A Case Study Of Press Censorship In Vichy France

by Sarah Dobin Shields

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Submitted to the Department of History and the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.
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IN VICHY FRANCE
SARAH DOBIN SHIELDS
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Le maréchal PÉTAIN assumera les fonctions de chef de l'État et celles de chef du Gouvernement. Il exercera le pouvoir législatif jusqu'à la formation des nouvelles assemblées.

Douze ministres l'assisteront dans sa tâche.

Le discours radiodiffusé du maréchal PÉTAIN

Le retour au système de l'administration provinciale

M. Albert LEBRUN se démet de ses pouvoirs

Violentes batailles aériennes

M. Roosevelt réclame au Congrès les moyens d'assurer aux États-Unis une défense plus réaliste et plus concrète

Nous devons nous protéger contre une menace qui prive les hommes de la parole, de l'ouïe, du libre arbitre.
I Introduction

Control of information in unoccupied France during World War II was designed not only to suppress undesirable information, but also to effect profound change in the values and beliefs of the French people. Exercised by a French government situated in the southern resort town of Vichy, censorship had as its end the popularization of the "National Revolution" which would restore France to glory and attain for her a favored place in Hitler's New Europe. Although this censorship proved increasingly effective throughout the war years in its control over the press, it was ultimately unsuccessful in changing public opinion. This thesis will examine both the efficacy of censorship in relation to the press, and its failure in relation to the French populace.

The armistice signed by France after its rapid defeat in the summer of 1940 stipulated the continuation of French sovereignty, which was exercised by the government of World War I hero Marshal Philippe Pétain. To Pétain and his associates, the crushing defeat of France reflected social and cultural degeneration as well as military failure. They attributed it to the inability of republican institutions to respond to crisis, the decline of France under parliamentary rule, and the general bankruptcy of the Third Republic. The defeat was welcomed as an opportunity to recreate France along more traditional, authoritarian lines. Thus, while still vulnerable to pressures exerted by the German government which occupied three-fifths of France, the Pétain government attempted to effect major changes in French society. "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"
were interred, to be replaced by "Work, Family, Country." Information
media were required to effect such change; the French press was to
assist in the transmission of the National Revolution from the govern-
ment to the people.¹

Control of information also attempted to popularize the French
government's official policy of collaboration with the victorious Germans.
To the new French leaders, it appeared evident in June 1940 that a com-
prehensive German victory was just around the corner, and that early
capitulation and reconciliation would lead to better conditions in the
post war settlement. Additionally, the unusual circumstances in which
the French government found itself necessitated some degree of collabora-
tion. The Vichy government was forced to refrain from actions and
policies which would antagonize the Germans, in order to retain its
sovereignty. Believing further that cooperating with or even anticipating
German demands would result in favorable treatment, the French government
gave up much of its independence in order to retain its sovereignty.²
The French population, having experienced three German invasions in
seventy years, had to be convinced of the desirability of reconciliation.
Control over the press attempted to popularize the official policy of
collaboration, which was officially proclaimed after the meeting of
Hitler and Pétain at Montoire in November 1940.³


²Robert O. Paxton, Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-

³Henri Michel claims that the policy of collaboration began in
This censorship, although ultimately ineffective in inducing popular adherence to collaboration and the National Revolution, severely restricted the freedom of the French press. In order to study the efficacy of Vichy's control of information, one newspaper, La Montagne, will be examined. La Montagne declared itself politically to the left of center; its biases thus ran counter to the ideological themes advocated by the Vichy government. La Montagne was one of three small daily papers published in the town of Clermont-Ferrand, home of the large Michelin factory and less than thirty miles from Vichy. In 1941 the paper employed eighty workers at salaries of between sixty and one hundred francs daily. Both of the other papers, L'Avenir and Le Moniteur du Puy-de-Dôme, had larger circulations than La Montagne. Le Moniteur du Puy-de-Dôme was owned by Pierre Laval, Prime Minister of the Vichy government in 1940, and from 1942-1944. A comparison of this newspaper with La Montagne will be useful to evaluate the effectiveness of censorship.

Alexandre Varenne, founder and editor of La Montagne, opposed collaboration with the Germans, the authoritarian character of the National Revolution, and especially the increasingly strict control exercised over his publication. While acknowledging the need for censorship in exceptional circumstances, Varenne questioned the techniques used to impose the official ideological orientation of the press,

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4 Letter from Varenne to Pétain, 20 March 1940, Archives of La Montagne. "Notes sur la situation économique et le travail dans le département du Puy-de-Dôme" February 1941, Archives départementales du Puy-de-Dôme, Clermont-Ferrand, M06508. (All future references to file numbers are for these archives.)

5 Le Moniteur's circulation in 1939 of 43,564 was more than twice that of La Montagne, which printed 22,000 copies daily. L'Avenir printed 48,000 copies daily. Jean-André Faucher and Noel Jacquemart, Le Quatrième pouvoir: La Presse française de 1830 à 1960 (Paris: Press L'imprimerie de l'Auxerrois, 1968) p. 173. By 1945 La Montagne printed 76,000 copies daily. 26 November 1945, M06362.
taking exception both with the quality of interactions between the press and the censor, and with the censor's unwillingness to acknowledge the patriotism of "independent journalists." Concerning the policy of collaboration, Varenne supported the ideal of a peaceful unified Europe in a federated union, using the Swiss state as an example, and claimed that if that was the German goal, their New Europe should be supported. However, he asserted that confidence that this was truly the German ideal was a mirage. Instead, the Germans aimed at the diminution and vassalage of the French. An ardent republican, Varenne believed that changes would nonetheless be necessary in order to make the Third Republic effective. He called especially for centralization of authority, utilizing the example of the United States to support the compatibility of republicanism and strong leadership. In a letter to Pétain, he claimed that the republic was not only the regime which divided France least, but also the one which, founded in equity, led to peace and justice. In light of Varenne's political perspective, it can be expected that articles in La Montagne supporting collaboration and the National Revolution had been imposed by the censor.

By the time of the armistice in 1940, Varenne was an experienced journalist, lawyer, legislator, politician, and colonial administrator. Born in Clermont-Ferrand in 1870, he had studied law and served on the appeals court in Paris. At twenty-seven he helped organize the Socialist Party in the area around Clermont-Ferrand, and in 1902 was asked by the eminent socialist Jean Jaurès to help with the party newspaper, L'Humanité. By that time, Varenne had already started two local papers, and would

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6 Letter to Pétain, 29 November 1940, Archives of La Montagne.
7 Letter to Pétain, 15 January 1941, Archives of La Montagne.
soon found *La Montagne*, of which he would remain political director until his death. Varenne entered national politics in 1906 as a deputy from Puy-de-Dôme, a seat he would retain until 1936, except during an interlude from 1910 to 1914. Interestingly, Varenne had worked with the Bureau of the Censor in 1914, but declined to direct it. In 1925 he was sent to Indochina as governor-general, a post he held until 1928.\(^8\) In the course of this experience he had become acquainted with many of the most prominent people in France. During the early part of the Vichy government, Varenne maintained correspondence with the venerable Marshal Philippe Pétain, head of the French state. Varenne kept his paper open after the occupation of southern France in 1942 at the request of his friend, socialist and former Prime Minister Léon Blum.\(^9\) Varenne had been acquainted, both as a journalist and as a politician, with many government functionaries inside and out of the censor. Although in early July 1940 an announcement appeared that Varenne had ceased active involvement with *La Montagne*, his correspondence indicates continuing control over the paper.\(^{10}\)

The first section will describe the methods and organization of censorship services at Vichy. Following this, the thesis will concentrate upon the censor's increasing control and the diminishing freedom of publication. The final section will examine the failure of censorship.


\(^9\) Interview with M. Favre, director of *La Montagne*, 29 March 1979, by John F. Sweets.

\(^{10}\) *La Montagne*, 5 July 1940. In a letter to Laval on 16 May 1942, Varenne referred to himself as political director of the paper. Archives of *La Montagne*. 
to change public opinion by comparing the press presentation of events with popular sentiment as reported by the local police.
Censorship in unoccupied France during the Second World War had multiple aims. First, it was necessary to suppress certain information in order to appease the occupying power and to avoid presenting an unfavorable impression of the Vichy government. At the same time, censorship was used to promote information favorable to the regime and to popularize its policies and its program for national renewal. Officials in the censorship services tried to guide popular opinion through their influence on all mass communications media in southern France, as well as through their control of access to information. For the press, their role included orienting journals' presentation of news as well as removing or imposing articles. For the purpose of this paper, therefore, "censorship" will be used to refer not only to the suppression of articles, but to all aspects of control over information.

The press was only one medium subjected to government control. Radio broadcasts controlled by Vichy were strongly propagandistic, with such collaborationists as Philippe Henriot presenting commentaries. However, the problem of limiting access to radio information was seriously complicated by the ease with which Swiss and British stations could be received. As early as 22 November 1940

the government forbade listening publicly to British broadcasts on penalty of imprisonment of up to six months, and fines ranging from sixteen to one hundred francs. Films were actively employed to popularize the National Revolution. One documentary by Jean Morel and Jacques Chavannes, for example, was violently anticommunist, and ended with an appeal to all Frenchmen to gather around the Marshal. Officially produced newreels were required to be shown at all cinemas without alteration after August 1942. Even before the occupation of southern France, the Germans successfully prevailed upon the French government to forbid the showing of English and American films. The government also exerted control over music. In hopes of regulating taste and reducing "foreign" influence, jazz records were prohibited and concerts authorized only if jazz music was excluded. Selected books were removed from libraries, schools, and bookstores beginning in the summer of 1941. Reflecting the Vichy government's concern with morality, pornographic books were prohibited along with those on communism. The government exploited education as a vehicle for propaganda, supervising teachers' attitudes and prescribing reading material and essay topics. Teaching materials were created for a

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2Levy, p. 25. One year later, in October 1941, the fines increased to 200-10,000 francs, and imprisonment to a maximum of two years. For references to those tried, see report of police commissaire, Riom, 31 July 1941 M07156 and Police Intendant to secretary-general for police, 13 November 1941, M07186.

3Levy, p. 27.


69 May 1942 and January 1942, N06531.

7Secretary-general of police to prefect, 11 June 1941; 16 July 1941; 12 January 1942; M06551.
French history rewritten to emphasize French grandeur, heroism, and selected traditional values which presented Pétain as the most recent in a long line of French saviors from Vercingetorix through Napoleon, Joan of Arc, and Pascal.  

The information services thus had extensive responsibilities. No such centralized control had previously existed in France. The first French government agency to control information was established in 1936, when an interministerial commission was created to coordinate the diffusion of French news abroad. Previously each ministry had controlled the outflow of information concerning its own area. Organization of information services increased in 1938, and by the advent of war in 1939 the government exercised control over the press, books, films, and other printed matter. On 1 April 1940, a Ministry of Information was established, charged with internationally disseminating all information which affirmed and propagated French thinking and policy, with the goal of defending the nation's superior interests. Censorship of films and books, and some control of the press were evident during the Third Republic, however. As Amaury noted in his dissertation comparing the two systems, the difference between the two regimes was one of scope, degree, and intent.

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8 Superprefect monthly information report for February 1942, M97788. Regional propaganda delegate to inspector of academies, 3 July 1942; secretary of state for national education to inspector of academies, 28 September 1942, T01455.


The Prime Minister of each Vichy government exercised control over the information services, appointing trusted friends in the highest positions. For example, both René Bonnefoy and Pierre Cathala were close friends of Laval, the former having edited his journal *Le Moniteur* since 1927.\(^\text{11}\) The Prime Ministers retained direct control of censorship, holding the ministerial portfolio for information when one existed. The highest functionary of the Information Services was the Secretary-General, though some change was evident through these years in the extent of his power. Propaganda services, control of press and radio, and the news agencies were under his jurisdiction. The office of press and censorship, one section of the Information Services, was responsible for communicating and enforcing decisions concerning the press. Notwithstanding the ability of the officials to influence and interpret policy, decisions on access to and orientation of information were controlled from the highest level of government. To a great degree, therefore, the censor and the government appear indistinguishable.\(^\text{12}\)

Policy determined by the most powerful government leaders was transmitted to the local papers by daily orders. These *consignes* were concerned with content, presentation, and emphasis. "Permanent" *consignes* were periodically revised and never exceeded 93 at one time. Examples of this type were the standing prohibition against publishing maps without previous approval by the central censor; against publishing news of Laval's travels, or any news on Pétain except official


\[\text{\footnotesize 12} \text{Amaury, p. 137. During short periods Pétain had control of censorship. Information for facing chart taken primarily from Chabourd, Amaury, and Lévy.}\]
# Control of Information Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July-December 1940</td>
<td>Pierre Laval</td>
<td>Pierre-Étienne Flandin</td>
<td>François Darlan</td>
<td>Pierre Laval</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 13, 1940 to February 10, 1941</td>
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<td>December 10, 1941 to April 13, 1942</td>
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<td>April 13, 1942 to 1944</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary-general of information</td>
<td>July 16</td>
<td>Jean Montigny</td>
<td>Pierre Cathala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December 7</td>
<td>Tixier-Vignancourt</td>
<td>(adjoint)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December 13</td>
<td>Tixier-Vignancourt</td>
<td>(adjoint)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January 4</td>
<td>George Portmann</td>
<td>Paul Marion*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 23</td>
<td></td>
<td>René Bonnefoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of press and censorship</td>
<td>December 8</td>
<td>Pierre Dominique</td>
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<td></td>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>March 30</td>
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<td>March 1941</td>
<td>March 30</td>
<td>Month 1942</td>
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<td>November '42</td>
<td>Romain</td>
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<td>October 1941</td>
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<td>Piétri</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October 1942</td>
<td></td>
<td>Roussel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assistant directors

Press

René Vallet

Censorship

Jean Duffour

Director of O.F.I.

November

Henry Prêts

*Marion's title changed often during his period in command. See Amaury, page 143.
communiqués; or in 1942 publishing any communiqués from Russia.

Daily *consignes* stipulated coverage of specific events, often including the number of columns and the type of headlines. News of government events, such as Laval's interview with Hermann Goering, were emphasized with first page coverage of at least three columns, while news concerning the Allies was underplayed, including speeches by U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, which received vague headlines and were permitted only one column. 14

In addition to these orders, newspapers received frequent "notes of orientation" elaborating themes which the government wanted them to emphasize. These notes dealt with both major and minor problems. On 16 March 1941, the papers were encouraged to discuss the profound social conflicts troubling America. 15 On 22 November 1940, the note discussed the necessity for journals to guide opinion toward the realization that collaboration with the Germans was essential. In order to create this "favorable atmosphere" needed to "nurture propaganda," each issue of every journal was required to make a personal contribution to this work of salvation by the government. 16 In 1943, these notes became the basis of government control of the press.

The Vichy government exercised control of the content of newspapers through the official French news agency Havas. Initially

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13Limagne, pp. 28, 113. *Consignes* for 28 April 1941, Archives of *La Montagne*.

14Limagne, pp. 36, 46. *Consignes* for 28 April 1941.

15Limagne, p. 116.

16Limagne for 22 November 1940.
established in 1832 to translate foreign news for use by French newspapers, it had become a major source of international news for the French press. After the armistice, the agency was nationalized, and in November 1940 it was converted into the French Office of Information (O.F.I.). Through the O.F.I. the government controlled the contents of articles. In the daily consignes, specific O.F.I. articles were often required. Placement, number of columns, and headlines were stipulated. Thus, for any day it is not uncommon to find a whole series of required O.F.I. articles with precisely specified presentation indicated. The results are apparent in comparing newspapers in the unoccupied zone, whose front pages appeared almost identical.

In order to assure compliance, the information services utilized fines and suspensions. La Montagne was suspended at least nine times for a total of over twenty-five days and reprimanded repeatedly. Such suspensions could be expensive; Varenne complained that a one-day suspension could cost more than 25,000 francs. In addition, the government controlled the supply of commodities essential for publication, chiefly paper, and could use this to influence the journals.


18 Limagne, p. 68. In the north, the Germans created the Agence française d'information et de presse (AFIP) which was attached to the German propaganda system. The two agencies were fused in October 1942. Levy, pp. 11-12.

19 the following is a possibly incomplete list, taken mostly from the paper's archives. 2 January, 13 March 1941; 10 January, 1 August, 8 September, 2-4, 27 March, 19 September, 4 December 1942; 13 March, 10 May, 7 June 1943. Many of these suspensions were for more than one day.

20 Letter to Pétain, 27 March 1942, Archives of La Montagne.

21 Claude Bellanger, Jacques Godechot, Pierre Guiral, Fernand
Functioning under such a system was frustrating for the editors. Before publishing their papers, articles had to be submitted to the local censor. Part of the national system, these officials were connected to the central office through regional and departmental offices. Those articles which were accepted would be stamped "already seen." Those rejected were returned, sometimes with required changes stipulated. In order to avoid leaving blank spaces, the editors were encouraged to have back-up articles available. Since O.F.I. articles had been previously approved, there should have been no problem with them, unless their acceptance had been withdrawn. Maps would have to be approved by the central office at Vichy; photographs had to be submitted (two copies) to the local office. In each case the number of the visa as well as a letter indicating its source would have to appear in the paper.

The requirement of previous approval was annoying; one editor complained that it was necessary to get the articles in very early to have enough time to insert different articles if some were cut. Technical difficulties were encountered in removing single words without leaving blank spaces close to the time of printing. In a poorly equipped provincial printing shop, such things required an hour of work.


22 Levy listed nine regional offices: Bourg, Châteauroux, Limoges, Clermont-Ferrand, Lyon, Marseille, Montpellier, Toulouse, and Pau, p. 18.

23 Letter from Delahre to Varenne, 19 August 1940, Archives of La Montagne. Limagne, p. 113.

24 Limagne, p. 19.

25 Limagne, p. 111.
Worse, it appears that a visa from the local censor did not protect journals from reprimands or suspensions. 26

Newspapers received their daily notes and orders either written on blue sheets or verbally. Sometimes, however, the official orders would arrive so late as to make the paper's appearance problematic. For example, Pétain's interview with Goering on 1 December 1941 was to be presented in three columns with an official communiqué according to a 6:30 P.M. order. At 9:45 that order was changed by phone to be five columns. At 10:30 it was decided that the paper could, after all, decide to use only three columns. At half past midnight, the obligatory presentation was stipulated to be four columns, with an imposed title and order of articles. According to Varenne, at this hour the newspaper would usually receive its final form. But still, they had not received the required commentary from O.F.I. After checking with the censor, they were told that this would arrive at 2 A.M. At 1:05 the copy was submitted to the censor, and at 1:40 the missing dispatch finally arrived. 27

Even more difficult for the editors was the requirement to print O.F.I. articles which they knew to be misleading or inaccurate. Varenne clearly had access to British and American news sources with which to evaluate imposed articles. Pierre Limagne, editor of La Croix, mentioned among other sources London radio and the New York Daily News. 28 In order

26 Letter to Pétain, 3 March 1942, Archives of La Montagne.

27 Limagne, p. 102. Letter from Varenne to Dufour, 2 December 1941, Archives of La Montagne.

28 Limagne, p. 114.
to disavow their responsibilities for such information, both Varenne and Limagne insisted on attributing it to its source. Later, when it was required to publish two columns daily on German military exploits, Limagne claimed that La Croix always put them on the right side and, to point out to readers that this was obligatory, always headed the columns with the words "German aviation." "Commentaries" which were required by the censor were signed with the initials N.C. in La Croix to signify note communiquée.

As we shall see, demands by the censor for such distasteful articles, and restrictions by the censor generally, increased during the Vichy period. Although Alexandre Varenne continued to oppose control over his journal by government officials, his ability to resist gradually diminished. Eventually, his only alternative to avoid propagandizing for the government was to cease publication.

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30 Limagne, p. 90.

31 Amaury, p. 651.
The Vichy government's effectiveness in controlling the press increased between the time of the armistice in 1940 and September 1943 when La Montagne voluntarily ceased publication. Many articles of the type appearing in the summer of 1940 would not have been acceptable in 1943. Similarly, the number of imposed items increased during that time. Although Varenne was occasionally able to subvert the demands of the censor, his victories were gradually overshadowed by the overwhelming adherence of his material to the themes and news demanded by the government. Four aspects of this increasing pressure from the censor will be examined in this chapter: restrictions on presentation, the obligation to print propagandistic stories, the demand for identification with this mandated coverage, and Axis influence. Finally, three important events will be examined in order to discern changes over time in Varenne's freedom of publication.

Restrictions on presentation became more rigorous during the war years. The Vichy government was obviously aware of the importance of layout and the power of headlines in drawing attention. Seeking to influence readers, their attention quickly turned to controlling the type of information receiving the most space, the most effective placement, and the largest headlines. As early as January of 1941 the daily consignes included placement, number of columns and lines, and the nature of characters in the titles. At the beginning of 1941, for
example, the new Secretary-General of Information told the assembled newspaper editors that the top of each issue was to devote one or two columns to the initiatives or successes of the Axis. Although other communiqués could be used, priority was to be given to those from Germany and Italy, and emphasis was to be given in commentaries to events considered fortunate for Berlin or Rome.

Resistance to the censor also focused on presentation very early. On 3 July 1940 La Montagne left half of the left column empty, except for the notice that Varenne's article had been completely censored. Similar "blanks" appeared throughout July 1940. Smaller spaces were left within the body of stories with a note stating the number of lines which had been censored. This was an obvious attempt by La Montagne to protest control over its content. This response to having stories cut must have been widespread, for a memo was sent on 9 January 1941 from the central censor suggesting ways to avoid leaving spaces. The next day, 10 January, blank spaces were forbidden.

Varenne also used the order in which articles appeared to demonstrate his sympathies. In early coverage of the Battle of Britain, for example, the lead stories in La Montagne were dated from London. A much smaller area at the bottom of the same page was used to print the official German (DNB) article, with an explanation that these lines were given to the press by that German news agency. On 1 August 1940 the communiqués on the battle began with the English statement, as

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1Limagne, p. 78.  
2Limagne, p. 78.  
3See especially La Montagne for 12, 14, 17, 18 July 1940.  
4Limagne, p. 80.
did many of the subsequent days' coverage.5

A year later, Secretary-General of Information Paul Marion reprimanded Varenne for his lack of "objectivity" in covering the war. He claimed that attention was regularly focused on the first page to news favoring the Anglo-Russian Allies, that Varenne employed euphemisms in headlines announcing their defeats, and used the conditional form to discuss the Axis advances.6 In May, Marion again reprimanded him for the layout of La Montagne, this time for relegating the celebration of Marshal Pétain to the second page, while at the same time including a dispatch drawing attention to American aid to England on the first page. Marion accused him of trying to orient his readers by the manner of his presentation toward a completely different direction than that hoped for by the government.7

Finally, on 1 August 1942 the government removed Varenne's flexibility, and required the publication in their entirety of German, Italian, and Japanese communiqués, in that order. If room were available, British communiqués could then be printed in the same characters. Russian communiqués were not permitted. Varenne was reminded that presentation of information on England, Russia, and America could consist only of one column in the body of the page. Batardy, the local censorship official, claimed that the central office had complained of the large number of British dispatches, with titles too favorable to the Allies, which appeared on the first page

5La Montagne, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31 July, 1 August 1940.
6Letter from Marion to Varenne, 9 February 1942, Archives of La Montagne.
7Letter from Marion to Varenne, 21 May 1942. See also letter from Dominique to Varenne, 28 April 1941, Archives of La Montagne.
of *La Montagne*. The newspaper was suspended for August third and fourth for failure to publish the official German communique. Unable to publish Russian statements, and severely limited concerning the emphasis which he could place on other Allied information, Varenne could do little to treat the war objectively or the Allies with sympathy. By controlling placement and determining much of the content, the censor effectively dictated that *La Montagne*'s emphasis in treating foreign news would favor the Axis.

While these restrictions on presentation precluded pro-Allied and non-biased information, obligatory articles served even more decisively to mandate pro-Vichy and collaborationist coverage. O.F.I. stories, which the government controlled, were often stipulated as the required coverage of particular events. Required publication of "demonstrations" or "letters" showing support for the government were utilized to impress the French with the popularity of the regime and its policies. Obligatory coverage was often exploited in the interest of the National Revolution. By making such items compulsory, the censor dictated a definite bias.

On 6 January 1942 the censor announced the establishment of a National Press Bureau. The Bureau was to provide articles to the major journals of the nonoccupied zone supporting the National Revolution and the New Europe. Articles by well-known authors and journalists would be distributed simultaneously in four different regions, but each recipient would have exclusive rights to the story

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8 Letter from Batardy to Varenne, 1 August 1942. Telegram from Marion to Varenne, 1 August 1942, Archives of *La Montagne*. The public was aware of the disappearance of the Russian communiques. Monthly report, commissaire de police, 25 April 1942 to intendant, MO7191.

9 See next section.
in his region. The authors would treat relevant subjects, including aspects of the New Europe, international relations after the war, and the imperial mission of France.\textsuperscript{10}

In order to portray popular support for its policies, the government encouraged (or required) publication of letters of support or demonstrations in its behalf. Varenne found such news disagreeable, especially when staged by the government. On one occasion, 16 May 1942, he wrote to Prime Minister Pierre Laval deploiring the required publication of "manifestations of indignation" in France over British activities in Madagascar. Although the material was published, Varenne vowed not to print such items in the future, even at the risk of serious sanctions.\textsuperscript{11}

One last example of required articles in support of government policy took place on 23 May 1942. A group of French journalists visited Germany and wrote articles on their observations and impressions. These articles were distributed to journals in the unoccupied zone, each exclusive in its region. \textit{La Montagne} was required to publish the articles without alteration or addition.\textsuperscript{12}

While the national censors did show some flexibility in requiring adherence to the National Revolution, enforcement is evident. For example, René Vincent, the assistant director of censorship, reprimanded Varenne in September 1941 for failing to honor his agreement to support the government program. Varenne, claiming that he was unable to pub-

\textsuperscript{10}Letter from Georges Lorant to Varenne, 6 January 1942, Archives of \textit{La Montagne}.

\textsuperscript{11}Varenne to Laval, 16 May 1942, Archives of \textit{La Montagne}.

\textsuperscript{12}From the assistant director of the press and censorship to Varenne, 23 May 1942, Archives of \textit{La Montagne}.
lish articles attacking bolshevism, had allegedly agreed to display his support for the Revolution in another manner. But after the censor had agreed to exempt La Montagne, nothing published in the newspaper had fulfilled that promise of support. On the contrary, La Montagne's coverage of the condemnation of communist agitators, it was charged, appeared to question their guilt. In addition, the paper had not published the O.F.I. dispatch recounting the recent criminal conduct of communist agitators in France. Because of Varenne's alleged failure to keep his agreement, La Montagne would henceforth be held strictly to all rules. ¹³

The attempt to trade support for the regime for relaxation of rules became general policy by January of 1943. Beginning with Paul Marion, who directed the information services from February 1941 until 1943, the censor tried to coopt journalists, promising them more flexibility in return for voluntary participation in popularizing the government's program.

In March 1941 Marion tried to institute what one journalist called the German system. Instead of censorship by a government official of all material before publication, the new system was to leave censorship to each journal. In the guise of restoring flexibility to the press, this measure would lead the editors to do the government's censorship. An article published under this system which offended the Vichy government would result in the suspension or suppression of the journal. Since the material would not be previewed, each editor would be required to act as censor. Pierre Limagne, editor of La Croix, feared for the future of his journal, and commented in his published diary that instead

¹³Letter from Vincent to Varenne, 13 September 1941, Archives of La Montagne.
of loosening the censorship, this measure would be a new stage in the servitude (asservissement) of the press.\textsuperscript{14} Varenne called the system a trap in his correspondance with Pétain, whereby the paper would not know before it was published what was forbidden, and would expose itself to severe penalties without warning.\textsuperscript{15} It appears that this change was never implemented. Although the system was to have been put into effect for correspondants at Vichy on 16 March, the censors were still previewing their articles four days later. Limagne suggested that the censorship officials' concern about keeping their jobs was decisive.\textsuperscript{16}

Marion encouraged journalists to rewrite collaborationist or pro-Vichy articles in more personal form.\textsuperscript{17} Indeed, in January of 1943 an agreement was made with most journals of the Vichy zone that they would be exempted from publishing imposed articles if they agreed to write commentaries at least three times weekly on the themes suggested in the daily note of orientation. Articles which would previously have been imposed would still have to appear, but could be changed by the paper as desired, as long as the spirit remained. While appearing to increase the flexibility of the press, this reform was designed to enlist the journals in propagandizing for the government. Very few journals refused this agreement. \textit{La Montagne}, as one of these, was

\textsuperscript{14} Limagne, p. 112.

\textsuperscript{15} Letter to Pétain, 20 March 1941, Archives of \textit{La Montagne}.

\textsuperscript{16} Limagne, p. 119.

\textsuperscript{17} A note to the local censors encouraged them to point out to journals that they were encouraged to alter the form of recommended and official information as long as they did not deviate from its orientation. 26 February 1942, Archives of \textit{La Montagne}. 

required to continue complying with all consignes.

In addition to this program, Marion mandated "personalized" support for the government from the journals by prohibiting the attribution of ideological articles to their sources. Varenne complained in December 1942 about being required to entitle an article on Laval's interview with Hitler, "Proof is given that collaboration remains possible. For France it is a vital necessity." He was not permitted to use quotation marks or indicate its source, making the story appear to reflect the opinion of La Montagne's staff. After a similar event in February 1943 Varenne refused to publish his paper. An obligatory article that evening was entitled "The Anglo-Americans abandon the Balkans to the Soviets--Indignation at Belgrade." This headline was unacceptable, Varenne objected, unless they were authorized to indicate its German source (DNB), attenuate its terms, or add quotation marks. Since all were refused, the journal did not appear.

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18 Bellanger claimed that the others were L'Action française, Le Journal, Paris-Soir, Sud-Est, Le Républicain, and Le Petit Bleu, pp. 24-25. Amaury listed the others as Tribune de Saint-Etienne, Les Croix (sic), La Dépêche de Toulouse, and Le Figaro, p. 651. Bonnefoy included only L'Action française and Paris-Soir in "Information and Press," in France during the German Occupation 1940-1944 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957) p. 879. All agreed that La Montagne was among those refusing. In any case, both Amaury and Bonnefoy claimed that the other journals attempted to subvert the spirit of the agreement almost immediately. See for example Limagne's use of N.C. to sign all commentaries under the agreement in the previous section. See also letter to Soustelle from Bonnefoy, 6 January 1943, Archives of La Montagne.

19 Letter from Varenne to Bonnefoy, 23 December 1942, Archives of La Montagne.

20 Letter from Varenne to Bonnefoy, 15 February 1943, Archives of La Montagne. In August 1943 the local heads of the censor were encouraged to intervene with journals not to present articles from the notes of orientation as from a correspondent at Vichy, but as true editorials reflecting the opinions of the journals. If unable to convince them, they would still be able to attribute items from accredited sources. Amaury, p. 676.
Demands that La Montagne identify with government policy became harder to evade. At the same time, growing German influence over the control of information further subjected Varenne to collaborationist pressure. German involvement in press censorship in the unoccupied zone was less overt than in the north. According to the historian Claude Lévy, German ambassador Abetz was commissioned by Hitler to influence those elements influential in forming public opinion in the unoccupied zone.\(^{21}\) It appears that Abetz did affect the process of appointing directors to the information services and that the Axis powers exercised an effective veto over news publication long before troops occupied the south.\(^{22}\) The government at Vichy accepted this influence in the interest of maintaining its sovereignty. In this area, as in many others, the French government ironically gave away much of its independence to retain the impression of sovereignty.\(^{23}\)

A note of orientation on 28 March 1941 insisted that journals adhere strictly to consignes concerning international conflict and diplomacy. It was forbidden to publish anything which might irritate the occupying powers.\(^{24}\) The same day, Varenne received a reprimand for giving a subtitle to the anti-German manifestations at Belgrade,

\(^{21}\) Lévy, p. 16.

\(^{22}\) Amaury, pp. 106-108.

\(^{23}\) Paxton, p. 227.

\(^{24}\) Limagne, p. 122. On page 242 Limagne quoted from the note of orientation for 6 September 1941, "Si, dans leur très grande majorité, les journaux ont présenté les événements du conflit germano-russe de manière objective, certains d'entre eux ont cependant publié à diverses reprises des titres de nature à provoquer des réactions de la part des autorités occupantes. Il est rappelé à ces journaux qu'ils ne doivent oublier que nous sommes en état d'armistice et qu'un des textes de la convention vise expressément la présentation anti-allemande des informations militaires. De telles erreurs, si elles se reproduisaient, comporteraient donc de graves sanctions."
for publishing a headline at the top of a column on the fall of German-held Keren, and for adding a subtitle on the career of British general Wavell, all of which were likely to provoke an unfortunate reaction from the occupying authorities. Varenne was threatened with a suspension of one month for each new infraction, in hopes of making him realize the gravity of such incidents. In his defense, Varenne claimed that the local censor had approved the paper before publication. Further, he questioned the right of the occupying authority to censure the press in the free zone. Until it had been proved that this intervention in the nonoccupied zone conformed to the clauses in the armistice, "I persist in thinking that, on this point as on so many others, the rights of the occupying power stop at the line of demarcation." Japanese and Italian pressure likewise resulted in reprimands.25

Varenne complained of the German impact on censorship after the occupation of the south in November 1942 in his letter of 7 June 1943, which protested a two-day suspension. Varenne claimed that when he asked the local prefect if changes would occur in the juridical system as a consequence of the German occupation of the Vichy zone in 1942, he was told that German troops stationed in the free zone were not occupation troops, but were instead "operations" troops, and that no changes in the juridical system would result. It was announced later that a German censor would function next to the French censor, but that his work would apply only to military information. Varenne claimed that even though this article was not related to the military, it had been censured solely at the insistence of the Germans. Since the article

25 Letter from Marion to Varenne, 16 July 1941. Limagne, p. 95. Letter from Varenne to Marion, 31 March 1941, Archives of La Montagne.
had been locally approved, he thought that it should have been defended by the Vichy censor. Finally, Varenne charged that no real differences existed between the press of the occupied and nonoccupied zones:

Cette ressemblance s'accuse un peu plus chaque jour, surtout par la forme et la qualité des informations—en grande partie obligatoires—qui nous sont transmises par l'O.F.I. Entre les journaux parisiens, contrôlés, sinon édités par les autorités occupantes, et les quotidiens de l'ancienne zone non occupée, les différentes s'estompent au point de n'être plus perceptibles. 26

The pressures on La Montagne had increased steadily, and are visible if one examines changes in the paper over time. Three important events, one year apart, will be surveyed below to illustrate the decreasing freedom which Varenne had to control his publication. Each event affected French attitudes toward the warring powers: the bombing of the French fleet at Mers-el-Kebir, the German invasion of Russia, and the Allied invasion of North Africa.

On 4 July 1940 at the Algerian port of Mers-el-Kebir, the British navy attacked the French fleet. The Vichy government condemned this action, which sank or damaged much of the fleet, and it subsequently broke off diplomatic relations with Great Britain. Publicity of the event could stimulate Anglophobia, and would assist the government in discrediting the competing claim to leadership of General de Gaulle, who had supported the British attack; it could also lend popular support to Britain's enemy, Germany. Indeed, Pierre Laval's local paper, Le Moniteur du Puy-de-Dôme, got appreciable mileage out of the event, headlining one story "Some details of the circumstances of the treacherous British aggression." This article emphasized the neutrality of the French fleet, as did another, which pointed out that neither Germany

26 Letter from Varenne to Bonnefoy, 7 June 1943, Archives of La Montagne.
nor Italy required the surrender of the fleet, as England had. Le Moniteur’s editorial, entitled "Mr. Churchill’s Loathsome Action," recalled France’s loyal fight by England’s side, and called the attack brutal and traitorous.\(^{27}\)

While the Moniteur’s headlines included such inflammatory items, La Montagne wrote of the "tragedy," and printed the British government communiqué, along with a statement by the English Prime Minister under the large headline, "The British Explanation." An article was also published about the account which H.R. Knickerbocker, "well-known and pro-French" had written in an American newspaper of the events. He emphasized, according to the French article, that the French commander had categorically refused to accede to the appeals of the British admiralty, which exhausted without success "the whole gamut of persuasion."\(^{28}\) At the same time, both papers reproduced the official description of the events and the government’s declarations concerning the affair.

At this early date, considerable room remained for expression of one’s position. Although La Montagne carried France’s official response, it was diluted with bland headlines, England’s declarations, and the report by an uninvolved observer. By the beginning of the German-Soviet war, Varenne’s ability to influence coverage so strongly had diminished. Although he continued to insert "enemy" communiqués and was able to show his skepticism in editorials, his paper was overwhelmingly devoted to official French, German, and Axis statements, and obligatory O.F.I. articles.

\(^{27}\)Le Moniteur du Puy-de-Dôme, 5 July 1940.

\(^{28}\)La Montagne, 5 July 1940.
When Germany declared war on Russia, the French in Clermont-Ferrand were excited. Russia, they thought, would finally stop the Germans. According to the local police, people generally were pleased to see that the Russian army had indeed halted the Germans, and by autumn had forced them to fight a guerre de position rather than a war of movement. They believed that while the Germans were thus occupied, America and England would be able to prepare strong armies.  

In light of this general feeling that Russia would prove a formidable adversary, the censor ordered reservation in forecasting the military situation. For 23 June 1941 the orders required publication of the events in Russia to comprise between four and six columns. La Montagne coverage included primarily Havas material on foreign responses to the new war, Hitler's message to the German people, Ribbentrop's declaration, and General Antonesco's address to the Rumanian army. Still, some divergence is evident in the attitudes of the two Clermont-Ferrand editions. While Varenne entitled Ribbentrop's declaration simply "Un note de M. von Ribbentrop," in Le Moniteur the same declaration ran under the headline "The hatred of bolshevism against national-socialism was stronger than political judgement." On the same day, La Montagne carried a story on the Tripartite pact of the Axis powers which implied that the other signatories were not obliged to support Germany's war with Russia.  

La Montagne's coverage of the Russian war on 24 June was unremarkable, including primarily O.F.I. dispatches, German news service

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29 Commissaire centrale of Clermont-Ferrand to Prefet, 1 August, 1 September 1941, M03822. Police report to Prefet, 31 October 1941, M03823.

30 Limagne, p. 192. La Montagne and Le Moniteur for 23 June 1941.
reports (DNB), and the German command communiqués. The following day, 25 June, La Montagne ran communiqués from various Axis powers: Italy, Hungary, and Turkey, as well as Spain; the German command communiqués; and Havas dispatches. However, it also ran the Soviet communiqué, which claimed that the German attacks had been repulsed, that the Soviet counterattack had begun and was partly successful, that the Russians had taken five thousand prisoners and destroyed seventy-six pieces of equipment. In light of later instructions, which specified that one of the articles of the armistice convention prohibited presentation of anti-German military information on the threat of grave sanctions, the publication of this communiqué seems unusual. On the same day, an anonymous author included information disputing Germany's claims in the column "Views of the War." The author claimed that the Germans did not need eight million soldiers and 15,000 airplanes on the Russian front, and that they would be foolish to utilize that many, since that would include their entire army and all the reserves, and the Russians were only one enemy. During 1940, the column asserted, it had been demonstrated that large masses of soldiers did not decide battles, especially in a war of movement, where they would be a hindrance. He requested that the country not resurrect the famous fable of the German steam-roller. On the twenty-fifth, the same author denied the veracity of reports about Germany's successes. The German advance was not as great as had been announced, he claimed. It was not two hundred, but only one hundred kilometres that the

32 La Montagne, 25 June 1941.
Germans had gone beyond Brest-Likovsk. He also described how the German successes on the other fronts were not as great as previously thought, and concluded by pointing out that the Russians had accepted battle rather than relying on strategic retreats as they had done in the first world war.33

For the most part, these suggestive articles were carried through the editorial column, which had ceased to appear by the time of the Allied landings in North Africa one year later. Despite a limited amount of apparently unacceptable material during the coverage of the Russian war, La Montagne was overwhelmingly composed of official information. By the following year, little visibly remained of Varenne's independence.

On 8 November 1942 Anglo-American forces invaded French North Africa at Algeria and Morocco. France immediately severed relations with the United States. As a direct consequence of the Allied conquest of North Africa, the Germans moved troops south of the line of demarcation and occupied the whole country, maintaining the Pétain government to execute its orders. In light of Varenne's hostility to the German occupation, strong condemnation of this break in the armistice could have been expected. Upon examination, however, it is evident that La Montagne showed no divergence from the required journalistic path.

Consignes were extensive for the day following the Allied invasion of North Africa. Headlines were specified, and only O.F.I. dispatches were permitted. Le Moniteur and La Montagne were almost

33 La Montagne, 26 June 1941.
indistinguishable, except that Le Moniteur placed more emphasis on the breaking of relations with the United States, and included an editorial deploring the aggression and demanding obedience to the Pétain government. Later coverage of the events in North Africa followed a similar pattern. The only differences between the papers related to Le Moniteur's additional voluntary support, while La Montagne simply printed articles supporting the government and its policies.34

Even in the issue of 12 November, which announced the occupation of southern France, La Montagne appeared to endorse the official position that Germany had occupied the south to protect her now exposed coastline. Small differences between the two papers are negligible compared with their extensive similarities. Le Moniteur printed all of Hitler's letter on the first page, while La Montagne put at least half of it on the second page; Le Moniteur ran an editorial voluntarily reiterating the day's major themes. On the thirteenth, Varenne's paper appeared to endorse government policy and encourage resignation to the status quo by printing all the required information, including an explanation of the occupation, and the "real intentions" of America in her aggression.35 After that date, required support for the regime included the publication of obligatory articles showing the extent of popular enthusiasm for the government. On the thirteenth, La Montagne published an item on the numerous telegrams which Pétain had received from French youth pledging their support.

34Limagne, pp. 888-892. Le Moniteur, 8-11 November 1942. La Montagne, 8-11 November 1942.

35Le Moniteur, 12, 13 November 1942. La Montagne, 12, 13 November 1942.
It is apparent that by the advent of the occupation of the entire country in November 1942 press freedom had virtually ceased. Obligatory articles, and the prohibition of non news-service material gave little possibility for printing news critical of the government, its policies, or the occupiers. This freedom had been very limited for at least one year. Varenne's attempts to present forbidden material were insignificant compared with the mass of information favorable to the existing situation.

In September 1943 La Montagne notified the Prefect and its subscribers that it would cease publication. Varenne had been unable to obtain an opportunity to close his paper in protest, and in the end closed it quietly. In a notice sent to the subscribers, he cited "professional and technical difficulties." His letter to the Prefect mentioned the censor's refusal of a visa to publish an article the preceding week, and problems with supplies as the factors contributing to his decision. According to M. Favre, current editor of the paper, the staff decided to close because they had begun to be seen as a collaborationist paper. Further, General de Gaulle had threatened trials after the liberation for all editors who continued to publish after the occupation of the south in 1942. A combination of all these factors, in addition to increased pressures from the information services, which had negated La Montagne's character as an "independent" journal, finally made the staff unwilling to continue its publication.36

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36 Copy of notice sent to subscribers, 9 September 1943, M05755. For note to Prefect, see M06357. See also Bonnefoy, page 882, who claimed that Varenne asked him how to stop publishing without encountering repercussions. Interview with Favre, who also claimed that they hid some of their workers in order to help them escape from conscription as forced labor in Germany.
Even though he worked to circumvent the censor's restrictions, Varenne's freedom of publication had diminished steadily. In the end it is apparent that the censor's control of information was effective in relation to information published by the press. However, this efficacy did not necessarily carry over to control of public opinion.
IV Censorship and Public Opinion

The censor's control over the press did not have the result intended by the government. Notwithstanding the evident bias and propaganda published daily in France, the population continued to oppose collaboration with the Germans and refused to be misled concerning events in the continuing conflict. Clermont-Ferrand's population did not support government policies after 1941, and were suspicious of the media which tried to popularize them.

As early as November 1940 the prefect warned that it was necessary to do a better job with radio and journal propaganda. British radio was more effective because it came right after dinner, when the French listened to their radios. People read the papers for the news only, he said, and were not impressed by the moral lessons.¹ The Commissaire Central claimed that one could not overestimate the influence of English radio on French opinion in 1942. French radio had hardly any listeners.² Even the Vichy Minister of the Interior admitted in his synthesis of reports received from the whole region that the populace had confidence in the British Broadcasting Company and none in French radio.³ By June 1943 the same official claimed that "the population looked more and more to foreign radio stations

¹Prefet to Minister of Interior, 11 November 1940, M03822.
²Monthly report, Commissaire Central to Intendant of Police, 24 October 1942, M07191.
³Monthly synthesis of reports from Vichy Minister of Interior, to Prefets, 15 November 1943, M07191.
to be informed, because they claimed that French radio too often passed in silence diplomatic and military information, or gave it too late." He said that some people listened to Swiss radio, but estimated that most of the population listened to British broadcasts.  

As early as December 1940 the people had limited faith in both French radio and newspapers. They complained that everything was censored by the Germans, and that consequently the news found in the journals was either false or slanted. In 1941, the police report claimed that people did not believe anything. "Contrary to what is printed in the journals, which they say has imposed articles which do not represent the truth, which never fail to emphasize the adherence of the public each time a reform is introduced, these people remain indifferent."  

It is clear from the reports sent by various officials that the people of Clermont-Ferrand did not support the Vichy government or its policies, although the extent of their hostility varied with events, seasons, and material need. An intimate connection was indeed drawn by many officials between the availability of food, clothing, and employment, and the popular response to the government. Bread rationing began in August 1940, and butter was unavailable even in July 1940. In October of that year Pierre Limagne remarked that difficulties with provisioning were becoming terrible in the majority of French towns. By May 1941 the local commissaire reported that the

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4 24 June 1943, M07191. See Wright, chapter 4, for a discussion of the use of radio during the war as a propaganda tool.

5 Monthly report of police to Prefet, 1 December 1940, M03822.

6 Monthly report of police to Prefet, 31 October 1941, M03823.

7 La Montagne, 7 July 1940. See also official declarations on rationing, La Montagne, 4, 9 July 1940.

8 Limagne, p. 6
primary preoccupation of the public was with procuring food.\(^9\) As winter drew closer that year, the Minister of the Interior commented that worries over securing food, heat, clothing, and shoes for the winter took up all thoughts. Little attention was paid to other events.\(^{10}\)

By the middle of 1942 Germany's conversion to a war economy led to increased demands upon France. Unable rapidly to defeat England or the Soviet Union, Germany began to mobilize her economic structure, and consequently her demands for French goods grew.\(^{11}\) Requisitions of agricultural products left the already strapped French with little. By 1943 ration cards would not guarantee food, and the black market became a necessary part of life for urban dwellers.\(^{12}\) French labor was conscripted to work in German factories beginning in the autumn of 1942. In 1943 the Police Commissaire at Clermont-Ferrand wrote that almost unanimously opinion was turning toward resistance to what was considered deportation. "The social and political atmosphere is marked with violence and menace. It would be imprudent not to take into account that the climate of civil war or insurrection is growing from day to day."\(^{13}\)

In order to describe the increasing gulf between press propaganda and popular opinion, this section will compare *La Montagne*’s treatment of the National Revolution, the policy of collaboration, and labor

\(^9\) Monthly report, Police Commissaire second arrondissement, to Prefet, 29 May 1941, M03822.

\(^{10}\) Monthly synthesis of reports from Vichy Minister of Interior, to Prefets, 13 November 1941, M07191. See also monthly report of Commissaire Central to Intendant of Police, 28 April 1942, M07191.


\(^{13}\) Monthly report of Commissaire Central to Prefet Delegué, 25 March 1943, M07191.
conscription, with the public response to those policies. It is obvious that the government's tight control over the journal was unsuccessful in accomplishing the ultimate goal of propaganda: to direct popular sentiment.

The traditionalists who held power after the 1940 armistice believed that leadership and popular recognition for authority would help to restore France to greatness. Pointing to the difficulties plaguing the country under the Third Republic's parliamentary system, the government vowed to write a new constitution replacing rule by incompetent deputies with rule by a centralized head of state. Marshal Pétain, a World War I hero with a reputation for hoarding French lives, was widely respected when he first attained power in June 1940. In one of his first actions, parliament was assembled to endorse the call for a new constitution and to give full power to Pétain for its creation. Pétain became head of the French state, and Pierre Laval became his deputy.

Much of the attempt to popularize the government was focused on the leaders themselves. The Secretary of State instructed local mayors to post pictures of Pétain on the walls of public buildings in October 1940. One advertisement for a calendar of the Marshal discussed the necessity for such a timekeeper in order to see the life of the Marshal in his duties as chief of state. Children were taught in school that Pétain was the last of a line of saviors of France. The recommended

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14 Prefet to Mayors, 11 October 1940, M07853.
15 M06135.
lesson taught that the conditions which Pétain obtained from the victor after the defeat of the French armies safeguarded the existence of France and her honor, and ended, "Of all the great commanders produced by our country, of all the great diplomats, of all the great organizers, none has been as upright as he." The Secretary of State for Education sent school teachers themes on which children were to be assigned essays on topics relating to Pétain and national renewal. Teachers were to choose the best essays each month, and two from each school would be sent to the government. These letters, in turn, were cited in the press as evidence of the support which the government received from French youth.

The press contributed to popularizing the government also by the extended coverage given to the Marshal's speeches and travels, as well as those of his deputies. Often, such descriptions were accompanied by photographs. When Pétain visited Clermont-Ferrand in March 1942 to address a peasant assembly, La Montagne ran a large picture of the Marshal, a large headline, and five columns of text. In the subsequent issue, similar space was devoted to the event: a picture of both Pétain and Admiral Darlan, large headlines, and a reproduction of the text of Pétain's speech. According to the paper, the populace welcomed the leader with "incessant acclamation, ardor, a fervored welcome." The author interpreted this greeting to signify the people's veneration and

16 Minister Secretary of State for National Education to Inspectors of Academies, 28 September 1942, T01455.
17 Same, 23 September 1942, T01455.
18 See for example La Montagne, 14 July 1940; 21-23 March, 8 August 1942.
untiring attachment to the savior of the country. The police reported that amid shouts of "Vive Pétain," many people did not cheer at all, and that no support was heard for Darlan.19

Eliciting support for Pétain was initially not difficult. The Marshal enjoyed widespread support for his first year in office. However, his assistants never enjoyed much popularity. Most people in Clermont-Ferrand were happy to see Laval leave government in December 1940, but the same report claimed that they were not happy with Flandin, his replacement. Flandin's successor, Darlan, was frequently criticized.20 Thus, even during the first year support for the regime was ambivalent, with Pétain the only popular figure.

Pétain's support began to fade during 1941, according to local officials. People especially criticized the government's lack of organization, its large number of unnecessary functionaries, and the restrictions it placed on the exercise of businesses or professions.21 By October of 1942 the Commissaire Central of Clermont-Ferrand claimed that the government did not have popular support.22 Even though Pétain had lost much of his popularity by spring of 1942, during his local visit he was warmly received. Pétain's popularity faded as


22. To Intendant, 24 October 1942, M07191.
collaboration increased, as workers were required for Germany, and as the people realized that Pétain had little power against the Germans. Small actions expressed this increasing disaffection. For example, after the scuttling of the French fleet when the Germans tried to seize it at Toulon, Pétain's posters disappeared for a few days from some of the local stores. People believed that this loss of life and property should have been avoided by sending the fleet to Dakar. By the summer of 1943 the police report read, "As always concerning the government, the spirit of criticism dominates the whole population."

Just as the increased German requirements resulted in a diminution of the government's prestige, it also limited the effectiveness and energy behind the National Revolution. As Yves Durand pointed out, after 1942 the burden of occupation became so heavy that it attenuated the possible effectiveness of the National Revolution. German demands for food, labor, and material diverted popular attention from the government's attempt to reconstruct France.

Desiring to recreate French society, and believing that the French defeat was due to cultural decadence, the Vichy government set out to change French values and institutions. In order to break with the past, the Third Republic was abolished by parliamentary vote, and a new constitution was promised. Marshal Pétain saw the ending of

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23 Commissaire Central to Intendant of Police, 25 September 1942, M07191.

24 To Director of G. R. at Vichy, 15 December 1942, M07191. See La Montagne coverage, 28-30 November 1942.

25 Commissaire Central to Prefet Delegué, 24 July 1943, M07191.


27 Paxton, p. 142.
the old regime as a necessary precondition for fundamental French change. The Riom trial which accused the leaders of the late Third Republic for the defeat of France was another attempt by the government to condemn the past in order to remake France.

Although the National Revolution did not reflect a single coherent set of goals, certain themes were generally accepted by its propagators. In addition to their desire to be rid of republican institutions, the adherents sought to return to an agricultural lifestyle and value structure, reemphasis upon the institution of the family, and the emergence of "notables" as the nation's leadership. Fearing bolshevism perhaps more than any other danger, they strove for social and class harmony. Patriotism, combined with respect for authority, and the reawakening of traditional values, would lead a renewed France to take her rightful place in the European community. Propaganda for the Revolution relied heavily on posters, radio broadcasts, and the press.29

28 La Montagne, 10 July 1940.
29 Paxton, chapter 2. Poster from Durand, p. 79.
At the beginning of the Vichy regime, propaganda for national renewal was especially intense. Radio broadcasts by many of the Vichy ministers discussed the efforts which they were making to return France to her former glory. On 25 July the Minister of the Interior claimed that after the defeat they were in the ruins of a liberal, capitalist and parliamentary regime, and claimed that it would not be with discredited "intellectual subtleties" that the country would be rebuilt, but with passionate love of the country. According to the Minister of Foreign affairs, the world which existed before 10 May 1940 had been terminated. Soon new relations between labor and capital, new administrative and educational orders, and new concepts of life would be instituted in France. The Ministers of Labor and Agriculture talked of a massive return to the land, a renewal of agriculture and its attendant values. Emphasis was placed upon teaching, especially by Pétain, who spoke of the mortal dangers that intellectual and moral perversions could have, and declared his commitment to protect the institution of the family. Each of these speeches was printed in La Montagne. Although such strong emphasis decreased in the paper following the first months, commentaries, orientation of news, and published speeches continued to reiterate the major themes for national renewal well past 1942.

The people of Clermont-Ferrand, initially skeptical of the National Revolution, were indifferent or scornful of it by 1942. According to the police, the workers wanted bread and work and did

30 La Montagne, 25 July 1940.

31 La Montagne, 3, 10, 25 July , 26 November 1940; 6 March 1942.
not believe in the National Revolution. They were especially skeptical of the campaign to elicit fear of communism. "Tired of the occupation, the population refuses to believe in a communist danger." Nor did they believe that the Germans were at war in order to protect the world from bolshevism. Anti-German sentiment had strong precedents in France, and increasing German exactions were turning the population into overt opponents of collaboration. Thus, many of the residents of Clermont-Ferrand strongly opposed the official policy of cooperation with the Germans.

Pétain's radio broadcast on 30 October 1940 stated that "It is for honor and to maintain French unity that I enter today in the path of collaboration." Even at that date, this decision to cooperate with the Germans was not popularly accepted in France. Limagne remarked on the growing anger rumbling in the people over this policy. The Commissaire Central of Clermont-Ferrand reported in January 1941 that the population hoped for a German defeat. In order to gain acceptance for the official policy, the press was required to be favorable toward the Axis powers in the material they presented. Even in 1940, Limagne repeatedly remarked on the requirement to support the policy of collaboration in articles and commentaries, as well as on the "Germanophilic" tendencies of the censor. Three major themes were used to encourage favorable sentiment toward reconciliation with Germany.

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32 Commissaire of second arrondissement to Commissaire Central, 24 March 1942.
33 Commissaire Centrale to Prefet Delegué, monthly report, 25 March 1943, M07191.
34 Limagne, p. 41.
35 Limagne, pp. 62-63.
36 To Intendant of Police, 31 January 1941, M07191.
37 Limagne, for 2 July, 24 November, 5 December 1940.
First, the possible benefits of cooperation were emphasized. Second, the censor stressed the overwhelming power of the Germans, implying that eventually France would have to come to terms with it. Third, the censor's insinuations concerning the Allies' goals and activities were designed to loose old allegiances.

The most important benefit to be received from collaboration, according to the government, would be the inclusion of France in the New Europe. Fearful of attaining a role as a second-rate vassal state, the French authorities believed that participation in the German program to remake Europe would better their position in a future settlement. Germany's retention of two million French war prisoners was further reason for cooperation. Here no convincing was required; it appears that even though many Frenchmen disliked the idea of collaboration, they would give it a chance in order to get the prisoners returned.38

In order to popularize its interactions with the Germans, the press was required to publish stories on top-level interviews between French and German government officials, and to emphasize such things as the return of prisoners. Marshal Pétain's interview with Marshal von Runstedt in December 1942 received large headlines, and a quotation from Pétain's letter to Hitler supporting collaboration in the interest of a future reorganized Europe was reprinted in large letters under the headline.39 Laval's reception by Hitler received similar emphasis, with a top center, four column headline. Laval's famous speech of June 1942 received extensive coverage, with one headline quoting his most dramatic statement: "I hope for the victory of Germany because, without it,

38 John F. Sweets, research notes.
39 _La Montagne_, 11, 13/14 December 1942.
bolshevism will install itself everywhere." According to Laval's speech, France had erred in 1918 and again in 1940 by not having come to terms with Germany, and it was imperative to do so now. In returning to power, he was committing himself to trying to establish normal and trusting relations with Germany and Italy, claiming that a new Europe would emerge from this war. The alternative to this new peaceful Europe, according to Laval, was the disappearance of French civilization.  

More immediately tangible benefits were emphasized as well. As will be seen, the return of prisoners under the relève received extensive and emphatic coverage. Even the inauguration of the obligatory labor service was presented as a German concession to the French. Another important "benefit" of collaboration occurred in August 1942 when the Germans thanked the residents of Dieppe for resisting a British invasion by releasing all war prisoners from that region. A large headline on August 26 attributed the decision to release the prisoners to Hitler, in testimony to the "disciplined attitude" of the population. Three columns were devoted on September 14 to the "moving return" of the prisoners, in which pictures of Pétain appeared, the youth sang praises to him, and one of Vichy's representatives to Paris spoke.  

It appears, however, that many Frenchmen in Clermont-Ferrand were not impressed with the benefits to be received from cooperating with the Germans. According to the chief of security, collaboration was seen as a jest. Almost unanimously, people believed that France

40 La Montagne, 23 June 1942.
41 La Montagne, 26 August 1942.
gave everything and received nothing in compensation. One had only
to go to the cinema and listen to the whistles, laughs, and coughs
during the newsreels to see how strong anti-German sentiment was.\textsuperscript{42}
The local populace was not impressed with the \textit{relève}, was overtly
hostile to labor conscription, and did not believe that the Germans
were really fighting to establish a desirable New Europe.\textsuperscript{43}

At the same time that the government played up the advantages
of support for Germany, it emphasized German might and triumphs. This
propaganda, sometimes inaccurate, implied that reconciliation was
necessary, since Germany would be victorious regardless of French
sentiment. To illustrate the Germans’ imminent success, \textit{La Montagne}
published a series of articles discussing the insurmountable difficulties
facing the Allies in opening a second front. World opinion seemed to
confirm this impression. News from the U.S.S.R. implied that the
Russians were impatient and embarrassed at the long wait, and they had
relied so much on this diversion, that they had ceased predicting
victory in 1942 as a consequence. In England, it was said that the
government would not even discuss its plans in a closed session of
parliament, and one official was quoted as saying that a landing with
maritime transports could not be regularly supplied. Three days later,
\textit{La Montagne} quoted from the London \textit{Times} editor that “the situation is
bad not only for the Russians, but for us.” \textit{La Montagne} also published
the reflections of the French press on the opening of the second front,
which repeated the need to refrain from illusions.\textsuperscript{44} The Allied com-

\textsuperscript{42} To Intendant, 24 February 1942. See also Commissaire second
arrondissement to Commissaire Central, 24 April 1942, M07191.

\textsuperscript{43} See succeeding notes on the \textit{relève}.

\textsuperscript{44} 1, 4 August 1942.
mando attack on 19 August 1942 at Dieppe was presented as a hurried landing, ill-conceived and poorly prepared, but arising out of the pressing need to open a second front. A more direct presentation of Germany's triumphs was published on 30 September 1942, when von Ribbentrop's speech celebrating the second anniversary of the tripartite pact drew up a "balance sheet" of Germany's military activities.

Having shown that none of the badly needed relief from the Anglo-Americans was in sight for the immediate future, the press published extensive descriptions of German successes in such places as Egypt and Stalingrad. La Montagne published optimistic accounts of German successes in Stalingrad until the Allied invasion of North Africa distracted public attention. Large headlines announced German offensives and victories, even on November first and second, when the Russian counterattacks to the south of the city were claimed to have failed. On 13 November, while the Soviet forces were encircling the German army, headlines claimed that the Wehrmacht had improved its position in Stalingrad.

The local populace obviously had other sources of information, and considered Stalingrad a defeat for the Germans. The newspapers became the object of ironic comments. In August 1943 the Commissaire Central said that "when the official communiqués announced that the Axis was using an elastic defense or tactic in Russia, the population thought that the matter is entirely a series of defeats that she had

45. La Montagne, 20, 21 August 1942.
46. La Montagne.
47. La Montagne, 7, 10-12, 14, 17, 20 October; 1/2, 13 November 1942.
Many people still expected a second front in October 1942, but generally felt that the Anglo-American deception concerning it was compensated for by the Axis reverses in Russia and Egypt. The French remained unmoved by German superiority, even when the Germans had sustained an unbroken chain of victories, hoping for their defeat even in 1941. When the south was occupied, the residents of Clermont-Ferrand received German concerts and marches with total coldness. They treated these "operations troops" with condescension, and remarked on their extreme youth.

The government tried to instill distrust and hatred of the Allies, and especially of de Gaulle, concurrently with the campaign to make the Germans more appealing. Two themes recur with great frequency: the Allied bombings of France destroy our peaceful nation, and war in the Empire reflected Britain's greed for French colonies. As early as November 1940 the Vichy government required the press to comment on the unspeakable and unanticipated English bombardment of Marseille. To the bombing of the Parisian suburbs in March 1942, La Montagne devoted four columns and a headline reading "A frightful bombardment of the Paris region by British airplanes." The subtitle claimed two hundred properties destroyed and deaths in the hundreds. Beginning with the plea "France did not deserve this," the article stated that France had adhered strictly to the armistice, abstaining from any act which could constitute an action against those nations still at war. "Workers in Paris

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48 Monthly report to police, 25 August 1943, M07191.
49 Commissaire Central to Intendant, 24 October, 25 September 1942, M07191.
50 Commissaire Central to Prefet Delegue monthly report, 23 February, 25 March 1943, M07191.
51 Limagne, for 26 November 1940.
are not mobilized and do not fight, but instead go to work to feed their families. All other considerations are foreign to them." To reinforce the extent of the damage to this peacable city, a photograph of the destruction was printed five days later.\textsuperscript{52}

In addition to portraying the English as destroyers of the innocent, the newspapers presented her as motivated by the basest of objectives: greed. An article on 16 September 1942 claimed that the British justifications for their attack against Madagascar were not true. Instead, the article accused them of being after the rich French colonies in a manner reminiscent of their nineteenth century competition with France. When the Allied forces attacked North Africa, the French similarly painted this aggression with ignoble motives.

Probably the most vituperative denunciations, however, were reserved for General de Gaulle, who, by refusing to recognize the armistice, challenged the legitimacy of the Vichy government. Although his initial declaration calling for continuation of the struggle against Germany was censored by the government, the speech did appear in many French newspapers.\textsuperscript{53} The campaign to smear him came early, with the note of orientation for 21 September 1940 reminding the editors that according to the Churchill-de Gaulle agreement in August, the French dissidents were being paid by England. It was noted that England's defeat in Egypt was serious, presumably to emphasize the futility of de Gaulle's movement.\textsuperscript{54} After the failed British-Gaullist invasion at Dakar, editors were told to "Emphasize the felony of General de

\textsuperscript{52} La Montagne, 5, 10 March 1942.

\textsuperscript{53} Le Journal de la France..., no. 108.

\textsuperscript{54} Limagne, p. 26.
Gaulle and the horror it inspires in all good Frenchmen." Those who joined him were claimed to be Spanish legionnaires from the defunct Popular Front on one occasion, and on another a Vichy cabinet member identified opposition to the regime with communism.\(^{55}\) When some Frenchmen from equatorial Africa refused to follow de Gaulle and returned to France, the daily *consigne* demanded good placement and large headlines. The article claimed that the reason so few returned was that the others were kept by force.\(^{56}\)

It appears that, instead of disdaining de Gaulle, the French supported his cause in increasing numbers. In 1940 a local police commissaire reported Gaullist writing on public walls in Clermont-Ferrand, distribution of Gaullist tracts on the street, and widespread following of English radio.\(^ {57}\) By May of 1941 it was admitted to be "notably on the rise" in several parts of France.\(^ {58}\) In June of that year a local official claimed that Gaullism was noticeable among lycée students, and one report claimed that English radio was heard in the camps of the Chantiers de Jeunesse, the youth movement designed to renew the French spirit.\(^ {59}\)

Even those who were not Gaullists, however, frequently hoped for an Allied victory. According to an estimate by an official in Riom, a town not far from Clermont-Ferrand, the greatest single number of people in the area hoped for an English victory without supporting

\(^{55}\)Limagne, pp. 27, 47. Paxton, p. 226.

\(^{56}\)Limagne, p. 119.

\(^{57}\)Commissaire, third arrondissement to Prefet, monthly report 9 December 1940, M03822.

\(^{58}\)Weekly synthesis of interceptions through PTT control, M03822.

\(^{59}\)19 June 1941. Head of mission for Auvergne to chief of the youth camps, 21 August 1942, T02548/2.
Moreover, this hope for Allied victory was not seriously diminished by either the bombings or attacks on French colonies, although anti-British sentiment sometimes shifted allegiance to the Americans. Concerning the Allied debarkation in North Africa, the local populace seemed pleased. Although some feared that food might become more difficult to secure, the announcement brought an "uncontained joy" until it was understood that an unfavorable German response would follow. Although some had feared after the bombing attack on the Renault works in Paris that the Michelin factory would be struck and fled to the countryside, that fear was over quickly. Although the population was upset and confused by the bombings, the events nonetheless did not have the effect which the French press attributed to them. According to a Vichy official, the result had certainly not created a current of opinion favorable to the occupiers.

Probably the largest contributing factor to this pro-Allied and Germanophobic sentiment was the conscription of laborers to work in German plants. Although the relève was initially presented as a victory for the policy of collaboration, it clearly alienated the populace from the government and its policies. Initially, the relève was an ingenious attempt by Prime Minister Laval to forestall German demands for labor and at the same time reassure the population concerning their soldiers taken prisoner in 1939-1940. When Laval returned to power in April 1942, the populace welcomed him hoping his ties with the Germans would help to ameliorate the conditions of French prisoners of war. Two million prisoners were held in Germany, and had not been released after the armistice.

60 Sous-Prefet at Riom to Prefet, Puy-de-Dôme, 29 May 1941, M03822.
61 Divisional Commissaire at Vichy to Prefet Delegué at Vichy, 24 April 1943, monthly report, M07191.
A substantial proportion of the French population, their presence was felt strongly on the personal level, for almost everyone seemed to have had a friend or relative captured. On the national level, since many were farmers, their absence was most apparent in the drop in agricultural production. Prisoners had been a major preoccupation since the armistice, and so far all attempted solutions had been unsuccessful. 62

At the same time, as previously seen, Germany's lightning war had slowed to steady combat, especially in Russia. While initially German consumption and production had been maintained at a high level, with the prospects of a protracted struggle the Germans had to convert their economic base to a military footing. Since their own population was recruited for the military, industry lacked workers, which were to be supplied from the occupied territories. During his first year in office from May 1942 to May 1943, the German Minister of Industry brought two million foreign workers to Germany. 63

Prime Minister Laval seemed to have performed a diplomatic coup by negotiating the relève, whereby for every three French skilled workers agreeing to work in Germany, one prisoner of war would be returned. Initially it seemed like he had solved the national obsession while at the same time supplying Germany with much-needed labor. Moreover, due to lack of materials, French production had slowed, leaving workers unemployed; and provisioning was increasingly difficult to maintain. Notwithstanding the apparent merits of the plan, presented in the most positive possible manner, the French remained unconvinced. Despite the impressive propaganda campaign launched in behalf of the relève, it was

62 Commissaire Central to Intendant of Police, 28 April 1942; Commissaire third arrondissement to Intendant, 24 April 1942; M07191.

63 Wright, p. 121.
in the end unsuccessful in recruiting workers.

Pierre Laval's speech on 23 June 1942 announcing the relève set the themes for later propaganda. First, the relève was seen as vindication for his collaborationist policy and as a vehicle through which further understanding could develop between the French and their German neighbors. In addition, it was necessary for the French to participate in the German efforts to create a new Europe, free of bolshevism, which would live harmoniously after the war. In light of the extensive German sacrifices, the French could not remain passive and indifferent, according to Laval. Third, the French were faced with growing unemployment due to lack of raw materials, while Germany had an urgent need for manual labor in order to continue her struggle. A fourth common theme related to working conditions. French manual laborers could expect a good reception, high salaries, excellent working conditions, and could assure the wellbeing of their families by sending them part of their monthly pay. Finally, Laval made an appeal for solidarity and responsibility. It was the soldiers who risked their lives to protect the labor of the workers; now it was the responsibility of the workers to secure the release of these prisoners by volunteering to work in Germany. 64

These themes were frequently reiterated throughout the campaign to enlist workers. Posters showing a mother and child happily contemplating the funds they received from their absent provider were posted on walls, along with pictures of returning prisoners reunited with their families. 65 Radio broadcasts of statements by Laval

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64 La Montagne.

65 Le Journal de la France... no. 137. Poster on p. 56 from Durand, p. 44.
accompanied press coverage in an attempt to persuade the population to participate in the relève.

La Montagne's coverage of the relève took on a stylized form at the beginning of July. For the first days after Laval's speech, discussions of the new measures were printed daily at the top of the first page under such titles as "After the Message of Prime Minister Laval," "After the Discourse of Prime Minister Laval," and "After the Appeal of Prime Minister Laval." Beginning on June 30, however, news of the relève was relegated to the lower part of the page using smaller headlines, which usually read "French Workers in Germany," or "The Sending of French Workers to Germany." All stories published in La Montagne concerning the relève were either attributed to government spokesmen or to O.F.I.

66 La Montagne, 25-29 June 1942.
67 La Montagne, 2, 4, 5, 11, 13, 15 July 1942.
Except for occasional articles which received more attention, these sections on French workers in Germany repetitiously followed four main lines. Sections included stories on new bureaus opening to receive applications and recruit workers; details on convoys departing for Germany; enumeration of benefits to be reaped by volunteering; and interviews with those who had returned concerning the good conditions, food, pay, and labor relations in Germany. Most days *La Montagne* printed small articles, a few paragraphs long, covering one or more of these. *Le Moniteur* followed a roughly similar format. The first days after Laval's speech, the *Moniteur* printed discussions of it, but rather than using the vague titles employed by *La Montagne*, its headlines tended to be more detailed. After the second of July, the *Moniteur* printed stories similar to *La Montagne*, usually more detailed and emphasized in the layout. Additionally, the *Moniteur* frequently did not cite O.F.I. for their stories. While no editorials appeared in *La Montagne* endorsing the relève, *Le Moniteur* obviously exceeded the minimum required coverage, printing appeals to French workers to free the prisoners.

Occasionally, articles received emphasis by being published at the top of the page, such as "The Duty of the Relève" and the return of the first trainload of prisoners of war. The arrival of the first soldiers released by Germany was played up in the press as a triumph for the government and its policy of collaboration. Laval broadcast a message over the radio the day before their arrival, then greeted them in a ceremony at Compiègne which received six columns and

a headline covering the width of most of the page. Emotional accounts of the prisoners' joy in reaching France and their cheers for the government were followed by Laval's speech calling for acceleration of the relève. "A politics of understanding, conforming to the interests of France, like Montoire, could accelerate their return." Laval called for collaboration, stating that Germany's war in the east was for the benefit of all European civilization. When the prisoners' train arrived in Paris, La Montagne printed another large section at the top center of the first page. No pictures were published concerning the return of the prisoners. After this first return, coverage decreased. When the second train arrived on 17 September, Laval was not present to greet it and La Montagne did not give it much attention. Subsequent trainloads received even less space, and mention was made eventually only in short paragraphs under "La Relève" or "French Workers in Germany."69

From the newspaper coverage of the relève it seemed as though officials were overwhelmed by a stampede of workers waiting for papers to go to Germany. Bureaus were set up to match workers to available jobs and to recruit volunteers. The office at Clermont-Ferrand, which opened on 18 June 1942 claimed ten days later to have signed up forty to fifty people daily. In Nice, the authorities were said to have demanded patience of the workers, since they could not handle more than 150 volunteers daily. Montpellier, an agricultural region, claimed more than one hundred volunteers within the month. Similarly the reports of trainloads of volunteers leaving daily from throughout the unoccupied zone gave the impression that the relève achieved immediate success.70

69La Montagne, 11, 13 August, 17, 19 September 1942.

70La Montagne, 28/29 June 1942. On 5 July the two thousandth worker was claimed to have left from the Marseille region. On 11 July
A different assessment is evident, however, in the continued appeals addressed by Laval, and the frequent reiteration of benefits, as well as the extensive use of testimonials to the advantages of working in Germany. In July the German Minister of Industry Fritz Sauckel offered a bonus to anyone volunteering. It appears, indeed, that support for the relève was not as extensive as apparent in the press, and that the propaganda campaign was not successful. The monthly report sent by the Commissaire of one section to the Intendant of Police for August 1942 claimed that the relève was treated with skepticism by the population even after the first prisoners returned. Too few were liberated to convince them. According to the populace, most of those leaving from Clermont-Ferrand were foreigners or refugees without jobs, an opinion reinforced by La Montagne's report on 4 July 1942 stating that those who left were mostly without stable employment after demobilization.

The most important indication that voluntary recruitment of workers was unsuccessful was the need to make labor in Germany mandatory. Labor conscription, known as the Service du Travail Obligatoire (S.T.O.) was legislated on 4 September 1942. When the S.T.O. was introduced by the press on 25 September it was made to appear as a major victory for the French government. According to the government's position, published at the top of the first page with a headline covering four columns, German military control of labor and factories in other occupied territories would not be applied in France. Because more than 115 were said to have left from Clermont-Ferrand.

71See La Montagne, 28/29 June, 2, 5, 7, 11 July, 9/10 August, 6/7 September for examples.

72M07191.

73Commissaire of first arrondissement to Intendant of Police, 25 August 1942, M07191.
of previous labor agreements between the Vichy government and the Germans, the occupied area of France would be exempted, the Vichy government would have control of the S.T.O. and would be able to inspect working conditions. Prisoners would continue to be released in return for laborers, and families would receive an indemnity. The unemployed would be conscripted first; a census was ordered of everyone between the ages of eighteen and fifty who was employed regularly less than thirty hours weekly, with the exception of students, apprentices, and the ill. These people had fifteen days to register. Henceforth everyone losing employment would be required to register within twenty-four hours. It was reemphasized the following day that this policy was a victory for collaboration.  

Popular sentiment was unconvinced that the alleged special favors given to the French were significant. According to the Commissaire Central, writing on September 25, "The measures for the requisition of manual labor taken by the government were considered by many as an acknowledgement of the defeat met by the relève and as taken under the pressure of the occupier." However, he also reported that the demonstrations against the S.T.O. which had been called for by foreign radio had not occurred.  

Even after labor was made obligatory, little change is apparent in the style or content of La Montagne's coverage. Short pieces continued on new departures, released prisoners, interviews with returning P.O.W.'s, and testimonies of workers returning from Germany. It appeared

74 La Montagne, 25, 26 September 1942.
75 To Intendant of Police, M07191.
that the S.T.O. was proceeding smoothly, with emphasis gradually decreasing so that toward the middle of 1943 the columns on workers in Germany were almost hidden. Stories on the S.T.O. occasionally received more emphasis, especially when new provisions were made or a change in policy announced.\footnote{See for example \textit{La Montagne}, 1 October 1942.}

Even though financial incentives and good working conditions were promised, it appears that they had little effect. Laval continued his appeals, reiterating the need to respond to German generosity.\footnote{\textit{La Montagne}, 21 October 1942.} The population continued to view the \textit{relève} as disguised deportation, according to the superintendent of police.\footnote{Commissaire of second arrondissement to Préfet Delegué, 24 October 1942, M07191.} The Vichy Minister of the Interior complained of total opposition to the \textit{relève} and to collaboration generally; workers and employers were united in their antipathy.\footnote{Monthly synthesis of reports from Vichy Minister of Interior, to Prefets, 15 November 1942. See also monthly report of Commissaire Central to Préfet Delegué, 23 February 1943, M07191.} Opposition flared on 6 January 1943 into a demonstration at a regional railroad station in Montluçon. A crowd invaded the station from which workers were to leave for Germany. The labor conscripts escaped, but most were recaptured and the train left without further incidents.\footnote{Intendant of Police to Laval, monthly report, 23 January 1943, M07191.} Nothing on the demonstration appeared in \textit{La Montagne}.

The German demand for 250,000 French workers in January 1943 prompted still more stringent recruitment. On 16 February, it was announced that everyone born between 1 January 1920 and 31 December 1922 (all twenty to twenty-two year old men) would be conscripted for
two years. A new theme of equalitarianism was introduced in French propaganda. According to the government, the previous system conscripting only workers endangered French productivity and applied to a single economic group. Under the new system, everyone would share the burden of remaking Europe. Two distinct measures were then in effect, one conscripting all young men between twenty and twenty-two years of age, the other a search for unemployed men from twenty-one to thirty-one by the prefects. Both groups would receive the same working conditions and salaries as the free laborers. 81

To ameliorate public sentiment, much publicity was given on 23 February to new concessions concerning the French prisoners of war. Large headlines spanning six columns announced this apparent victory for French policy in thick letters at the top of La Montagne. The subtitle claimed that 50,000 new prisoners would be liberated and 250,000 more would be transformed into free workers with the same salaries, furloughs, and working conditions as those leaving France. This would be achieved when 250,000 new workers left France for Germany, and the paper announced that many were already on their way. 82

In this article, the French government put the best possible light on forced labor. It claimed that the need to eliminate offensive inequalities and maintain the French economy at a vital minimum had required it to create the S.T.O. Part of the conscripts would remain on their farms; a second part would work in French factories, and the third part "much the less important" would go to Germany under favorable conditions. This effort would, moreover, result in substantial com-

81. La Montagne, 16, 17 February 1943.
82. La Montagne, 23 February 1943.
pensions in prisoners repatriated and liberated. According to Laval, these "important and tangible results" were obtained by the governmental policy of collaboration. In his speech, he implicitly acknowledged dissension over his policy when he urged the French not to adhere to the "collective madness" resulting from foreign propaganda. 83

It is evident from the police reports that the French in Clermont-Ferrand were not impressed by the promised working conditions, were skeptical of prisoner returns, and hostile toward the conscription of French workers. In February 1943 the Commissaire Central reported that the relève was the big issue, bringing increasing discontent. It was viewed by the workers as deportation, and managers began to fear that they may have to close their plants because of losses of workers. 84 One official complained that owners tried to keep their factories open to avoid unemployment which would send their workers to Germany. They would require workers to be present for forty-two hours even if they had work for only twenty hours. 85 Equalitarianism appears to have increased the relève's unpopularity: the report claimed that the middle classes now feared they may be deported next. 86 Some of the younger recruits to the police force Gardiens de la Paix were suspected of choosing that career not "by vocation," but in order to escape the labor draft. 87 In March, similar sentiments were reported. Newsreels of Laval's speech on the S.T.O. elicited indifference and contempt at

83 See preceding note. Also La Montagne, 27 May 1943 where cooperation was stressed in a joint press conference with Sauckel.

84 Commissaire Central to Prefet Delegué, monthly report, 23 February 1943, M07191.

85 Commissaire of first arrondissement to Commissaire Central, monthly report, 25 May 1943, M07191.

86 See note 84.

the theatres. According to one official, the relève was not seen so much as a relief of prisoners, but as a mass mobilization of laborers for Germany.

It is obvious that the official attempts to secure support for the relève failed. Collaboration with the Germans, never popular, was viewed with increasing antipathy by the end of 1942. Support for the government generally had diminished. In spite of the ambitious attempts of the government to propagandize for its policies, this campaign never achieved its intended effect. Partly due to increasing problems with provisioning and the deportation of French labor, in part due to German reverses and the presence of German troops in Clermont-Ferrand, the population looked with increasingly less favor upon the government and its policies. Even though control of information became more strict, it obviously had limited success.

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88 Commissaire Central to Prefet Delegué, monthly report, 25 March 1943, M07191.

89 Commissaire at Vichy to Prefet Delegué at Vichy, monthly report, 24 April 1943, M07191.
V Conclusion

Censorship by the government at Vichy was increasingly effective in determining the content and presentation of news in southern France. Alexandre Varenne became less and less able to determine the layout and articles of La Montagne, and was forced to adhere to the prevalent Vichy themes in order to continue publishing his newspaper. However, this control over information was never complete. Understanding the extent of government control over the French press and radio, the population of Clermont-Ferrand utilized external sources for information.

It is evident that the local population did not support cooperation with the Germans, the German war effort, or their own government. Collaboration at the official level, well-documented by historians of the period, obviously did not filter down to the local level. The residents of Clermont-Ferrand remained hostile to the Germans, and supported the Allied war effort in increasing numbers.

Thus, the censor ultimately failed. Notwithstanding the effectiveness evident in the government's ability to control La Montagne, this control was ultimately unavailing. Attempts to popularize the government, the National Revolution, and collaboration failed. As labor conscription began, hostility increased rapidly despite official attempts to sweeten the obligatory labor service. Having gained control of the French media, the government nonetheless lost the battle to attain popular adherence.
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La Montagne, microfilm.


Background reading


Hoffman, Stanley. "Collaborationism in France during World War II."


Édouard Daladier, le général Gamelin, Léon Blum, Paul Reynaud, et Georges Mandel ont été condamnés à la détention dans une enceinte fortifiée.

La Chambre et le contrôleur-général Jacomet restent internés à Bourrassol.

Le Conseil de Justice militaire n°7 ne dessaisit pas la Cour de Riom.

Le marché de Moscou s'aggrave.

La Chambre et le contrôleur-général Jacomet restent internés à Bourrassol.

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Le marché de Moscou s'aggrave.

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