democracy in both the domestic and the international fields, trends which may well be affected by the ascendancy of the Soviet Union. Due to their size and power, the two Anglo-Saxon countries will influence the ultimate form and character of postwar reorganization. French prewar democracy does not offer a very compelling example because it has lost its prestige; Scandinavian democracy, extraordinarily advanced, has a limited influence, just as has Switzerland, because the peculiar

conditions prevailing in these small countries are not often applicable elsewhere.

There remain, for purposes of analysis and example, Britain and the United States. We are familiar with the history of American democracy but it may be worth while to survey the growth of British constitutionalism about which there exists a good deal of misunderstanding and confusion.