

Vichy Regime

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Preliminary remarks

I really appreciate this business of having to go around and talk to all kinds of groups. I've done a hell of a lot of that in my lifetime. There was a time when I never turned down an invitation to speak anywhere, anytime to anyone, on the grounds that — you know this — I was living this kind of one-man Chautauqua life; whatever I could do in life I was going to do it. And so I used to go on the circuits, and I got into this thing for about two years in which the churches kept inviting me. And you get into a circuit, and it goes from one to the other, and so forth. But I never was invited back, always one time each [*laughter*]. And that's also true of businessmen's clubs [*laughter*].

Lecture

I want to elaborate, then, considerably, that proposition that I set out to you last hour, a proposition which is really quite staggering in its implications: the proposition that the French ruling class in 1940 — by which we mean that kind of directory of big French capitalists, along with the high functionaries of the society, along with the traditional elites of the army and the Church — that that French ruling class in 1940 was perfectly willing to accept the military defeat, and to turn it into a political victory. That that French ruling class, after all, was to pounce upon the armistice of the 25th of June 1940, with the idea that it would close a potential social and political vacuum, and be able to maintain and retain what there was of the structure and the substance of its power. That that ruling class if you please, went into collaboration with the Nazis, went into collaboration with Nazi Germany, not unwillingly or not reluctantly, but with a great deal of enthusiasm — thinking, if you please, that its loyalty in that collaboration was like a passport into a kind of integrated European economy dominated by the Germans, and that that loyalty was a kind of pawnbroker's ticket. So that, when the British Empire was finally dismantled, that France would get its share. A ruling class, if you please, that in 1940 was to hide behind that kind of shadow sovereignty of the Unoccupied Zone of Vichy, and there deliberately to set out to chart a counter-revolution: by which I mean, after all, a capitalist society that is anchored and rooted in the impotence of the working class, a working class which has all of the instruments of its power destroyed, its trade unions, its right to strike, and the like. A ruling class that in 1940, after all, was to use the heavy shield of the German occupation in order, finally, to wreak its vengeance: a vengeance against the proletariat that had the pretension in those hot weeks of 1936 to want to improve its condition.

And all of that, after all, is terribly important, because it tells us a great deal about the social psychology of ruling elites, and about the capacity of those ruling elites to wage the class struggle. Because it is something that we often forget: that it is the ruling class that wages the class struggle more persistently and more effectively. And that's something that we have to know and be alerted to. Because we live in a moment after all, when in every advanced capitalist society, there is disarray that is setting in and that grows deeper, and that those who regulate the establishment, and are the ruling classes set about day after day to try to construct their strategies of defense. And we must know what the psychology of those elites are, and what their capacity to wage the class struggle is. And so to know about Vichy, after all, to know what the reality of Vichy is, is to know in the first place why it was that workers at the end of the Second World War stood with weapons in their hands and knew that their only safety lay in a revolution. To know about the reality of Vichy, after all, is to understand why the American policymakers at the end of the war, prefer to deal, if not directly with Vichy, at least with the partisans of Vichy, and never with the Resistance movement. To know the reality of Vichy, in other words, is to know a great deal not only about France, but about the roots of our contemporary societies.

And the political armature of Vichy, that kind of constitutional juridical structure upon which it was built, was constructed very quickly in July of 1940. The political framework for what was to be this new revolution in Vichy, for that was to be a return after all, to God and to family and to father. All of that was constructed in the early days of July of 1940. And it was constructed by the Pétain ministry that had replaced the Reynaud government on the 16th of June of 1940. And the engineer of that construction was Pierre Laval, who was the assistant prime minister to Marshal Pétain. But note it well, what is the creation of this political armature: that the old assembly, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, the last ones of the Third Republic, the ones that had been elected in May and June of 1936 — the Popular Front assembly, in other words — collaborated very willingly and very openly with the construction of this new political framework, of this new political armature. Now, you understand that the Communists are not in that assembly by 1940, that they have been expelled from the assembly and outlawed as a party on the 26th of September by [premier Édouard] Daladier in 1939, after the Nazi-Soviet pact. You understand also that there are thirty deputies that are not present in July of 1940. They are the ones that sailed off on the *Massilia* to go to North Africa on the 21st of June, and to try to raise a Resistance there, only to be incarcerated as enemies of the Vichy state. And so you're dealing with a reduced assembly. But nonetheless, they don't want the Socialists and the Radicals who were elected in 1936 as a Popular Front government. And it all goes on in three days, the 9th and the 10th and the 11th of July of 1940.

And it really is a sobering lesson: on the 9th of July there is the proposition put before the assembly in Bordeaux, before the combined Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, and the proposition is to revise the Constitution of the Third Republic. And that passes by a vote of 624 to 4. The next day, the crucial day, the 10th of July, and there there is a vote put that all power

should go to Marshal Pétain to revise the Constitution, *le pouvoir* in the hands of Marshal Pétain to do what he will do with the Constitution of the Third Republic, and that passes by a vote of 529 to 80. And among those 80, 39 are Socialists and 13 are Radicals — but note it well, then — a majority of the Socialists in the Chamber and a majority of the Radicals voted for those full powers to Pétain.

And then the next day, the 11th of July, and there you get the destruction of parliamentary government, the destruction of all the assemblies because Marshal Pétain returns and he is now called the head of the state, or the chief of state, no longer prime minister. And he introduces his Constitutional Acts No. 1, 2 and 3, the substance of which is to place totally in his hands all executive and legislative power to pass laws; you no longer have to refer to popular consultation in any way or in any form. And you ask the question: Did the people who voted that so overwhelmingly, did they know what they were doing? And Laval spoke it bluntly enough, did he not, in the debate of the 9th of July of 1940, when he said, "We have no other possible course but loyal collaboration with Germany and Italy; I am not disturbed by that prospect. I assure you, we will have a great future by integrating ourselves into the new European policy." There was no ambiguity as to what was going on, and how to explain that good republicans, some of them called themselves socialists, should have gone down the line for this Léon Blum, who was there tried to define it at the process — at the trial, the treason trial of Marshal Pétain in 1945, when he made a deposition — and he talked about fear, that men were afraid on those days of debate: "As I sat on those benches for two days, I saw the paralysis which fear creates: the fear of [Jacques] Doriot's fascists gangs in the street, the fear of bygone soldiers at Clermont-Ferrand, the fear of the Germans." And surely that was there.

But it's another kind of fear that it seems to me is at the heart of the matter, and that is that deputies in these damnable chambers, that no matter whether they are of the left or of the right, are of the establishment. They are a part of the system, and they do fear a vacuum, and they do fear disturbance and chaos, and they look upon Pétain as the patriarch, *père de la Patrie*. They thought he will restore a certain order, he will keep at least some French sovereignty. But what will he keep? He keeps a beachhead: he keeps a power base, if you please, for those capitalists who want to make their counter-revolution, and that's all. And there were a few who sent that in those crucial debates, because Laval said something very offensive. At the end of the debate on the 10th of July, at the end of the debate, he was full of joy. He had really engineered this vote, it was 529 to 80. And consequently, he had gotten those full powers for the regime and for Pétain. And at the end, he said, "Gentlemen, in the name of Maréchal Pétain, *'Je vous remercie pour la France'*": I thank you for France. And there came one shout from that assembly. And it came for Marcel Astier, a deputy of the left, who shouted, "One with France, even if it's dying!"

And there is, after all, some recognition that something is changing, but with those laws and that political armature, with that structure, the architects of counter-revolution could set their course.

And the question we ask is: Who are those architects and what do they want? And here we have to strip away a certain mystification. And we have to really strip away layers and layers upon historical interpretation and criticism, to get down to what is really a kernel of truth at the center. And you strip away, first of all, that idea that Vichy is traditionalism. There were traditionalists at the Vichy, there were people who were thinking about a pre-industrial society. There were those Catholic *pères*, those army officers, those reactionary professors of philosophy, those crazy journalists who were thinking that France was too mechanistic, too materialistic, that you have to go back to an organic society to an hierarchical society that should be rooted in the land, that should be rooted in craft production, that you had to organize human beings into family units, that you had to organize them into corporations and guilds, all of that kind of hierarchical nonsense. Yes, it was there.

But traditionalists were at Vichy, and they did push through a certain number of laws. That Minister of Education Jacques Chevalier (the godson of Marshal Pétain, if you want a prestige item) and Jacques Chevalier, the Minister of Education in December of 1940, does push through a law that says there shall be religious instruction in the schools, which have been outlawed since the separation of Church and State. There are the laws that give extra subsidies to the fathers of big families, and the laws that make it damnably difficult to get a divorce; all of which means that the family, and especially the big family will be that kind of central prison house of the society, and that human beings will be wedged into the family so that they cannot get out, so that their area of freedom after all is restrained, so that there is, if you please, order in society. And there is all of that attack upon the *métèques*, upon the outsiders, upon those that are a little better than animals, as Charles Maurras would say: we're talking about Freemasons, we're talking about Jews, we're talking about foreigners. And, you see, you see what a magnificent mystification this is: you see that to attack the outsider, that racism is a *union sacrée*, it is a sacred union of the rich and the poor, of the weak and the strong, of governors and the governed, all of them around the idea that they are French, that they belong to the real community and all of the others are outsiders. It is mystification to prevent the class struggle from rearing its head, to prevent a consciousness of the reality of one's social and economic circumstances. And all of that was there.

But my point is that traditionalism is not at the center of the problem, that there was no going back to villages under Vichy, but rather an acceleration of going into the cities, that there was no going back to craft production, but rather a very accelerated program of concentrated capitalist production. What traditionalism did provide for the essence of Vichy was a rhetorical cover: that you could say that you were really recreating the authentic community, that you were reestablishing traditional French values, and also a certain amount of law, a certain amount of legislation to restrain and restrict opposition, to drain people by putting them in families and conservative schools, to drain them of their insights and to drain them of their capacity to act. And it is not traditionalism, *non plus* Nazism. The Nazis are there also, the authentic French

Nazis. They are there in the regime, but it really isn't so much about that. And when I talk about the real Nazis, I'm talking, of course, about the psychic cripples [*laughter*], I'm talking about those *révoltés* in the society, after all, who in some mystical kind of alchemical formulation, managed to combine nihilism and authoritarianism. I'm talking about those people who would purify society and stop the rot in it, by applying terror to all those they hated, whether they be workers or Communists or Jews or weak people or defective people. Yes, they were there.

Most of them were not in Vichy, but they were in occupied France. They hung around Paris, and they loved it in Paris. There in Hôtel Lutetia was the Gestapo, and they hung around the hotel lobbies to see the Gestapo. And in Paris, they got their little pension from Otto Abetz and the German embassy in Paris. And they lived in that cardboard world of power and honors. They were the underlings of the real Nazis, and they enjoyed whatever fruits and crumbs were thrown off the table. I think of Eugène Deloncle. I don't think of him often, but Deloncle was there, and he's very characteristic of those types up in Paris. And he was himself a guy with a good education from Polytechnique, an engineer who became a naval engineer and, as a matter of fact, one of the constructors of the great passenger ship the *Normandie* — but a kind of repressed guy, Deloncle, never feeling he was given proper credit in society, and formed in 1936, right at the time that the Popular Front was being formed, a terrible paramilitary terrorist organization called La Cagoule. And the Cagoule specialized in assassinating the enemies of Mussolini. It did its work for Italian fascism, and there is Cagoule at the beginning of 1937, hunting down the Rosselli brothers: hunting down that Carlo Rosselli, that magnificent anti-fascist socialist from Italy, who had gone into the Spanish Civil War and fought in the International Brigade only to be wounded, then pumped into France to recover, and there with his brother Nello in June of 1937, to be knifed down by the terrorists of the Cagoule. And this Deloncle around Paris, ingratiating himself to his Nazi bosses on the 3rd and 4th of October during that night in 1941, doing something for which he won a medal: sending his boys out to blow up seven synagogues in Paris that night. And they were around Vichy too.

And there is that Joseph Darnand. And this is the same world in which we live, and these are people who come out of the same circumstances in which we are. And there's Joseph Darnand, after all, who's the head of the Vichy police from December of 1943 on, and he was really a *révolté*, a kind of a top, a brute, somebody with an uncontrollable temper. And had gone into World War I and been a commando hero and been decorated, but no officership after the war, and hated the society and vegetated in the 1920s, owning a garage in Nice fixing automobiles. And he went up to Paris in the '30s and he joined the Action française, and then he joined the Cagoule, and still looking for his place — and a filthy type. And on the 17th of September of 1943, he made the final move towards the Nazis. And he and Marcel Déat address a document directly to Hitler and to Himmler and to Goebbels on the 17th of September of '43, called *Plan de redressement français*, a plan for cleaning house in France. And what it says there is that Herr [Fritz] Sauckel — that marvelous *Gauleiter* of Thuringia, that brute who had gone from the

merchant marine into high ranks in the Nazi movement in Germany; that Herr Sauckel, who in March of 1942 had been made the chief *négrier* of Europe, that kind of slaveholder, that kind of collector of all of that slave labor of Europe to bring it into Germany — that Sauckel didn't realize, this says Darnand, that the French themselves are frustrating his mission in France: that there are 160,000 young Frenchmen who have escaped the net of this forced labor, and that 20,000 of them have gone out into the *maquis*. And says Darnand into this message to Hitler directly, "If you make me the chief of police or use your good officers on Vichy, I will clean that up." And the corner offices are used, and Darnand becomes the chief of the Vichy police in December of 1943. And he organizes what is called Milice. And the Milice is something that the French really can never live down.

The Milice comes right out of France. And it really is that Vichy police that is just so awful. And if you want to know the quality of it, there we are on the 10th of January of 1944. And it is Darnand leading a campaign himself of his Milice in the city of Lyon. And they knock violently at the door of a man named Victor Basch, who for a long time had been the head, the president of the League of the Rights of Man and Citizen in France, a civil liberties organization. And there, early in the morning, Basch came to his door in his bedclothes, accompanied by his wife, likewise in her bedclothes, and before they could even ask, shot down Basch and his wife, 80 years old. And, you see, that is the quality of those Nazis down there.

And they were at Vichy, to be sure, and it isn't really so true that they were just forced upon Vichy. There is a magnificent book about the Milice, if you have a very strong stomach and really can bare to read it, because it has all of the documents of that agency in it. And it is written by a Jacques Delperrié de Bayac. And he says, at the end of that thousand-page work on the Milice, this: "The Milice wasn't that epiphenomenon, but an integral part of Vichy. The Nazis didn't have to impose it between the Vichyssois and the Germans, we must remember: there was a genuine community of interest to hate and to do in the Communists, the Jews, the democrats, to extricate them from society and from life itself." You see what the point is. The very respectable Vichy didn't go around pulling triggers on Victor Basch; it wasn't [postwar prime minister Maurice] Couve de Murville who did that, it wasn't [Third Republic politician Pierre-Étienne] Flandin who did that. But then the respectables never pull the trigger; [copper mining company] Anaconda isn't pulling the trigger in Chile, nor is Chase Manhattan doing it in South Africa, but it's being done.

And that was the point. But you see the point about the Nazis in Vichy: it is that they have an instrumental role and not a substantive role, that their role was to create a terror within which the real counter-revolution could go on. And that brings me to the heart of my argument: that really what Vichy is about, what this entire problem of challenge at the end of the war will be about, is that Vichy is a good, solid, very capable, capitalist counter-revolution. They are the great capitalists at the helm of affairs, along with the great functionaries who do some of their

planning for them. There are men after all, like Pierre Pucheu, who was the head of the Comité des forges, and he became the Minister of Industrial Production at the beginning of 1941, and then is replaced when he becomes Minister of the Interior by the nephew of Louis Renault the automaker, a man who we already have met as making deals with the Germans to monopolize the auto industry of Europe. What I'm talking about is that there were capitalists in these key positions, who were interested in the expansion, the rationalization, the modernization of French capitalism, and who, in order to do that, knew that what they had to do was to prevent an opposition from the labor force. In other words, the spirit was very good — much like the spirit of the plan in the Fifth Republic, very much like the spirit of the government of [President Georges] Pompidou and [interior minister Raymond] Marcellin. Except that it had more clout, because it had, after all, simply the sheer terroristic power of doing in the working class.

And, you see, with them were the great technocrats. And that's one of the really unspoken parts of the story. We're talking about the revolt of the high civil servants, the ones who always were arrogant, and who hated electoral politics, and who thought that the governments of the left especially were degenerating France, and suddenly they become at Vichy real ministers and real planners. We're talking about Jean Bichelonne, for example — a fascinating story, this Jean Bichelonne. He is what is called *grande marque* at the Polytechnique; it means he gets the highest marks at this great school ever given to anyone who graduates from it. He's an arrogant son of a gun. And he's somebody who, when he sits as an Inspector of Finance, doesn't have real power until Vichy comes. And then this Bichelonne, this very brilliant type, is suddenly in a planning role, can really plan that kind of capitalist expansion without any opposition from below. And he makes his confabulation without Albert Speer of Germany, who was likewise interested in a kind of integrated European economy, what was a very brilliant type. And with Speer, he makes an agreement in December of 1943, and that is that 3,300 of the most important French factories, that employ 725,000 French workers, shall be exempted from the *Service du travail obligatoire*. In other words, shall be exempted from forced labor: they shall become the French core, or the French center, of an integrated capitalist economy in Europe, that will never have to count upon or never have to cope with the opposition of the working class. You get people like Bichelonne, you get people like that [Jean] Berthelot, the Minister of Communications at Vichy, who already thinks in terms of what today the Europeans call regionalism: that if there is an integrated Europe, some regions will be backward, other regions will be developed, because Berthelot already thinks that the road and the railroad system of France ought to be integrated into a European notion of the division of labor. You see, what that is all about is bogus corporatism.

And when I say bogus corporatism, I mean that the capitalists could organize their industries, but workers couldn't organize. That was the way Vichy corporatism worked. So that there is a law of August of 1940, which says that in every trade or every industry, every industrial branch, that all of the producers in that branch shall have what is called an organizing committee. And it shall

regulate its own internal affairs, it shall fix prices, it shall fix production, it shall allocate raw materials. And you see what that is about: that is the end of competition to begin with, but also it is the beginning of concentration. It means merger, it means driving out small producers, it means emphasizing the allocation of raw materials to the most advanced and the most powerful producers. And against them workers with no powers, because the law that comes in November of 1940 — you go back to pre-1884, because the law of November of 1940 dissolves the trade unions, and workers do not have the right to strike. And a year later in October '41 comes that kind of phony Charter of Labor, the *Charte du travail*, which organizes what are called social committees (*comités sociaux*) for the workers; bogus nonsense. They have no right to organize or right to strike.

And so what happens to the workers under Vichy will happen when that kind of counter-revolution happens. It is that their real wages plunge down, that the hours grew long, that they could barely survive, and yet they were better off than the million and a half of their comrades who were carted off to Germany to work in forced labor.

Question: Was this just a revolt of tiny minorities? Question: Did this have some support?

Question: Were there people in that French public — where after the war everyone was a resistant — were there those that supported it? Well, this crisis has been opened, of course, by *Le chagrin et la pitié*. The crisis is very profound in France; suddenly there's a four-hour movie made for television, which television wouldn't show in France, which you have seen here, I'm sure, in America. Suddenly a movie which said, "Oh ho, not everybody resisted. There were a lot of *collaborateurs*, and a lot of collaborators all." Yes, and some of those collaborators who came from the middle and the lower sectors of the bourgeoisie, some were profiteers. They were like that butter and egg lady in Jean Dutourd's magnificent novel, *Au bon beurre*, that tells you so much about Vichy. And she has this dairy shop, and she doesn't do at all well in the 1930s — but then, you see under Vichy, there are shortages, and she does very well with her butter and eggs. And all of her customers who had been arrogant toward her, she is arrogant now toward, she, and she loves it and has big pictures of Pétain. And there are those poor peasants — those peasants, after all, who had not a tractor, but maybe one straggling horse, and they barely made ends meet in the 1930s — but with the shortages of the Pétain period, with the shortages of Vichy, these marginal farmers suddenly became affluent, and they are the Vichyites. And then there are the sheer profiteers, the black market, you know, and then those that are grabbing up Jewish property. And there are people who make it under Vichy, and they like the regime.

But it's more than that. What it is, after all, is a mystification about Pétain also: the idea that somehow Pétain represents the people, he represents the race. And that becomes very strong. I'll tell you something most interesting. And that is that you really do not get a profound Resistance inside France until you demystify Pétain. Consider, if you please, these quotations from *Libération-Nord*. *Libération-Nord* is an early Resistance newspaper, and as late as January of

1941, we read this about Pétain: "After all of the unscrupulous politicians who have led France to defeat, he at least represented a bedrock of honesty, who neither wealth nor money could buy." And it's only when *Libération-Nord*, at the end of that year in December of 1941, one begins to demystify itself that you have a change: "It is a lie that that Pétain saved France in 1916. He didn't even know how to fight then." And then *Combat* in June of 1942: "Monsieur le Maréchal, we don't understand your fascist language, when you tell us every morning that we are beaten." But, you see, you have to come to that point.

And there were people in France who thought that Pétain was a father, that he represented the nation, and also that he represented order, because this gets closer to the point. You have in the petty bourgeoisie and in the *moyenne* sector of the bourgeoisie, you have people who are frightened: frightened of young people, frightened of insurgents, frightened of workers, frightened of change, frightened to look in the damn mirror, frightened to review one's life. I know people like that all over the place: that woman on the Avenue Bosquet, sitting there alone in a seven-room flat, the 7th arrondissement of Paris, sitting there with those damnable pictures of [conservative former president] Raymond Poincaré on the wall, shrieking about everything that is alive in the street — hating young people, hating drugs, hating Communists, hating everything that terrifies. Well, it's not just the French: 25% only like Richard Nixon now, but 75% liked him a lot in November of 1972. All the ones that were afraid can't be Richard Nixon; he's not pretty, he's stupid [*laughter, applause*]. There must be something else. Well, all of that was there.

And certainly you get it with that kind of support, but you do have the Resistance. You do have the Resistance nonetheless. And the Resistance we have to talk about a little bit, because, you see, it is there. And it is sufficiently visible so that American policymakers could have seen it and even seen it at an early time. Now, when you talk about the Resistance, let's make the case very, very clear. And that is that the Resistance in France inside the country was not really very visible, and was very scattered and very isolated until the second half of 1941. During the entire first year of the Vichy regime, and of the German occupation, Resistance is a very, very sporadic thing. Oh, there is part of the Resistance that we'll never be able to measure. And that's the sign of Resistance. You know, the first great Resistance novel — which was published by the first underground press during the Resistance movement, and that was Les Éditions de Minuit — and the first great Resistance novel was written by Vercors [pen name of Jean Bruller]. And Vercors wrote a novel called *Le Silence de la mer*, the silence of the sea. And it's a magnificent novel which you should read, because it tells you something about what we mean by the measureless, by the silent Resistance. It's about this old man and his daughter, upon whose household German soldiers are billeted, and they will never speak to the German soldiers. And that is silent Resistance. And Christopher Sykes does it in that marvelous book *Four Women*, when he talks about that café owner in Paris, who every time the Nazis come in and order something, and she

has to go back to the kitchen never goes through the door to that kitchen without going "pschh" over her shoulder. And that the silent Resistance.

But when we talk about Resistance, we mean something active. We mean those kinds of networks of intelligence gathering for the Allies: we mean clandestine newspapers, we mean acts of sabotage, we mean acts of violence. And you begin to get a little bit of it toward the end of 1940, the first clandestine newspaper in November of 1940. It was an army captain, Henri Frenay, who founded the first issue of *Combat*, of Combat. The next month, in December of 1940, you get two rather conservative and moderate trade unionists, a man named Robert Lacoste, will become such a very barbaric governor of Algeria in 1956. It is Lacoste and Christian Pineau, these two moderate trade unionists, who found a newspaper called *Libération*, done in mimeograph copy in December of 1940.

You get your first intelligence network. And that first intelligence network, interestingly enough, is founded at the Musée de l'Homme, at that great anthropological center, that great anthropological museum. And it is there that two Russian émigrés, ethnologists, Boris Vildé and [Anatole] Lewitsky, that the two of them form a kind of intelligence-gathering service to give information to the British. Well, you see, all of that was very scattered. And the Nazis didn't care much about it. They rounded up Communists in 1940. In October, especially, Vichy rounded up Communists. But it is not until March of 1941 that the Nazis themselves begin to crack down on internal Resistance, and they crack down on the Musée de l'Homme. They broke up that network of intelligence gathering, and they shoot Vildé and Lewitsky.

And the question is: Why was that Resistance so mild in that first year? And what does that mean? In part, quite obviously, it's because people simply don't think that the war has not been settled once and for all. It's hard to believe that the British will hold out, it's hard to believe that the Russians will go into the war, it's hard to believe that the Americans will go into the war. There is a magnificent quotation from Simone de Beauvoir from the second volume of her memoirs, called *Journal de guerre*. And she's there in Paris, right after the fall of France, and this is what she writes about her life: "I live in a sort of bedlam, where public events bring their own individual psychological agony. But I want to become a person again, with a past and a future of my own. Perhaps here in Paris, I shall achieve this aim. If I can only grow my salary then I will stay there a long time." And what Simone de Beauvoir is saying is that so many people simply tried to settle down and live, thinking that really the inevitable has happened. And the second factor that is so important is that Vichy itself for a period of time complicates the question of Resistance: that against the German in the north, you know who the enemy is, but against Vichy? Well, you have to demystify, you have to say that Vichy really does work for the Germans, you have to say that there is no double game, that it hasn't saved anything, and that will take time.

But then a crucial factor, and that's the disarray of the left. When I talk about the disarray of the left, of course, I mean that the socialists were in thorough disarray and had no sense of how you resist clandestinely. I'm talking about some leftists — one of the hardest parts of the story even to discuss — some leftists, who because they're pacifists and don't want the continuation of a war; because they are so anti-Communist, they think that the defeat of communism is a desideratum for working people; who are so caught up in a certain kind of *planisme*, a certain kind of planned society, that they think that Vichy may do it: they join the regime. And there are socialists and trade unionists who do that. But mainly I'm talking about the Communists.

Now, the Communists went into the war in September of 1939 intact: they had 300,000 members. They had a terrific support in the working class. And they had done a fantastic job, really, of struggling against fascism, of insisting after all that there had to be a front against fascism. They had attacked Daladier for making the Munich Accords, they attacked every notion of capitulation before fascism. You think of those great speeches of Gabriel Péri in the Chamber of Deputies, that great Communist deputy, day after day haranguing that fascism is a danger and that France must defend herself against it. You think of that newspaper *Françoise*, in which there is that constant barrage by Paul Nizan, or by a kind of anti-fascist demand that anti-fascist front called for: all of that in the Communist record. And then, you see, comes the Pact.

And comes the Pact, the Nazi-Soviet Pact on the 23rd of August of 1939. And Stalin, of course, had not advised the French Communists any more than he advised any other Communists, that he was going to engage in an alliance of convenience to be sure with Nazi Germany. And that struck the French Communist Party. And note it well. For a little while, the French Communist Party clung to its own independent line. Even a week after that pact, it went on the 1st of September of 1939 into the Chamber of Deputies and said this: "The French Communist parliamentary group unanimously proclaims the resolution of all Communists to work in first ranks of the resistance to Hitler's fascism." The 3rd of September, two days later, the Communists voted for more credits, voted for credits to fight the war in Poland against the Nazi invader.

But, you see, all that that Pact meant was that the ruling class of France, which hated the Communists — people like Flandin and even Daladier, who thought the Communists were a terrific barrier against any accommodation with Hitler's Europe — they took the opportunity. And the opportunity was taken on the 26th of September, when not only all of the Communist press was outlawed, but the Party itself was outlawed. It meant that the Communist deputies were expelled from the parliament on the 26th of September of '39; it meant that they were expelled from the municipal councils, some 2,500 of them across France; it meant that some of the leaders were put into prison.

And that, you see, is an opportunity. If the Communists had only been able to play that right, that was an opportunity — because under attack, they could have done what they had failed to do in the '30s. Under attack, they could have done what they were constrained from doing throughout that entire period of the Popular Front: they could have demanded an anti-fascist alliance, an anti-fascist front. And at the same time, by pointing out that the ruling class of France was really hellbent from capitulation, that it was suppressing them, because they were calling for a revolutionary defense of France. It could have fought not only for anti-fascism, but for the revolution simultaneously; it could have taken what is that great resource of patriotism and put it to revolutionary ends. But to do that, it would have had to separate itself from Stalin's line. And that they could not do.

By the beginning of October, after all, it is following the Russian line. And it is denouncing the war in Poland and saying the French should not be in Poland to pull chestnuts out of the fire for Polish noblemen, who are great landowners. And then [Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav] Molotov is saying, after all, that they are the British and the French who were guilty in Poland and not the Germans, that the Germans are peace-loving, and the French Communist Party follows that line. And on a platter, they hand to the French ruling class what it wants. And the French ruling class kills two birds with one stone: it suppresses the Communist movement to begin with, puts key people in prison, ousts them from their forum; and in the second place, it removes the obstacle to their capitulation, the capitulation they were to make in June of 1940. Comes Vichy, and under Vichy the Communist line is very strained until June of '41. Between the summer of 1940 and June of '41, the Communist line — essentially, as we find it in the clandestine issues of *L'Humanité*, the Communist newspaper — is to attack Vichy, is to attack the reactionary oligarchy that has seized control at Vichy, but to go very soft on the Germans, and never to call for an armed uprising against Vichy and the German occupation: that it will not do. And that basically is the line until June of '41. But that's only basically the whole thing is very complicated.

And some of the complications, really, you ought to know, because you're old enough [*laughter*]. And there were Communists who resisted before it was time. And there is Charles Tillon in Bordeaux, poor man, that man who was such a tough kind of militant, and who in the summer of 1940 is already writing a clandestine tract in which he says, "We must continue this struggle against Nazi Germany." But I'm thinking especially of Gabriel Péri, and of Georges Politzer, and note this well. Péri is magnificent, is magnificent for a variety of reasons. He was a worker who stood in that parliament day after day and made those magnificent speeches about fascism. And here's Péri. The line is that you don't attack Nazi Germany because it is the ally of Russia, and here is Péri, Péri who cannot stand it. In December of 1941, or December of '40, which is the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the French Communist Party, he publishes a brochure in which we read this, in my translation: "We, the people of France, who live under the German occupation, we have a good taste of what global Nazi domination would mean. We Communists

fight imperialism, whether it appears in a British bowler, or in a German brown shirt." Well, all right, the line is still that there are two imperialisms; but there were two imperialisms, and he does include the German.

But April of '41 — and listen to this — and here is Péri, and this is two months before the Communist line changes. And here he is, high-ranking Communist militant, April '41 in this brochure, listen to it — it burns off the page:

"No, Nazism is not socialism, but its sworn enemy. The mission of the Nazis assembled by Hitler and of the cardboard Nazis assembled by Déat and Deloncle and Doriot is to deflect the working-class masses from its revolutionary goal, and to consolidate the power of the oligarchy by sheer terror. Germany is an oligarchic elite and a vassal population. And that is what is in store for all of Europe if the Nazis win. The Communists must struggle with every breath and every day for the liberation of their land, from Nazi occupation and for the liberation of the lives of the popular masses."

And Politzer... and Politzer is a young philosopher, one of the best intellectuals who ever went into the Communist Party. And the Communists were not quite sure that they could trust Politzer. He was trained in psychology, after all, and he was writing tracts that mentioned Freud, and Freud was not to be mentioned in this Communist literature. He was unreliable, as we say. But there was Alfred Rosenberg, that theoretician of Nazism, who had written *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, that great tract on racism, talking about how you create a superior race. And Dr. Rosenberg had come to Paris to lecture in February of 1941, and Politzer couldn't stand it. And consequently, having heard that lecture, he answered it in his own brochure in February of '41 this way: "Under the Nazi Revolution, the relations among human beings have sunk beneath the standards of the darkest of the medieval Dark Ages. What is the superior civilization the Nazis have achieved? Concentration camps for workers and intellectuals, antisemitism, and persecution of so-called inferior races. In Rosenberg's twisted mind, in fascist ideology, the most frenetic reaction becomes revolution, and the policy of enslaving France becomes national renovation." There's no ambiguity about that.

And then comes May and June, before the Russians are attacked by the Nazis, and up there in the Pas-de-Calais, in the mining area of France — suddenly, on the 27th of May in one of the mine pits, in a mining town in the Pas-de-Calais, is a strike. And strikes are not supposed to be. And suddenly the strike spreads, and between the 27th of May and the 4th of June, there are 120,000 people under the Gestapo noses out on strike. And it is repressed by the Gestapo and by Vichy. But what is responsible for it? We know now, it is Auguste Lecœur, that young Communist militant. It is a network of Communist militants, who aren't waiting for the line and who helped to launch that strike, but don't exaggerate. The Party line was against that.

And here is what you are probably not old enough to know, and that is that both Péri and Politzer were pulled in by the Nazis. Péri was pulled in a month after he wrote that April '41 tract, in May of '41. And he was shot at Mont-Valérien in December of '41, shot with those magnificent last words about the "tomorrows that sing." And Politzer was taken prisoner in May of 1942 and shot. That's normal; they were militants, they had written tracts. But [historian and Comintern activist Alfred] Rosmer told me years later — it was somebody who knew a great deal, it was a great friend of Trotsky's, and somebody who had watched social movement very closely and been in it — and he said to me in an offhand thing that haunted me, and that I simply had to find out the truth about. He said, "Well, you know that both Péri and Politzer were unreliable. And when the Nazis got them, or the Vichy police got them and turned them over to the Nazis, it was because the Communists had fingered them." And I could not believe it then.

And so I tracked it and tracked it for a long time. And I had that marvelous dinner with Madame Péri, the widow of Gabriel Péri. And we sat in the Place de la Contrescarpe, and I got to the end of that interview, and I said, "Well, what about the so-called mysterious circumstances of the death of Gabriel Péri?" And she said, "Yes, they were mysterious." And I said, "Does that mean the Communists fingered him?" And she said, "Probably." And when I talked then to the daughter of Charlotte Delbo, who knew Politzer very well, and then interviewed in Number 745 Lexington Avenue in New York, a great old friend of Politzer, a man named Norbert Guterman — and they are convinced that he was done in that way. Well, now it doesn't surprise us: we have the confession, and so forth...

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... don't exaggerate this Resistance before the act. The point is, you see, that the Communists really were badly served by Stalin's line. They were badly served for three reasons. One, because between the beginning of the war until June of 1941, they lost their opportunity, the great opportunity they had, to struggle against fascism and the ruling class at the same time. In the second place, because they gave the stage away to the bourgeois elitist sector of the Resistance movement: namely the Gaullist movement. By the time they came in, it was late. And in the third place, because they were utterly naive. They really did trust that the fact that there was a Nazi-Soviet Pact was going to protect them. Now I have seen in the manuscript room of Bibliothèque nationale, in the Resistance Collection, the most astonishing document imaginable. It is the letter that was sent, after all, from captured Nazi archives. It is the letter that French Communists in May of 1941 sent to Otto Abetz, the Nazi ambassador in Paris, asking if the Nazis would not intervene with Vichy to prevent the arrest of so many Communists, 18,000 of them by May of 1941. And they signed their names and put their addresses, and were arrested the next day.

And so you're dealing with a wasted moment. And then, of course, the frontier is crossed. The frontier is crossed on the 21st and the 22nd of June of 1941, when the Nazis invade the Soviet

Union, and everything changes. And suddenly the Communists are into that Resistance, and they are into it fantastically: with a kind of courage, with a kind of daring that really can hardly be described, which brings them immense support among workers and intellectuals. Suddenly they are attacking De Gaulle and saying that he is too *attentiste*: that he is waiting too long for an armed uprising, that he wants only the Allied armies, and all the time before that they had attacked him for being an adventurer and a warmonger. But the Resistance changes at that point. But the point is this: that until June of 1941, there was a Resistance. But that Resistance, as it was visible to American policymakers — and that is crucial to our understanding — was not the Resistance inside France: it was the elitist Resistance outside France and centered in London. It was the Gaullist Resistance.

And about that, you have to have certain points of understanding. Now, don't exaggerate De Gaulle; it's easy to do so. De Gaulle, after all, is a prisoner of his upbringing, a prisoner of his training. He is trained and brought up exactly the way Marshal Pétain was, exactly the way [collaborationist general Maxime] Weygand was. He is a military man with a tremendously conservative bias. In fact, when you talk about De Gaulle and Gaullism, when you talk about that act of the 18th of June of 1940, of going up to London, and making that Resistance broadcast over the BBC, you're really — I'm sorry to say — you're really talking about something psychological. You're talking about a man who is a loner, a man who is a rebel, but never with goals that are rebellious.

And that, after all, is what De Gaulle was thinking about. There he was in Bordeaux, on that awful 16th of June of 1940. And everything was stagnant, and everything was static. And there was all kinds of intrigue, and he decided that something had to be done. And he left the next day on the 17th of June by plane for London, with his aide-de-camp and with the British ambassador. And his idea in going to London was not to found something separate: his idea was to be part of the Imperial Resistance, in other words, that the empire would resist. But what De Gaulle didn't calculate was the capacity of Weygand to really nip that in the bud. Because in the final analysis, there are only two colonial commanders — General [Georges] Catroux in Indochina and General [Paul] Legentilhomme in Somaliland — who join De Gaulle. All the rest are bludgeoned by Weygand, who goes into North Africa, who goes into the colonies and says, "You must obey orders, you must obey the hierarchy, you must not fight the Resistance" — and they don't.

And so De Gaulle was suddenly caught up there in London, and he is alone. And he hadn't planned it that way. And Churchill gave him the BBC, and he used it. So on the 18th of June of 1940, he makes his famous speech. And the speech of De Gaulle over the BBC is this way: "Has the last word been said? Is this defeat a final one? No, France is not alone." This is a man sitting with absolutely just his aide-de-camp at that time [*laughter*]. "No, France is not alone. She is not alone. She is not alone. I, General de Gaulle, today in London, invite all French officers and soldiers on British territory — engineers, war plant workers — to join forces with me. The flame

of French Resistance must not and will not be extinguished." Now, consider that well, and keep certain things in mind: that when De Gaulle talked about the flame of French Resistance, he was not talking about an interior Resistance, not at all. He was not talking about a *maquis* inside the country, and that he always disliked and always feared. What he was talking about was gathering Free French forces outside to serve as a phalanx to the Allied war effort. In the second place, when he called all French...

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... traditional, not very famous people, generally the ones that were out of sorts for one reason or another with Vichy (high civil servants, a couple of generals and admirals, people of that sort), but not a rank and file population. And that by the end of 1940, De Gaulle had 35,000 in his movement, he had one sector of the empire — namely the sector of West Africa — about 35,000, and there it stayed until the beginning of 1942.

Now, note it well with De Gaulle. What De Gaulle is talking about, he said very bluntly. He is talking about a sacred union. And he writes in the *grand livre* of the 15th of November of 1941. And listen to this, because this gives you a clue: "In our Resistance, there must be no politics for a divide." In other words, the Resistance movement is to restore France, it is not to renovate; it is not to make something new. And in all of those early speeches, he's talking about *notre Algérie*, *notre Maroc*, *notre Tunisie*, which, of course, offends the Americans. All the time, he has that same background as the others. And when he taught history at Saint-Cyr, the military academy, he used as his textbook *The History of France* by Jacques Bainville, who was a monarchist. And he believes in one party, and he is anti-parliamentary and quite xenophobic, and even a bit racist. But there is a difference: De Gaulle is not Pétain, and he is not Weygand. And that is that he didn't think that the Communist menace was so great that it was best to give in to German occupation in order to fight it. And secondly, with that kind of arrogance that really won out so often, he knew he could co-opt the Communists.

Now, all that was visible; you can't not see De Gaulle. So that really raises the question about our American policymakers, and they were there. Now, we weren't at war, we Americans. We weren't at war until that day that will live in infamy, the 7th of December of 1941, which meant that American policymakers had quite a period of time to adjust to Vichy. And what they saw in Vichy was an opportunity to oust British influence from the French Empire and from France. And De Gaulle, after all, was the ploy for Churchill, was the front man for Churchill. And, consequently, American policymakers thought that they would make their arrangements with Vichy. It's a fascinating story.

Roosevelt had two emissaries in Vichy France. He had his closest diplomatic friend, Admiral [William D.] Leahy. Now, you have to understand that Roosevelt, who is this great renovator of

American society, has as his closest diplomatic adviser a man who is, really, a military man. And Admiral Leahy goes off, after all, and he sees Pétain, likes him, and he sees Darnand and likes him, but especially he likes Weygand: Weygand talks his language and he writes very nice things back to Roosevelt. And then there is that special authority in the State Department, Robert Murphy, and what they do is complain constantly back to the State Department that the British are blockading North Africa and blockading American trade there. Well, naturally, the British were blockading North Africa because Vichy was the friend of Nazi Germany and they were at war. And, consequently, February of 1941 comes the Murphy-Weygand Accords. And Robert Murphy strikes an agreement with General Weygand, and it gives the United States for the first time a foothold economically in North Africa.

And all of that changes when the United States goes into the war. And then it's a question of who to deal with, if we have to invade North Africa, as we do in November of 1942. And do you deal with those Vichyites? Or do you say that if you go into North Africa, maybe you will stir up a Resistance movement, a liberation movement? No, no, not that. What do you do in North Africa? Eisenhower, who was there, put it very well. And Eisenhower tells you a great deal about the mind of America. And he writes back to the State Department in November of 1942, "There is a great paucity of qualified men to fill the political posts in North Africa. Abrupt or radical changes — bringing into office those who are unknown quantities — could create trouble for us. We can't be too concerned about past political affiliations, whether these men work for Vichy or not. However, any Gaullist is really too extreme." And within that framework, policy would be worked out for North Africa and then for France. Now, get the picture, because we have tried to make an analysis of what Vichy was. And when we talk about collaboration, keep in mind what that was. And ask yourself this weekend: What the hell anybody was talking about when he said we were fighting fascism? [*applause*]