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THE FALL OF FRANCE

SEEN THROUGH SOVIET EYES

by Boris Efimov

DANCE OF THE UNCLEAN SPIRITS

by

ILYA EHRENBURG

3d

With a foreword
by
SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER

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FOREWORD

This is not the first French war that Ilya Ehrenburg, famous novelist, Soviet citizen and very much citizen of the world, has seen. Living in France before 1914 he was a correspondent on the Western Front in the war of 1914-18. Since then he has lived for many years in France, knowing it closely and dispassionately—and perhaps, in his eye-witness reportage from Vienna in February 1934, from Spain during the Civil War, observing some cloudy symbols of the catastrophe which he witnessed in 1939-40.

Between May 9th and June 9th, 1940, the German Army, having entered France through Belgium, crossed the Meuse, flouted the Maginot Line, reached the Channel, cut off the Belgian Army, the British Expeditionary Force and a considerable part of the French Army, havocked the north-eastern provinces, and swept forward to Paris. On May 17th prices on the Paris Bourse rose sharply, and the first refugees appeared in the street. On June 9th the Government left Paris. During the next day Parisians wondered whither it had gone—until the evening, when a black fog, drifting in from the burning oil-tanks, became a more immediate preoccupation. On June 14th the enemy entered Paris, where they found the Military Governor, the police, the staffs of public utility services, and those who were too old, too infirm, too poor, or too witless to get out—in all, less than one-tenth of the population of the city.

On June 14th, too, as I find in a diary: "*Onlooker,* broadcasting on the events of the week, urged hearers not to be too much overawed by the fall of Paris. It was less important than the steadfast courage of people in this country."

For a month and a little over, then, France was News . . . a flaring presaging comet in all men's eyes. Before, we had heard little about France. We have heard but little since. Before, we learned, briefly, that all was going well. Since, we learn that all goes ill. There have been some books, memoirs, disclosures, but they have not told us very much, for some are but personal impressions hastily thrown together, and in others the grinding of the axe, the paying-off of old scores, have invalidated the narrative.

Ehrenburg's *Fall of France* (first appearing, last August and September, as five articles in *Trud,* the Soviet trade union paper) has a different ring. It records what he witnessed

before and during the fall of Paris, and describes the aftermath in both occupied and unoccupied France. Compact, incisive, vivid (in the accounts of the sufferings of the French people almost unbearably so), it matches a ruthless narrative to a ruthless march of events. Analysing the causes which prepared the downfall of the Republic, and survived it, and still persist, malignant as ever, it is much more than that easy thing, an indictment. It is a diagnosis.

As a diagnosis, it contains an element of hope. But for us, perhaps, it would be most useful read as a warning. It may be that *Onlooker* was right, that the courage of people in this country was more important than the fall of Paris. But the French did not lack courage. During ten months of defeat—defeat at first a slow paralysis, then a strychnine poisoning convulsion, they displayed a great deal of the courage known as "bulldog". . . the kind of courage that holds on with its teeth while its hindlegs are being lifted off the ground. What was needed in France was not courage to face the enemy, but courage to find out the truth, and face that.

Across the Channel the chalk cliffs of France remind us that we were once part of the continent of Europe. We are not so much an island that we can afford to ignore the lesson of what happened in a country so close to ours in social structure and development. Till now, we might have pleaded that the lesson was hard to decipher. Ilya Ehrenburg's book removes that excuse.

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER.

I. THE WAR THAT WAS NOT A WAR

(*September* 1939-*April* 1940)

In the summer of 1935 I visited the little town of Lannoy, near Lille. The "Association of Flaxmill Owners" had decided at the time to pull down a number of factories: the manufacturers wished to keep prices from falling. The machines were to have been sold for scrap. But day and night the workers kept watch over the mills, they guarded the national wealth. They managed to save the greater part of the flaxmills. In the summer of this year I passed through Lannoy again. Bombs had destroyed the factories. All around was a heap of ruins. Where are the workers of Lannoy now? Wandering, no doubt, with millions of other refugees, over the wasted fields of Limousin or Perigord. . . .

How is it that this time they could not manage to protect their machines, their cities, their land? I know the French people well; they love their country and they love freedom. In 1915 I saw the French infantry at Verdun; they were brave lads. It is not the people who are to blame for the defeat of France. The people were deceived; while armed, they were disarmed. It was those same men who once tried to tear down the Lannoy flaxmills who brought the country to its ruin.

France lived heedless, not recking of danger. The summer before the war I saw vegetables and sardines thrown into the sea. A year later, starving people searched in vain for tins of food. When they entered Paris, the Germans found there tons of steel—disused rails from tramway lines that had been scrapped ten years before.

People studiously made ready for dinners, for summer holidays, for fairs, for everything you please, save only for the ordeals that were to come. In the year before the war a huge fire broke out at Marseilles. In this city of a million inhabitants could be found neither a fire escape nor a pump. Fire brigades had to be called by telephone from Lyons, while in the meantime Marseilles burnt. I saw this with my own eyes.

Everyone said that France was prepared for war. This was part deceit, part self-deception. Once upon a time, before the invention of gunpowder, expensive coats of armour protected the knight from injury. The French Generals believed that expensive armour could save France. They called this armour the Maginot Line. In vain a few experts led by Colonel de Gaulle insisted that a new "gunpowder" had been invented, and that without a strong

the Paris restaurants in all the languages of the world. The menus were tempting, but even the most delicious pheasants could hardly help to repel a tank attack. . . . The optimists of Paris never thought of that, they sang Maurice Chevalier's ditty *" Paris reste toujours Paris "* (" Paris will always be Paris "). Ten years back there was a very popular song in Vienna, *" Wien bleibt Wien "* (" Vienna will always be Vienna "). . . .

Every evening, unfolding our newspapers, we could learn which shares had risen and which fallen. The stockbrokers thrived. Only the deputies could vie with them: meetings of the parliamentary groups, whisperings in the lobbies, complicated intrigues, all went on as before. Bonnet's stock now fell, now took a leap. Laval's stock rose slowly, but surely. Flandin swore that the Germans loved him, de Monzie insisted that he was highly appreciated in Rome, Ybarnegaray vowed that he was worshipped by Generalissimo Franco himself. Knowing ones laid wagers on the date of the next government crisis: in January or in February.

Having proclaimed the Crusade, the " Crusaders " immediately embraced Islam. They filled the jails, burned seditious books, muzzled the press. The military communiqués of the General Staff were noted for their brevity: " Nothing to report." The bulletins of the secret police made up for them in verbosity. Arrests of Communists were presented like military victories. The French Government was fighting not against Germany, but against the French Communists, and very soon there languished in concentration camps like prisoners-of-war, 34,000 workers. People were arrested on trumped-up charges. A shopkeeper would swear that his competitor was " a dangerous pacifist." A jealous husband asserted that his wife's lover was " a notorious defeatist." People were arrested for raising their fists (the Popular Front salute), for possessing a biography of Lenin, for a few bars of the " International," for saying " this accursed war."

A Polish gutter journal that published anti-Semitic filth calmly continued to appear in Paris. Jews, called up to serve in the Polish army, were baited there, as formerly in the Rzecz Pospolita. But none of this disturbed the French " Crusaders," declaiming about " the equality of peoples." The Russian White Guards were the special pets. In their news-sheet *Vozrozhdeniye* they praised General Franco, the Fifth Column, and pogroms. An individual named Breus offered free board and lodging to those on leave, adding: " The applicant must be ready to refer to His Majesty the Tsar Emperor by his full titles, members of the commonalty need not apply." Furthermore, the Spanish Republicans continued to rot in concentration camps. The police zealously arrested Italian workers, they raided the " House of Czech Culture " in Paris. The Ruhr magnate von Thyssen

honoured Paris with a visit; he put up at the best hotel (the German Army headquarters are there now). Von Thyssen was photographed in profile, and in front view, with his wife, and with his little dog.

For the captains of industry the war was *revanche* for 1936—for the fears that had gripped them in those memorable days, for the red banners on the streets of Paris, for the rights the workers won. The whole lot went at a single blow. The trade unions existed on sufferance. Stool-pigeons in the workshop organisations ferreted out " trouble-makers." Workers were dismissed for a word, for a gesture, for keeping silent even. Scores of thousands of skilled workers were thrown out on to the streets. The war industry suffered, but the manufacturers piled up profits. To the " Crusaders," shells or aeroplanes meant not the defence of the country, but dividends alone.

The beginning of this century had brought France emancipation from the Church. Only old women used to go to mass. During the war, official France went devout. The Radical-Socialists, who traced their ancestry from the Jacobins, suddenly remembered Saint Louis. Cabinet Ministers became frequent visitors to church. Services were broadcast over the air. The Bishops left the Generals in the shade.

The newspapers degenerated into miserable sheets. They did not know what to write about; no military events were taking place, and as for the so-called " war aims," it would have been difficult to write even a short article about them: there were neither aims, nor war. The newspapers filled up space with slander of the Communists and idle gossip. *Le Temps*, organ of the big industrialists, wrote: " We must root out the selfishness of the workers." *L'Action Française* denounced the British. *Le Jour* sang the glory of Rome. The lads of the pogrom sheet *Je Suis Partout* brought an action against de Kérillis: the poor man had roused the indignation of the " Crusaders "—he wanted to take the war seriously.

In charge of the radio was placed the writer Giraudoux, author of the comedy " The Trojan War Shan't Happen."* He made frequent speeches that sparkled with witticisms and dealt with moral values vaguely. Listening to him, the French peasantry spat with disgust. It was difficult to fill up the radio programmes. I have heard religious services succeeded by smutty songs, a hymn to Ambassador Bullitt, and even a bow-wow entertainment by military dogs.

A war without an enemy was exhausting. Deputies, journalists, Bishops rejoiced with ardour over General Mannerheim as over manna from heaven. At last they had found a foe! The war

* *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu.*

with Germany was completely forgotten, like a last season's play, and a not particularly successful one at that. The newspaper columns were full of the Far North. The war correspondents migrated from Strasbourg to Helsinki. The Parisian ladies began trying on hats that were something like the shape of the Finnish soldiers' caps. Some expert linguist writing in *Le Matin* suggested changing the name of the "Rue de Moscou" to "Rue de Finlande."

In the Ministries, in editorial sanctums, in shop windows were hung up maps of Finland. The "Crusaders" heaved a sigh of relief: how far away it all was! When peace was signed in Moscow they turned in perplexity to the globe. Soon they were comforted: the newspapers began to print maps of Denmark and Norway. The war was carrying on, but not coming nearer; for France throughout those months it had been a war that was not a war.

Not long ago in Paris an enterprising person published a new map, this time a map of France. Across the whole country runs a thick red line: the frontier of the occupied zone. Looking at this map, one seems to see more than the German garrisons, one sees deserted Paris, the ruins of towns, the millions of fugitives, the soldiers' graves—for the deeds and delinquencies of the "Crusaders" the splendid, brave, loyal and deluded French people are now being made to pay.

II. THE FATAL MONTH

(May 9th-June 9th)

On the ninth of May, few people in Paris were thinking about the war. It was a fine spring evening. The city was living its customary life: it had long become accustomed to the tiny blue lights that had replaced the former radiance of the streets. The war seemed to have taken a curious fancy for the distant northern fjords. Only the small world of the deputies was still excited by it: there the recent disaster to Norway was regarded as the occasion for another Cabinet crisis.

That night the Parisians were awakened by the roar of the anti-aircraft guns; grumbling a little, they went to sleep again. The next morning they learned that in that brief May night the war had leaped from far-off Norway to the frontiers of France. From that moment events unrolled so rapidly that people could not keep up with them: the morning papers had become history by evening.

The almost instantaneous fall of the Belgian fortifications might easily have been foreseen. The French Generals were caught napping: the Germans crossed the River Meuse over bridges that had been left intact. General Corap, in command of the army at that point, had been occupying himself not with bridges, but with the domestic hearth; he was arrested in Paris. Large French forces, the Belgian Army, and the British Expeditionary Force were cut off. The road to Paris lay open.

Panic seized the Government and the Army Command; the inhabitants of the capital knew nothing of the danger threatening the city. The streets of Paris were as animated as ever. Someone said that the Germans had reached Laon, about 80 miles north-east of Paris, but these rumours were vague, the newspapers kept up their sunshine smiles, and the Parisians made ready for peaceful summer holidays. People in the know say that the Germans could have entered Paris on May 18th without encountering serious resistance; but even the stockbrokers did not believe in the oncoming storm, and on May 17th all prices on the Exchange rose sharply.

The first announcement of the Germans' advance came not from the newspapers, but from the streets: upon them appeared refugees—Belgians, inhabitants of Champagne, Picardy, Flanders. Paris beheld motor-cars riddled with bullets, and half-crazed people who had been through scores of bombings. The word

" death " began to turn up in the carefree chatter of the Paris boulevards. In vain did the police drive the Parisians away from the refugees; tales of catastrophe swept through the city. But the newspapers calmly went on reporting stories about Narvik: for them the war was still tucked away in Norway. Incidentally, even the Parisians did not grasp the extent of the danger. Memory may be a pledge of salvation, memory may also prove a source of disaster. The recollection of the first World War hung heavy over France. The myth of Verdun blinded the French Generals, to the last they believed in the impregnability of their fortifications. The myth of the Marne lulled the faculties of the population of Paris. People said: " In '14 the Germans were nearer than now, but all the same they didn't take the capital."

At last, on May 21st, the head of the Government broke to the people the news of the disaster. Reynaud even said straight out: " treachery." (True, he was at once corrected by the censors: in place of the word " treachery " they substituted " mistake "—believing that the people would prefer idiots to traitors.) Listeners wept at their radio sets. Everyone spoke of " treachery." The word made the round of the streets, it hovered above the crowded cafés, it flew in through the open windows, it even reached the soldiers in the trenches. The newspapers had to yield a point, and with mock indignation they began to speak of " the Fifth Column."

In the first chapter I related how, when the French " Crusaders " declared war upon Islam, they at once embraced Islam. Now we witnessed a second miraculous conversion: the Fifth Column of France, as though by command, began to shout: " Death to the Fifth Column! " The friends of General Franco, without a blush, rushed to adopt the inspired slogan of the defenders of Madrid. . . .

The surrounded army fought back courageously. I heard many stories of the battle in the North; report came both from Frenchmen and Germans; alike they had but one word for it: " hell " . . . No one knew the exact position of the enemy; the front was a sort of layer cake: Germans, French, Germans. The outskirts of Arras and Amiens changed hands several times. The Germans had superiority in the air, preponderance in tanks. The courage of the French infantry could not change the situation created by the break-through on the Meuse, but it enabled a considerable part of the army that had been cut off to reach the coast.

Not long ago I passed through the fields on which the northern battle was fought. The earth speaks of its stubbornness; towns are razed; trees smashed to splinters; beet-fields and market gardens uprooted; what was once a rich land, a land of coal and

textiles, the stronghold of the Red French proletariat, is changed to a desert, pervaded by the stench of corpses. Hastily buried human remains stick out of the earth like shoots. Abandoned weapons, charred machines, the corpses of smashed-up tanks, serve as reminders of the bitter battle of May.

In one day the war changed its character. Before the tenth of May the French people had not understood against whom it was fighting or why. The sinking of shipping, the struggle for Swedish ore, the enrichment of the war profiteers, the police terror, the flourishing of speculation, the shameless luxury of the rear, the taking of millions of hands from their work—all this had seemed to the people no more than a cunning and malicious plot of the ruling class. On May 10th the war knocked at the doors of France itself.

Human consciousness, however, develops slowly, like a tree. The trenches of the first World War were a good school for mankind. The second World War (I speak of its phase of May this year) with its new technique was not favourable to meditation. Fast as was the development of the consciousness of the French people, the motorised German units moved faster still.

Once more the " Crusaders " did their utmost to dam the upsurge of genuine patriotism. For the gentry the days of the Popular Front were a fresh and unhealed wound. They feared not so much the defeat of the French Republic as a victory of real, republican France. In the month of May the workers employed at several of the Paris aircraft factories resolved to increase production. At the same time they demanded that the plain-clothes men who " watched " them at their work should be removed from the workshop organisations. As reply, the " Crusaders " arrested a thousand workers: they were not concerned about the output of chasers, but about that of barbed wire for concentration camps.

The Minister of the Interior, Mandel, knew from which direction danger threatened France, but even he was helpless: the country was ruled by the friends of Daladier, the cronies of Laval, the satellites of Pétain, the henchmen of Flandin. When Mandel made so bold as to arrest five ultra-Right journalists who patently dreamed of the downfall of France, there was a scene in the parliamentary lobbies, all the parties of the Right threatened to withdraw their support from the Government. Mandel had grown up in the lobbies of the Chamber; from his youth up he had been accustomed to count votes " for " and " against "; this complex arithmetic was to him a law of nature. When Mandel was asked to release the 34,000 Communists who were languishing in the concentration camps, he replied: " It is desirable, but impracticable. Of course the Communists are honest patriots,

but if I release them the 'Socialists' will vote against the Cabinet . . . "

One Minister intrigued against another. All the parties were at loggerheads. The Rights wanted to oust Mandel. The "Socialists" were anxious somehow to intensify the repressions against the Communists. The Radicals, irritated at the inglorious end of Daladier, attacked Reynaud. The head of the Government delivered moving orations but he took no decisions: like Mandel, he reckoned in parliamentary instead of army divisions. Chatting genially with Churchill, he at the same time entrusted Foreign Affairs to the little-known Baudouin; and Baudouin boasted of his pro-Italian leanings. Of the success of his diplomacy we learned on the tenth of June, when Italy entered the war. . . .

General Gamelin was replaced by General Weygand. This was a change of methods, but not of theoretical conceptions. No one can accuse the French Generals of ignorance; they are venerable old men, set in the knowledge and experience of a past epoch. Like General Gamelin, General Weygand had no understanding of modern warfare. (As for Colonel de Gaulle, he was promoted General and given a prominent post, but over him was placed General Weygand.) If General Gamelin was an adherent of cautious tactics, General Weygand, on the other hand, never prided himself on sparing his soldiers' lives. He was prepared to lay down any number of soldiers' lives; but no one knew what the said soldiers were ready to do. The newspapers wrote about a new "Weygand Line," allegedly running along the Seine and the Marne. No such line existed, and, pressed by the German Army, the French hurriedly dug light field fortifications.

The bringing up of reserves was seriously hindered by the number of refugees. The mass exodus of the population meant not only catastrophe for millions of individuals, not only the collapse of the economic life of the country, it was one of the principal causes of the defeat of the French Army. Millions of fugitives, in cars, on horseback and on foot, jammed all the roads, and French tanks could not crush French women. The exodus began spontaneously: people fled from bombings, from the occupation, from hunger; one went and the rest followed. One whole village removing would grow like a snowball: hundreds of others joining it. Passing through Northern France much later, we were surprised to see living creatures: an old man on the doorstep of a house that had escaped demolition; a woman, with children who would never recover from shock.

The Government had done nothing about preliminary evacuation of the population. From the first day of the war leaflets had been stuck up in the corridors of Paris buildings: on these was

stated exactly to which "department" (county) were to be evacuated the inhabitants of each given street. But prior to June 9th no one was evacuated anywhere. Foreigners were actually compulsorily detained in Paris: one had to wait weeks for a pass, and then instead of evacuation a flight started—everybody following his fancy. The Government, from the beginning, if it could not have prevented the exodus, could at least have organised it, keeping clear the military roads, directing the people to specified points. The Government did nothing. Very frequently the prefects and mayors were the first to take to flight. Only as late as June 12th did the authorities make an appeal to the Paris population not to leave the city. It was too late: Paris was already tramping along a hundred ill-starred roads, hampering the movements of the Army. At last, June 16th, the eve of surrender, the Government forbade all flight. This came at a time when the Government was itself a fugitive, and when no one paid any more heed to its orders.

At a Cabinet meeting two Ministers openly declared: "There is nothing left to us but to follow the example of the King of the Belgians" (up to one week previously, to the title of "King," they had invariably added the adjective "treacherous"). The more alert Ministers resigned from their posts, but there remained in the Government the chief admirer of the "treacherous King" —the aged Marshal Pétain. The President of the Republic, the sentimental Lebrun, ceremoniously received the by no means sentimental Laval. When the newspapers reported this meeting, everyone understood that capitulation was in the air; from hand to hand already passed the list of members of a new Government, drawn up against "the evil day." At the head of this reserve Cabinet stood that self-same Marshal Pétain and the ex-Socialist Laval. Such a Government would certainly be capable, if not of doing anything, at least of signing anything.

The Army retreated. The soldiers believed neither in the Government nor in their commanders. On Sunday, the ninth of June, crowds of picnicking Parisians filled the Bois de Boulogne. The newspapers wrote of "the genius of Weygand" and "the machinations of the Communists": on the following day in Paris the trial was to have opened of thirty-three Communists. Toward evening the news came through that German troops had occupied Rouen and crossed the Seine. As though waked with a start from a dreamless sleep, Paris rushed for the railway stations. The Government was also seized with *Wanderlust*: it decided to move to Tours. Paris did not sleep that night: the anti-aircraft guns thundered; residents began packing their bags; the Ministries burned their archives. The "evil day" had arrived.

III. THE EVIL DAY

On the tenth of June, when I went out into the street in the morning, I could not recognise Paris. Iron shutters were being fixed, venetian blinds and window curtains drawn, shop fronts boarded up—as though closing the eyes of a corpse. Every car was moving in the same direction: toward the southern and western outskirts. The procession included luxury limousines and runabouts, cars of every make and description—racing cars and cars bought for idyllic country outings, antiquated cars, trucks battered with years of use, buses, utility vans, even advertising cars made in the shape of a cockerel or a rubber man. There were cars covered with mattresses: everyone remembered the ones that had come from Belgium with their bodies riddled with bullets. This lasted many hours, all day, through the night, it lasted three days and three nights: hundreds of thousands of cars left the city. They went slowly, stopping every now and again, covering no more than fifteen to twenty miles a day. Knowing drivers headed for the narrow country lanes, but found them blocked tight by thousands of others.

On the tenth of June, all trains were still leaving Paris as usual; but already no one bothered about tickets; they stormed the carriages. Around the railway stations, the police had a hard job holding back the surging crowds. On the eleventh of June, only a few trains left. Outside the Gare de Lyons, Gare d'Orléans, Gare Montparnasse, camps were pitched: tens of thousands of people spent two and three days on the pavement. The police said, "No more trains," but all the same, people waited for something.

On the evening of the tenth of June, black fog descended upon Paris: the oil tanks were burning. People gasped for breath. It grew dark as night. And the exodus went on.

The Government kept silent. No one knew where it had gone. On the eleventh of June appeared in Paris the last issue of *Paris-Soir*. In this, inserted by some incorrigible optimists, appeared a photograph portraying dogs being bathed in the Seine, with the caption: "Paris will always be Paris" (that good old Maurice Chevalier song). Paris at that moment was fleeing from what had yesterday still been called Paris.

On the eleventh of June the stream of cars was joined by cyclists: young ones and old ones, with suitcases or children

strapped to their backs. By evening, people began leaving on foot. At first they went pushing baby carriages, handcarts and wheelbarrows: these had been laden with old people, children, dogs, bundles. The next day they went without barrows, carrying children in their arms, their baggage left behind. On June 14th, when the Germans entered the city from the north, I still saw a few straggling old and sick people hobbling feebly along towards the Porte d'Orléans.

There were no authorities in the city. The newspapers had stopped coming out. The radio was broadcasting prayers, contradictory appeals (now calling on all the men to leave Paris, now ordering them to stop in Paris), and classical music. For some unknown reason, armchairs and cupboards were carted from the Ministries in trucks, while women with children at the breast dropped from weariness on the suburban roads.

When Paris was empty, leaflets appeared stuck on the walls of houses, explaining (to the lone old women? to the abandoned dogs? to the birds?) that Paris had been declared an "open city." At the last moment General Dentz was appointed military governor of the abandoned capital. This extremely military governor succeeded in addressing moving appeals to the old women left behind: he implored them "not to manifest ill-will towards the German Army."

On the evening of the thirteenth of June the oil tanks were again set on fire. It began to rain; the soot in the air turned the rain black. Garbage rotted in the deserted streets. All the shutters were up. Barely a tenth of the population was left in the city. On the fourteenth of June, in the morning, the advance troops of the German Army entered Paris. Passing by the side of the Arc de Triomphe, they turned towards the southern suburbs. They marched through an empty city, and some of the soldiers asked wonderingly: "Can this be Paris? . . ."

But Paris was trudging along roads and over fields toward the longed-for Loire. The towns of Fontainebleu, Etampes, Orléans and Gien were crammed to overflowing: it was impossible to get through them either by vehicle or on foot. That was the time when German aircraft destroyed Gien and the city centre of Orléans; they bombed Etampes. Airplanes sprayed the roads with machine-gun fire. The refugees crawled on the ground, lay flat in shell-holes and ditches. There was no food, there was not even water. In some towns the refugees broke into shops and warehouses. Those who left Paris before June 11th got through to the South. The rest rode or trudged forward, not knowing that ahead of them were the Germans.

On reaching the Loire, many jumped in and swam for it (all the bridges had been destroyed), and on the left bank

German outposts were waiting for them. The detachments of troops left to cover Paris up to the last day found themselves stranded. In front marched the Germans, behind them the millions of women and children, and last of all the soldiers, deserted by their officers. Cars broke down, there was no petrol; people abandoned their cars and continued on foot. Some of them broke through the ring; some, after a ghastly ten-day pilgrimage, encountered the German outposts.

Once Paris had been surrendered without a struggle, it became difficult to continue defending the country. I speak not of strategic but of psychological difficulty: Paris for France is more than a mere capital; in this exceptionally centralised country Paris is—the brain, the heart, the guts, the backbone. However, a great part of the French Army had been led out of encirclement, the Maginot Line still held, the fleet was untouched and the colonies out of the enemy's reach; the Syrian Army and the colonial units remained in reserve. Some still thought that the Government might not agree to unconditional surrender.

Twice, on June 14th and on June 16th, Reynaud had talks with Churchill. Reynaud said that France's surrender was inevitable. Churchill insisted on the "neutralisation" of the French fleet. Behind the scenes, Baudouin, Reynaud's confidant, was busy; he was getting ready to step into the shoes of his luckless patron.

On the evening of the sixteenth of June, Government No. 2, the one that had been got ready beforehand and got out of Paris in good time, started to rule France. This *coup d'état* was carried through without a single shot, without even a plebiscite. It was accomplished in refugee style, at one of the wayside halts. The new Government was headed by Marshal Pétain. The choice was not accidental. Everyone remembered the part played by Pétain in crushing the Spanish Republic. Some remembered too, that at the time of the first World War, General Pétain had not concealed his antipathy for one of the Powers allied to France. The big bourgeoisie felt safe in entrusting home policy as well to Pétain—the Marshal's creed was simple: "Honour thy God and thy employer." Lastly, the Marshal, long famous as "the valiant defender of Verdun," was needed as a façade, a smoke-screen. The white flag had to be masqueraded as the banner of the defenders of Verdun. For this purpose the gorgeous uniform of the aged Marshal was taken out of the moth-balls.

The first military exploit of the "valiant defender of Verdun" was to make an appeal to his old friend, the ambassador of General Franco, Lequerica: on June 17th the Government

decided to surrender, and the Marshal asked the Spanish Ambassador to act as intermediary. In an address to the French people, the Marshal explained that the conditions of the armistice would have to be "honourable."

The German Army continued to advance toward the South. It swiftly occupied Brittany; from Champagne it moved forward to Dijon and the Swiss frontier, striking at the rear of the French divisions still holding the Maginot Line. On June 20th the Germans occupied Lyons. The Bishop of Lyons, a representative of the "*Croix de Feu*" and the head of the manufacturers' association jointly addressed an appeal to the population of the city: "Avoid every manifestation of ill-will in your attitude toward the German Army." City after city declared itself "open." This was scarcely necessary: the whole country was "open." The people, by the way, did not stay in the "open" cities; despite appeals and prohibitions, they fled, and to the millions of homeless fugitives each further day added its new quota. More than ten million refugees were on the road in central and southern France.

Here and there small detachments offered resistance to the invading army. In Tours a defence was organised by the mayor of the city, and Tours held out for three days. In Saumur resistance was put up by the cadets of the *Haute Ecole* riding school. Battles occurred on the Swiss frontier and in Alsace, at the approaches to the Maginot Line. These were chance episodes, some of them profoundly dramatic.

The Government had turned up in Bordeaux; it was called "the Government of Bordeaux," which was comic even to people who had never read Griboyedov.* Following the bombing of Bordeaux, the mayor of the city, Marquet by name, started persuading his bosom pals, Laval, Pomaret and Frossard, to change their residence. Marquet even pasted up bills with the proclamation that Bordeaux was—an "open city." The radio announced that the Government, not wishing to expose Bordeaux to danger, was leaving that city (on the following day the Government solemnly repudiated its yesterday's announcement). A panic started. Refugees from Bordeaux rushed southward, towards the Spanish frontier. Here history once again showed its predilection for pointing morals: the Spaniards greeted the French refugees with barbed wire. The Germans approached Bordeaux. Whereupon the "valiant defender of Verdun" made an appeal to the German command not to occupy Bordeaux "until after the conclusion of the armistice." Receiving an

* Nineteenth century Russian playwright and diplomat, whose work was noted for its scathing satirising of bureaucratic and old-fashioned military types.

affirmative reply, the Government made it public, and the refugees at once made a wild dash back to Bordeaux. Cordons had to be set up to keep them out. Soon no one was admitted to Bordeaux; it became the preserve of the few.

Behind the back of Marshal Pétain were busy personages well known in France: Pierre Laval, the one-time poor lawyer, who had delivered ultra-revolutionary speeches and subsequently been Prime Minister, business man, real estate dealer, magnate; Baudouin and Pomaret, the financial wizards; General Weygand, who had decided to protect, instead of the "Weygand Line," the safes of the "200 families"; Ybarnegaray, crony of General Franco and leader of the "*Croix de Feu.*" All these gentlemen had their pens poised for action.

The people maintained a sullen silence. They could not quite understand what actually had happened. They wandered over the roads, ransacked empty warehouses, sat tight in cellars, and they muttered vaguely: "Treachery . . . treachery . . ." The Government of Bordeaux feared the people. It forgot the Army, abandoned to its fate, but it showed a patriotic concern for the *gendarmes*. Now the "crusaders" were protecting not France but themselves, and this time the protection was organised in good earnest. Minister Ybarnegaray addressed a thoroughly frank appeal to the ex-Servicemen members of the "*Croix de Feu*": soldiers embittered by defeat are bearers of "unrest"; the ex-Servicemen of yesterday must help the Government to curb the ex-Servicemen of today. The Bishop of Bordeaux promised absolution from sin to all those who "submitted to their trials," and the wrath of God to those who "fled in the face of Providence." The prefect of the Gironde, obviously loth to rely on celestial authority, ordered the *gendarmes* to be issued with automatic rifles. The prefect of Marseilles forbade the discussion on the streets of political events. All these gentlemen were plainly nervous.

The Government was clearly unwilling to let recalcitrants get away. They detained in Bordeaux not only steamers, but sailing craft and motor-boats. Airplane petrol was made unusable to prevent pilots from flying away to forbidden countries.

The days passed. The French negotiators had already signed the armistice text put in front of them; after which they had been taken to Rome; but still there was no armistice.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, after walking through the streets of Bordeaux and overhearing the rather unflattering remarks about the Government being made by workers, dock labourers and soldiers, hastily reiterated that the Government would sign only such armistice terms as it considered "honourable."

Laval called together the deputies and senators. Out of eight hundred, eighty showed up, and these eighty unanimously voted their complete confidence in Laval. The newspapers called this "the expression of the people's will." Baudouin made another statement: the English are to blame for everything. The Minister of Propaganda, textile king and owner of *Paris-Soir*, Prouvost, added: Mandel is to blame for everything. *Le Temps* wrote: "Of course, a hopeless struggle would be better than dishonour, but our honour has been saved. . ." A feature writer in *Le Figaro* expressed himself even more eloquently: "The life of the spirit pervades our material existence." Stockbrokers consoled themselves otherwise, and on June 23rd "Indo-China Rubber," "Rio Tinto," "Tonquin," and many other shares soared on the Bordeaux stock exchange.

On June 24th the armistice was signed with Italy; the armistice with Germany simultaneously entered into force. The Pétain Government declared June 25th a "day of national mourning." The papers explained that the mourning was meant for the killed Frenchmen and not for France. The Marshal himself and all his Ministers, Generals and stockbrokers went to church. The ladies on the balconies cried: "Vive la France!" "Vive Pétain!" France was silent, but the Marshal courteously bowed acknowledgement. This requiem was attended also by Reynaud. . . .

Their devotions over, the Ministers went to pack their bags: Bordeaux had been included in the Occupied Zone. The Germans occupied Bordeaux on June 27th. The Government lingered and did not get away to time. On the eve of its departure, Marshal Pétain returned to the radio with a speech addressed to the French people. This was supposed to be positively the last radio speech: by the terms of the armistice all French radio stations were to be shut down. This time Pétain said nothing about "honour"; he expressed himself frankly, even cynically: "Do not rely upon the State. Rely on yourself, on your children. Bring up your children to provide for you." This was all that the old Marshal could find to say to the mothers and widows of the slain, to the maimed soldiers, to the refugees who had been parted from their children: "Do not rely upon the State." The Crusade had ended in dismal failure: the State that had demanded blood from the people in May, in June refused them even bandages. Were it not for the blood of the innocent, were it not for the agony of a great people, we might say that the tragedy had played itself out as cheap farce.

IV. THE LAND WITHOUT A PEOPLE

The armistice left France divided into two countries. Officially they were called the Occupied and Unoccupied Zones. But they could be distinguished otherwise: the land without a people and the people without a land.

I travelled right through the Occupied Zone from Moulins to Lille; from the edge of the Unoccupied Zone to the Belgian frontier. I saw very few people. That is, people who lived there before. Tanks and trucks moved along the roads. Soldiers bathed in the rivers. German flags fluttered from the cottage rooftops. The railway stations, most of which had been smashed up, were staffed by German railway officials.

Every once in a while you see Frenchmen: war prisoners repairing roads or bridges.

On the fences are posted up orders issued by the Army Command: "It is forbidden to be on the streets after nine o'clock in the evening, to talk to war prisoners, to listen to foreign radio stations, to help anyone reach the Unoccupied Zone." Signs and arrows point to the Commandant's Office, the Military Hospital, the Quartermaster's Stores, the Veterinary Post, the Military Prison. The signs are fixed on boards, they look as if they had been there since time immemorial.

A four-hundred-mile trip through the occupied zone shows the havoc left by the war. The textile mills of the north, iron and steel works, the vineyards of Champagne and Sancerre, orchards, sugar-beet fields, all these have been destroyed, livestock killed, and scores, if not hundreds, of towns razed to the ground. Where Douai once stood I saw nothing but ruins. But for the signposts still standing on the outskirts, I should never have known that a heap of rocks and debris had once been—the town of Gien. The stench of corpses still hung heavy above the ruins as we passed through the centre of Orléans. Hundreds of villages, hospitals, schools have been burned or shelled into nothingness.

The most tragic fate of all within the "land without a people" has befallen Paris, though it suffered little from bombardment. Paris, the great and gay, has become a dead city. The papers that now come out there call it "the chief provincial city of France." I lived in this enchanted world for six weeks, and now I can hardly remember the lively Paris I knew.

Réné Clair once made a film called "Paris Asleep"*, in which

* *Paris qui dort* (called in England: "The Crazy Ray").

he showed the capital as though all its life had suddenly been stopped by magic. Once again the fantasy of history has proved richer than the imagination of the artist.

The streets are empty. The few remaining inhabitants go out in the morning with their shopping bags, make their purchases, and hurry home. An occasional concierge sits outside a door. A figure peers out of an entrance, stands there a moment, and then hides. All the shutters are drawn, making the houses look as though they had gone blind. There are streets where not a single living soul is left. In the poorer quarters passers-by are slightly more frequent: there are women, old people, children. The old men and old women seem numerous; one used not to notice them —formerly they were lost amid the bustling crowds and cars; now they have crept out of their holes, and with them have appeared the halt, the maimed and the hunchbacks—all those who could not get away. Old women in carpet-slippers shuffle along in the middle of the roadway. Cats miaou; deserted dogs howl. Garbage rots in the streets.

In the working-class district of Belleville, old men sit on benches and play cards. Here is a big café that has been closed: some old men have brought comfortable campstools and sat beside it, for this is where they used to sit. . . .

The emptiness during the first weeks of occupation was especially heartrending. Later, refugees who had failed to break through to the Unoccupied Zone came back. They came back from Brittany and from the Gironde: German troops had arrived before them. However, even at the end of July (I left Paris on July 23rd) the city was still empty.

The clocks were changed to Berlin time; they had already been put on one hour in the spring (for summer time) so that the difference between solar time and that now fixed was two hours. During June it was forbidden to be out on the street after 9 p.m., in reality after 7 p.m.—the sun at that time being still high above the city. During July one was allowed to stay out till 10 p.m. (that is, 8 p.m. actual time). Loudspeakers, which had previously been used at night to shout the air raid warning: "Take cover," now blared out: "Go home." But, in any case, the streets were empty long before curfew. It made a strange picture: the sun, the streets, the houses and—nobody at all; only the patrol passing from time to time.

In the Tuileries the grass had grown high, no one cut it and it had pushed up around the forgotten statues. On the Rue de Rivoli, in the arcades that used to be crowded at all times of the day—there was silence, abruptly broken by the tramping of boots —the sound of soldiers marching by.

There are neither cars nor buses. Once in a while you see a hand-cart. Near Montparnasse railway station (where the refugees coming back from Brittany arrive) stand famished-looking men with hand-carts who offer to deliver your baggage. About the middle of July appeared, as last word in progress, a wagon drawn by an emaciated horse; a sign on the wagon read: "Express Luggage Delivery."

At the crossings stand French policemen—without revolvers, but with their white truncheons; they are directing the traffic, of which there is none. Every now and then they blow their whistles at old women; these are transgressing, they should have crossed the streets at the studs.

I have seen a French policeman arrest French soldiers who had come back to their homes after the fall of Paris. And the Prefect who signs the orders in Paris is a Frenchman.

The people, both those who stayed in Paris and those who have managed to get back to Paris, have nothing to do; there is no work. Those who have a little money left go out every morning "a-hunting"; they buy to hoard. They stand in queues till dinner-time, exchanging the latest gossip on where olive oil is being sold or which dairy has just had in a consignment of milk. . . .

An "occupation mark" (invalid in Germany) has been introduced; its exchange rate is reckoned at twenty francs. Most of the shops are closed. Those provision shops whose owners left Paris have been requisitioned. The big department stores are open by order; the shop assistants still in them are few, and they barely manage, so lively is the trade—the customers are soldiers of the Army of Occupation. Large stocks did exist in Paris; gradually the goods are beginning to disappear; ahead of all other wares have vanished coffee and men's footwear.

There remain in Paris a few "celebrities," for example, the "Men of February the Sixth" (the French reactionary riots in February, 1934): the former Prefect, Chiappe,* and his henchmen, Pinelli and Fontenoy. On one occasion they assembled in the Church of the Sacré Cœur, and Cardinal Suhard held a thanksgiving service. A portrait of the renegade Doriot is displayed on one of the principal streets. His paper, *La Vie Nationale,* is published in Paris. This same renegade has a residence in Vichy; yet none the less I have met him in Paris; he is a spirit that lightly floats over all frontiers.

On June 22nd, the newspaper *Le Matin* printed a headline "Communist Leaders Arrested in Paris," and went on to tell of the arrest of four workers for distributing leaflets.

* Since killed in a plane on the way to Syria.

The French language has an expression that may be translated "the business smile": it describes the professional cordiality of the salesman ("the customer is always right"). French-German dictionaries and guidebooks, with lists of the sights in German, are displayed at all newspaper kiosks. Street vendors sell miniature Eiffel Towers, naughty photographs, picture postcards with views of Paris, perfumes. Some cafés and restaurants have posted up notices on the doors: "Pure Aryan establishment. No Jews allowed." The newspapers print recommendations to tradesmen: "Advertise in German." This sort of advice goes down much better in such quarters than the appeals made last spring—for donations for refugees.

The *Paris Soir* of June 27th published a questionnaire: What do the Parisians who have stayed behind think of events? A restaurant owner replied: "Business good. German soldiers are helping to revive trade."

In the more expensive cafés sit prostitutes, smartly dressed and cheerful.

On the Place de l'Opera, and on the Place de la Concorde (the subject of a poem by Mayakovsky*), concerts of military music are given under the direction of a Professor Schmidt.

Paris is cut off from the Unoccupied Zone; there is no telephone, no telegraph, no post between them. In fact, it is cut off from the entire world. During the early days there were no newspapers. On June 17th, there began to come out again the newspaper of the former Anarchist, Gustav Hervé, *La Victoire*—Victory. Even the old women in carpet-slippers laughed when they heard the raucous voices of the paper-sellers shouting: "Victory! Victory!". Gustav Hervé himself was perfectly happy, but the paper was soon closed down. Then appeared two newspapers with familiar names: *Le Matin* and *Paris Soir*. The names of the journalists who wrote in them, however, were entirely unfamiliar. *Paris Soir* announced that it would "adhere to the objectivity that has always distinguished this publication," but it labelled the issue: "New Series, No. 1." Particularly racy is the language of the new paper *La France au Travail*. Here are quotations from a couple of editorials: "There is a bit of the Jew in every one of us. What we need is an internal, intimate pogrom." "It is high time to realise that there are no Communists any more, for labour is now honourable and the workers live in an atmosphere of social peace. What would be the sense of civil war? Let the would-be murderers of the people understand that there is going to be no second Commune . . ." It is not hard to detect the note of fear in such assurances.

* Soviet poet, the most famous and admired in U.S.S.R. today, died 1930.

There are many advertisements in the newspapers: people seeking missing children or parents; people seeking work—"Aryan, willing to do anything," "Speak German, degrees in two subjects, want job in café or shop."

Tatters of old election and theatre posters still hang from the walls. You can learn which plays were to have been performed in Paris on June 14th—the day the city was occupied by the Germans. A new poster, posted up everywhere, depicts a German soldier with a child in his arms, protecting French refugees. Notices have been put up, saying: "Soldiers' Cinema"; these are outside the best cinema theatres, inside them are shown military news reels.

They wanted to open the legitimate theatres, but they could find no actors. However, the Concert-Mayol music-hall is running a revue entitled "*Immer Paris*"—once again is heard the song of Maurice Chevalier: "Paris will always be Paris"—these words turn up also from time to time in every Paris newspaper. A great deal has changed since winter, but they are still comforting the people with the same old tune.

"Paris will always be Paris." Of course, everything is in its place: the Eiffel Tower, the Place de la Concorde, even the Café de la Paix. The only thing missing in Paris is Paris: the houses are empty of people. And all around—nothing but empty fields: a land without a people.

V. THE PEOPLE WITHOUT A LAND

Over the territory of about one-third of France wander refugees. According to the estimates of the French Government the number of refugees in June exceeded eleven million. Since that time two or three millions have gone back to the North. The rest are still wandering.

The cities are overcrowded. In Clermont-Ferrand, Limoges, Brive, it is impossible to push one's way through the streets. The refugees have bought up everything and eaten up everything. In Brive the shops are open that sell typewriters, toys, furniture, coffins—the rest have no stocks left.

Trains run when they please. A letter is like a miracle. The newspapers are full of advertisements: refugees seeking their families. The hoardings are pasted over with notices: somebody is here and asks a wife or brother to get in touch with him.

Travelling from Clermont-Ferrand to Brive and from Tulle to Limoges, I saw nothing but people camping: living wherever they could manage—in cars, in Paris buses, on the bare ground.

The Government has its hands full: the reorganisation of the *gendarmerie*, the immobilisation of the fleet, the checking and surrender of war equipment; it has no time for the shattered army. The soldiers have demobilised themselves. They are not sent home—there is no transport; they are not fed ("do not rely upon the State"); they roam the roads; the greater part of them cannot go back to their homes even on foot—for their homes are in occupied territory. These are also people without a land.

Not so long ago Marshal Pétain, like all other mortals, spoke of himself in the first person; now he says: "We, Marshal Phillipe Pétain." This has not strengthened his authority. The Government is not unlike the refugees in one of those Paris buses. It was obliged to leave Bordeaux. It chose Clermont-Ferrand. But in that city are situated the big Michelin factories and the climate was declared harmful to the aged Marshal. The Government moved to Vichy. No one is allowed there; it is—an ideal refuge. But Vichy is—a spa for persons suffering from disorders of the liver. "The Government of Bordeaux" has become "The Government of Vichy," and that sounds even more contemptuous. The Marshal once more felt "a desire for a change of scene." He enquired about Versailles. (In this it is scarcely likely he was thinking of Louis the XIVth, more likely

his inspiration was Thiers.) The Government was not allowed to go to Versailles. Whereupon it modestly made application for the right to communicate, if not with the dead Thiers, then with the living Chiappe: to this date there has been no postal communication between the land without a people and the people without a land.

At the beginning of July, I had occasion to visit Marshal Pétain's capital. From morning till late at night I searched for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: no one in the town knew where it was situated. Some maintained it was in the high school building, but from the high school concierge I received the following reply: "Thank God, they've not come here. . . ." By an oversight, I wandered into a large, cheerless room, sat down: suddenly various people rushed in, shouting in horror: "What are you doing here? Don't you know this is M. Laval's private office?"

At the spa of La Bourboule, famed for its healing waters, sat Admiral Dumesnil. In view of what had happened to the French Navy, this Admiral spent his time allotting rooms to the members of the diplomatic corps. At another spa—Mont-Doré, where asthmatics get treatment—was situated the Ministry of Armaments. Many Generals, bored by idleness, started to take the cure. Between one inhalation and another they counted the arms that were to be handed over.

The War Minister, General Weygand, went off to Syria, to persuade his former comrades-in-arms to submit to the terms of the surrender. This General, who not long ago had meditated a march against Baku, became a disciple of Tolstoy over night; he now argues with all and sundry that a bad peace is better than a good fight.

The bourgeois rabble of the Champs Elysées dash from Ministry to Ministry, from spa to spa, startling with their motor horns the peaceful cows of the Auvergne. These gentry have arrived complete with stocks and bonds, elegant clothes and valets. They do not yet realise what has happened. One declares that France will smash England and become the No. 1 Power. Another gloats happily over a bundle of shares—they are shares of factories bombed to smithereens. A third says that he most certainly must go and pick up his Buick, which he left somewhere round about Orléans.

The new Ministers prove to be old acquaintances. The guardianship of Labour has been entrusted to the "Syndicalist" Bélin, one of the most rabid of the "Munichéers." In 1938, on Bonnet's instructions, Bélin broke up the trade unions; he showed himself then an expert strikebreaker. The renegade Doriot is become counsellor to the old Marshal. Doriot promises

to "curb the Communists." The "Sixth of February Man" Ybarnegaray is now "Minister for Youth"; he swears that the salvation of ruined France lies in—sport. Sipping the health-giving spa waters, the "Crusaders" have become followers of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Minister Pomaret has even indulged in the bucolic dream: "France must go back to being an agricultural land again."

The "Socialists" are putting out a newspaper called *Effort*. Here they welcome the energy of Marshal Pétain and propose that the German occupation be extended over the whole of French territory. In the opinion of the "Socialists," this would immediately solve all difficulties.

On July 9th, a few hundred senators and deputies quietly ("no speeches, no wreaths") buried the Third Republic. All constitutional rights were abolished. Three votes in all were cast in the Chamber against the putsch. After all, it would have been difficult to expect courage from a Chamber that last winter had voted the expulsion of all the Communist deputies. The Chamber, elected on the slogan of the Popular Front, betrayed the French people and committed suicide. Five days later—on July 14th, the anniversary of the Fall of the Bastille—the Ministers of Pétain attended another thanksgiving service.

The Paris papers regard the zeal of Vichy with a certain irony and *Paris au Travail* writes: "They could manage with three Ministers—Police, Agriculture and Hygiene."

The "Vichy Government" likes to speak of "rejuvenating France." The aged Marshal adores youth. However, all the Government's "reforms" have been taken out of history school books. Thus, for example, Laval decided to split France into Twelve Provinces—a division that existed up to the year 1790. These people are resolved to wipe out everything that was achieved by the French Revolution: equality before the law, elections, secular education, and even the word "citizen."

The people without a land are just as much cut off from the rest of the world as the land without a people. Those newspapers that might have told their readers of what was going on in the universe have had their existence terminated. Of the Paris papers, the most shameless have survived: *Le Jour, Le Temps, Le Journal, Le Figaro, L'Action Francaise, Gringoire.* For a long time these papers were nomads: one issue appeared in Poitiers, the next in Bordeaux, the next in Limoges. Three-fourths of the news agency telegrams land up in the censors' wastepaper baskets. Even the journalists, who are hardened to anything, complain. The newspaper *La Montagne* exclaimed on July 1st: "Night and silence! Either no newspapers at all or newspapers

without news. Moreover there are no trains to distribute papers. The radio is silent. The French Government has made public utterances polemising now against its former Allies, now against the Frenchmen who have quitted France, and that is all. . . . Now even the Government has become silent. The Government must let us know what is going on." The newspaper *Le Journal* had written its piece on June 26th: "Ours is a realm of closed doors. Up to the last moment we were told nothing of anything. Radio-Stuttgart long ago broadcast the armistice terms, but the French knew nothing of these armistice terms. Beware! France wants to know the whole truth. We were always told that we grew great from governing our country. Now we must wait our fate like sheep before the slaughter. The first duty of the Government is—to enlighten us about what is happening."

In the first few days the newspapers still tried to protest. Then they mastered their new science: night and silence. Only the monarchists refused to be pacified: they wanted, instead of "We, Marshal Pétain," a real blue-blooded King. However, the chidings remained gentle. . The other papers stay humbly silent.

And the people? The people sullenly repeat: "Treachery." This word envelops the country, it leaks through into the columns of the Government press. The military correspondent of the newspaper *Le Journal,* General Duval, is an individual easy to please; he has admired in turn all the following—Daladier and Reynaud, Gamelin and Weygand. Now this General writes: "The work of the so-called 'Fifth Column' was far too significant for us to be able to forget it. We were conquered not by the German Army, but by treachery. . . ." Of course, if we were to ask General Duval whom he means by "the Fifth Column," he would smile mysteriously.

There are judges in the little Auvergnat town of Riom. In order to console the invalids and the fugitives the Pétain Government has decided to try "the men responsible for the war." Laval and Pomaret will sit in judgment on their co-religionists, Daladier and Bonnet. Frossard—Minister of Pétain, will indict Frossard—Minister of Reynaud. Prouvost No. 1 will expose Prouvost No. 2. The Paris newspaper *La Gerbe* writes, on the subject of the trial of "those responsible for the war": "Not all are equally guilty. The men of September 3rd who wanted a 'bloodless' war ('*la guerre blanche*') are less to blame. . . ." Thus, according to the authoritative opinion in the Paris press, Daladier and Bonnet deserve leniency. Who, then, do Pétain and Laval intend to try? Not General Weygand, for Weygand is—a Minister. Not Frossard, for Frossard is—a Minister. Not Pétain, for Pétain is—"We, Marshal Philippe." And yet Frossard, and Weygand, and Pétain, all worked together

with Reynaud. Then, perhaps Reynaud? But Reynaud worked together with Daladier and Bonnet. . . .

Gringoire let the cat out of the bag: "It is necessary to try those really to blame for the disaster, that is, those who inspired the Popular Front." The "Crusaders'" have at last reached the Temple. . . .

In the meantime, misery grows. The cold months are coming and the refugees are still on the roads. All the coffee has been drunk, all the tobacco has been smoked, all the bread has been eaten. People who already have lost roof and job are now threatened by starvation. How pitiable beside the sufferings of the refugees appear Twelve Provinces, allusions to Rousseau, farce at Riom and all!

The gentlemen of Vichy are hiring new *gendarmes,* and the *gendarmes* are consuming the last crust of bread to no effect: they are afraid to show themselves to the people. Near the town of La Souterraine I saw a detachment of *gendarmes* retreating before a crowd of women, who were shouting: "We've had enough of injustice!" The people have been silent; they are just beginning to find their voice.

In Clermont-Ferrand, I saw workers, great-grandsons of the men of the barricades of '48, grandsons of the Communards, good French proletarians. They gazed with longing eyes at the lifeless lathes. I saw soldiers in the woods. They cut themselves sticks, built fires, tried to crack jokes. Their eyes were dim: they had seen the battle in the North and the fall of Paris. I saw peasants in Limousin: they were sullenly gathering grain. This grain will not suffice for hungry France. One of them said to me: "I had two. One was killed. The other is lost." How many are like him? This is the real France. It is not they who invented the "war that was not a war," it is not they who sent warm underwear to Mannerheim, not they who dreamed of marching on Baku, not they who surrendered Paris. . . .

The history of a great people, who gave the world '93 and the Commune, Stendhal and Hugo, Delacroix and Courbet, Lavoisier and Pasteur, cannot end in Vichy Water. . . .

French Communist Ministers

LED STRUGGLES IN PARIS

FERNAND GRENIER, new French Commissioner for Air, was born in the industrial north of France in 1901.

He became a national figure when he took over the General Secretaryship of the French Society of Friends of the U.S.S.R. This he built into a body whose influence was felt in every walk of French life.

In 1937, he defeated the renegade Communist Jacques Doriot in the by-election of the century in the constituency held by Doriot for many years—St. Denis, great industrial suburb of Paris.

At the outbreak of war, most of the Communist deputies were arrested at the first session of the Chamber, but Grenier, in the Army, momentarily escaped.

At the next session, he arrived in uniform and protested at the arrests. He was assaulted and thrown out, but again escaped arrest. Demobilised when France fell, he was arrested in October, 1940, and handed over to the Gestapo.

He escaped from Chateaubriant prison camp the day before the massacre of 50 hostages—June 19, 1941. From then until January, 1943, he worked in Paris with the resistance movement.

Then he was sent to Britain as a delegate from the Communist Party of France to the National Committee of Fighting France in London.

A month ago Grenier turned the tables on Pucheu, executioner of his comrades at Chateaubriant. He tore to shreds the defence of the man who had tried to kill him.

Those who know Fernand Grenier are confident that his ability, courage and tact equip him admirably for the difficult job that he has undertaken.

FAMOUS YOUTH LEADER

FRANCOIS BILLOUX, Commissioner of State in the French Committee of National Liberation, is not yet 41, but he has spent nearly 27 years in the French working-class movement.

At 16, he joined a trade union, and when 19 joined the Socialist Party. In 1920, although still only in his 16th year, he was secretary of the Socialist Youth in the town of Roanne when it decided to affiliate to the Young Communist International.

From then until 1930 he was one of the best-known leaders of the French Young Communist League and was general secretary from 1928 to 1930.

A foundation member of the Communist Party, he rapidly rose to the most responsible posts, being elected in 1926 to the Central Committee, of which he has been continuously a member ever since.

In the Parliamentary triumph of the Popular Front in 1936, when the Communists won 72 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, Billoux secured a great victory in Marseilles, where he had been for two years the regional secretary of the party.

He was arrested by the Daladier Government and put on trial with other Communist Deputies in October, 1939, and imprisoned in France and Africa until February, 1943. It was not his first experience of persecution, as he was sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for political offences in 1928 and 1929. He had to go "underground" for three years until amnestied.

In Algiers he has played an outstanding role in the work of the group of Communist Deputies, of which he was secretary.

M. Grenier will be succeded by M. Joanny Berlioz, also a former Deputy for the Seine, in the capacity of delegate of the Communist Party.

M. Billoux will be succeeded in the French Consultative Assembly by M. Etienne Fajon, former Communist Deputy for the Seine Department, in the capacity of Parliamentary delegate.

This is France's African Army

SPAHI

In Africa, the French will soon have a fine Army of at least 300,000 men. France is proud of her African Army. Three generations of Frenchmen have seen soldiers from Africa die for France on French soil. These are things no Frenchman can forget.

"TIRAILLEUR"

GENERAL GIRAUD, French Commander-in-Chief and recently appointed successor to Admiral Darlan as High Commissioner in North Africa, when asked last week in an interview the approximate strength of the French Army he contemplated placing on a war footing, replied: "300,000 men."

This is regarded by French experts in London on African military questions as a very moderate estimate.

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The French Colonial Empire, and notably North Africa, has for long been looked upon as a vast reservoir for Army effectives by the French General Staff. Most of the latter have had long years of service in the colonies. General Giraud and General Catroux, who rallied to De Gaulle in 1940, are former collaborators of Marshal Lyautey, the founder of French Morocco, and both were responsible for the final and successful pacification of Southern Morocco a few years before the war. During the Riff campaign General, then Colonel, Giraud commanded the 14th Regiment of Turcos and it was to him that Abd El Krim surrendered.

For the last hundred years or so the North African Army, or "Armée d'Afrique," has taken its full share of military glory wherever France had to fight. Three generations of Frenchmen have seen soldiers from Algeria, from Tunis and Morocco, defend France — with courage and loyalty—against German invasion.

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The Armée d'Afrique does not confine its activity to colonial warfare nor is it recruited solely among the Arabs. It is based on conscription and part of it has, almost from the beginning, been stationed in France.

So, just as Algerian territory is not a colony but part of France, the Armée d'Afrique is an extension in Africa of the French Metropolitan Army.

Colonial troops—the divisions commanded by General Mangin, for example—proved to be such wonderful fighters on European battlefields and did so well during the last war that M. Georges Mendel, Minister of Colonies when the present war broke out, worked out a plan with the General Staff for raising no fewer than 600,000 colonial soldiers, most of whom were to come from Africa.

Many regiments of picked colonial troops were on the front in 1940 when the French military debacle occurred, and, according to military experts, they had not been used properly. Although badly equipped and hopelessly outnumbered they fought as well as ever, the Spahis, on their horses, charging German tanks near Abbeville.

The Zouaves, the "Tirailleurs" or Turcos, the Chasseurs d'Afrique and the Spahis are known all over the world. With their baggy red or light blue trousers, tight embroidered coats and red chechias, the Zouaves and the Turcos have, in a way, won the same place in the French Army, owing to the picturesqueness of their dress and to their fighting qualities, as Highland regiments in Britain.

The Zouaves (infantry) and the Chasseurs d'Afrique (cavalry) are entirely composed of French settlers and of a few Frenchmen from France.

The Turcos (infantry) and the Spahis (cavalry) are Arab regiments. Their officers and N.C.O.s are mainly French, but they have also Arab officers and N.C.O.s, who enjoy, in every respect, the same privileges as their French colleagues.

French Infantry

The Spahis are among the finest horsemen in the world and mean to the French what the Cossacks mean to the Russians. They have the same peculiar tradition as the Cossacks of standing upright in their stirrups when they are on parade. When the King and Queen went on a State visit to Paris in July, 1938, they were given an escort of Republican Guards and of Spahis.

Following the Armistice, and under its terms, the French Army of North Africa was considerably reduced in size to an official figure of 100,000, which the Germans later raised to 120,000.

But, as several senior French officers who came here from North Africa lately, put it:

"Our wonderful North African Army was reduced *officially* but not always in fact. There were many easy means of camouflaging men and material and the Army chiefs did not fail to take advantage of them. For instance, men were needed for the building of the Trans-Saharan railway; and Youth Labour Camps, which were full of young soldiers, continued their training on the quiet by various means.

"When our Disarmament Commission was making inspection tours in Germany after the last war, they never came across any arms and ammunition dumps; the German troops were no longer in their barracks. Well, we have done the same thing. The south of Morocco and Algeria are very big, and matters were so arranged that the German and Italian Armistice Commission always found everything in order!"

Thus when General Giraud arrived with the Allied Expeditionary Corps on November 8 he found a French Army. True it was small in size, but there were large reserves ready to be called on when equipment and proper modern arms arrived for them from England and America.

Foreign Legion

Here is an idea of the position of the army in North Africa at the time:

Morocco.—The Germans, who feared an Allied attack or landing in Morocco more than anywhere else in North Africa, favoured a strong defence and let Vichy concentrate there four divisions of between 13,000 and 14,000 men each.

They were composed of Tirailleurs—which include 75 per cent. of native troops; men of the Foreign Legion, Zouaves, Chasseurs d'Afrique and Moroccan Spahis (both cavalry) and one field regiment (or two reduced regiments) of artillery.

The Zouaves and the Legionnaires were the only purely white troops. The officers and most of the N.C.O.s in the native regiments were white men.

There were two regiments of the Foreign Legion, whose headquarters are at Sidi-Bel-Abbès (Algeria), two regiments of Zouaves, six or seven regiments of Moroccan Spahis and Chasseurs d'Afrique and two regiments of anti-aircraft service. Altogether 12 regiments of infantry and 8 regiments of cavalry.

The troops were stationed at various important centres (Rabat, some 6,000 at Casablanca, Fez), near ports and at a great many posts in the centre and south of the country.

Of the Air Force, all that was left officially was: Two groups of bombers, one group of fighters and one reconnaissance group. Each group was composed of two or three squadrons. The tanks were very few and old types of machines.

Zouave

Algeria.—Situated in the centre of North Africa, Algeria appeared less dangerous to the Germans, who allowed only three divisions of between 12,000 and 13,000 men each.

Their composition was about the same as those stationed in Morocco. Their principal quarters were at Algiers, Oran and Constantine. There were also numerous posts, some very important ones, in the south of the country, where camouflage was extremely easy.

A few aviation groups were dispersed on various aerodromes and there was one group of about 50 old tanks at Oran.

Tunisia.—The fortifications—the Tunisian Maginot Line, as it was called—on the borders of Tripoli having been practically dismantled and rendered useless after the Armistice (the Italian Commission saw to that) the Axis considered that Tunisia needed very little defence, and in consequence Vichy was allowed to keep only one small division of 12,000 men in the country.

At Bizerta there was only one regiment of colonial infantry, no tanks and a few planes.

Senegalese

Dakar.—The effectives in June last were: Army and Navy, a total of 60,000 men. The land forces were composed of native troops with French officers and N.C.O.s. The Air Force had 80 fighters and 80 bombers. But since that date some planes were sent to Dakar from Africa.

With regard to the French Air Force possibilities in North Africa, I was told by French experts here that a great many young French airmen were there, all extremely well trained and anxious to resume the fight against the hated Boches.

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"I have quite recently met British and American officers who have returned from North Africa," one French expert told me. "They were all full of praise and admiration for the remarkable technique of our French boys who, although they have been using only old types of machines dating from the early days of the war, are able to master the most up-to-date British and American planes in no time. This is because a certain kind of personal initiative is left to the men during their early training. This spirit of initiative produces results in fighting.

"We assume that the equipment of our French airmen in North Africa—we might perhaps count them by thousands—will be one of the first tasks of British and American Allies.

Henry Ste