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## The Gravediggers of France at the Château d'Itter, 1943-1945

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# The Gravediggers of France at the Château d'Itter, 1943-1945

## **Abstract**

Discussion of responsibility for the defeat of France in 1940 has been a matter of controversy and debate among historians of France. Given the importance of this event in French history, which brought the downfall of the Third Republic, the establishment of the collaborationist Vichy Regime and Occupation by the Germans, these debates have led to accusations of incompetence and even treason. One author has called these individuals the "gravediggers" of France. A number of these individuals were arrested by the Germans in 1943 and assigned to a prison, the Château d'Itter (or Schloss Itter) in annexed Austria from 1943-45. This imprisonment compelled those whom some see as the guilty parties to confront one another and assess their own roles in the conduct of French politics leading up to the defeat and armistice. The paper revisits the way these individuals assessed their roles in the immediate aftermath of defeat, going back to the atmosphere at the time and a reexamination of responsibilities through the eyes of the participants. The article concludes that the severe condemnation of these individuals as "gravediggers" is excessive, reflecting the anger and frustration felt in the immediate aftermath of defeat.

# The Gravediggers of France at the Château d'Itter, 1943--45

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## The Gravediggers of France at the Château d’Itter, 1943-45

However historians may continue to argue about the true causes for the fall of France in 1940, they all agree that this was an “event that resonated throughout the world”.<sup>1</sup> Recriminations and searches for guilty parties began immediately after the event. One of the best known and thoughtful of these early works is Marc Bloch’s *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940*, which analyzed the structural, underlying problems of French society that contributed to the sudden collapse.<sup>2</sup> Almost all historians who have confronted France’s collapse in 1940 have given homage to Bloch’s analysis. No less influential at the time of writing during the war were the bitter accusations that the journalist André Géraud (Pertinax) leveled against France’s military and political leaders in *The Gravediggers of France: Gamelin, Daladier, Reynaud, Pétain and Laval: Military Defeat, Armistice, Counter-Revolution*. Pertinax was less concerned with the long-term causes of defeat than with the immediate and, as he saw

it, disastrous choices made by the gravediggers.<sup>3</sup> These interpretations have set frameworks for many subsequent analyses of the defeat. While Bloch criticized both the military and political leadership of the later Third Republic, he also focused upon the structural problems: the domestic social divisions, intellectual laziness, particularly in military thinking, and the political rivalries that weakened French society's ability to resist the external threat.<sup>4</sup>

The second paradigm, illustrated in Pertinax's assessment, emphasizes individual responsibilities, the mistakes of the leadership and their errors of judgment during the crisis months that led to France's humiliation. Others have seen the hand of treason at work in the betrayal of the Third Republic or in the political attacks by anti-republican writers and polemicists on the political right, who prepared the ground for Vichy's collaboration with Nazi Germany.<sup>5</sup> André Simon concluded with a wholesale condemnation, "France was not beaten by Hitler. It was destroyed from within by a Fifth Column with the most powerful connections in the Government, big business, the State administration and the Army."<sup>6</sup> From this perspective, France had fallen by treachery as well as internal rot. Finally, the American diplomat, Anthony Biddle, who witnessed the defeat, sent President Roosevelt a trenchant analysis of the causes of the French collapse a week after the armistice was signed in which he stated, "Events have shown that France was (A) militarily, (B) diplomatically, and (C) morally unprepared,"<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, these have been the three areas where historians have judged France's failure in 1940.<sup>8</sup>

Vichy also had its list of guilty parties who were blamed for the defeat. In his radio address of 20 June 1940 Marshal Pétain deplored France's "decadence" or "decline" in language that would be echoed by others, including some historians not necessarily sympathetic to Vichy,<sup>9</sup> when he declared that defeat resulted from France being, "Less strong than twenty-two years ago; we also had fewer friends, not enough children, not enough weapons, and not enough allies. These are the causes of our defeat."<sup>10</sup> In making his judgment on the Third Republic and its ills Pétain became the founder of the 'decadence

thesis' to explain the Third Republic's demise and to justify his National Revolution as a necessary remedy for France. In 1942 Marshal Pétain's government hauled some of the Third Republic's leaders before a court of inquiry at Riom, accusing Edouard Daladier, Léon Blum and General Maurice Gamelin, of taking France into a war for which it was not prepared. When Blum and Daladier (Gamelin remained silent) made a mockery of the accusations, the Riom trial was suspended, but the accused remained in prison under Vichy. Eventually they were deported to Germany, along with a few supporters of Marshal Pétain who had fallen from favor and had become suspect to the German occupiers. These deportations brought a number of them to a rather fantastic prison, the Château d'Itter in the Tyrol where they confronted each other under the eyes of their Nazi jailers. Here they confronted a recent disaster and assessed their own roles in that event and the events leading up to it, becoming witnesses to history.

## THE SETTING

The Château, rebuilt in the late nineteenth century in a false Renaissance style, provided a setting that was suited for staging a comic opera, and at times the behavior of Itter's prisoners and their circumstances had elements of comedy as well as seriousness.<sup>11</sup> This imprisonment compelled these presumed gravediggers to confront one another in an isolated, "magic mountain" setting above the fray taking place on the plains below. From 1943 to their liberation in 1945 these notables had time to reflect upon their actions, to keep diaries, to prepare their memoirs, and to engage in often quite lively discussions over responsibilities for the defeat and the armistice that opened the way to the establishment of the Vichy regime under Marshal Pétain's leadership. Hanging over the prisoners was a question of their fates. The condition of their imprisonment was comfortable for wartime, but would they survive and be liberated, or would they be executed at the end? Life among the French notables at Itter may be found in the memoirs and diaries written at the time, which provide the basis for a re-creation of an encounter among those whom several historians since have looked upon as having been

responsible for, or contributed to,  
the French defeat in 1940 that  
led to the Vichy regime.<sup>12</sup>

Revisiting the immediate  
reactions of French leadership to  
the defeat and demise of the  
Third Republic also enables an  
assessment of their responses to



the broader problem of how  
France confronted the general  
crisis of democracy in Europe between the wars.

Château d'Itter whose 19th century guests included Peter Tchaikovsky  
credits Foto Rudisch-Muller

For those who blame the political leadership, we have Paul Reynaud and Edouard Daladier, the next to last two Prime Ministers of the Third Republic whose rivalry is often cited as evidence of a political system that had become dysfunctional and unable to respond effectively to the Nazi threat. For those who hold the military responsible for the defeat, there is Maurice Gamelin, who lost control of the battle, and Maxime Weygand, his successor, who sought an armistice that opened the way to Vichy. For those who criticize the diplomats for the contradictions and failures of French diplomacy in the 1930s, why not Daladier, the “man of Munich,” or the dean of French ambassadors, François-Poncet, the French representative in Berlin from 1931-38 and then ambassador to Mussolini’s Italy from 1938-1940? For those who denounce the Popular Front for raising the specter of revolution and dividing the country, we have Léon Jouhaux, secretary of the most powerful French labor union, *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT), and champion of the working class, specially during the politically charged days of the 1930s. Those who criticize the abandonment Popular Front reforms during the last months of

peace from 1938-9, again we have Daladier and Reynaud, rivals who nevertheless combined to issue decree-laws that modified the Popular Front's forty-hour work week as a way of stimulating the economy and stepping up production in French war industries but embittered the working class in the process. For those who detect the sinister hand of various leagues threatening the republic with a right-wing revolution, if not a French brand of fascism, who better than Colonel de La Rocque, the head of the *Croix-de-Feu* and then the *Parti Social Français* (PSF)? And for the conditional loyalty—or disloyalty—of the military to the republic, we return to Weygand and the aging Marshal Pétain, still at Vichy but on everyone's mind at Itter. At the end we have a hint of redemption with the arrival of General de Gaulle's sister and her husband in April 1945. Missing from the Itter guest book were Léon Blum and Georges Mandel, deported with Daladier, Reynaud and Jouhaux but detained at Buchenwald because they were Jews.

Why would the Nazis go to the trouble of arresting this group of disgraced leaders and put them away in a Tyrolean castle? Weygand suspected a malevolent plot contrived by the Germans to humiliate and annoy him by bringing him face-to-face with his adversaries. Others feared that the Nazis would use them as hostages to bargain with the allies or that the Nazis wanted to prevent the allies from exploiting them as a way of rallying opponents of collaboration, following the landings in North Africa.<sup>13</sup>

Circumstances support this last assumption. The Germans began preparing Itter for its guests in December 1942, and the facility was ready to receive them by the end of April 1943. The Château came under the command of SS Captain Wimmer, who was notorious for his brutality as a camp guard, which gained his promotion to Captain. Itter was an administrative dependency of the sinister Dachau camp near Munich.

Former prime minister Édouard Daladier, former Generalissimo Maurice Gamelin, and former secretary of the CGT, Léon Jouhaux, were the first to arrive at the Château d'Itter late in the afternoon of

2 May 1943. Daladier has described the sobering impression made by a phalanx of twelve non-commissioned SS guards lined up to receive them. He entered a small courtyard through two heavily barred doors. Beyond was a terrace that would soon serve as a place for exercise, sunbathing and the sport of ring tennis. His two companions followed, taking residence in small, dark rooms, equipped with desks, wooden beds and a WC in the corner, beginning what would be the final phase of their incarcerations. Daladier also observed that the condition of his German imprisonment was an improvement over Vichy's prisons. Daladier and Gamelin were already two and a half year veterans of Vichy's detention system.

The next two arrivals consisted of another seasoned veteran of Vichy's political prisons, former prime minister Paul Reynaud, paired with the tennis star and former Vichy Commissioner for Sport and Education, Jean Borotra, who had been arrested in November 1942 while trying to leave France, presumably to join French forces in North Africa. Reynaud's trip to Itter began, as it had for Daladier and Gamelin, with his arrest on 6 September 1940, followed by successive incarcerations in Vichy's Bastilles prior to his deportation. The view of the forest, the bright sunlight and blooming wildflowers that announced the beginning of the Alpine spring provided a vivid contrast with his prison experiences under Vichy and his five months in the grim Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg camp near Berlin. When he met Daladier, Jouhaux and General Gamelin, he feared he had scandalized them by exclaiming: "This is paradise." He had been sobered, though, by the phrase from Dante's "Hell" above the entry to the prison: "*Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate.*"<sup>14</sup> His diary and then his memoirs reflected a persistent fear of execution at the hands of the SS. Reynaud claimed that both Vichy and the Nazis wished to execute him and Mandel as their "most dangerous" enemies.<sup>15</sup> There was good reason for Reynaud's concern.

Other prisoners soon followed. The Germans allowed two women to join Jouhaux and Reynaud at Itter, sharing their incarceration. Augusta Bruchlen, the companion and later wife of Léon Jouhaux, joined him on 19 June. She was from Alsace, and her fluent German enabled her to serve as intermediary with the Commandant of Itter and his wife. Along with Borotra, the “master of ceremonies,” she served as head of protocol. Her published account of life at Itter complements the prison diaries of Daladier, Reynaud and François-Poncet. Christiane Mabire, Paul Reynaud’s secretary and future wife, arrived on 2 July following incarcerations in France and Germany. She brought a typewriter with her, which was used to write Reynaud’s memoirs, and in general she was instrumental in assisting Reynaud and organizing his room as a library where weekly discussions would take place. To everyone’s surprise Marcel Granger, a landowner in Tunisia and a relative of General Henri Giraud, who had joined the Allies in North Africa, arrived at the same time as Christiane Mabire. His importance seemed insignificant, but his suspected activities in the resistance, as well as his relationship with Giraud, apparently earned him a place at Itter. Two other distinguished French notables, the last president of the Third Republic, Albert Lebrun, and the dean of the French ambassadors, André François-Poncet, appeared on 3 September. Two Italians, former prime minister Francesco Nitti and a banker, Schiff Giorgini, both arrested in Paris, arrived two days before Lebrun and François-Poncet.

The prisoners settled into a daily routine of exercise in the small courtyard of the Château and enjoyed games of ring tennis organized by Borotra and Daladier. There was leisure for reading, reflection, occasional conversation, and plenty of time for writing memoirs and making diary entries. Raoul de Broglie, who became High Commissioner for French occupied Austria after the war, noted that Daladier, Reynaud and Jouhaux would work for days at a time, assisted by Christine Mabire acting as secretary for Reynaud and Augusta Bruchlen for Jouhaux.<sup>16</sup> The small library in Reynaud’s rooms was a source of information and a way of combatting boredom. After evening meals they would listen to the

BBC news and the Free French radio broadcasts from London, thanks to a radio that Zvonimir Cuckovic, a Yugoslav prisoner working at the Château, had modified to enable reception of broadcasts from other than Nazi stations. Meals were taken in a dining room with a single table to accommodate the twelve prisoners. Conditions were relatively comfortable. Prisoners received packages from France. These provisions, which were shared at luncheons or dinners, enabled these guests of the Third Reich to enjoy relative comfort. François-Poncet observed that beyond the presence of the guards, the locks on the doors, and the bars on the windows, they lived as if they were in a middle-class pension.<sup>17</sup> Still, the daily routine in this “magic mountain” setting produced monotony, as it had for inhabitants of Thomas Mann’s *Berghof*. By the end of August Daladier complained, “I am beginning to find meals at our guest table unbearable. It’s as if we were on a motionless ocean liner.”<sup>18</sup> Only three days after his arrival, François-Poncet lamented, “The monotony of our existence is slowly enveloping me as if in a fog.”<sup>19</sup>

#### REPUBLICANS AND PÉTAINISTS

What helped relieve the monotony were nightly dinner conversations. President Lebrun headed the table and presided over the conversation. Others were seated according to their political rank. As François-Poncet noted, beyond gymnastics, promenades, sunbathing and ring tennis in the courtyard, the principal occupation was to engage in conversations that would last late into the evenings. On one occasion some of Daladier’s admiring constituents sent a case of Chateaufort-du-Pape, which produced “an animated political discussion” at dinner that was “heated, covering a wide variety of subjects in a lively, no holds barred exchange [à batons rompus]”<sup>20</sup> The heat of discussion reflected the personal and political differences among the prisoners, although in the presence of the Germans they maintained a façade of unity. Even the most heated discussions stopped short of acrimony, at least during the early stages of their imprisonment. As Reynaud observed, they respectfully referred to each other as “excellency.”<sup>21</sup> Would this atmosphere last?

The initial discussions revealed what would be both fundamental and personal differences within the ranks of the prisoners, despite efforts to show courtesy and patriotic unity before their jailers. Their polite behavior successfully preserved a façade of mutual courtesy, according to the account left by the Yugoslav prisoner Cuckovic.<sup>22</sup> From the very beginning the republican faction, led by Reynaud, taunted Borotra for his persistent and unshakable loyalty to Marshal Pétain. Daladier admitted that despite Borotra's good spirits and openness, they had been relentless in their teasing him about his collaboration with Pétain. In an early exchange the Bounding Basque insisted that Pétain's decision to seek an armistice and remain in France was the correct one, rejecting the option of pursuing the war from North Africa. France was, according to Borotra, fortunate to have had the hero of Verdun to assume leadership in a moment of extreme crisis. Borotra insisted that Pétain had saved France in 1940. "What would we have done without him?" he asked. Daladier, Reynaud and Gamelin responded that France's fate would have been no different than that of other occupied countries, such as Norway, Belgium, Holland, or even Greece and Serbia.<sup>23</sup> Despite his own arrest and having been turned over to the Germans by Vichy police Borotra persisted in his loyalty to Marshal Pétain. Nevertheless, all of the prisoners at Itter admired Borotra for his courtesy, cheerfulness and his willingness to help each of them, whatever their political views.

François-Poncet, who had initially served in Pétain's government as a member of Vichy's National Council, was among those who had become alienated by the weakness, corruption and parliamentary intrigues of the Third Republic, and he understood Borotra's loyalty to Pétain. In discussing the bitterness that he found at Itter in his old friend, Paul Reynaud, François-Poncet confided to his diary that the depths of this bitterness prevented Reynaud from seeing why many well-meaning French had placed their hopes for reform and change in the hero of Verdun, nor could Reynaud see that a number of French of good will wished to end Franco-German antagonism and decided that the moment

had come. Rather than traitors, though, many of these people were naïve and foolish in not recognizing Hitler's Reich to be based on violence and domination. François-Poncet expressed an attitude of his class, the *bien-pensant haute bourgeoisie*, when he noted that the defenders of the republic underestimated the disgust brought on by political scandals and apparent corruption, seen in the Stavisky Affair, parliamentary paralysis, constant political crises, and evidence of anarchy and disorder in the political system. Instead, the true lesson of the anti-government riots on 6 February 1934 escaped them and left them surprised to hear that Pétain had aroused hope among disillusioned and fearful French. François-Poncet's own break with Vichy did not come until April 1942 with the return of Pierre Laval, the "great corrupter," who had led the Marshal off the path he had chosen.<sup>24</sup>

Although a division of opinion between the Pétainists and republicans would continue until Iiter was liberated in May 1945, it was not absolute. Exchanges between these two factions occurred when some of the prisoners got together to discuss the progress of the war, or to justify their actions in 1940, or to explain their positions during political and ideological conflicts of the 1930s. A number of issues were discussed. One was the conduct, or misconduct, of the battle for France in May-June 1940 and who was responsible for the military defeat. Included in this discussion was the issue of rearmament as well as problems of command. Another was the decision to accept the armistice at Bordeaux, which made possible the formation of the Vichy government. A third addressed the issue of a socially and politically divided France in the 1930s, seen in the riot of 6 February 1934 and the subsequent formation of the Popular Front. A fourth was France's diplomatic dilemma and the consequences of Munich. They frequently commented upon the course and conduct of the war. Finally, as the war's end approached, they debated the future of France, the need for reforms, the role of France in the postwar world, and the influence of both the United States and the Soviet Union in the reconstruction of Europe. These discussions revealed ongoing differences that their shared confinement failed to resolve, despite hours of

discussion and reflection. But were they truly “gravediggers” whose actions deliberately sealed France’s fate at the outbreak of the war? Did they engage in treason, as some journalists and historians have maintained? They were aware of mistakes that had led to defeat, but as he was leaving Itter François-Poncet observed that for all of their political differences and contrasting personalities they were individuals of distinction who remained French patriots.<sup>25</sup>

#### DEBATES ON THE MOUNTAIN: THE DEFEAT

Nevertheless, the Itter prisoners could be quite critical of one another in their assessments of responsibility for the defeat. Their discussions and reflections ranged over the military causes, political divisions, parliamentary paralysis, ideological divisions, and the state of French morale. General Gamelin, for example, was preoccupied with the conduct of the war and sought scapegoats for the defeat over which he had presided.<sup>26</sup> Regularly he repeated that he was not at fault, his orders were irreproachable, and he did everything possible to defend the country. He understood perfectly the role of aircraft and armored divisions in modern warfare, and the French Army had all the equipment necessary. The fault lay with his subordinates, generals who did not understand his orders or did not follow his instructions.<sup>27</sup> As for the French Army, troops shared the deficiencies of morale that plagued the French people, according to Gamelin. One year’s service limited military education and training for the troops who, like their civilian compatriots, had lost their martial abilities. Faith in the League of Nations had destroyed the warrior ideal and spread the notion that the will of the people could bring victory without battle. The French middle class had not accepted its responsibilities. It was a case of moral weakness confronted with German dynamism. In making a criticism of civilian morale and that of the average soldier Gamelin, considered to be a “republican” general, made some of the same argument that the reactionary, royalist General Maxime Weygand had made and would continue to make about the pacifist preferences of French schoolteachers and other shortcomings in civilian morale and patriotism.

François-Poncet noted that Gamelin was intelligent and had many fine qualities, but he failed to understand that it was not enough to give orders; he had to see that they were obeyed. Gamelin after all was responsible for the appointments of those officers that he claimed were incompetent. The former ambassador concluded that the commander-in-chief had lost his head at the height of the battle and was spending his embittered days at Itter looking for ways to shift blame for the defeat. On the other hand, the ambassador agreed with Gamelin's criticism of the French people, who lacked a sense of civic duty and patriotism.<sup>28</sup> Incompetent subordinates and a population that lacked the will to fight had dug the Third Republic's grave, according to Gamelin and François-Poncet. As Martin Alexander has noted, Gamelin's preoccupation with a frequently petulant self-justification led not only to François-Poncet's critique but set the stage for an unsympathetic assessment of Gamelin as supreme commander by a generation of historians and polemicists determined to find a scapegoat for the military defeat.<sup>29</sup>

Gamelin sided with Reynaud against Daladier, his civilian superior during Daladier's time as Minister of War (1936-1940), agreeing with Reynaud's accusation that Daladier wanted power but was crushed by the responsibilities that came with it.<sup>30</sup> Reynaud claimed that Daladier was perpetually worried, that he had no real program for rearmament in the 1930s when he was Minister of War, nor did he know how to defend the country when war broke out. In response to Reynaud's assertion that Daladier was a weak and ineffective wartime leader, Daladier claimed that no Minister of War had done more than he to build up the strength of the French army.<sup>31</sup> In the confines of his room, to which Daladier frequently withdrew, he mocked Gamelin's subservience to Reynaud, and Augusta Bruchlen commented on the way that Gamelin, the former supreme commander of the French Army, seemed to submerge his personality before the prime minister who had dismissed him.<sup>32</sup>

Differences between Reynaud and Daladier were long-standing and reflected their political rivalry and, some would claim, the rivalry of their mistresses, Hélène de Portes and Jeanne de Crussol.

In spite of their rivalry, they had worked together warily in each other's cabinets until Reynaud fired Daladier to Daladier's eternal resentment in the cabinet shuffle of 5 June 1940. While at Itter, they held several at least cordial discussions about their respective leadership decisions, methods and styles of governing, confining their mutual jabs and negative comments to their diaries.<sup>33</sup> These exchanges demonstrated that a lack of trust and fundamental misunderstanding between these hostile political allies that persisted even in the confines of the Château d'Itter. Neither, however, acknowledged that their political rivalry in itself had produced defeat. Nor were they immune from seeing plots and conspiracies that undermined the republic, particularly on the part of Marshal Pétain.

Their discussions at Itter revealed contrasting personalities and temperaments as much as rival ambitions or political agendas. They came from quite dissimilar political bases. Daladier, the politician from the south of France, embodied a distinctive, rustic French Radicalism of the village square or the Café du Commerce while the conservative, socially connected and well-to-do Parisian, Reynaud, embodied the politics of the capital's comfortable upper middle-class.<sup>34</sup> These individual differences were observed by two of their fellow internees: François-Poncet and Augusta Bruchlen. Although a friend of Reynaud and himself a member of the Parisian elite, François-Poncet was somewhat more sympathetic to Daladier than Reynaud in his assessments of these two leaders' qualities. He found Daladier to be a man endowed with common sense, intelligence and a "generous heart," who was unjustly blamed for France's defeat. According to François-Poncet, the fault lay less in Daladier's weaknesses as a leader—after all he was also "Daladier the dictator" who issued the decree-laws that ended the Popular Front in 1938-- than in the shortcomings of a parliamentary system that had degenerated into questionable, corrupt practices and had become poisoned and paralyzed by a partisan atmosphere that prevented the government from responding to the threat to France's security.<sup>35</sup> Yet Daladier was a product of the clientage and bargaining that characterized the political methods of the

Radical Party, which had been central to the politics of the Third Republic from the time of the Dreyfus Affair to the Popular Front.<sup>36</sup> Whatever his admiration for Daladier's personal qualities, François-Poncet concluded after reading Seignobos' *l'Histoire sincère de la nation française* that the *petite bourgeoisie* of small town France, which was exactly Daladier's clientele in the Vaucluse, had become the true ruling class, which explained the decline, decadence and mediocrity of the French parliamentary system during the later years of the Third Republic.<sup>37</sup>

Paul Reynaud shared François-Poncet's view that rural domination of French politics was a source of weakness in the French political system that handicapped the country's economic development. During his imprisonment and isolation at the Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg prior to his arrival at Itter, Reynaud reflected upon what had brought about the defeat of France, and he found the source of weakness precisely in the traditional and predominantly agrarian France that made up Daladier's Radical constituency in Carpentras. He wrote that in Great Britain, the United States and Germany, migration from the countryside to the cities had made the prosperity of those countries, but in France this movement was seen with regret and reflected nostalgia for a way of life among the "new classes" that Léon Gambetta had considered to be the foundation of republicanism at the outset of the Third Republic in the 1870s. By the 1930s the declining French birth rate since the days of Gambetta and losses from World War I meant a deserted countryside that continued to be represented, or overrepresented, in parliament as before, which meant the part of France that was "dying" had more political power than the France that was "dynamic" and "alive," and this "old" France was unwilling to accept economic reforms that would provide the foundation for an urban, industrial and modern nation. Reynaud concluded that the France of the Radical Party resisted necessary economic reform.<sup>38</sup>

He also noted that Daladier was subject to bouts of misanthropy at Itter when he would withdraw to his room and take his meals there. Augusta Bruchlen found a bitterness in Daladier that his reflections

upon the Munich concessions intensified; his incarceration by Vichy deepened his pessimism.<sup>39</sup> She noted that he often withdrew into himself, which brought a severe judgment from Reynaud, who took this as another sign of weakness and a lack of self-confidence.<sup>40</sup> In conversations with Reynaud, François-Poncet agreed that Daladier seemed to have been crushed by his responsibilities and was perpetually worried, producing an inferiority complex that made Daladier morose. The assessment of Daladier as a gloomy, pessimistic misanthrope would last until the eve of their liberation in 1945. Reynaud recorded in his diary in March 1945 that Gamelin reported that Daladier was “unstable,” sitting with a fixed stare and making automatic gestures.<sup>41</sup>

Reynaud’s self-confidence—bordering on overconfidence—and his reluctance to face the possibility of his own errors of judgment during his time as prime minister formed the basis of both François-Poncet’s and Augusta Bruchlen’s evaluation of Reynaud’s personal qualities. An optimist filled with a remarkable energy and moral force, Reynaud showed little sensitivity or consideration for the opinions of others, and he displayed a certain lack of humane qualities. According to François-Poncet, he could be a peremptory in his discussion, issuing categorical opinions from which there was no appeal.<sup>42</sup> Among Reynaud’s categorical judgments was his conviction that the defeat in 1940 was due to political paralysis: “We were beaten because the parliamentary regime did not function.”<sup>43</sup> Madame Bruchlen noted that he was always right against all comers, and if events turned out the way they did, this was because no one listened to him.<sup>44</sup> Thus the prime minister in office at the moment of the French defeat and the supreme commander he had dismissed out of dissatisfaction with his conduct of the war shifted blame from themselves to others under their authority or to the weaknesses of the political system that they had served.

In the pages of his diaries Daladier’s record at Itter showed some willingness to reflect upon both his performance and his record as prime minister of France during the crisis years. His entries contain

occasional self-criticisms as well as defensive justifications. Rather than primarily blaming the parliamentary system or its practices, however, Daladier placed responsibility for the defeat in the lap of the military. While awaiting the Riom trial he was categorical. “We didn’t lose the war because of a lack of materiel; we lost it because of the mind-boggling incompetence of military leaders mired in the past.”<sup>45</sup> Yet Daladier also recognized the shortcomings of parliamentary politics as well, particularly the excesses of empty rhetoric or partisan posturing that marked debates in the Chamber of Deputies.

As party leader and prime minister, Daladier faced the dilemma of trying to satisfy his local constituency, meaning protecting the individual’s rights against an abuse of power on the part of the state, while at the same time needing to exercise authority and forceful leadership at a time when the republic was in danger.<sup>46</sup> This dilemma became apparent during one of Daladier’s discussions with Léon Jouhaux over the Daladier/Reynaud decree-laws that allowed an extension of hours in defense industries beyond forty-hour work week. Jouhaux argued that a decree-law could not replace a law that had been passed by a duly elected legislature.<sup>47</sup> The result was considerable effervescence among the working class that brought a general strike on 30 November 1938, which failed when Daladier called in police reinforcements to break the strike.<sup>48</sup> For Jouhaux, Daladier was the authoritarian prime minister acting against the people, whereas for Reynaud or Gamelin or François-Poncet he was Daladier the indecisive, vacillating leader. From the Itter mountain prison, a commonly expressed image of Daladier emerges. Some of his admirers have called him “the bull of Vaucluse” while he was a “bull with the horns of a snail” to his detractors. Each image may be valid. Daladier’s behavior, both his withdrawal and his engagement with fellow prisoners, along with the quality of his diary, make him--with all of his contradictions--perhaps the most complex personality among Itter’s French prisoners.

As for Jouhaux, he was critical of both Daladier and Reynaud. In his conversations he raised awkward questions about the role that both ministers played in prewar politics. For Daladier it was both

his resignation after the 6 February riots and his breaking of the general strike on 30 November 1938. He blamed Reynaud for alienating the working class with measures that favored industrialists and caused morale to drop among the workers, thereby worsening industrial relations on the eve of the war.<sup>49</sup> Both Daladier and Reynaud persisted in their insistence that France had to be put back to work. Jouhaux took this as a sign that both were typically bourgeois in their preferences for reassuring capitalists over advancing the welfare of the proletariat. As a humble “man of the people” Jouhaux felt that Reynaud, Daladier and François-Poncet looked down upon him.<sup>50</sup>

### OPPONENTS OF THE REPUBLIC AT ITTER

These discussions, while often heated, were marked by courtesy and civility, but this relatively cordial atmosphere changed abruptly with the arrival of General Maxime Weygand and his wife at the beginning of December 1943. When Reynaud learned that the Weygands would occupy the rooms recently vacated by Ambassador François Poncet and President Lebrun, who along with the Italians Nitti and Giorgini had been transferred to other locations, he announced that he would not shake the hand of a man “who has contributed so much to the capitulation of France in order to strangle the republic.”<sup>51</sup> He and Gamelin declared that they would not share a meal at the same table. Jouhaux and Daladier announced that they would ignore him. Daladier decided that henceforth he would take his meals in his room. The palpable hostility between Reynaud and Weygand, the general he had appointed to supreme command after firing Gamelin, was the source of considerable tension at Itter.

The surprising arrival of Colonel François de La Rocque further complicated the dining room arrangement when he showed up at Itter in the company of Michel Clemenceau, son of Georges Clemenceau, the “father of victory” in 1918. Shortly before La Rocque’s arrival Captain Wimmer came to see Daladier to inform him that he had orders to go into the local village, Wörgl, to pick up La Rocque and Clemenceau at the railroad station. An astonished Daladier asked him to repeat his

statement, which he did; then they both burst out laughing. Marcel Granger entered and was told of the new guests, to which Granger replied that there would be gunplay at Itter city. Daladier assured Granger that La Rocque would side with Weygand and Clemenceau with Reynaud so that the balance of power would be preserved between the republicans and those hostile to the Third Republic.<sup>52</sup> The question was whether or not the façade of national unity would be maintained. A crisis of protocol was at hand, which was resolved by Augusta Brucklein. She went to the commandant and asked that instead of a single table for meals that three tables be provided. This formula would avoid having those who detested one another from sitting down at a common table. Henceforth three compatible clusters were created with Reynaud, Christiane Mabire, Gamelin and Clemenceau occupying one table; Léon Jouhaux, Augusta Brucklen, Marcel Granger and an empty chair for Daladier constituted a second; and a “Vichy” table was reserved for General and Mme Weygand, Borotra and Colonel de La Rocque.

At issue in the Reynaud-Weygand hostility was the decision to seek an armistice with Germany in June 1940.<sup>53</sup> When Reynaud dismissed Gamelin, he hoped that he had found the aggressive general who would provide another miracle on the Marne. But 1940 was different. The Marne defense was quickly broken in 1940, and the government left Paris after declaring the capital an “open city” that would not be defended.. During the meetings that took place during the flight to Bordeaux, Weygand argued that further resistance was futile and the government should seek an armistice. He raised the specter of a communist led uprising in the abandoned capital. In Bordeaux Marshal Pétain, Reynaud’s Minister of War, agreed and called for an armistice as the only way to preserve France from chaos. After briefly considering resistance from North Africa, Reynaud resigned on 16 June. Marshal Pétain replaced him, setting the stage for an end to the republic and the establishment of the Vichy regime.

In his discussions with Daladier, Gamelin and Jouhaux, Reynaud sought to justify his decision, which proved fatal to the Third Republic. Reynaud claimed that he resigned when he no longer had a

majority in his cabinet, thanks to the Weygand-Pétain opposition.<sup>54</sup> Reynaud expected that President Lebrun would recall him to form a new cabinet; when he did not have the support of key members of the government, Lebrun turned to Pétain.<sup>55</sup> Gamelin told Reynaud that Weygand had introduced politics into the army by forming a clan that was hostile to the republic, and this conspiracy, in which Pétain had a leading part, dated back to the anti-parliamentary riots of 6 February 1934. What Weygand sought was to return the army to where it had been before the Dreyfus Affair.

The drama at Bordeaux marked the ascendancy of the military at the expense of the political leadership of the discredited republic. For historians sympathetic to the republic, the armistice decision was, if not a conspiracy, then a long-awaited opportunity for the military to assert its role as the protector of France once the republic had failed that responsibility.<sup>56</sup> The issue of civil-military relations was at the heart of the controversy raised by General Weygand's arrival at the Château d'Itter. On the other hand, Reynaud's resignation represented an abdication of political leadership in favor of the military and marked a crucial moment in the long-term crisis of civil-military relations in France that had been brewing since the Dreyfus Affair at the end of the 19th century.

The Pétainists at Itter still felt that the armistice was the right decision. On 17 June 1944, eleven days after the Allied landings in Normandy, La Rocque, Borotra and Granger awakened Gamelin from his sleep with their noisy celebration of the fourth anniversary of the signing of the armistice.<sup>57</sup> Pétain, although allowing their arrests and deportations, had been the savior of 1940, and they would maintain this belief up to their liberation and into the postwar era. Weygand's response to Reynaud's charge that his call for an armistice had been dishonorable was to say that if the government did not agree with his proposal for an armistice, it had only to dismiss him.<sup>58</sup> Borotra insisted that Pétain had saved France in 1940. As for Weygand, his allies claimed that he remained a patriot who opposed any collaboration that went beyond a strict interpretation of the armistice. He frequently revealed his Germanophobia, and he

had been at odds with Pétain over the Anglo-American landings in North Africa when he urged the Marshal to cross the Mediterranean and resume the struggle against the Germans in November 1942, an attitude that led to his house arrest and eventual deportation.<sup>59</sup>

Colonel de La Rocque's presence at Itter also was awkward for the anti-Vichy republicans, such as Daladier and Jouhaux, who had been on opposite sides of the barricades from La Rocque during the demonstration in the streets of Paris on 6 February, 1934. On that day La Rocque's Croix de Feu was one of several anti-parliamentary, right-wing leagues that tried to march on the Chamber of Deputies to protest a regime that they considered corrupt, scandal-ridden and incapable of dealing with the economic crisis of the depression. The police prevented the demonstrators from reaching the Chamber but only after a serious clash that left sixteen dead and several hundred injured in the melee. The Prime Minister was none other than Daladier. The next day the right-wing press called him an assassin and demanded his resignation. Although he survived a confidence vote in the Chamber on the evening of the sixth, Daladier resigned the next day. The crowd in the street had forced Daladier from office.

How serious a threat was the riot of 6 February 1934 to the Third Republic, and was the 6 February a harbinger of Vichy and evidence of fascism in France? Was it a conspiracy to overthrow the Third Republic? These are questions that historians have debated and will continue debating, particularly around the figure of Colonel de La Rocque.<sup>60</sup> And they were raised among the principals at Itter. Much depended upon the assessment of Colonel de La Rocque's intentions.

The 6 February riot had raised the possibility of a coup that might overturn the republic to be replaced by an authoritarian regime. Rumors spread of plots that involved military figures such as Marshals Franchet d'Esperey, Lyautey and Pétain. As leader of one of the more important of the anti-parliamentary leagues, Colonel de La Rocque was under suspicion. His hostility to the Third Republic and parliamentary politics was well known. Consequently, his arrival at Itter created a flurry among the

prisoners. Jouhaux remembered the insults and threats that the Croix de Feu aimed at him, and Colonel de La Rocque had called Daladier the assassin and killer of 6 February. Borotra and Granger, who had belonged to La Rocque's PSF, remained loyal to their old leader.<sup>61</sup> Daladier, who had been forced out as Prime Minister by the events of 6 February, was the one who had occasion to size up his old adversary and assess the nature of the threat to the regime in 1934.

La Rocque insisted that he had participated in the demonstrations of 6 February without enthusiasm. Although he commanded the best disciplined and one of the larger leagues demonstrating that day, he did not test the police barricades set up to protect the Assembly on the Left Bank. Instead, he ordered his followers to disband just as the demonstration was reaching its climax across the Seine on the Place de la Concorde. Consequently his rivals on the Right, Charles Maurras and Léon Daudet of the *Action Française*, found him too soft and moderate, and they did not forgive him for abandoning the demonstration that became a riot and might have toppled the regime.<sup>62</sup> If not a concerted plot, the demonstration nevertheless forced Daladier's resignation. However, Daladier observed that the events of 6 February meant that La Rocque was inadvertently the founder of the Popular Front. Frightened by the right-wing demonstrations, the parties of the Left --Socialists, Radicals and Communists-- staged a counter rally on 12 February and then pursued a common front to contest the 1936 election in which they won a parliamentary majority. The popular rally on Bastille Day in 1935 was far larger and more impressive, Daladier noted, than any of the Croix de Feu rallies organized by Colonel de La Rocque, which paled by comparison. Daladier considered this a sign of republican strength, not weakness, in the face of any threat from the radical, anti-parliamentary right.<sup>63</sup>

La Rocque's populist attempt to gain wider support became apparent when La Rocque created a political movement, the PSF, after Popular Front banned the Croix de Feu and other anti-parliamentary leagues in 1936. His formation of the PSF gave him the mass movement that he lacked in 1934. The

PSF found support from some veterans, reactionaries, a segment of the middle-class and younger people who were victims of the economic crisis and disgusted with ministerial instability, parliamentary chaos and scandals, according to Daladier's analysis.<sup>64</sup> He did not call La Rocque or his movement fascist, but he placed the Croix de Feu in the line of interpretation that links authoritarian or even fascist trends of the 1930s to the Boulangist, anti-parliamentary phenomenon of the late nineteenth century.<sup>65</sup> Daladier concluded that La Rocque had created a national movement with the intention of coming to power legally. If more moderate and electoral in its methods than the Croix de Feu, the PSF had become a political force to be reckoned with by 1938. Daladier judged that rather than staging or participating in a coup against the republic in the late 1930s, La Rocque's purpose in forming the PSF had been "the creation of an authoritarian, anti-parliamentarian, hierarchical republic, with the reinstatement of corporations as the basic approach to social issues. Anyway, that is what I could make out of it, along with something of a neo-Boulangism."<sup>66</sup>

In addition to the encounter between the two former political antagonists, Daladier and La Rocque, there was an equally unexpected exchange between La Rocque and Léon Jouhaux. This encounter revealed two contrasting visions of what the French social order should be, which was at the heart of the ideological debates of the 1930s. Through the intermediary of Augusta Brucklen, the former head of the CGT agreed to a meeting with the former head of the Croix de Feu and the PSF. The interview consisted of La Rocque exposing his ideas of a social duty founded upon the maintenance of Christian traditions of charity toward the poor and humble, assuring housing and day care for workers. He suggested that his program with its concern for the demands of the workers was not different from the goals of the CGT. As Augusta Brucklen noted, this was a paternalistic vision of society based upon Christian charity.<sup>67</sup>

Jouhaux replied that his conception of society was that workers had the right neither to charity nor to the benefits of owner-sponsored relief committees but to be considered as indispensable partners in the production process and not dependents. They should be able to participate in the decisions made that would affect their livelihood and the security of their families. He also insisted that France needed an enlightened work force, and the workers had to have access to education in economics and social problems so that they would be able to adapt to the changes that economic development inevitably entailed. Augusta Bruchlen confirmed that a search for social justice that would end the hatreds of the past was the issue that tormented Jouhaux during his days at Itter.<sup>68</sup>

Jouhaux was confident that the working class would be in power for a long time after the war. He reflected anxiously about what the future held if the debates and arguments among his fellow-prisoners were any indication, and a revival of the antagonisms of pre-1940 France appeared to be on the horizon. Jouhaux expressed a pessimistic view of whether or not French politics would be capable of overcoming the conflicts and distrust of the past. He noted that among this little group the continued appetite for power had split them into two clans. Jouhaux worried that seeds of future political battles had emerged during the discussions at Itter thus assuring a continuation of the destructive trends that had produced the defeat for France in 1940. He believed that class conflict was inevitable, reflecting his own distrust of the bourgeoisie. His mistrust extended to the republican politicians at Itter, whom he criticized as “those who believed themselves invested with the responsibility of leading the people.”<sup>69</sup> He thought that those responsible for France leading up to the war were “glossing over” (*passer l'éponge*) their mistakes in their memoirs and conversations at Itter. Among the mistakes, Jouhaux had argued in his conversations with Daladier and Reynaud, was the failure to cement a military alliance with the USSR, which had left France without a crucial ally.<sup>70</sup> He regretted that in the microscopic world of Itter, the eternal causes of conflict remained in an active state.<sup>71</sup>

The La Rocque-Jouhaux exchange revealed on the one hand an ideal of society that would be based upon moral practice and responsibility toward all members of the community. It was a hierarchical, military sense of the social order based upon honor, duty and Christian social obligations. On the other was the secular vision of social rights that stemmed from universal principles of law and equality before the law, with a republican state assuring fairness and justice to its citizens. It also hinted at two visions for the future of France, one based upon Resistance ideals of social equity and democratic practice. The other was also republican but a republic that would be authoritarian in order to assure order and overcome the political and social divisions of the past.

Two years of enforced cohabitation at the Château d'Itter had not changed many minds, as could be seen in what the inhabitants hoped the future would hold for a restored France. All agreed that France would have to be part of an international order that would guarantee peace and promote prosperity. There was fear, though, of domination. Jouhaux warned of a postwar domination of Europe economically and politically by American "super-capitalism." Daladier feared Stalinism. The political structure of France remained open to debate. Several called for the creation of stronger state, perhaps through a presidential system. Daladier wanted a strong centrist government in which the Radical Party would continue to play a leading role.<sup>72</sup> Reynaud proposed a constitutional reform that would strengthen the executive. Léon Jouhaux called for a revived Popular Front under the banner of a National Front, but Daladier rejected any return to the Popular Front, reflecting his profound distrust of the Communist Party. Marcel Granger declared that Jouhaux was a communist, and he proclaimed that in ten years France would need to ally with Germany against the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>73</sup> La Rocque repeated his prewar formula for a corporatist, hierarchical social order.<sup>74</sup>

## LIBERATION

The question remained whether or not the Itter prisoners would survive to see the postwar world as the final push to defeat Nazi Germany came in late 1944 and into 1945. They all followed external events with hope and anxiety as military operations raised the possibility of liberation, or of execution, or of becoming hostages in exchange for Allied concessions, or of becoming victims of retaliation. American soldiers of the Seventh Army, commanded by General Alexander Patch, and troops of the First French Army, commanded by General de Lattre de Tassigny, had crossed the Rhine in late March and had begun their drives toward Munich, Innsbruck and the Tyrol in what was part of the final phase of the war in Southern Germany. Throughout their internment the French prisoners had discussed their uncertain fates and whether or not they might be executed in retaliation for the purges and assassinations of collaborators in France as Allied forces liberated the country. An announcement from Berlin in April 1944 warned that the Germans would take reprisals for any actions against those French who had collaborated with Germans.<sup>75</sup> After the war Mme Daladier said that she had a list of French who would be executed in retaliation for German officers assassinated by the Resistance, and all of the Itter detainees were on the list.<sup>76</sup>

Much depended upon the attitude of Captain Wimmer, who once had said, “None of these pigs will emerge from here alive.”<sup>77</sup> Given his reputation as one of the crueler SS camp guards, would he deliver on this boast? On the other hand, relations between the French prisoners and Captain Wimmer generally had been marked by mutual respect. Mlle. Bruchlen’s diplomatic skills and fluent German very effectively smoothed relations between the prisoners and the Commandant and his wife. By the end of April Captain Wimmer and the SS guards knew that the end had come for the Nazi regime.<sup>78</sup> In January Daladier observed that there was “great consternation” at Itter, and Captain Winner locked up all radios to prevent morale deteriorating among the SS.<sup>79</sup> At this time Wimmer began to consider his own fate as well as that of the prisoners. In January and then again on 16 March 1945 he requested that

Reynaud and Mlle Mabire provide him with a letter that would attest that he had treated the prisoners correctly during their time at Itter.<sup>80</sup> The American bombing was taking its toll, and the road between Itter and Innsbruck had become clogged with refugees. On their return from a medical visit to Innsbruck in April, Leon Jouhaux and Augusta Bruchlen reported, “The chaos in the train stations is terrifying.” It reminded Daladier of the French exodus in 1940: cars with mattresses on the roofs and women leading starving children by the hand. He also noticed that the SS and the Wehrmacht soldiers were “eyeing each other hostilely,” suggesting possible civil war.<sup>81</sup>

Although Captain Wimmer had confiscated the radios of the SS, the French prisoners still had theirs, which gave access to news of Allied progress. By 24 April the Americans were reported forty miles from Munich and advancing rapidly. The First French Army had reached Lake Constance, and by the 28<sup>th</sup> the Americans were reported to be on the outskirts of Innsbruck. Captain Wimmer became nervous when American soldiers were reported to be in Wörgl. These rumors proved premature, but clearly Wimmer feared for his and his wife’s safety as well that of the SS guards, who after changing into civilian dress disappeared one by one into the woods or joined the refugees on the highways. A few fanatic diehards joined with SS units in the region that were still engaged in combat. Wimmer recommended that the French prisoners leave with him for Kitzbühel sixteen miles east, but they declined since liberation was now in sight. He then asked that they all sign the statement that he had treated them respectfully during their imprisonment and had tried to make them as comfortable as possible. Wimmer also requested that a Luftwaffe officer, Captain Schrader, assure the security of the French dignitaries, and Schrader with his family took up residence in the Château d’Itter.<sup>82</sup> At the request of the prisoners the Germans also left behind a supply of guns and ammunition.<sup>83</sup> The French prisoners were technically free, but their lives were still in danger. The fighting in Wörgl had been between members of the Austrian resistance and fanatic troops of the Waffen-SS, who were determined

to continue fighting to the bitter end. On 2 May, the second anniversary of the first arrivals of the French prisoners at Itter, several diehard SS soldiers took up positions in the valley and the surrounding woods, preparing to shell and then assault the castle. Never in their captivity were they in such great danger, Reynaud noted, as at the moment when they were freed.<sup>84</sup>

Faced with this imminent and deadly threat, they decided to get in contact with the Americans, and they hatched two plans. The Czech cook, André Krobot, was given a bicycle by the local grocer in Itter village, enabling him to go into Wörgl on the calculation that American soldiers coming from Kufstein nine miles down the road to the northeast would pass through Wörgl as they advanced toward Innsbruck. He would alert them to the presence of the French dignitaries at Itter castle and their fear that the SS fanatics might kill them. The Yugoslav handyman, Zvitomir Cuckovic, who had sympathized with the French prisoners, decided to head toward Innsbruck some forty miles to the west, where the Americans were known to be, with the same objective. When he reached Wörgl, the resistance put André in contact with Major Josef (Sepp) Gangl of the Wehrmacht, who had persuaded some twenty Wehrmacht soldiers that they should protect the prisoners at Itter. Since the resistance and Gangl's troops had only small arms, they needed reinforcements. Members of the resistance, André Krobot, and Major Gangl with twenty Wehrmacht soldiers headed toward Kufstein to make contact with the Americans while Cuckovic peddled forty miles west through oncoming refugees to Innsbruck where the Americans had just liberated the city.

When the Germans arrived in Kufstein, Major Gangl was put in touch with the commander of the American 23<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion. Gangl asked for aid in the protection and liberation of the French prisoners at Itter.<sup>85</sup> Lt. John C. Lee, commanding officer of B Company, was summoned to headquarters where he agreed to lead a patrol up to Itter castle. He secured fourteen volunteers, including six members of the all African-American Company D of the 17<sup>th</sup> Armored Infantry Battalion. At the last

minute five more Sherman tanks from the 36<sup>th</sup> Division's 142<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment joined Lee's group to provide cover once they reached Wörgl. Lt. Lee's force, followed by Major Gangl and his twenty German soldiers, headed for Itter in the early afternoon of 4 May. Once they reached Wörgl, Lee discovered that the SS troops, who had been fighting the Austrian resistance, had left town. At the request of the Austrian resisters Lee deployed the five Shermans from his detachment to protect the northern approaches to Wörgl, preventing a return of the SS. He then headed toward the castle with fourteen American soldiers, the cook André Krobot as their guide, and Major Gangl's twenty German soldiers. This strangely mixed force reached the castle about 6:15 pm to the delight of the French prisoners, who came out to embrace André, to welcome the Americans, and to wonder what soldiers from the Wehrmacht were doing there. Major Gangl informed them that he had come to defend them.

At 11:00 that evening the SS fanatics began firing on the castle. Lee's force returned fire. The exchange continued in a desultory fashion until the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup>, when a serious attack began. Approximately two hundred SS soldiers were involved in the assault and the American and German force at Itter was outnumbered. An artillery shell hit the room inhabited by Gamelin, who was fortunately not there. Another shell scored a direct hit on Lt. Lee's tank at the castle entrance, and it began burning furiously. This was a signal for the SS to press the attack, forcing defenders back into the castle. During a lull in the fighting, Major Gangl stepped into a doorway to assess the situation. Suddenly he slumped, killed by an SS sniper's bullet. Daladier paid tribute to this German officer, who had survived both the 1941-2 winter campaign in Russia and had been at Stalingrad only to become a casualty at the very end. "The nobility of this man," Daladier wrote, "this German for whom the war was over! He had risked his life to help French prisoners, his enemies."<sup>86</sup> The battle resumed and Lt. Lee realized that the defenders were running low on ammunition, and he needed help in a hurry.

In the meantime, Cuckovic had reached Innsbruck where he encountered a GI, who took him to the American commander, Major John Kramers. Kramers called in his French liaison officer, Lt. Eric Lutton. Cuckovic gave him a message from Paul Reynaud, who stressed the urgency of the situation. A second American military force then departed from Innsbruck toward Wörgl to the east. After advancing twenty miles toward Wörgl they met Austrian resistance fighters, who warned them that the SS was still fighting in the region. When they came under bombardment from SS artillery, Major Kramers' force took cover and radioed back for reinforcements. They then pushed on toward Wörgl. In the distance they could see smoke rising from Itter castle, and they could hear explosions from the shelling that had intensified during the siege. The situation appeared desperate,.

Lt. Lee did not know if help was on the way. After some hesitation, he agreed to Borotra's request that he leave the castle to make contact with the Americans. Borotra slipped out of the Château, dashed across forty yards of open field, scrambled down the steep northwest slope of the promontory and reached the bank of the Brixentaler Ache. Having disguised himself as a peasant who was out foraging for herbs, he slipped past the SS troops, who took no notice of him, and he then hastened toward the village of Söll-Leukental where he spotted American infantry soldiers. A GI put him in contact with the same Lt. Reinhardt who had been ordered to advance toward Itter along a road leading to the chateau by way of Itter village. Borotra claimed he knew a safer way to approach the Château that would not expose the Americans to the SS artillery. He then joined a second American force commanded by Captain Matney, and this group, anxious to avoid casualties now that the war was practically over, approached Itter from another direction. While Matney's group and Borotra were advancing, Lt. Reinhardt's tanks and infantry headed toward Itter village. They encountered SS soldiers trying to set up a roadblock outside the village. They opened fire and broke through. In the castle Daladier was standing next to two of Major Gangl's Wehrmacht soldiers who cried out: "Panzers!" Lt. Reinhardt's infantry

company with tanks and armored vehicles in support had arrived at Itter to lift the siege by the SS, who began to evacuate the region. Lt. Matney's company was only minutes behind. Although Borotra was disappointed that he was not with the first Americans to liberate the prisoners, he was warmly welcomed by his fellow French inmates, who were relieved that he was alive.

By 3:00 pm the battle for Itter was over. The fanatic SS troops had ceased their shelling and disappeared into the woods. The other German soldiers at Itter, many of them very young, were relieved to be safe as prisoners of the Americans. Colonel Coyle and Major Kramers appeared; they were introduced to the German soldiers, who had fought to defend the French dignitaries and had suffered casualties in addition to Major Gangl's death. They were taken prisoner but eventually released by the Americans. Photographers appeared. The liberated French were taken in a convoy of jeeps, trucks and requisitioned automobiles to Innsbruck where they were lodged in a hotel. General Anthony McAuliffe, commander of the 103rd Infantry Division and famous as the defender of Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge, welcomed them and provided a candle light dinner. After more photographs McAuliffe sent them the next day to the headquarters of General Alexander Patch's Seventh Army in Augsburg.

They made their way to Augsburg circuitously by way of Ulm, which had been almost completely destroyed by Allied bombardment. The prisoners were shocked by the destruction as they travelled through Bavaria to Augsburg where they encountered a French major, who found them lodging in the partially destroyed Grand Hotel located in the midst of the city's ruins. The next day General Patch greeted them and apologized for the inconvenience of their lodging. Daladier believed he had been liberated by "General Patton, one of the greatest commanders in the American Army....He was unaffected and cordial."<sup>87</sup> The latter description was hardly appropriate for the flamboyant and egotistical Patton. It was appropriate, however, for General Alexander Patch, a modest but no less effective commander of the Seventh American Army, who had lost his only son fighting for the

liberation of France. Patch then invited them to lunch, and early that afternoon he informed them that they would be transferred to the highest French military authority in Germany, General de Lattre de Tassigny, whose headquarters was at Lindau on Lake Constance. De Lattre would organize their return to France in accordance with instructions from General de Gaulle.

When they arrived at Lindau, General de Lattre made sure that General Weygand, his former superior, was given full military honors. None of them knew at the time that General de Gaulle had issued orders to have Weygand and Jean Borotra arrested



and sent back to France under military escort.<sup>88</sup> They sat down to dinner at separate tables, as they had at Itter. Later General Weygand gave Granger a suitcase containing his memoirs with instruction that the manuscript should be given to his lawyer in Paris. As chance would have it, Paul Reynaud had entrusted a suitcase with his own memoirs to Granger before their departure from Itter. Granger ironically became responsible for the safety of the memoirs of these antagonists, who first had clashed at Bordeaux in 1940, then continued their feud at Itter, and finally gave full vent to their hostility at the trial of Marshal Pétain after their return to Paris in 1945.

Pétain's trial produced a reprise of positions taken at Itter, and historians are dismissive of the republicans' self-justification in defense of the Third Republic during the trial. An example of negative

judgment of the Itter republicans, who were called upon to testify, may be found in Fred Kupferman's history of the Pétain trial in which he referred sarcastically to these republicans as individuals who were hoping for another political career but were no more than "representatives of another age" who no longer amounted to anything.<sup>89</sup> As the *New York Times* reported, "Marshal Henri-Philippe Petain's trial seemed today to become increasingly a trial of his predecessors of the Third Republic, of twentieth-century France and even of the prosecutor and the judges in this case."<sup>90</sup> In the extensive historical literature dealing with the defeat and armistice of 1940, most historians have shown little sympathy for these republican witnesses returned from their Itter imprisonment. All have been subjected to the scrutiny of historians who have tried to explain the dramatic and shocking defeat of France in 1940, which opened the door to the formation of the Vichy regime. Criticisms range from condemnations of the structural weaknesses of the Third Republic, mainly political and economic, to strategic failures in military planning, diplomatic alliance building, to wrong, even desperate, choices made by the leadership when faced with war with Germany.<sup>91</sup>

Negative assessments of the Third Republic's leadership have been challenged recently by historians who conclude that the performance of the Third Republic's leadership was neither dismal nor lacking in moral fortitude.<sup>92</sup> In one instance an American historian argues that the military defeat itself was a closer call than most historians have claimed. Needless to say, this judgment has been challenged in turn.<sup>93</sup> Whatever the verdicts of historians and history, the republican faction at Itter did not see themselves as solely responsible for the presumed "collapse" or "decline" or "decadence" of the Third Republic; in their discussions and diaries the old rivals, Daladier and Reynaud, were defending themselves as leaders who were committed to the idea of democracy, however flawed it may have been in practice under the Third Republic. They were obsessed with presumed plots on the part of their political enemies, some of them sharing their imprisonment, and believed that they were defenders of

the republic in a time of conflict, division, and real threats to French democracy at home and abroad. Only the Pétainists at Itter, for all of their patriotism toward their idea of France, were the ones who celebrated the parliamentary republic's demise. Weygand, for instance, had no use for democracy but believed the Army was eternal France, a political orientation that persisted into and beyond the Fourth Republic. What the Itter imprisonment revealed was how difficult it was even then to find common ground or consensus on responsibility for the French defeat of 1940. At least they presented a façade of patriotic, national unity before a common enemy while imprisoned at Itter.

What had landed all of them at Itter was their personal and individual patriotism but with contrasting versions of the French nation. These views came out in the debates on the mountain and could be seen in their return to politics after the war with Daladier's ongoing commitment to the Radical Party that had been at the heart of the Third Republic since the turn of the century; in Reynaud's commitment to a liberal and less statist republic endowed with a strong leadership; in Weygand's conviction that the honor of the Army was identical with the honor and greatness of France; in Jouhaux's ardent belief in justice for the ordinary citizens of France as the foundation for peace in the future. Although they looked anxiously to a recovered France after the war, they had, with the exceptions of Jouhaux and François-Poncet, secondary roles in the process of reconstruction and renewal, but they could not really be called "gravediggers." They were not trying to bury French democracy but to defend it as best they knew how within the limitations of the Third Republic's political culture.

What dug the grave of the Third Republic was in the first instance a military defeat as it had been for the Second Empire in 1870. What followed was a regime of those who thought they had an opportunity to reshape the French nation, a Vichy France that proved to be as divided as its predecessor and, as it turned out, even more morally deficient than the men of Vichy thought the politicians of the Third Republic had been. Thus the bitter, persistent and painful memory of defeat continues to drive the

examinations, debates and revisions in the ongoing search for responsibility or blame for the defeat, but the failure of France to defend its democracy needs to be placed within a larger narrative of Europe's interwar crisis of democracy, which produced a widespread turn toward authoritarianism, totalitarianism and fascism in the Europe of the interwar years..<sup>94</sup> France was not exceptional nor was it immune from the ideological divisions and conflicts that could be found throughout Europe at that time. However shaken by the political and ideological turmoil of Europe between the wars, Third Republic France was one of the last bastions of democracy on the continent until the military defeat of 1940. Their commitment to preserving French democracy, whatever their personal differences, became apparent at Itter, as did their commitment to finding a way to peace through international cooperation in postwar Europe.

<sup>1</sup> Nicole Jordan, "Strategy and Scapegoatism: Reflections on the French National Catastrophe, 1940" in *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, Winter 1996, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 11; Julian Jackson, *The Fall of France: The Nazi Invasion of 1940* (Oxford & New York: 2003), 2-3. His bibliography has the major studies of the 1940 defeat and its consequences, including a brief but perceptive analysis of Marc Bloch's contribution, pp. 185-87; Tony Judt, "The Catastrophe: The Fall of France, 1940" in *Reappraisals: Reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century* (NY: Penguin Books, 2009) cites Nicole Jordan and then adds, "It shaped British and American attitudes toward France for the next generation....Most of all it led to profound soul-searching and self-questioning by the French."183.

<sup>2</sup> Marc Bloch, *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940* tr. Gerard Hopkins (NY: Norton, 1968 ed.), originally published 1946).

<sup>3</sup> Of the gravediggers listed by Pertinax (André Géraud), *The Gravediggers of France: Gamelin, Daladier, Reynaud, Pétain, and Laval, Military Defeat, Armistice and Counterrevolution*, (revised edition, New York, 1944) only Gamelin, Daladier and Reynaud made it to the Château d'Itter. Pétain and Laval of course remained at Vichy, while Weygand, the supreme gravedigger in the eyes of Reynaud, did not even merit mention in the book's title and has only three references in the index. For a restatement of the Pertinax argument, see Richard D. Challener, "The Third Republic and the Generals: The Gravediggers Revisited," in *Total War and Cold War: Problems in Civilian Control of the Military* (Columbus, Ohio, 1962): 91-107.

<sup>4</sup> Most historians dealing with the French defeat of 1940 consider Bloch's analysis to be the starting point. For example, Julian Jackson, *The Fall of France: The Nazi Invasion of 1940* (Oxford & New York: 2003), 185-87. Judt, "The Catastrophe" 183; Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac, "L'étrange défaite de Marc Bloch revisitée," in Pierre Allorant, Noëlline Castagnez et Antoine Prost, eds., *Le moment 1940: Effondrement national et réalités locales* (Paris: Harmattan, 2012): 15-24. See also Carol Fink, *Marc Bloch: A Life in History* (NY: Cambridge UP, 1989) and "Marc Bloch and the *drôle de guerre*: Prelude to the 'Strange Defeat,'" in *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, vol. 22, no. 1: 33-46.

<sup>5</sup> Accusations of treason may be found in Pierre Cot, *Triumph of Treason*, tr. Sybille and Milton Crane (NY: Ziff-Davis, 1944). The argument that France had become morally susceptible to fascism or Naziism during the interwar years was formulated early on by Yves R. Simon, *The Road to Vichy, 1918-1938*, tr. James A. Corbett and George J. McMorrow (NY: Sheed & Ward, 1942), re-issued with an introduction by John Hellman, University Press of America (1988). The failure of leadership, except for Georges Mandel, is at the heart of Heinz Pol, *Suicide of a Democracy*, tr. by Heinz and Ruth Norden (NY: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1940). A recent accusation of treasonous behavior may be found in the concluding chapter 13 "La France trahie par ses chefs," in Claude Quétel, *L'impardonnable défaite: 1918-1940* (Paris: JC Lattès, 2010): 351-395.

<sup>6</sup> André Simon, *J'accuse: The Men Who Betrayed France*, introduction by Carleton Beals (NY: Dial Press, 1940)

353. Simon's accusation of betrayal has been taken up recently in Annie Lacroix-Riz, *Le choix de la défaite: Les elites françaises dans les années 1930* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2006), and *De Munich à Vichy: L'assassinat de la Troisième République 1938-1940* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Biddle to Franklin D. Roosevelt, July 1, 1940, "Memorandum: Observations on factors which contributed to France's defeat," Hyde Park, FDR Library, PSF, Diplomatic Box 29, folder France 1940. To what extent Biddle's memo influenced Roosevelt's view of France as a nation in decline cannot be measured. Biddle's message urged Roosevelt to modernize and prepare the American Army for war. See Judt, "Catastrophe," 183 cited above.

<sup>8</sup> The literature on the fall of France is extensive and growing, and there is no consensus on what were the causes of the defeat, whether the system, individuals, moral decay, "decadence" or simply circumstance. Joel Blatt, ed. *The French Defeat of 1940: Reassessments* (Providence and Oxford: Berghahn, 1998); John Cairns, "Along the Road back to France 1940," *American Historical Review*, III (April, 1959): 583-603; an update: Cairns, "Some Recent Historians and the 'Strange Defeat' of 1940," *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 46, no. 1 (March 1974): 60-85; Richard D. Challener, "The Third Republic and the Generals: The Gravediggers Revisited," in Harry L. Coles ed., *Total War and Cold War: Problems in Civilian Control of the Military* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962): 91-107; Peter Jackson, "Recent Journeys along the Road Back to France, 1940," *The Historical Journal*, 39, 2 (1996): 497-510; Peter Jackson, "Post-War Politics and the historiography of French Strategy and Diplomacy Before the Second World War," *History Compass*, volume 4, issue 5 (September 2006): 870-905, which is an extensive, balanced and fair minded review of the literature, to which we return at the conclusion of this narrative.

<sup>9</sup> A leading French diplomatic historian of Gaullist persuasion has argued the "decadence thesis": Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *La décadence: la politique étrangère de la France, 1932-1939* (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1979).

<sup>10</sup> Broadcast 20 June 1940 in Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux Français: 17 juin 1940-20 août 1944* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1989): 60.

<sup>11</sup> Schloss Itter (referred to as Château d'Itter here) served as residence for the Archbishop of Innsbruck. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century its guests included Tchaikovsky and Liszt. When Paul Reynaud arrived, he described Itter as having the décor for an opera. Paul Reynaud, *Carnets de Captivité 1941-1945* présentés par Évelyne Demey (Paris: Fayard, 1997): 275, entry for 12 May 1943.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Young cautions historians on the use of memoirs and diaries, but in this instance they, along with some other sources, provide the only way to capture the atmosphere of two years of enforced cohabitation in the Château d'Itter. Robert J. Young, "Partial Recall: Political Memoirs and Biography from the Third French Republic," in *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory*, ed. George Egerton (London: Frank Cass, 1994). With all of its problems of selective memory, by going back to the reflections upon a defeat in which they were involved one way or another, we can get some sense of the complexity of how the so-called "gravediggers" assessed themselves, even with their self-deceptions or evasions. In this way, we can return to the immediacy of the event and how those involved tried to come to terms with what had happened to the country they were responsible for defending. This gives an atmosphere of defeat as experienced by some of the major actors as the journalists and historians began their judgments.

<sup>13</sup> Augusta Léon-Jouhaux, *Prison pour hommes d'état* (Paris, 1973): II. The prisoners feared that the Nazis at the end of the war would execute them in vengeance, and the Commandant of Itter, Captain Wimmer, would so threaten them from time to time. And it was a close call. At the end SS units from Dachau fired on Itter as the Americans, accompanied and supported by troops from the Wehrmacht (the major commanding was killed by fire from the SS), liberated the prisoners on May 5, 1945.

<sup>14</sup> Various translated as: "All hope abandon, ye who enter in" or "Leave all hope, you who enter." However translated, the message carried sinister implications in 1943. Paul Reynaud, *La France a sauvé l'Europe*, vol. II (Paris: Flammarion, 1947): 590.

<sup>15</sup> Reynaud, *Carnets de Captivité*, 127, entry for 21 August 1941.

<sup>16</sup> Raoul de Broglie, *Souvenirs français dans Le Tyrol* (Innsbruck: Auteur-Editeur, 1948): 152.

<sup>17</sup> François-Poncet, *Carnets d'un captif* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1952): 51 entry for 25 September 1943. François-Poncet was delighted to receive a package from his wife that contained butter, concentrated milk, tobacco, tins of sardines and tuna, which meant, "in certain respects we are better fed than [they are] in France."

<sup>18</sup> Daladier, *Prison Journal 1940-1945*, 221, entry for 25 August 1943.

<sup>19</sup> François-Poncet, *Carnets d'un captif*, 38, 35-6, 31 entries for 6, 5 and 3 September 1943.

<sup>20</sup> François-Poncet, *Carnets d'un captif*, 35-6, 31 entry for 5 September 1943 and 31, entry for 3 September 1943.

<sup>21</sup> Reynaud, *Carnets de Captivité*, 277, entry for 18 May 1943.

<sup>22</sup> Zvinomir Cuckovic, "Zwei Jahren auf Schloss Itter," p. 13 ms. Dachau Archive SS-Sonderkommando Schloss Itter/Tyrol. Thanks to Rainer Praetorius of Die Helmut-Schmidt-Universität/Universität der Bundeswehr Hamburg for providing a copy of Cuckovic's memoir.

<sup>23</sup> Daladier, *Journal de captivité*, 201, entry for 13 May 1943.

<sup>24</sup> François-Poncet, *Carnets d'un captif*, 52-3, 65, entries for Monday 27 September 1943 and 14 October 1943.

François-Poncet had been a member of Vichy's National Council until he withdrew to his home near Grenoble in 1942.

<sup>25</sup> François-Poncet, *Carnets d'un captif* 77, entry for 19 November 1943.

<sup>26</sup> Although Gamelin remained silent at the trial itself, his lawyers made a deposition that stated the public wished to know the causes of the defeat and that they were in the first instance of a purely military nature. The deposition asked three specific questions as to the conduct of the war, including the performances of the Second and Ninth Armies at Sedan, but the court did not introduce the deposition as evidence, focusing instead on preparation for war and responsibility for declaring war. See Giraudier, *Les Bastilles de Vichy*, 180 and fn. 23, 258-9, citing AN, BB<sup>50</sup> 1719 and *L'Oeuvre de Léon Blum*, vol. 5: *1940-1945, Mémoires. La Prison et le procès. À l'échelle humaine* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1955): 161-2. There was, though, at least one occasion when Gamelin spoke up at Itter when Daladier asked General Keller if he had communicated the supposedly "black picture" of French inferiority in tanks, compared with the Germans, to his superiors. Keller replied that he had communicated this information to General Gamelin, whereupon Gamelin shouted, "You never told me that." The official record was purged of this outburst. Daladier, *Prison Journal 1940-1945*, 348-50. Appendix B. Jean Daladier "The Riom Trial."

<sup>27</sup> Daladier, *Journal de captivité*, 219, entry for 6 January 1943.

<sup>28</sup> François-Poncet, *Carnets d'un captif* 38, 40-41, 77, entries for 7, 9 September and 19 November 1943. These self-justifications would reappear in Gamelin's postwar memoirs, which he began writing during his imprisonment at Itter.

<sup>29</sup> Martin S. Alexander, *The Republic in Danger: General Maurice Gamelin and the Politics of French Defence, 1933-1940* (Cambridge, 1992): 6-8.

<sup>30</sup> Reynaud, *Carnets de Captivité*, 298, entry for 16 October 1943.

<sup>31</sup> Daladier, *Journal de captivité*, 205, entry for 3 March 1943.

<sup>32</sup> Daladier, *Journal de captivité*, 263, entry for 8 January 1944 and Augusta Léon-Jouhaux, *Prison*, 52-3.

<sup>33</sup> A brief discussion of the diary attacks on each other at Itter may be found in Tellier, *Paul Reynaud*, 695.

<sup>34</sup> When Reynaud arrived at Chazeron, where he, Blum and Daladier were initially imprisoned, Daladier sarcastically noted that Reynaud was "typically Parisian" for not noticing that bars on the windows only recently had been installed. Daladier, *Prison Journal 1940-1945*, 8-9, entry for 8 September 1940.

<sup>35</sup> François-Poncet, *Carnets d'un captif*, 37, entry for 5 September 1943.

<sup>36</sup> Frédéric Monier, *La politique des plaintes. Clientélisme et demandes sociales dans le Vaucluse d'Édouard Daladier (1890-1940)*, (Paris: La boutique d'histoire, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> François-Poncet, *Carnets d'un captif*, 70, entry for 31 October 1943.

<sup>38</sup> Reynaud, *Carnets*, 225, entry for 14 December 1942. Reynaud overlooked his own vulnerability before the resentments of the urban *petite bourgeoisie*. He barely won the 1936 election from the second arrondissement in Paris after he had pressed for a devaluation of the franc. A group of electors, “who described themselves as artisans, small shopkeepers, employees and men of modest private incomes” denounced his policies as a threat to the stability of the Poincaré franc. Paul Reynaud, *Mémoires*, vol. 1, *Venu de ma montagne* (Paris: Flammarion, 1960): 405, cited in Jessica Wardhaugh, *In Pursuit of the People: Political Culture in France, 1934-39* (NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009): 9. As for the shortcomings of French inability to plan and organize for war, Reynaud’s economic liberalism and aversion to state planning has recently been criticized for France’s failure to meet the test of modern war. Talbot Imlay, *Facing the Second World War: Strategy, Politics, and Economics in Britain and France 1938-1940* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003).

<sup>39</sup> According to the testimony of Cuckovic, Daladier answered his question as to why he had signed the Munich agreement with an assurance that neither France nor Great Britain were prepared for war, but he was so upset by what he had done that he had emptied a bottle of cognac on the flight back, expecting to be assassinated on his return. Cuckovic, “Zwei Jahren auf Schloss Itter,” 27; Reynaud, *Carnets*, 363 fn. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Augusta Léon-Jouhaux, *Prison*, 53-54.

<sup>41</sup> Reynaud, *Carnets*, 298, 299, 360 entries for 16, 17 October, 2 March 1945.

<sup>42</sup> François-Poncet, *Carnets d'un captif*, 52, 67, entries for 27 September and 15 October 1943.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Reynaud, *La France a sauvé l'Europe*, vol. 1, pp. 540ff.

<sup>44</sup> Augusta Léon-Jouhaux, *Prison*, 52.

<sup>45</sup> Daladier, *Prison Journal 1940-1945*, 224, entry for 8 September 1943.

<sup>46</sup> Monier, *La politique des plaints.*, 52-55. For Daladier’s operation on two fronts the parochial and the national, see Elisabeth du Réau, *Édouard Daladier 1884-1970* (Paris: Fayard, 1993): 57; and Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac, *Les Français de l'an 40*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1990): 55 on the harmful effects of fighting on two political fronts.

<sup>47</sup> Augusta Léon-Jouhaux, *Prison*, 35-6.

<sup>48</sup> Guy Bourdé, *La défaite du Front populaire* (Paris: Maspéro, 1977) is critical of Daladier’s action; a more favorable assessment began with René Rémond & Janine Bourdin, *Édouard Daladier, chef de gouvernement, avril 1938-septembre 1939* (Paris: Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1977); Réau, *Édouard Daladier* is also sympathetic.

<sup>49</sup> Imlay, *Facing the Second World War* argues that despite crushing the strike and ending the forty-hour work week in defense industries, Jouhaux was willing to work with industrialists to step up production, faced with the threat of war, an approach that he proposed to Daladier, but the industrialists persisted in their fear that the CGT harbored a revolutionary threat, pp. 279-283. Imlay is critical of Reynaud's economic liberalism and resistance to wartime industrial planning. Talbot Imlay, "Paul Reynaud and France's Response to Nazi Germany, 1938-1940," *French Historical Studies*, 26: 3 (Summer 2003): 497-538; He also questions the claim that the Communists were engaged in sabotage or "go slow" protests against the decree-laws and the breaking of the general strike. See Talbot Imlay, "'Mind the Gap': The Perception and Reality of Communist Sabotage of French War Production during the Phoney War 1939-1940," *Past and Present* (2005): 179-224. See also Herrick Chapman, *State Capitalism and Working-class Radicalism in the French Aircraft Industry* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1991).

<sup>50</sup> Bernard Georges et Denise Tintant with Marie-Anne Renault, *Léon Jouhaux dans le mouvement syndical français* (Paris: PUF, 1979): 295. Despite their political and personal differences, Gamelin, Reynaud and Daladier gathered on 7 September 1943, the third anniversary of their arrests, and marked the occasion with a bottle of cognac provided by Reynaud and mints and fruit candies sent by Daladier's sister. Daladier, *Prison Journal 1940-1945*, 222, entry for 7 September 1943.

<sup>51</sup> Reynaud, *Carnets*, 303, entry for 1 December 1943.

<sup>52</sup> Daladier, *Prison Journal 1940-1945*, 247, entry for 8 January 1944.

<sup>53</sup> The conflict between Reynaud and Weygand at Itter anticipated the confrontation between the politician and the military commander that would erupt at Petain's trial after the war.

<sup>54</sup> Reynaud, *Carnets*, 314, 335-36.

<sup>55</sup> Daladier, *Journal de captivité*, 215, 218. Daladier commented that Reynaud had appointed these defeatists to his cabinet, and that he could have asked for their resignations instead of offering his own without the least resistance.

<sup>56</sup> The classic account of Weygand's defiance of civil authority is Philip C.F. Bankwitz, *Maxime Weygand and Civil-Military Relations in Modern France* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967): 310-317. A more sympathetic view of Weygand and a refutation of the charge of conspiracy against the republic is Bernard Destremau, *Weygand* (Paris, 1989, 2001): 752-54.

<sup>57</sup> Reynaud, *Carnets*, 327.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 335-36.

<sup>59</sup> Augusta Léon-Jouhaux, *Prison*, 114-15.

<sup>60</sup> Assessments of La Rocque's fascism or authoritarianism may be found in William Irvine, "Fascism in France: The Strange Case of the Croix de Feu," *Journal of Modern History* 63 (1991): 271-95; Robert Soucy, "French Fascism and the Croix de Feu: A Dissenting Interpretation," *Journal of Contemporary History* 26 (1991): 159-88; more nuanced is Kevin Passmore, "Boyscouting for Grown-Ups? Paramilitarism in the Croix de Feu and PSF," *French Historical Studies* 19 (1995): 527-57, and his "The Croix de Feu: Bonapartism, National Populism of Fascism," *French History* 9:1 (1995): 93-123; Sean Kennedy, "Accompanying the Marshal: La Rocque and the Parti Social Français under Vichy," *French History* 15:2 (2001): 186-213; Didier Leschi, "L'étrange cas La Rocque," in *Le mythe de l'allergie Française au fascisme*, ed Michel Dobry (Paris, 2003): 155-94; the extensive discussion of the issue of fascism in France by Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York, 2004): 68-73, 241-44; and the sympathetic biography of La Rocque, which portrays him as a nationalist with Christian social ideas, Jacques Nobécourt, *Le colonel de La Rocque: ou les pièges du nationalisme chrétien* (Paris, 1996).

<sup>61</sup> Daladier, *Journal de captivité*, 263.

<sup>62</sup> Julian Jackson observes that La Rocque's withdrawal on 6 February is sometimes cited as evidence of the movement's non-radical nature. Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944* (Oxford, 2001): 73.

<sup>63</sup> Daladier, *Journal de captivité*, 263.

<sup>64</sup> Daladier, *Journal de captivité*, 262 entry for 8 January 1944..

<sup>65</sup> This is the argument of William Irvine, *The Boulanger Affair Reconsidered: Royalism, Boulangism, and the Origins of the Radical Right in France* (Oxford, 1989).

<sup>66</sup> Daladier, *Prison Journal 1940-1945*, 248 and *Journal de captivité*, 262, entry for 8 January 1944. Daladier did not refer to La Rocque as a fascist although he commented that General Giraud "is either a Royalist or a Fascist, depending on circumstances, but in every instance he is antirepublican." *Prison Journal*, 190, and *Journal de Captivité*, 203, entry for 25 February 1943. One of the women prisoners whom Daladier had befriended at Itter but was being sent back to Dachau, asked Daladier why had the colonel been arrested since "M. de La Rocque is a Fascist!" *Prison Journal 1940-1945*, 277 and *Journal de captivité*, 289, entry 28 May, 1944.

<sup>67</sup> Augusta Léon-Jouhaux, *Prison*, 88-89. Lyautey was much admired by La Rocque.

<sup>68</sup> Jouhaux advocated coexistence with the USSR in the postwar world while at the same time he admired Roosevelt and the New Deal as well as the American labor leader, Samuel Gompers. Augusta Léon-Jouhaux, *Prison*, 81-83.

<sup>69</sup> Georges et Tintant, *Léon Jouhaux*, 294-5.

<sup>70</sup> Augusta Léon-Jouhaux, *Prison*, 81.

<sup>71</sup> Léon Jouhaux's lament and hope may be found in Augusta Léon-Jouhaux, *Prison*, 93-94, 97.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 36. There would be a strong centrist party, but it would be the MRP not the Radical Party, which was rejected by the post-1945 electorate for its close identification with the Third Republic.

<sup>73</sup> Reynaud, *Carnets*, 355, 328.

<sup>74</sup> Colonel de La Rocque's prison writings offer no insight into the dynamics of relations among the prisoners since his reflections are no more than another political pamphlet. François de La Rocque, *Au service de l'avenir: réflexions en montagne* (Paris, 1946).

<sup>75</sup> Augusta Léon-Jouhaux, *Prison*, 130-31.

<sup>76</sup> Augusta Léon-Jouhaux, *Prison*, 132-3.

<sup>77</sup> Augusta Léon-Jouhaux, *Prison*, 127. Frau Wimmer explained that her husband suffered from a stomach ulcer that he treated with an excess of alcohol, which made him violent.

<sup>78</sup> Augusta Léon-Jouhaux, *Prison*, 143.

<sup>79</sup> Daladier, *Prison Journal 1940-1945*, 317 and *Journal de captivité*, 331-2, entry for 30 January 1945.

<sup>80</sup> Cuckovic, "Zwei Jahren auf Schloss Itter," p. 49.

<sup>81</sup> Daladier, *Prison Journal 1940-1945*, 330, 332-34 and *Journal de captivité*, 343-47, entries for 12 and 20 1945.

<sup>82</sup> Reynaud, *Carnets*, 375, entry for 2 May 1945

<sup>83</sup> Augusta Léon-Jouhaux, *Prison*, 146-49.

<sup>84</sup> Reynaud, *Carnets*, 374, entry for 2 May 1945.

<sup>85</sup> The liberation of Itter by the Americans is told in Stephen Harding, "The Battle for Castle Itter: One of the last actions of the war in Europe was fought by the unlikeliest of allies," *World War II*, August/September 2008, pp. 38-45. Harding has completed a book on the liberation of Itter by the Americans that appeared in print as this article was going to electronic press, Stephen Harding, *The Last Battle: When U.S. and German Soldiers Joined Forces in the Waning Hours of World War II in Europe* (Boston, Da Capo Press, 2013). A contemporary account is Meyer Levin, "We Liberated Who's Who," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 21, 1945, pp. 17 and 97-8; and Texas Military Forces Museum, 36<sup>th</sup> Division in World War II, Internet, <http://www.texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org/36division/archives/seigfi/freed.htm>.

<sup>86</sup> Daladier, *Prison Journal 1940-1945*, 338 and *Journal de captivité*, 350-51, entry for 5 May 1945.

<sup>87</sup> Daladier, *Prison Journal 1940-1945*, 340-41 and *Journal de captivité*, 353-54, entry for 8 May 1945.

<sup>88</sup> General Patch received instruction from General de Gaulle to place Weygand under surveillance. Patch was shocked at this treatment of a general whom all soldiers admired for his role in World War I; Patch refused to carry out de Gaulle's request, and turned him over to General de Lattre instead. Jacques Weygand, *Weygand mon père*, 408.

<sup>89</sup> Fred Kupferman, *Le procès de Vichy* (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 1980): 95-6.

<sup>90</sup> Harold Calender, "Petain Case Trial of Third Republic: Witnesses Defend Their Own Acts--Press Attacks Past Errors of Principals," *New York Times*, July 26, 1945.

<sup>91</sup> Ant overview of the literature and explanations offered for the fall of France in 1940 may be found in Peter Jackson, "Postwar Politics and the Historiography of French Strategy and Diplomacy...", *History Compass* cited in note 8. After a masterful survey of the literature, Jackson concludes that there are still two approaches to explaining the fall of France in 1940: one individual and the other structural, as they were when Marc Bloch began examining his conscience and Pertinax identified the gravediggers during the war, showing the durability of this binary explanation after seventy years of research. A recent history (2003) examines the evidence and concludes that the leaders of the Third Republic failed the test of war. Talbot Imlay, *Facing the Second World War: Strategy, Politics, and Economics in Britain and France 1938-1940* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003). Great Britain passes Imlay's test. There are numerous studies of the French defeat, beginning with Marc Bloch's *Strange Defeat*. Two important studies in English would be Julian Jackson, *The Fall of France: The Nazi Invasion of 1940*, and the thoughtful monograph by Andrew Shennan, *The Fall of France, 1940* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), which is specially strong in its analysis of the implications of the defeat since 1940.

<sup>92</sup> Peter Jackson contrasts Imlay's work with a revisionist view exemplified in the work of Robert J. Young, particularly his *France and the Origins of the Second World War* (NY: St. Martin's, 1996), a revisionism begun with his publication, *In Command of France: French Foreign Policy and Military Planning, 1933-1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1978). In *Origins* Young challenges the idea that the choices French political and military leaders faced were always clear cut. He offers the concept of ambiguity to show the complexity of how they responded to the threat of war, and he also questions the idea that these leaders and the French people were decadent or moral cowards. Imlay, as Jackson notes, also rejected the moral decay or "decadence" explanation in favor of a France that was hopelessly divided and uncertain of how to meet the security threat, producing a panic of leadership, particularly during the Phony War when the German military threat was all too real. On the other hand, there have been those who argue that France pulled itself together between the Munich capitulation and the declaration of war. An example of this view may be found in the work of William Irvine, a historian who has been critical of the contentious atmosphere of the thirties in France, but concludes, "All the evidence... suggests that in the summer of 1939 France was morally and materially ready to confront Nazi Germany," and he refers to the extensive survey of French morale by Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac, *Les Français de l'an 40*, vols 1 & 2. See William D. Irvine, "Domestic Politics and the Fall of France in 1940," *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1996): 86. In the conclusion to his survey of the vast literature on France in 1940, Peter Jackson proposes that historians go beyond the charged atmosphere of judgment of whether or not the French had the courage and moral backbone to face up to Nazi Germany, avoiding a priori beliefs that there was something "terribly wrong" with France and then looking for evidence to support that view. Such consideration has led to this reexamination of the evidence from the gravediggers themselves in order to give them a voice as to what they thought they were doing in defense of France during the crisis years.

<sup>93</sup> Tony Judt, "The Catastrophe: The Fall of France, 1940" in *Reappraisals*, 181-195.

<sup>94</sup>Brian Jenkins has called for a broader perspective in “Conclusion: Beyond the ‘Fascism Debate,’” Brian Jenkins, ed., *France in the Era of Fascism: Essays on the French Authoritarian Right* (NY and Oxford: Berghahn, 1905): 215.