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Paul Reynaud and French National Defense, 1933-1939

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PAUL REYNAUD AND FRENCH NATIONAL DEFENSE,
1933-1939

by
Joseph D. Connors

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
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VITA

The author, Joseph David Connors, is the son of John Henry Connors and Julia (Davidson) Connors. He was born February 12, 1945 in Calais, Maine.

His elementary education was completed in a private Boston school and his secondary education at St. Thomas Aquinas High School, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts where he graduated in 1962.

In September 1962, he entered Boston State College and in June 1966, received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in History. In February 1969, he earned a Master of Arts in History from the University of Maine at Orono, Maine.

He entered Loyola University in the fall of 1968 where he enrolled as a doctoral student. After four years as a teaching assistant on the Chicago campus, he went to Paris to do a year of research. Since his return to the United States, he has written a doctoral thesis on Paul Reynaud's defense position during the 1930s. He hopes to graduate in June 1976 with a Ph.D. in Modern European History.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AAN - Archives de l'Assemblée Nationale
- AN - Archives Nationales de la France
- CSDN - Conseil Supérieure de la Guerre or Supreme
Council of National Defense
- CSG - Conseil Supérieure de la Guerre or Supreme
War Council
- DLM - Division Légère Mécanique or lightly
mechanized division
- JOC - Journal Officiel, Chambre des députés

INTRODUCTION

In October of 1933, Adolf Hitler, German Chancellor and head of the National Socialist Party, pulled the Reich out of the Geneva Disarmament Conference. By the spring of 1934, reports reached the French Intelligence Agency that indicated the Germans were rearming. This was publicly confirmed by Hermann Goering who on March 10, 1934 announced the creation of the German Air Force. On March 16, 1935, Hitler demanded compulsory military service to be paralleled by the development of twelve army corps or thirty-six divisions, a plan that would keep about 500,000 men in uniform. In the same year, the construction of a fleet of German submarines began.

A special aspect of German rearmament was the development of the armored corps or panzer division. The brain child of Heinz Guderian, a German officer who had seen the success and failure of tanks during the First World War, these special divisions allowed the tank to assume the primary role in battle instead of being subordinated to the infantry.¹ They lent maneuverability and speed to military

¹Guderian was the author of Achtung-Panzer! Die Entwicklung der Panzerwaffe, ihre Kampfstrategie und ihre operative Möglichkeiten (Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1937).

strategy, a sharp contrast to the static, linear defense that so dominated the World War I theaters. As a mate for these mobile armored columns, dive bombers were added. Known as Stukas, these planes were to precede the panzers or tanks so as to silence antitank artillery.

Hitler accompanied this rearmament by an increasingly aggressive foreign policy. His long range aims: revenge for the war guilt clause of the Versailles Treaty, annihilation of France as an independent force, and living space in the East were cleverly disguised by a series of short range diversionary tactics.² These varied from manipulating European fears of Bolshevism to playing on French guilt feelings over the harshness of the Versailles Pact. Whenever Hitler made a specific move, it was often in response to a supposed threat. An example was the reoccupation of the Rhineland on March 7, 1936, justified on the grounds that the Franco-Soviet Entente of February 1936 threatened Germany with encirclement.

France was ill prepared to face Hitler. Exhausted by the loss of life, physical disability of veterans, and material damage of World War I, the nation signed a series of treaties whose terms the country proved unable to live up to. The first was an alliance with Poland drawn up in

²In his autobiographical account, Hitler wrote: "France is and remains the inexorable enemy of the German people." See Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf [translator not indicated] (New York: Stackpole Sons, 1939), p. 600.

1921. It stated that as mutual allies, France or Poland would assist the other partner in case of attack by a third party. Also drawn up was the Locarno Treaty of 1925. In this arrangement, Germany, France, and Belgium agreed to respect their common frontiers and to foreswear the use of war against each other except in self-defense or in accordance with the League of Nations covenant. Great Britain and Italy guaranteed the Rhineland chapter of the Treaty which forbade German military reoccupation of the Rhineland as stipulated in the Versailles settlement of 1918.

The Petite Entente rounded out the series of alliances drawn up during the 1920s. Completed in 1927, it included the Central European powers of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Rumania. Understood was military aid given by France in case one of these nations was attacked by an aggressor. The one serious weakness in this and other treaties was the diminished or absent position of France's strongest European ally, Britain. Determined to steer clear of continental entanglements, England saw itself much more as an arbitrator between France and Germany than as a third party ready to act in case of aggression against France.

With this as a background, the 1930s worked to the disadvantage of France in terms of foreign policy. Unable to rely on an ineffective League of Nations, the country witnessed the reoccupation of the left bank of the Rhine in 1936 partly because Britain refused to intervene. In the

year before, the same lack of resolve on the part of the two western democracies had been responsible for allowing Benito Mussolini to pursue his big coup of the 1930s, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Further, the Franco-Soviet Accords of February 1936 were too weak to insure Russian aid in case of German aggression. Thus the stage was set for the Munich Accords of September 1938.

Perhaps more than any other event of the 1930s, this arrangement demonstrated the diplomatic weakness of France. Hitler, supported by Mussolini, wrested a settlement from Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier that allowed Germany to annex the Sudetenland sector of Czechoslovakia, a deal that made the rest of this slavic country vulnerable to immediate and successful attack. In this respect, Munich saw the complete bankruptcy of French foreign policy since the understanding was a flagrant violation of the Petite Entente.

One of the main reasons for French weakness was the failure to align foreign policy on military strategy. In truth, France did not develop an army capable of fulfilling its alliances. The reasons for this stemmed back to the 1921 publication by the general staff of a manual on the tactical employment of army units. Known as the Instruction provisoire du 6 octobre 1921 sur l'emploi tactique des

grandes unités,³ this instruction booklet which set the tone for French military strategy between the wars stressed the role of the infantry as the principal weapon of combat. Supported by artillery or fire power, the infantry could anticipate a continuous front after having established couverture, a situation in which specially designated troops would stave off an attack until the bulk of the military had been mobilized and assembled. While ultimate victory lay in attack, the tank played a secondary role to the infantry because it was vulnerable to antitank weapons and fuel limitations. In any event, it could not be expected to penetrate deeply behind enemy lines until the latter's defenses had been sufficiently weakened.

This strategy, reiterated in a 1936 edition,⁴ complemented the laws on the organization and recruitment of the army as passed by parliament in 1927-28. Reducing the army to twenty divisions of 106,000 professionals and 240,000 conscripts, the measure left a skeleton force intended only for the defense and not for the attack as

³ Ministère de la Guerre, Instruction provisoire du 6 octobre 1921 sur l'emploi tactique des grandes unités (Paris: Charles-Lavauzelle, 1930), pp. 10-11, 23-25, 112, 161.

⁴ Ministère de la Guerre, Instruction sur l'emploi tactique des grandes unités (Paris: Charles-Lavauzelle, 1940), pp. 15, 17-18, 27, 44-47. This edition stressed that only the offensive could give decisive results but it kept all the details of the previous manual which overwhelmingly supported a defensive doctrine.

would be needed if Germany attempted to reoccupy the Rhineland or the Saar.

To reinforce the defensive concept, the construction of the Maginot Line was undertaken in 1930. Completed in 1934, it consisted of 196 miles of concrete subterranean forts and guns. Running from the Swiss to the Belgium border, it was intended to protect France from another disastrous invasion as had occurred in 1914. As for the remaining frontier from Belgium to the sea, couverture would be used to protect the nation.

Another reason for French weakness abroad was the Great Depression, an economic catastrophe so pervasive in impact, it touched every aspect of French life. Thus when the Popular Front coalition composed of Communists, Socialists, and Radicals, took power in June of 1936, their program for socio-economic reform was gradually wittled away by continual fiscal crisis. The unrest that followed from this distracted attention from important foreign policy and military questions and forced the politicians to focus unduly on domestic issues.

In the political arena, the severity of the depression was aggravated by France's multiparty system in which fragile coalitions made it difficult for one government to stay in power long enough to work effectively on economic problems. As the depression worsened, the frequency of cabinet changes accelerated. Attempts at

national union such as the Gaston Doumerque experiment in 1934 and the 1938 appeals of Léon Blum ended in failure.

Another factor working for internal weakness in the face of growing foreign peril was the revelation of the Stavisky scandal, an affair that implicated several key politicians and which led to the February 1934 Place de la Concorde riots. In addition to sharply reducing the credibility of government leaders, the demonstrations pointed to a growing hostility toward Third Republican politics. This was best exemplified by the important role the street leagues played in the riots. Essentially antiparliamentary in attitude, the leagues had little or no faith in the democratic system of government.

One important repercussion of this loss of faith was the obsession with the antidemocratic forces of fascism and communism. French fear of sinking into one or the other blurred rational thinking and caused politicians to hesitate on crucial issues. Such was the case with the Spanish Civil War, a prolonged and bloody conflict which sharply split the nation into left-right camps thus eliminating good judgement and stalling effective response.

It was this France that Paul Reynaud knew. Born on October 15, 1878 at Barcelonnette in the southern French Alps, Reynaud was the son of a well to do French businessman. At Paris, he attended the Lycée Louis le Grand and the Sorbonne from which after a year of service in the

thirty-seventh French infantry, he earned a law degree. After a trip around the world in 1906 at the age of twenty-eight, Reynaud returned to Paris and took a job as a lawyer's secretary, a position that allowed him to plead cases for his employer at the Palais de Justice. His development of a succinct, simple style of defense earned for him the position of first secretary of the Paris Bar Association Conference. Other fame in the field came about the same time when he married the daughter of famous Parisian lawyer, Henri-Robert.

Reynaud's public career began in 1913 as a municipal councillor at St. Paul, a small town eight miles northeast of Barcelonnette. In 1914, he ran and lost an election to the Chamber of Deputies from the Hautes-Alpes district of Gap; but in 1919 (after a four year interlude of wartime service), he was elected from Basses-Alpes on a rightist National Bloc list. In this postwar chamber, Reynaud joined an obscure center-right group, l'Action républicaine et sociale.⁵

Although defeated in the 1924 Basses-Alpes plebiscite and in the 1926 by-election held in the second arrondissement of Paris, Reynaud was successfully elected to that same Parisian district on a National Republican ticket in 1928. This stockbroker, small shopkeeper quarter

⁵In this study, less well known parties or political groups whose names do not readily translate into English are left in French.

reelected him in both the 1932 and 1936 campaigns allowing Reynaud to keep the same seat from 1928 until June of 1940.

Once elected in 1928, Reynaud's talents were quickly noticed by André Tardieu, a centrist who made Reynaud his finance minister in 1930. From March of 1930 to June of 1932, Reynaud served in succession as minister of finance, colonies, and justice. After the 1932 election, he became a member of the finance commission of the chamber, a position which he maintained for the rest of the decade. His great moment to shine came during 1938-40 when as Edouard Daladier's finance minister, Reynaud helped lift the nation out of its desperate financial straits.

Chosen premier on March 21, 1940, Reynaud resigned on June 16, 1940 when a majority of his cabinet opted for an armistice. From 1940-42, Reynaud remained a prisoner under Vichy and then for the duration of the war, a Nazi captive in various concentration camps. Liberated in 1945, he married his secretary, Christiane Mabire, by whom he fathered three children, the youngest born after Reynaud passed his eightieth year. After the war, he reentered politics and was successfully elected to the chamber from the Departement du Nord (Dunkirk), a seat he held from 1946 until 1962. In addition to being appointed minister of finances in 1948, Reynaud presided over the finance commission of the National Assembly from 1951 to 1962. Defeated in 1962 because he opposed the election of the

Fifth Republic's president by referendum, he died on September 21, 1966.

Petite, handsome, and impeccably dressed, Reynaud was in constant demand on the lecture circuit. His facility with English and Spanish, his reading of the foreign press, and his travels abroad all joined to make him an important source for measuring the state of Europe and the world.

At home, his liaison with pretty Madame H el ene de Portes, the mistress who gradually replaced his wife, attached Reynaud to a social set years younger than himself. This milieu also contained well known bankers and financiers whose ties with Reynaud were interpreted by some as favoritism toward big business.

An important weak spot in Reynaud's personality was his inferiority complex over his height, a factor which he himself described as a thorn and handicap.⁶ Referred to as a midget, Reynaud compensated by developing a superiority complex which demonstrated itself by a need to surpass and excel others.⁷ As a result, he often came across as haughty, caustic, affected, and cocksure. His perpetual smile was considered smug. His manner of walking was a strut. His clothes, physique, and mannerisms seemed

⁶ Paul Reynaud, M emoires, vol. 1: Venu de ma montagne (Paris: Flammarion, 1960), p. 41.

⁷ M emoires d'un pr esident [anonymous] (Paris: La table ronde, 1972), p. 192. Madame Reynaud states her husband's height as 5'6". Letter of December 20, 1973 from Madame Reynaud to the writer.

bizarre. Vendémiaire (Paris), a rightist weekly, compared the "wearer of the highest false collars in the chamber" to a bantam rooster whose nose and face were always arched back and pointed upward toward the ceiling in order to give people the impression he was taller than he really was.⁸

These aspects of Reynaud's life: his personality, associates, time abroad, and like for Anglo-Saxon ways and customs set him apart from many of the other deputies whose experiences and opportunities were of a more limited nature. Coming up to Paris for the chamber debates, these politicians, at the close of the session, returned to their provincial départements in order to immerse themselves in local affairs or electoral interests.

Over and above personal biography, it is Reynaud's ideas on national defense that hold the predominant place in this narrative. That they miscarried among the politicians, the military, and the people at large is a foregone conclusion. The reasons why, on the other hand, are the main focus of the study. The story begins with Charles de Gaulle.

⁸Vendémiaire, January 3, 1936, p. 2.

CHAPTER I

THE FOUNDATION

Jean Auburtin, a Parisian lawyer, introduced Reynaud to Charles de Gaulle on December 5, 1934.¹ Forty-four years old to Reynaud's fifty-six, de Gaulle was reputed to be the tallest lieutenant-colonel in France. Born at Lille in 1890, the son of a professor, de Gaulle received his education at St. Cyr military academy and graduated in 1912 with the grade of second lieutenant. Stationed at Arras in 1914 when the First World War began, he won a promotion to captain of infantry in 1915, was wounded and captured in 1916, escaped from a prisoner of war camp, was recaptured, and after the war, went to serve in Poland under General Maxime Weygand.

From 1921-24, he taught as an assistant professor of military history at St. Cyr and in 1924, he joined the general staff at Mayence in the Rhineland. Marshal Philippe Pétain, then vice-president of the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre (CSG), used de Gaulle as an aide-de-camp in his 1925-27 cabinet, during the last year of which de Gaulle was

¹Auburtin met de Gaulle for the first time at the home of Colonel Emile Mayer in the spring of 1934. He later brought a copy of de Gaulle's Vers l'armée de métier to Reynaud who after reading it requested to see de Gaulle. See Jean Auburtin, "A propos de l'armée de métier," Revue politique et parlementaire, no. 816 (1970), pp. 4-5.

promoted to the rank of major. From 1927-30, he commanded the nineteenth infantry division at Triers in the Rhineland and from 1930-32, he served on the French general staff in Lebanon. De Gaulle was promoted again in 1933 to the grade of lieutenant-colonel and was attached to the Secrétariat Général of the Conseil Supérieur de la Défense Nationale (CSDN).

In 1934, de Gaulle presented in his newly published book, Vers l'armée de métier,² plans for a major military reform. Unable to find a receptive audience among his army superiors, de Gaulle, on the advice of Auburtin, sought a political voice to present his ideas to the public. This voice was Paul Reynaud's.

De Gaulle's Vers l'armée de métier centered around a corps of six armored divisions. This motorized army of shock was to be characterized by lightening speed and a fire power capacity double that of the French army of 1914. The 100,000 men needed for this armored corps would be hired by contract and would serve long term. The basic components were speed, surprise, maneuver, camouflage, and the elite or professional soldiers. This specialized army would be a division of the national conscript army, the latter continuing to serve as couverture for the frontiers.³

²Charles de Gaulle, Vers l'armée de métier (Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault, 1934).

³Ibid., pp. 40, 44-45, 54, 56, 115, 117.

The armored corps would be trained to cross the frontier and take the offensive or counteroffensive whichever was needed. This offensive strategy based on mechanized vehicles consisted of an attack by waves of tanks grouped together according to weight. The heavy tanks charged first followed by the medium and then the light tanks. The infantry would terminate the liquidation and take possession of the conquered territory. The occupation was to be carried out not in continuous chains but in centers of force. Air planes would be used for reconnaissance. Finally, the entire operation would be under the control of intelligent generals among whom a spirit of enterprise would be fostered by the decentralization of leadership. A strong man was needed, however, to bring about the creation of the project.⁴

"The demonstration," wrote Reynaud after listening to de Gaulle's ideas, "was made with such power and with such clarity that I was won by the man and by his plan."⁵ Reynaud, in spite of the fact that he was already under fire for his support of the franc devaluation, decided to embark on this second undertaking. The groundwork consisted of a

⁴Ibid., pp. 111-17, 161-67, 202-3, 205. De Gaulle was not the first Frenchman to expound on an offensive based on tanks. General Jean Estienne, the "father of the tank," gave a series of lectures published in 1920 on the superiority of armored, mobile warfare in which the tank played a predominant role. Estienne reiterated and expanded on this view throughout the 1920s.

⁵Reynaud, Mémoires, 1:432.

series of meetings and letters between the two men that stretched over a period from 1934 to 1938. No recorded account has been found of their conferences but de Gaulle wrote frequently to Reynaud particularly in 1935-36. Out of these contacts between deputy and lieutenant-colonel grew a close friendship. To Reynaud, de Gaulle was "my conception of war chief: an intellectual as well as an animal of combat."⁶ To de Gaulle, Reynaud was both a patron of his new ideas as well as a protector against a hostile military world wedded to outdated strategy and doctrine.

One of de Gaulle's first communications to Reynaud advised using the armored corps to maintain order within France. In his note of January 28, 1935,⁷ de Gaulle

⁶ Paul Reynaud, Mémoires, vol. 2: Envers et contre tous (Paris: Flammarion, 1963), p. 195. Most of these meetings between the two men occurred at 5, place du Palais Bourbon, Reynaud's office and later, his home. There is some question as to the actual number of letters written before, during and after the war. This writer has found fifty-nine among Reynaud's Mémoires and the archives, six having been dated after 1945. Reynaud, however, claims there were seventy letters. See Reynaud, Mémoires, 1:420. According to Madame Renée Bazin, the private archivist assigned to the Reynaud papers, this group of letters had at one time been stolen from the Reynaud family but later was recovered. The writer assumes that the other eleven letters have been lost or are in the possession of Madame Paul Reynaud.

In his letter of May 10, 1973 to the writer, the son of General de Gaulle, Rear-Admiral Philippe de Gaulle stated that there does not exist any letters written by Paul Reynaud to his father in the de Gaulle papers deposited at the National Archives.

⁷ Reynaud Papers, "Lettres de Gaulle," Archives Nationales de la France, Paris (hereafter cited as AN), Charles de Gaulle to Paul Reynaud, January 28, 1935. The Reynaud papers have not yet been classified so referral is

observed that an elitist group of specialists could best deal with the tumults and disorders arising from the rightist street leagues or the newly formed Popular Front coalition on the left. Noting that the National Guard had the responsibility of maintaining internal order, de Gaulle ventured to doubt their effectiveness if riots were to break out simultaneously across France. How could loyalty be assured if their ranks were made up of men who had participated in the February 1934 riots or of natives from French colonies whose devotion to the mother country was rapidly becoming a thing of the past? Far better to rely on an elite of professionals whose trustworthiness was certain.

Other letters encouraged the armored corps because of German rearmament. On January 14, 1935,⁸ de Gaulle wrote that the Germans now had three armored divisions and that another three were to be activated in 1936. The personnel of this specialized corps were an elite and each division had an aviation unit attached to it.

In July 1936, de Gaulle submitted to Reynaud statistics on the German army labeled "not to be cited at the

not by carton or folio but by dossier. The dossier is indicated by the quotation marks. When shortened references are repeatedly made to the de Gaulle-Reynaud correspondence, they always refer back to the last dossier cited. This continues until a new dossier is used.

⁸De Gaulle to Reynaud, January 14, 1935.

tribune [the speaker's podium of the Chamber of Deputies]." suggesting that these facts might help Reynaud to develop his forthcoming speech before the chamber, the figures showed the Germans possessed more than 2,000 modern tanks while the French had only 310. De Gaulle also cited 510,000 men as serving in the German army: 350,000 recruits and 160,000 draftees. As of April 1, 1935, these men formed twenty-four regular divisions and three panzer or armored divisions. The evidence also indicated that the ranks of the panzer divisions were being filled by enlisted men or recruited soldiers.⁹

Again on August 26, 1936, de Gaulle warned of the widening gap between the French and German armies. "In the game called armaments competition," wrote the officer, "there are two aspects: mass [men] and quality." De Gaulle ruefully observed that "We loose on the first for not being able to win it and on the second, for not wanting it."¹⁰

De Gaulle was quick to defend the feasibility of the armored corps in terms of supplying the 98,000 soldiers needed. In his May 8, 1935 correspondence,¹¹ the officer noted that the war budget allowed for 84,012 career soldiers to outfit the 1935 army but 116,000 professionals were

⁹Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:484-85. The French had 400,000 men under arms in 1936. See General Maurice Gamelin, Servir, 3 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1946-47), 2:208.

¹⁰De Gaulle to Reynaud, August 26, 1936.

¹¹De Gaulle to Reynaud, May 8, 1935.

currently serving. Following from this, de Gaulle felt that the 98,000 could be supplied as based on the data in Table 1, page 18.

His figures, however, were questionable as to their numbers and reliability. Who could say that the 15,000 youths then serving would stay and join the armored corps?

TABLE 1

SOURCE OF SOLDIERS FOR DE GAULLE'S ARMORED CORPS

Difference between the 84,012 professionals needed for 1935 and the 116,000 men then serving	32,000 ^a
Youths now serving their tour of duty but who would soon be professionals	15,000
Career men or specialists to be transferred from the regular army along with their units or portions of their units	7,000
National Guardsmen	15,000
South African natives currently serving in France	18,000
Unexplained	11,000 ^b
Total	98,000

SOURCE: "Lettres de Gaulle," AN, de Gaulle to Reynaud, May 8, 1935.

^aThe actual figure is 31,988. De Gaulle apparently rounded off the number to 32,000.

^bA line is missing from the letter that explains the 11,000.

Moreover, the manner in which the 7,000 men transfer would be made from the regular army without depleting its ranks

was not clear. Also, the heavy reliance on National Guardsmen and native troops raised the issue of loyalty (de Gaulle, himself, had brought out this point in his letter of January 28, 1935) particularly at a time of internal disorder and colonial unrest.

Other letters spent less time with figures. "We need," wrote de Gaulle on October 15, 1937, "an instrument capable of striking without delay. . . ." ¹² The heart of this instrument was to be the modern tank which was for de Gaulle, an invention of great importance. Its appearance was an evolution in the form and art of war. All tactics, all strategy, and all other armaments depended on it. The conclusion was always the same: a concert of tanks in large armored units accompanied by infantry, artillery, signals officers and other specialists.

The letters did not merely give Reynaud the reasons why the armored corps should exist. They also assisted Reynaud with direct help in advancing the cause before the public. This aid ranged from constructing Reynaud's parliamentary proposals to suggesting material for his 1937 book, Le Problème militaire français, or to the writing up for Reynaud's referral, a plan for the organization of a ministry of national defense.

¹² De Gaulle to Reynaud, October 15, 1937.

De Gaulle continually informed Reynaud of appropriate moments to broach defense questions to the chamber. His letter of May 24, 1935 observed that the recent negotiations on the Franco-Soviet Alliance, the approaching Danubian Pact, and the latest speech of Hitler (Germany's plans for Central and East Europe), "bring to your plan of military reorganization some arguments of decisive importance."¹³

On June 25, 1936, de Gaulle simply wrote: "Doesn't it seem to you that the time has come to maximize the importance of the army question?"¹⁴ On other occasions, de Gaulle would go into detail and highlight for Reynaud what should constitute the essence of his next parliamentary intervention. In his November 25, 1936 letter, he stressed that in speaking on foreign policy, Reynaud should emphasize the narrow relationship between "security, international solidarity and military policy."¹⁵

Sometimes de Gaulle helped Reynaud focus on the current sway of ideas in the chamber. On January 30,

¹³De Gaulle to Reynaud, May 24, 1935. The Franco-Soviet Pact stipulated that one nation would come to the aid of the other if the latter were attacked by any European power. The Danubian Pact, if it had developed, would have included Austria, Germany, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia. These countries would have refrained from interfering in the domestic policies of their fellow members. France, Poland, and Rumania were to be eligible for membership upon request.

¹⁴Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:76.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 137.

1937,¹⁶ he noted that everyone agreed that French defense forces must have their quality improved both in matériel and in personnel. He also noted that an evolution of thought among orators was evident because the deputies were stressing the most powerful and specialized part of France's forces: aviation, mechanized corps, fortifications, and the navy.

De Gaulle kept Reynaud informed on party strategy which included the general outlines of planned political speeches particularly those given by leftist deputies. On March 14, 1935,¹⁷ he advised Reynaud of the Radical party's planned ordre du jour. Scheduled for the following day, this motion, to be moved by a Radical deputy at the end of his speech, would indicate that his party felt the military problem could not be solved by a simple increase in the tour of duty--a move intended by the Flandin ministry for the following day.

At other times, Reynaud's advisor on military affairs would focus on men favorable to their ideas such as Joseph Paul-Boncour, an Independent Socialist, senator, and occasional minister. This also included Philippe Serre, a member of the Left Independents.¹⁸ Whatever or whoever, for

¹⁶Ibid., p. 143.

¹⁷De Gaulle to Reynaud, March 14, 1935.

¹⁸Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:136, 143.

de Gaulle, the political milieu offered more hope for change than did military circles. "It would be inconceivable," wrote de Gaulle, "if the public powers did not take the initiative and at the same time their responsibilities for such a profound transformation of the nation's military instrument."¹⁹

De Gaulle himself mixed with the politicians. On September 23, 1936, he described his visit to the Radical, Camille Chautemps. The latter began by asking de Gaulle to keep the meeting a secret because he did not like Edouard Daladier, war minister and chief of the Radical party. The army officer thereupon explained to Chautemps the military problem and the solution. De Gaulle later reported to Reynaud that Chautemps appeared favorably disposed toward the armored corps not only as a means of intervention beyond the frontier but also as a method of maintaining internal order both in France and North Africa.²⁰

A great deal of hope was placed in Daladier. At the moment of approval of a fourteen billion armaments expenditures program in the fall of 1936, Daladier had uttered no words of opposition. This was interpreted by de Gaulle as a sign of progress.²¹ Later, on January 30, 1937,²² de Gaulle

¹⁹ De Gaulle to Reynaud, March 29, 1935.

²⁰ De Gaulle to Reynaud, September 23, 1936.

²¹ Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:132.

²² Ibid., p. 143.

informed Reynaud that Daladier might make an important declaration as a sequel to Philippe Serre's excellent speech supporting the armored corps. (The only declaration Daladier was to make, however, was to be his support of the Maginot Line, couverture, and fire power.²³)

By the following year, de Gaulle's hopes were completely crushed. On February 14, 1938, he wrote:

I fear that MM Daladier and [Minister of Air] Guy La Chambre who at the tribune summarily condemned your project of an elite armored corps and the ideas of the "young school," might neither have read Vers l'armée de métier, nor the article of Guderian and [they] know the question only through clouds with which they deliberately surround themselves.²⁴

The letters also provided Reynaud with an open window to the military world. On January 14, 1935,²⁵ de Gaulle observed that the incomprehension of some and the routine of others prevented them from seeing the truth. Two months later, he noted that "The technicians are too occupied by their current duties . . . too divided by their

²³Assemblée nationale, Journal officiel de la république française 1870-1940, Chambres des députés 1876-1940, Débats parlementaires, 1933-39 (hereafter cited as JOC), February 2, 1937, p. 292.

²⁴De Gaulle to Reynaud, February 14, 1938. De Gaulle is referring to a 1936 article by General Heinz Guderian written in Militar Wochenblatt. The article urged the development of panzer divisions.

²⁵De Gaulle to Reynaud, January 14, 1935.

theories, their activities . . . to undertake and pursue efficiently a reform. . . ." ²⁶

Occasionally his dissatisfaction became more pointed. His letter of May 8, 1935 ²⁷ contained a response from General Louis-Antoine Colson, director of publications for the Revue militaire française and member of the CSG. Colson emphatically denied de Gaulle the right to publish an article entitled: "How to Construct a Professional Army." According to Colson, it would be impossible to include the essay because it put the military forces of France into two categories: the armée de métier or professional army and the national army composed of volunteers serving their normal tour of duty. This was contrary to the current views of the war ministry which sponsored the journal.

In spite of this discouraging atmosphere, de Gaulle worked to find an audience for their ideas. In his letter to Reynaud of March 29, 1935, ²⁸ he submitted a list of military personnel who seemed open to their ideas and who because of this, would receive from de Gaulle, a copy of

²⁶ De Gaulle to Reynaud, March 29, 1935.

²⁷ De Gaulle to Reynaud, May 8, 1935 and Reynaud, Mémoires, 1:507.

²⁸ De Gaulle to Reynaud, March 29, 1935. The list of military personnel originally affixed to the letter is missing. The majority of notes that de Gaulle attached to his letters have been separated from the original correspondence. Some are in Reynaud's private papers and the rest appear to have been lost.

Reynaud's March 1935 chamber speech on the armored corps. One of these sympathizers was General Jean Flavigny, commander of France's only division légère mécanique (DLM) or lightly mechanized division--a unit composed of light tanks and armored cars and designed essentially for reconnaissance.

In a letter of April 24, 1936 to Reynaud,²⁹ Flavigny concurred that the armored corps was "absolutely indispensable." De Gaulle was elated with Flavigny's reaction and wrote to Reynaud that the General's objection to using only professionals could be skirted by putting the latter in the fighting ranks and the draftees in the maintenance crews. To de Gaulle, the fact that nearly 50 per cent of Flavigny's DLM troops were already professionals indicated a future trend in that direction.³⁰

More support for the armored corps came from General Pierre Hering who like Colson was a member of CSG. De Gaulle on May 20, 1937, praised Hering for his "independence of spirit," but stated that "We must be near victory in order to make the Council (CSG) confess its faith."³¹

De Gaulle used the correspondence to give Reynaud detailed information on proposed military expenditures: how

²⁹ Reynaud Papers, "Dossier Militaire 1936-38," AN, de Gaulle to Reynaud, April 24, 1936.

³⁰ "Lettres de Gaulle," de Gaulle to Reynaud, July 1, 1936.

³¹ De Gaulle to Reynaud, May 20, 1937.

they were planned to improve the defense network and how the armored corps would or would not fit into the budget. The September 23, 1936 note³² informed Reynaud of the fourteen billions to be spent between 1936 and 1940. This accelerated rearmament effort called for the construction of tanks, mechanization of units, and increase in the number of recruited soldiers. Yet according to de Gaulle, the program, because of its mode and manner of execution, was powerless to build something great.

It called for the creation of three DLMS and two tank divisions. The former while able to explore were not strong enough to produce rupture and exploitation. The tank divisions on the other hand lacked the basic infantry, artillery, and specialized crew which could permit them to act independently. De Gaulle's sad conclusion was that the poorly devised plan was unintentional "homage to our conceptions," but lacked the breadth to bring the armored corps into existence.³³

Other letters of de Gaulle fluctuated between pessimism and optimism. On August 26, 1936, faced with the knowledge of German armaments escalation, de Gaulle noted that:

It is very easy to foresee what will be the reaction of the humorous sexagenarians who comprise

³² De Gaulle to Reynaud, September 23, 1936.

³³ Ibid.

the CSG. They are going to ask you for a compulsory three year tour of duty. When they have it, they will notice that we are still short of the mark.³⁴

De Gaulle showed renewed hope on October 15, 1937. Excited about his recent appointment as commander of the 507th tank regiment at Metz, he assured Reynaud that the idea of an armored corps had made immense progress in the ranks of the army officers.³⁵ This hope, however, faded on February 14, 1938 when the newly promoted de Gaulle lamented the "stubborn conformism that bars all roads to reform."³⁶ Riding the seesaw of military opinion, de Gaulle was up with it one minute and down with it the next.

De Gaulle repeatedly informed Reynaud of important press articles. On April 2, 1936, he recommended that Reynaud read General X's article on the professional army as written in Mercure de France. De Gaulle labeled its negative attitude toward the new concept as typical of the official doctrine of the moment, "bereft of thought and will."³⁷

³⁴ De Gaulle to Reynaud, August 26, 1936.

³⁵ De Gaulle to Reynaud, October 15, 1937.

³⁶ De Gaulle to Reynaud, February 14, 1938.

³⁷ "Dossier Militaire 1936-38," de Gaulle to Reynaud, April 2, 1936. On General X, see his article in "L'Armée de métier," Mercure de France, April 1, 1936, pp. 9, 14-17. Also, see references to him in Chapter Four.

On January 12, 1938,³⁸ he sent Reynaud a recent article written by Commander Tony Albord in Revue de l'armée de l'air. Albord, General Héring's assistant, envisaged a vast modernization of the military machine by a concentration of the different instruments of war. De Gaulle was so impressed by these ideas that he suggested Reynaud contact Albord.

De Gaulle also discussed an important article from the German military press. In early 1938, he sent Reynaud a translation of a 1936 study in Militar Wochenblatt. The essay, written by General Heinz Guderian, discussed the development of the panzer divisions. Bluntly, de Gaulle noted that the Germans had pursued its development and the French had not.³⁹

Reynaud received comments from his military advisor on relevant articles in the political press. These included two 1936 editorials in the moderate Le Temps (Paris) which were favorable to the armored corps as well as a series authored by Raymond Patenotre in the leftist Le Petit Journal (Paris) entitled: "Are we defended?" Once again, de Gaulle raised a glimmer of hope. The articles in Le Temps suggested that their ideas were taking hold while

³⁸ "Lettres de Gaulle," de Gaulle to Reynaud, January 12, 1938.

³⁹ De Gaulle to Reynaud, February 14, 1938.

patenotre of Le Petit Journal could prove a powerful ally. Would Reynaud go and see him?⁴⁰

In the realm of foreign affairs, de Gaulle called attention to the German reoccupation of the Rhineland on March 7, 1936. In his letter of July 22, 1936,⁴¹ the officer weighed the damage this did to their ally, Belgium, who had had a magnificent occasion to watch the total paralysis of France. Giving Reynaud classified information, de Gaulle stated that in case of war with the Germans, the joint Belgian defense commission was "resolutely opposed" to fighting at Liège while waiting for the French. Thus in opposition to Defense Minister Devèze, the Franco-Belgian Accord of 1931, and the Locarno Treaty, the majority of the commission preferred to fall back to Anvers rather than defend the eastern frontier from which they could stall the Germans while the French moved up into Belgium.

Later, de Gaulle wrote that "One can no longer clearly tie the idea of Belgian resistance to the immediate and powerful cooperation of France."⁴² The reason for this was the lack of a French armored corps to counter the

⁴⁰Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:132. De Gaulle was on good terms with Edouard Delage, editorialist for Le Temps and favorably disposed toward the armored corps. In 1937, de Gaulle advised Reynaud to address a copy of the latter's newly published Le Problème militaire française to Delage. See de Gaulle to Reynaud May 21, 1937.

⁴¹Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:80-81.

⁴²De Gaulle to Reynaud, October 9, 1936.

lightning warfare tactics of German panzer divisions. De Gaulle concluded that France had vis à vis Germany two geographic areas over which she must "eternally" exercise control: the left bank of the Rhine and the Low Countries. Hitler now had the first and would soon have the second if France did not come out of its military policy of passivity.⁴³ Five days after de Gaulle wrote this second letter, the Belgians declared themselves neutral on October 14, 1936.

To stem this growing loss of allies and subsequent isolation, de Gaulle advised Reynaud that France's remaining friends should create solidarity by means of military interdependence. This should extend not just from chief of staff to chief of staff but from government to government. It would ultimately evolve into an "entente of democracies" based on armaments.⁴⁴

In assessing de Gaulle's impact on Reynaud in foreign affairs, it is evident that he was of less help here than in other areas. For one thing, a considerable amount of time was spent bemoaning past errors as in the case of Belgium. More important, precious little time was spent detailing how the armored corps would come to the assistance of allies especially in the case of Belgium. Generalizations about collective security were insufficient support for

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ De Gaulle to Reynaud, January 12, 1938.

convincing the French about the need for an armored corps capable of taking the offensive beyond the frontier. Later, this weakness would serve to hamper Reynaud whose own vague references to the specialized corps traveling to the aid of allies both near and distant raised numerous objections and adverse reaction.

In other respects, de Gaulle served Reynaud as a ghostwriter. In the fall of 1937, he sent his parliamentary friend a speech intended to represent Reynaud's participation in the November congress of the Democratic Alliance, an electoral organization to which deputies from the center adhered. The discourse centered around: 1) the contradiction between the nation's military and foreign policy; 2) the inadequacy of the "nation in arms" principle, a theory that at the moment of danger, the people would rise up to protect the motherland; 3) the need for a central control over the branches of the armed forces or la direction militaire unique; and 4) a plan for the organization of the nation in time of war.⁴⁵

Loaded with information and supported by the historical past, de Gaulle's speech stressed the importance of the motor, the tank, and the enormous burden of armament expenditures. These last three made for an enormous

⁴⁵De Gaulle to Reynaud, n.d. [November 1937]. The principle of the "nation in arms" went back to the levée en masse of 1793. In spite of this elaborately prepared speech, Reynaud was not given the opportunity to speak on defense matters at the Congress.

difference between the nature of the First World War and that of the anticipated conflict. De Gaulle also emphasized that while Russia, Italy, and Germany had almost achieved unified command, France decentralized its own defense among war, navy, air, and colonies. Would the only way that France would unite be, de Gaulle asked, "under the bombs?"

A short time later, the French officer wrote another discourse that underwent extensive corrections by Reynaud. This time the perilous international situation of 1937 was cited. Hitler demanded colonies on November 20; Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda minister, threatened war on December 10. The Japanese occupied Shanghai and Peiking on December 11; Mussolini left the League of Nations on December 12. Faced with these facts, France had to insure safety by her own means. To de Gaulle, the avenue to this security lay in military reform and, as he had written before, the impetus for this had to come from the politicians not from the military technicians.⁴⁶

Aside from having cited specific aspects of defense problems, the letters yielded valuable insight into de Gaulle's motivations. In this respect, the correspondence struck a delicate balance between love for France and personal ambition--Reynaud figuring prominently in both areas. This love for France reached on occasion the

⁴⁶De Gaulle to Reynaud, n.d. [?December 1937].

deification level. De Gaulle talked of France's "eternal national instinct." He stressed the need to restore France to her "rightful place in the sun." France was for de Gaulle someone alive and vital, a being with a soul. Such was the theme of his 1938 book, La France et son armée, which de Gaulle described as "a thousand years of history of our militant, suffering, and triumphant nation."⁴⁷

Within this loyalty, this passionate love for the homeland, there resided a sense of de Gaulle's personal mission, a sense of his own destiny, a search for a role to play in the nation's history. In this regard, de Gaulle was quick to inform Reynaud of events that might hold back this destiny. On May 10, 1935,⁴⁸ he wrote that his forthcoming book, La France et son armée, was about to be published without the collaboration of Marshal Philippe Pétain. The Marshal, hero of World War I and an important military personality in the interwar period, was infuriated that the project, originally begun in the 1920s under his auspices, was now being independently authored by one of his former staff officers.

⁴⁷ Reynaud Papers, "La France Démission 1938," AN, de Gaulle to Reynaud, September 24, 1938 and "Lettres de Gaulle," de Gaulle to Reynaud, November 24, 1938 and September 24, 1938. La France et son armée (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1938).

⁴⁸ "Lettres de Gaulle," de Gaulle to Reynaud, May 10, 1935 and "The Pétain Letters," Newsweek, February 7, 1972, p. 35.



A more serious incident occurred in December 1936. De Gaulle informed Reynaud that his career had been ruined because he had been removed from the promotion list. Reynaud immediately contacted Minister of War Daladier who in turn explained that de Gaulle had spent too much time in prison during World War I and, therefore, had not been sufficiently decorated. When Reynaud faced de Gaulle with this, the latter submitted a list of his numerous citations. De Gaulle further hinted that perhaps Daladier was not well acquainted with his dossier and might have been wrongly informed by those who "listened to their theological passions rather than to strict equity."⁴⁹

De Gaulle pointed out that since 1933, the moment of his promotion to the grade of lieutenant-colonel, neither his fellow officers nor he had had to wage war. In light of this, he could not understand how others were being preferred to him. De Gaulle, alluding to the conformism and rigidity of the high command since 1933, noted that "Some people would find it very suitable to stifle ideas by strangling the protagonist." He concluded that the whole affair was of small import; it was only significant to the extent it constituted "an episode in the great battle for military renovation."⁵⁰ Reynaud, confronted with this,

⁴⁹ Reynaud, *Mémoires*, 1:439-40 and de Gaulle to Reynaud, December 12, 1936.

⁵⁰ De Gaulle to Reynaud, December 12, 1936.

again sought Daladier who upon reexamination of de Gaulle's dossier had the lieutenant-colonel reinstated on the promotion list. "My devotion to you," responded de Gaulle, "finds new justification."⁵¹

Thus surfaced another weakness in the foundation: Reynaud had hitched his cart to a man with a grudge, a man who wished to pursue his own success on a course separate from that of the rest of the army. Inevitably de Gaulle's prejudice toward and dislike for the high command were communicated to Reynaud whose later references to its inadequacies served only to raise the enmity of several key members of the general staff. Aware that Reynaud was the front for a renegade officer bent on personal advancement through the political arena, these officers were predisposed to frown on the de Gaulle-Reynaud plan, a predisposition that made it easier to concentrate on negative and weak points rather than on the fact that the armored corps represented an important change in military strategy since the days of World War I.

Other letters of de Gaulle reiterated the devotion to Reynaud that followed the former's reinstatement on the promotion list, a devotion that showed itself as a desire to serve. ". . . [I am] at your complete service up to the last minute before the debate," wrote de Gaulle on March 14,

⁵¹De Gaulle to Reynaud, December 18, 1936.

1935. "From the 17th to the 30th of November [1936]," penned the officer, "I will have some free time that I beg you to use as you please." During October of 1937, he wrote to Reynaud that "I stay resolved to serve you on any occasion that you give me."⁵²

Hand in hand with this fealty went the automatic assumption that Reynaud would use de Gaulle in his future war ministry. In that event, de Gaulle was Reynaud's man. "My regiment," he wrote during the Munich crisis, "is ready. Let me tell you that in any case I will be--barring my death --resolved to serve you." The army officer came to believe, in fact, that their mutual destinies were interwoven by fate. "All the signs show," wrote de Gaulle, "that our hour is approaching."⁵³

Opposite ambition on the coin was the officer's vision of Reynaud's future, and in this respect, the genius of de Gaulle lay in intermingling the deputy's destiny with the future glory of France. Nowhere in fact is the sense of grandeur and destiny more present than in de Gaulle's prediction of Reynaud's future role. In a series of letters from March 1935 to November 1938, de Gaulle foresaw the realization of military reform in a government led by Paul Reynaud.

⁵²De Gaulle to Reynaud, March 14, 1935 and October 15, 1937. Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:132.

⁵³De Gaulle to Reynaud, May 31, 1935, September 23, 1936, and September 24, 1938.

Reynaud was the "great force of the future." His name was to be attached to the great national task of reform. It was Reynaud who, tomorrow, would regroup national forces to bring change. The country would turn to him and beg him to direct it. Reynaud would win the battle for military renovation. "France, in fact," wrote de Gaulle, "will not call Paul Reynaud to hold a function, make a transition, [or] to wait and see but indeed for some great and momentous actions." De Gaulle reinforced this idea in one of his last prewar letters. "I am convinced," he wrote, "of your success. Your destiny as a statesman is to put France back in its place in every respect."⁵⁴

To do so, however, Reynaud needed more than just high sounding words. One essential for such an undertaking was support which in itself begged the question as to why Reynaud and de Gaulle were not aided by a group, by a militant organization sincerely interested in the armored corps?

Several accounts of de Gaulle's struggle to promote his project mentioned a group of advisors who worked with him.⁵⁵ These helpers included Lieutenant-Colonel Emile

⁵⁴ De Gaulle to Reynaud, March 29, 1935, May 31, 1935, December 14, 1936, and November 24, 1938. Reynaud, *Mémoires*, 2:84 and Reynaud Papers, "La France Démission 1938," AN, de Gaulle to Reynaud, December 14, 1936.

⁵⁵ Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, trans. Francis K. Price (New York: The New American Library, 1965), pp. 47-52; Stanley Clark, *The Man who is France* (New York: Dodd, Mead

Mayer, a retired officer in his eighties who knew many people in military-political circles and who met occasionally with de Gaulle at the Brasserie Dumesnil where the two discussed military history and strategy among mutual friends. In this coterie were Colonel Lucien Nachin, a talented author and intimate of de Gaulle's, Jean Auburtin, a lawyer and an admirer of the lieutenant-colonel, Berger-Levrault, the editor, and Rémy Roure, writer for Le Temps. Also favorably disposed toward de Gaulle was General André Doumenc who in 1928 had submitted a plan for modernized armored divisions to the general staff.

Among the politicians who sympathized with de Gaulle were Leo Lagrange, Socialist and future minister of leisure during the Popular Front, Marcel Déat, a Socialist who defected in 1933 to form the Parti Socialiste de France, Philippe Serre, a member of a left wing Catholic group, Jeune République, Raymond Patenotre, onetime editor of Le Petit Journal as well as a member of the leftist group, Union Socialiste et Républicaine, and Jean Le Cour Grandmaison, a member of the right wing Republican Federation.

Aside from Roure and Delage of Le Temps, journalists who supported de Gaulle included André Pironneau of the center-right L'Echo de Paris (later L'Epoque), Emile Buré

& Company, 1963), pp. 76-82; and Brian Crozier, De Gaulle (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), pp. 61-76.

of the rightist daily, L'Ordre (Paris) and Daniel Halévy of Revue des Deux Mondes.⁵⁶

Jean Lacouture has stated that de Gaulle mobilized these men into a "politico-military guerilla war."⁵⁷ This was something of an exaggeration. The truth was that the armored corps was a "conception of the mind,"⁵⁸ the men interested in it being too looseknit and too poorly organized to further its advancement effectively.⁵⁹ Moreover, none of these men were from the commanding circles of the general staff or of the government. They lacked influence.⁶⁰ Le Cour Grandmaison and Serre, for example,

⁵⁶ John Marcus in his French Socialism in the Crisis Years 1933-36 (New York: Praeger, 1958), pp. 111-12 mentioned Marcel Bedouz and Pierre Hexa as two Socialists who as writers on military topics in Le Populaire (Paris) were favorably disposed toward de Gaulle's ideas. Their names, however, appeared neither in his correspondence nor in Reynaud's Mémoires.

⁵⁷ Lacouture, De Gaulle, p. 70.

⁵⁸ As described by Jean Auburtin in a personal interview with the author at Paris, April 18, 1973.

⁵⁹ Clark called the armored corps project a "time to time" affair in which these men gave de Gaulle their interest and support. See his The Man who is France, pp. 81-82. In this group, Clark included General Baratier and General Maurice Duval, Pierre Bourget and Charles Giron. Little is known of any of these men. Baratier and Duval wrote occasional articles on military subjects.

In addition to these men, Auburtin claims to have arranged interviews between de Gaulle and Joseph Paul-Concour as well as Alexandre Millerand, both independent socialists. See Auburtin's Le Colonel de Gaulle (Paris: Plon, 1965), p. 15.

⁶⁰ Personal interview with Joseph Laniel, Paris, France, May 11, 1973.

who were later to speak on behalf on de Gaulle's ideas were nonentities when it came to wielding political power.

Another weak spot in the foundation was de Gaulle's emphasis on reform coming from the civilian government. To some extent, this attitude must have been developed from the army officer's personal failures to get on in the military world. It was in fact the end result of de Gaulle's error to underestimate the still very influential role the military played in matters of defense. To attempt an usurpation of this role by collaboration with a politician was to invite a resistance; but on this point of civilian control, Reynaud acquiesced with de Gaulle.

Reynaud, in various Chamber of Deputy speeches, pointed out that the two basic military reforms in recent French history were conducted by civilians: Michel le Tellier Marquis de Louvois who by gradually introducing officers and soldiers directly responsible to royal authority, created for Louis XIV the first true standing army, and Lazare Carnot who in 1793 unified the revolutionary army by drawing together the officers of the old regime and the conscripts of the new Republic (known as the amalgame).⁶¹

⁶¹JOC, March 15, 1935, p. 1041 and January 26, 1937, p. 171. Auburtin, in an interview with this writer, also mentioned the introduction of compulsory military service in 1872 by Adolf Thiers.

A final point of note in the de Gaulle correspondence was the praise and flattery bestowed on the politician by the army officer. Reynaud was referred to as a man of authority, a man of the future, a man well qualified. His chamber speeches were magnificent, decisive, and masterly. He spoke with the "great voice of a statesman at a moment and in a way that would be noted by History." To find such another man, it was necessary to go back to Jean Jaurès, a pre-World War I Socialist possessed of great oratorical power and personal magnetism.⁶²

Was this manipulation on de Gaulle's part? Most likely not. De Gaulle was in desperate need for a hero. Disenchanted with the military chiefs, he imagined he saw in Reynaud the man who could implement his armored corps. One letter produced in its entirety tends to affirm the idea that Reynaud for de Gaulle was a saviour of sorts:

Not having been able to listen to you, I had to content myself with reading and rereading in the Officiel [Journal Officiel] your magnificent speech.

To the extent that: national defense is able to excite a French Parliament, when the issue does not raise an electoral interest (length of military service) or a political maneuver (condemnation of a government), you have known how to leave your imprint on the minds [of the deputies]. But moreover and especially, you have,--the first one in a long time--developed the issue to its essence, and on this subject [you] have made [the people] listen

⁶²"Lettres de Gaulle," de Gaulle to Reynaud, March 14, 1935, May 31, 1935, and May 14, 1937 and Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:142.

to the great voice of a statesman at a moment
and in a manner that will be marked by History.
While waiting, everyone talks of it. . . .

As to the solutions of which you are the
representative: modernization of the army,
specialized and mechanized corps, united
command, there is not a shadow of a doubt that
they are each day making more headway than the
day before. . . .⁶³

⁶³ De Gaulle to Reynaud, January 28, 1937 in Reynaud,
Mémoires, 2:142.

CHAPTER II

REYNAUD'S POSITION

The law of Europe today is the law of force.
Paul Reynaud, Le Problème
militaire français, p. iii.

"The French problem from the military point of view," stated Reynaud in the Chamber of Deputies, "is to create a specialized corps equally fast in both attack and counter attack, because if the attacked does not have counter strokes as rapid as the assaillant's, everything is lost."¹ The solution was the armored corps as Reynaud presented it to the chamber army commission on June 5, 1935. Written up in the form of an amendment to the Two Year Law, a measure allowing the government to prolong the length of military service beyond a year, Reynaud's proposal envisaged six armored divisions (see fig. 1, p. 44) and one light division (DLM) along with general reserves and services.

Based on the premise that the national army would not be able to guarantee the integrity of French territory at the beginning of a conflict, this armored corps which was capable of maneuver and the offensive would be added to the national army's couverture and Maginot Line defenses.

¹JOC, March 15, 1935, p. 1041.

The armored corps would be implemented gradually over a period from 1935 to 1940 and the cost would be 300,000,000

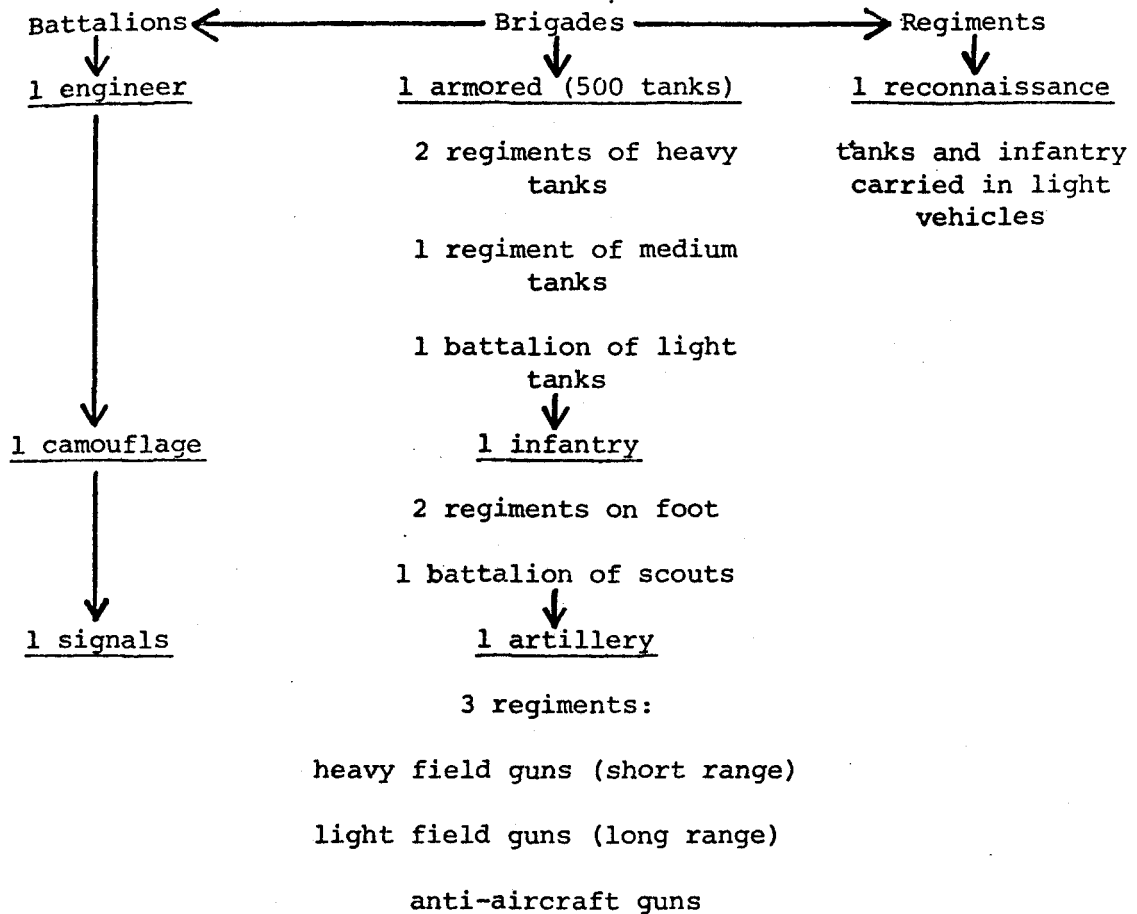


Fig. 1. Diagram of an armored corps division.

SOURCES: Paul Reynaud, Le Problème militaire français (Paris: Flammarion, 1937), p. 60; Stanley Clark, The Man Who is France (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1963), pp. 80-81; Fernand Schneider, Histoire des doctrines militaires (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1957), p. 90.

NOTE: By contrast, a lightly mechanized division or DLM was composed mostly of light tanks and armored cars and was designed essentially for reconnaissance, the role formerly taken by the horse cavalry.

francs (\$7,800,000). Finally, it would be the means of relating army strategy to foreign policy. Through its speed, mobility, and striking power, it would be the instrument to guarantee mutual assistance pacts.²

Taking into consideration that the next war would be short, that movement would be lightning quick due to the technical revolution in the art of war and that France lacked strength in numbers, the card to play was the armored corps or the card of quality.³ While Reynaud in the chamber and in his amendment did not go heavily into the details of armored corps strategy, he did so in his 1937 publication, Le Problème militaire français, a 1937 compilation of all his ideas on national defense.

The most important weapons were the tanks. By moving rapidly in dense, concentrated waves and by maneuvering under fire, they would catch the enemy off guard, break his line and disrupt his defenses. Crucial cover for these metal monsters would be supplied by the artillery. The infantry, carried in fast moving vehicles capable of

²JOC, Amendement au projet de loi portant modification à la loi du 31 mars 1928 sur le recrutement de l'armée, contre projet de Paul Reynaud, N°9 (Paris: Imprimerie de la Chambre des députés, March 28, 1935), pp. 1-11 and JOC, 15ième législature, Commission de l'Armée, Procès-Verbaux [sur l'] Amendement [de M. Paul Reynaud] au projet de loi de recrutement, Archives de l'Assemblée Nationale (hereafter cited as AAN), June 5, 1935, p. 3.

³JOC, March 15, 1935, p. 1041 and January 26, 1937, p. 168. According to Reynaud, Germany could mobilize 800,000 men to France's 434,000.

operating in all types of terrain, would conduct mop up operations and occupation of the territory. Other support would come from engineers, camouflage, signals, and reconnaissance units. The entire division would be mechanized or enclosed in armored vehicles ready to do combat.⁴

Aviation was the weak spot. Reynaud failed to see planes as a form of artillery which could not only provide cover for the tanks but also a path for them by silencing the opposition. In his 1935 chamber speech, it was true that Reynaud noted the disharmony between French aviation with its spirit for the offensive as contrasted to the defensive nature of the French army;⁵ yet he never allowed planes to share the burden of attack. His air force was designed to inform, to fight independently, and to destroy. Planes as destroyers, however, were not tied closely to the movement of armored columns. Bombers were primarily designed to hit airports, fuel depots, ships, and communication centers.⁶

⁴Paul Reynaud, Le Problème militaire français (Paris: Flammarion, 1937), p. 47.

⁵JOC, March 15, 1935, p. 1041.

⁶JOC, January 26, 1937, p. 169. In his La France a sauvé l'Europe, 2 vols. (Paris: Flammarion, 1947), 1:445, Reynaud admits this oversight when he states: ". . . [we] did not understand that the new factor in modern war would be the coupling of armored corps and dive bombers both protected by fighters."

To develop a rationale for the existence of an armored corps of professionals, Reynaud went beyond the point of simply naming its strategic advantages. He sought to enhance it by developing effective slogans or by citing examples of where its use proved or could have proven effective. Thus the centrist deputy created with de Gaulle's approval, the expression, fer de lance or iron head of the spear.⁷ The armored corps was to be, in fact, the iron head of the national army which it would precede in the business of piercing enemy lines. It was not a separate army as some had charged but, to the contrary, an integral part. Further, it was a preventative weapon which Reynaud described in Jeunesse, quelle France veux-tu? as the best means to preserve democracy.⁸ The armored corps stood ready to protect the Republic and its interests.

Among these interests were the pacts and treaties France has signed since World War I. Thus when Hitler reoccupied the Rhineland on March 7, 1936--in violation of the Locarno Treaty--France could not respond rapidly because of its costly and dramatic mobilization process.⁹ An

⁷Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:81.

⁸Paul Reynaud, Jeunesse, quelle France veux-tu? (Paris: Gallimard, 1936), pp. 43-46. This 1936 pre-election campaign booklet concerned itself with a variety of economic, political, and military matters.

⁹JOC, January 26, 1937, p. 169.

armored corps could have moved into the Rhineland within hours of the aggression. It would have forced Hitler to withdraw as he had originally intended if France had attacked and it would have freed France from dependence on England who in the end did not support the French.

The proof of the success in using elitist troops was demonstrated in the Spanish Civil War. This conflict began in 1936 when General Francisco Franco headed a revolt of Spanish legionnaires in Morocco against the Republican government in Madrid. After transporting his troops to Spain, he developed a right-wing following called the Falange which, with the help of German-Italian troops and arms, waged war against the Republicans or Loyalists. Franco, by means of 30,000 professionals, conquered half of Spain. The only way the Republican government of Madrid survived was by using the specialized troops of their national guard.¹⁰

Where were the elitist troops for the armored corps to come from? As indicated in Table 2 on page 49, Reynaud presented a wide range of figures; but the key word was "gradual." This was the basis of his amendment to the Two Year Law. Without altering that portion of the measure dealing with the extension of the tour of duty, Reynaud recommended that there be a gradual transfer of troops from the national army to the armored corps. This was to be

¹⁰Reynaud, Le Problème militaire, pp. 72, 76-77.

TABLE 2

RECRUITMENT SOURCES FOR THE ARMORED CORPS

Sources	de Gaulle's letter of May 8, 1935	Reynaud's amendment of 1935	<u>Jeunesse, quelle France veux-tu?</u> (1936)	<u>Le Problème militaire français</u> (1937)
1) Surplus of career professionals not needed in current army budget	32,000	18,000	15,000	28,000
2) Youths who would join later but were currently serving in national army (<u>engagés</u>).	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
3) Transfers from national army of specialists in lightly mechanized divisions.	7,000	25,000	25,000	18,000
4) Specialists to be drawn from the 15,000 professionals still to be recruited	-----	7,000	-----	-----
5) Transfers from National Guard	15,000	15,000	-----	-----
6) Native Troops	18,000	-----	20,000	20,000
7) Recruited	-----	20,000	25,000	25,000
8) Unexplained	11,000	-----	-----	-----
Total	98,000	100,000	100,000	106,000

SOURCES: Reynaud Papers, Lettres de Gaulle, AN, May 8, 1935; Paul Reynaud, Jeunesse, quelle France veux-tu? (Paris: Gallimard, 1936), pp. 46-47; Paul Reynaud, Le Problème militaire français (Paris: Flammarion, 1937), pp. 51-52, 56; Commission de l'Armée, Procès-Verbaux, Amendement . . . de recrutement, AAN, June 5, 1935, p. 3.

accomplished by transferring the surplus of professional soldiers over and above the number required by the budget for a particular year. Further, by lowering the draft age from 21 to 20, more soldiers could be obtained for the national army which would allow the transfer of other categories such as specialists and members of lightly mechanized units. Native troops would be admitted but would under no circumstances constitute more than one-fifth of the 100,000 men needed.¹¹

The figures prompt questions. Who was to say that the engagés (category two) would stay on to serve the six year term required of the corps' professionals? Reynaud and de Gaulle were, in fact, gambling that the high performance of the elitist corps would attract the necessary recruits as needed in category seven. Further, between de Gaulle's letter, the amendment, and the figures arrived at in Reynaud's two books, there was a wide range in numbers as well as variation in sources that suggested uncertainty and ambiguity. Table 2, in fact, was more hypothetical than real especially since it had to draw on a population scarred by World War I and tinged with a desire to be left in peace behind the Maginot Line.

Reynaud's position on national defense went beyond the armored corps and related strategy. It demanded a

¹¹Commission de l'Armée, Procès-Verbaux, Amendement . . . de recrutement, AAN, June 5, 1935, pp. 2-3.

variety of changes on which the military, Reynaud told the chamber, could not be expected to take the initiative.¹² Not the least of these reforms was the need to establish a unified command or as Reynaud called it, a ministry of national defense. Up to this time, the three branches of defense: army, navy, and air had been loosely tied and poorly coordinated since each had its own minister and chief of staff. As an alternative, Reynaud proposed that one minister and one chief of staff be given authority over all three branches with a chief of the general staff being delegated the power of commander-in-chief in time of war.¹³

Reynaud noted that there was a superior echelon of thought and action that functioned over and above the three armies. This level of strategy and military direction involved diplomatic and economic questions such as whether to use French aviation in a foreign theater or for protection of Paris. Reynaud used as an example the feud that erupted during World War I when the French army generals resisted the transfer of men from the western front to Salonika (Greece). If a unified command had been established at the time, a decision would have resulted not an argument.¹⁴

One of the most important points was readiness. The army had not been prepared to defend French security in 1338

¹²JOC, January 26, 1937, p. 172.

¹³Ibid., p. 171.

¹⁴Paris Soir, February 15, 1937, p. 5.

(Hundred Years War), 1792, 1870, or in 1914. "In France," stated Reynaud, "it is our national tradition of never being ready . . . [and] It is a tradition that we must abolish."¹⁵ The lack of this readiness was evident in rearmament where Reynaud cited the alarming lag behind the axis powers in production and quality of arms. An example of this was the famous 1937 Istria-Damascus race in which Italian planes averaged 62.1 miles per hour better than French planes. Aside from the poor quality of the finished planes, Reynaud noted that in January of 1937, France and England possessed a combined air force of 1,300 planes to Germany and Italy's 3,900.¹⁶

Coming back from Germany in the fall of 1937, Reynaud described the German worker as toiling twenty-four hours a day on three shifts and producing an average of 300 planes a month to France's forty-five. By December of the same year, this ratio had changed from 350 to France's 35-40 giving the Germans somewhere between eight and nine times more production. As Reynaud put it to the finance commission on March 2, 1938, the country was in danger until it stepped up its manufacture of planes.¹⁷

¹⁵Paris Soir, June 3, 1937, p. 4.

¹⁶Le Journal (Paris), September 3, 1937 and JOC, January 26, 1937, pp. 169, 171. Of the 3,900 axis planes, 2,000 were German and 1,900 were Italian. No breakdown of the French-English total was given.

¹⁷Le Journal, October 21, 1937, p. 1; Le Figaro (Paris), December 23, 1937, p. 1; and JOC, Commission des

To Reynaud, the lags, inferiorities, and gaps were everywhere. In 1937, the Italians launched two 35,000 ton battleships for which the French had no equivalent. Certain French tanks did only four kilometers an hour (2.4 mph) while certain German tanks could do forty kilometers an hour (24 mph). Certain German canons had a projectile capacity of 30 per cent more than similar French artillery. It took eight months, Reynaud noted, for the Germans to build a submarine; but it took eighteen months for the French. Further, by 1937, the Germans had almost completed six armored corps divisions while the French had none. The DLM, the closest thing the French had to approximate a panzer division, had 50 per cent fewer armored engines. French engines, moreover, were less powerful and some were even outdated.¹⁸

Describing the armaments race as the "non-bloody zone of the war," Reynaud felt that the Germans were by 1937 rapidly taking possession of that zone. "It is," wrote Reynaud, "the diplomacy of the machine that commands."¹⁹

finances, Procès-Verbaux, AAN, March 2, 1938, p. 77. In these minutes, Reynaud stated that France produced 387 planes in 1937 or on a ratio of one to eight with Germany's production represented by the latter figure. See pp. 75-76.

¹⁸Le Journal, September 3, 1937, p. 1; Comoedia (Paris), June 20, 1936, p. 1; Paul Reynaud, "Ou En Sommes-Nous? Bilan Politique 1937," Conferencia, December 1937 - June 1938, p. 52; Le Journal, September 3, 1937, p. 1; JOC, January 26, 1937, pp. 169, 171.

¹⁹Paris Soir, November 1, 1937, pp. 1-2.

In this respect, it was to Germany's advantage not to talk or make immediate war with France. For each day that she put more distance between herself and France materially, Germany stood a better chance of succeeding in an all out war. Indeed, Reynaud maintained in December of 1937 that if France did not speed up her production of arms, she would be at the mercy of a potential air attack within six months by the combined forces of Italy and Germany.²⁰

With regard civil defense, Reynaud, before the finance commission on March 2, 1938, wanted to know what the government had developed as a plan for the evacuation of Paris. Having previously remarked that if Belgium air fields came under German occupation, Paris would be only 200 kilometers (125 miles) in striking distance, Reynaud wanted to know if hundreds of Parisians would die for want of gas masks. More disturbing still was the response Reynaud received from Minister of War Daladier that the delegation of control over civil defense was divided between the department of interior and the air ministry. Such a situation, Reynaud protested, could not continue if civil defense was to have any meaning in the real sense.²¹

²⁰Ibid.; Le Figaro, December 23, 1937, p. 1.

²¹JOC, Commission des finances, Procès-Verbaux, AAN, December 2, 1936, p. 112 and March 2, 1938, pp. 74-75.

To Reynaud, one of the principle problems that blocked the way to defense reform lay in the attitudes of the French people. They were, in fact, divided into narrow interest groups that barred the road to collective effort. This lack of a powerful collective ambition stemmed from the insufficient numbers of young people to lend the system dynamic thrust and also from the harmful discord that resulted from the multiple party system.²²

It was on the latter problem that the predominance of interest groups proved most deleterious. When in 1938, Leon Blum, Socialist leader of the Popular Front coalition of Communists, Socialists, and Radicals, demanded a national union government to deal with the serious financial problems, the right refused because of the presence of the Communists. This was ridiculous according to Reynaud who noted that the Communists had voted all defense credits since 1936. On the other hand, the leftist group of the Popular Front was guilty of establishing incorrect priorities by demanding social reforms before healing a sick economy and a flagging defense program.²³

To bring reform, the French needed to modify their frame of mind. They needed to recognize that a problem of

²²Paul Reynaud, "Ou va le monde? La France et la crise," Conferencia, May 1, 1937, p. 485 and Le Jour (Paris), November 20, 1936, p. 1.

²³Le Figaro, March 19, 1938, pp. 1, 4, and Paris Soir, August 22, 1936.

morale dominated their national life. The economic and political crises had paralyzed the people. Immobility, however, in the Europe of the 1930s meant death. According to Reynaud, the country had to evolve. The French had to wake up. While the Socialists and Communists of the Popular Front squabbled for the forty hour week and the paid holiday, the German armament industries were working around the clock. While the French army remained mired in an archaic defensive strategy, the Germans had put into action more than six divisions of their lightning-offensive specialized corps. The French were, in fact, fighting for the accessories while ignoring the essentials. Failure to modify their race by a different set of attitudes spelled future disaster.²⁴

In contrast to his press accounts admitting the existence of a French morale problem and in Jeunesse in which Reynaud lightly admonished his fellow countrymen for their slowness, rigidity, and routine, Le Problème, in a much stronger fashion, attacked the bad qualities of the French. One of their worst according to Reynaud was their légèreté or lightness. History proved this in exposing the poorly made preparations for the wars of 1870 and 1914. Other deplorable habits included their hesitations, timidity, and laxity; but the worst by far was their petit-bourgeois spirit. This small mindedness kept the French mesmerized by

²⁴ Le Journal, August 21, 1936, p. 1 and September 3, 1937, p. 1. Paris Soir, August 22, 1936, p. 4; September 6, 1936, p. 1; and June 3, 1937, p. 4.

their immediate needs: their shop, the bank balance, and the family. The way out for them lay in recognizing the seriousness of the German menace. Recognition, however, had to be followed by action in order to carry out the most needed military reform since 1792.²⁵

Ultimately called for was the participation of all classes and parties in a government of public safety. This government of national union, Reynaud felt, would bring a sense of cohesion, unanimity, and solidarity that would help the country get over its divisions and would recreate a common soul. This government of national union which would replace rule by splinter parties had to communicate to the workers that it depended on them whether or not France won the "non-bloody phase." So as the Germans were spurred on in their efforts by the mystique of German power, the French workers had also the need to be spurred on by the desire to save the nation. "We have to," spoke Reynaud in the chamber on March 17, 1938, "silently and passionately work, work, work! without distinguishing between day and night, between the week and Sunday."²⁶

²⁵Reynaud, Jeunesse, pp. 37, 49, and Le Problème, pp. 16-17, 23.

²⁶Le Figaro, March 15, 1938, p. 5; and March 19, 1938, pp. 1, 4; L'Alliance Démocratique (Paris), February 7, 1934, p. 2; Le Journal, October 10, 1936, p. 3; October 31, 1937, p. 1; January 13, 1938; and January 29, 1938, p. 2; Journal de Rouen, July 26, 1936, p. 3; Le Jour, November 20, 1936, p. 1; Paris Soir, November 1, 1937, pp. 1-2; and JOC, March 17, 1938, p. 842.

To channel this effort, it was the duty of the elite to direct the people. Included among them were the writers, academics, civil servants, bankers, businessmen, engineers, farmers, lawyers, notary publics and doctors.²⁷ It was their responsibility to bring national union and to reform the system in order to make France strong. It was this elite who had to replace the current public attitude of inertia with intellectual hardiness and moral courage. They had to find new solutions to old problems. They had to reconstruct France by creating a climate where hate would have no place. The French, themselves, along with the elite had to feel the pride of being French. They had to understand that they were the forgers of their own destiny.²⁸

As if to pave the way by example, Reynaud offered brave words of encouragement and advice. Such was the case in February of 1938 when with patriotic fervor he declared that ". . . the world will be surprised once again when it will soon see that both at home and abroad, France's surrender has never been further away;"²⁹ or at the moment

²⁷ Reynaud, La France a sauvé l'Europe, 2:529. This postwar work (1947) is perhaps the first reference by Reynaud to exactly who constituted the elite.

²⁸ Marianne (Paris), July 14, 1936, p. 1; Le Petit Marseillais (Marseilles), November 11, 1936, p. 3; L'Echo de Paris, November 11, 1936; Conferencia, May 1, 1937, p. 500; and December 1937-June 1938, p. 52; Le Moniteur (Clermont-Ferrand), June 14, 1937, p. 3; Le Journal, November 11, 1937, p. 4; Le Figaro, November 11, 1937, p. 4.

²⁹ JOC, February 26, 1938, p. 649.

of the Anschluss when in a spectacular address to the entire chamber, he pleaded that ". . . at the present moment when war and peace hang in the balance, it is a mistake to reject the offer made to you [by Léon Blum for a government of national union]. . . ." ³⁰

Finally, the French had to work not only for unanimity in their own country but also for that among the democracies. It was through this concord that the various peoples could reach agreement on questions that the dictators resolved by force. ". . . the will of the democracy," Reynaud observed in 1935, "is more stable than the man who passes." ³¹

In the realm of foreign affairs, the armored corps was suppose to play just as critical a role as it did in internal defense. This was aptly expressed by Reynaud in the debate of March 15, 1935 when he stated:

This corps of maneuver is for us, moreover, imposed by our foreign policy. It was stated this afternoon and notably by M. Léon Blum that the role of our army is like before, that of being uniquely defensive inside of our country.

But this is not our [foreign] policy. And it is necessary to have the army of its [our] policy. By chance, would we have abandoned the policy of assistance and pacts? Do we interpret

³⁰ JOC, March 17, 1938, p. 843.

³¹ JOC, December 27, 1935, p. 2813; L'Eclaireur de Nice et du Sud-Est (Nice), November 6, 1937, p. 2. The newspaper recorded a speech given by Reynaud at the Congress of the Democratic Alliance held in Nice.

assistance as a one way current that one can demand from London but that one would not give to Vienna, Prague, or Brussels?³²

The brunt of Reynaud's ideas on foreign policy, however, did not concern how the armored corps would strategically assist such allies as Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Rumania. Other than passing references to the importance of tightening ties with these nations, Reynaud spent considerably less time with them than with the super powers: England, Germany, Russia, and Italy. This was not to say that he ignored the importance of the former. As early as 1933, Reynaud in a series of articles for the moderate La Liberté (Paris),³³ stressed the need for reliance on the constellation of alliances with the smaller, less powerful nations of central and eastern Europe.

While occasional reference was made to their value later on in chamber speeches and in press articles, Reynaud was aware that several of these states were not in step one with the other nor for that matter with France. Poland got on badly with Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia became increasingly friendly with Italy, and what was more serious, both Poland and Rumania were hostile to the passage of Russian troops through their territories (in case the Soviets had to come to the aid of France). This was especially true for Poland where Foreign Minister Colonel Josef Beck, whom Reynaud

³²JOC, March 15, 1935, p. 1042.

³³La Liberté, May 8, August 24, and September 5, 1933.

described as a "bad shepherd" to the Poles, impeded French efforts at collective security by appeasing Hitler and by giving a cold shoulder to the Soviets.³⁴

Because of this, Reynaud did not trust the Polish government. When Yvons Delbos, Radical foreign minister to the Blum ministry, appeared before the finance commission on December 23, 1936 to request approval of a 2.6 billion franc loan for Warsaw (Rambouillet Accords), Reynaud raised questions.³⁵ This loan which consisted of credits, arms, and cash as well as French military and technical advice, appeared to the centrist deputy to have been drawn up under duress in a situation where if France did not grant the loan, Poland would join with Germany against Czechoslovakia. Such a diplomatic move was bad example to other European allies who would then conclude that it was necessary to threaten to become a traitor in order to get help from France. Reynaud observed further that such a loan had been granted to Turkey before World War I but during the conflict, that country had used the funds against France.

In this unfortunate atmosphere of distrust, the main thrust of Reynaud's foreign policy concerned France's chief

³⁴Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:154. Reynaud described Beck's foreign policy as incoherent and "hostile to all its neighbors except Germany." On January 26, 1934, Beck signed a ten year nonaggression pact with the Nazis.

³⁵JOC, Commission des finances, Procès-Verbaux [sur le] Projet de loi N°1525 autorisant le Ministre des Finances à accorder la garantie de l'Etat français à des emprunts du

friend, England; her potential friend, Russia; her chief enemy, Germany; and her potential enemy, Italy. Germany was, by far, the greatest, most powerful, and most immediate threat. The German need for lebensraum or living space south and eastward into the slavic nations as well as the German hatred for France and the diktat of Versailles were well documented in Mein Kampf.

A country in the process of deifying its race according to Reynaud, Germany would only achieve this deification and expansion by combat which explained the need to mobilize on a war footing, German industry, technology, and manpower.³⁶ Attempts by Hitler to emphasize the Bolshevik threat from Russia were a clever campaign of diversionary propaganda since three-quarters of Germany's troops were stationed on the Dutch-Belgian-French frontier.³⁷

There was no disguising it. Germany was the wolf of Europe and those who believed in the nonsense that Hitler was its defender against communism were the "Little Red Riding Hoods."³⁸ This menace was further compounded by Germany's liaison with the man of prey, Mussolini. The

Gouvernement polonais et de la Compagnie franco-polonaise de chemins de fer, AAN, December 23, 1936, p. 5.

³⁶Confereencia, May 1, 1937, p. 485 and December 1937 - June 1938, pp. 40-41.

³⁷Paris Soir, February 2, 1937, p. 4.

³⁸L'Epoque (Paris), October 6, 1937, p. 5.

danger from these two was most immediate in the Mediterranean where axis involvement in Tripoli (Libya) and Spanish Morocco could catch the French colonies of Algeria and Tunisia in a pincer movement thus cutting them off from France who would have to depend on them in case of a major European conflict.³⁹

The reoccupation of the Rhineland and Italian invasion of Ethiopia were for Reynaud the prelude to a major European conflict that could only be avoided if France were militarily strong and if France maintained her allies as well as that "card of quality," the armored corps.⁴⁰ Although Reynaud conceded that discussions with the Reich over territorial demands might yield some fruit and although not opposed to a settlement with Germany on the arms race and on other disputes, the means of reconciliation still remained France's military strength since the Germans under Nazism lived by the cult of force.⁴¹

³⁹Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:120, and Jean Mistler et al., Problèmes de politique extérieure (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1937), pp. 173-79. This book contains a speech given by Reynaud on April 15, 1937 before the Society of the former and present students of the Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques. According to Reynaud, the Italians had an interest in Tripoli while the Germans catered to the Moslems in Spanish Morocco by providing them with a boat to Mecca so they could fulfill their holy pilgrimage. It was, in fact, from Spanish Morocco that General Francisco Franco carried his military coup to Spain with the help of the German air force.

⁴⁰Paris Soir, September 6, 1936, p. 1.

⁴¹L'Echo de Paris, January 8, 1937, p. 1.

The situation with Italy was more complicated. Reynaud acknowledged the French love for this latin sister in terms of the peninsular's art, language, people, and countryside; and actually, the problem lay not so much with the people who were essentially nonwarlike as with the tiny but successful Fascist party headed by Benito Mussolini. The Duce's message to his country, the starved nouveau-venu of Europe, was a promise of fulfillment through war and conquest. Ethiopia (invaded by Italy on October 10, 1935) according to Reynaud would not be enough to satisfy Mussolini especially when the League of Nations had completely failed to enforce sanctions, a factor that would encourage the Fascist leader to try his luck elsewhere.⁴²

In spite of these realities, Reynaud still worked for a rapprochement with Italy. He pointed out that with the Germans at the Brenner Pass and Mussolini's troops bogged down 2,500 miles away in Ethiopia, the Duce feared Hitler's intentions and, therefore, it was to France's advantage to drive a wedge between the two dictators by offering the olive branch to Italy.⁴³

Of Russia, Reynaud, since 1933, had commented on the potential value Soviet industrialization could have in terms

⁴²JOC, December 27, 1935, pp. 2815-16; Paris Soir, August 22, 1936, p. 4; and Reynaud Papers, "Dossier Portalet N° XIV," AN, Reynaud to Henri de Kerillis, August 25, 1935.

⁴³Le Journal, November 16, 1937 and Paris Soir, August 22, 1936, p. 4. Reynaud refers to Austrians as Germans.

of supplying France's smaller allies of Central and Eastern Europe. Indeed, if France and Russia could come to an understanding, the Russians could serve as the eastern buttress of the Petite Entente, a coalition which by itself had little support to offer France. Further, Franco-Russian entente would give equilibrium to the European balance of power by containing Hitler who lived in fear of a two front war. This was not an imaginary fear for as Reynaud pointed out, it was tsarist Russia of 1914 who by the attack on German forces in the east had allowed the French to win the battle of the Marne.⁴⁴

The road to entente was complicated, however, by events both within the Soviet Union and France. Joseph Stalin's purges had weakened both the army and the political structure of the nation. Further, the Komintern or Third International with its goal of spreading international communism was still in operation. On the other hand, Reynaud noted that there appeared to be an evolution away from this goal and a movement back toward the imperialism and nationalism of the czars. This was reflected in Stalin's emphasis on implementing socialism first and foremost within Russia.⁴⁵

⁴⁴La Liberté, May 8, August 24, and September 5, 1933; JOC, February 26, 1938, p. 648; Conferencia, May 1, 1937, p. 497, and December 1937 - June 1938, p. 47.

⁴⁵Conferencia, December 1937 - June 1938, pp. 46-47.

In a like fashion, Reynaud underwent an evolution in attitude toward the French Communists. In his December 4, 1936 address to the chamber, the centrist deputy stressed the clear impossibility of diplomatic entente with the Soviets while the Communist contingent remained a supporting factor in the Popular Front government. According to Reynaud, the majority of the French people still considered the Third International (to which the French Communists adhered) as based out of Moscow and very much a real threat. "I believe," stated Reynaud, "that alone, a Government independent of the Communist party would be able to carry out a policy [of detente]." ⁴⁶

In 1937, however, Reynaud, in an address to the University Club of Paris, stated that he did not believe in the development of communism in France. The reasons were the evolution of the Soviets under Stalin and the social make up of the French people which could never take on the international character of the Komintern. ⁴⁷ Further, in 1938, Reynaud noted that the Communists had voted the defense credits for the last two years and they had ceased all their antimilitarist activity. This followed, Reynaud wrote, from their realization that the interests of both Russia and France were identical: the search for a

⁴⁶ JOC, December 4, 1936, p. 3325.

⁴⁷ Le Figaro, May 2, 1937, p. 4.

European equilibrium. In this same article in Le Figaro (March 19, 1938), Reynaud asked:

How could the two democracies of the West [England and France] with their decreasing numbers of youth hope to maintain European equilibrium without the aid of this formidable reservoir of men and raw materials regardless of the internal convulsions of contemporary Russia?⁴⁸

Failure to get this aid would be disastrous.

According to Mein Kampf, which Reynaud cited to the chamber on February 26, 1938,⁴⁹ Hitler's main aim before launching into a great adventure toward the Asian steppe was the elimination of an attack from the rear and notably from France. Thus before France could be dealt with, the Franco-Russian entente had to be broken and a temporary pact with the Soviets had to be effected. Unless the French could strengthen ties with the Soviets, in Reynaud's view, there was a distinct possibility that Germany would annex the countries of the Petite Entente by a bloodless war of persuasion after which the Reich would make a momentary deal with the Russians. Then Germany could turn to France and offer her slavery or a war in which France would have no allies.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Le Figaro, March 19, 1938, p. 4.

⁴⁹ JOC, February 26, 1938, p. 648.

⁵⁰ Conferencia, December 1937 - June 1938, p. 48.

To avoid another Rapallo, a 1920 military pact between Germany and Russia, the French had to overcome their fears of communism and put the safety of France first. To construct a military pact with teeth in it, a consultation between the general staffs of France and Russia was needed. This was especially desirable between the two air forces. Russia, who had bad roads and an inferior rail network, possessed an aviation twice as strong as that of Germany's. This air force would be an excellent means of rapidly closing the distance between Russia and the point of possible conflict farther west. Lastly, if any Frenchman doubted the effectiveness of Soviet strength, let him regard the influence of Russian aid on Republican Spain where because of Soviet shipments of artillery, tanks and planes, the Loyalists were able to resist Franco for more than three years in spite of German-Italian aid to the leader of the Falange.⁵¹

The signing of the nonaggression pact between Hitler and Stalin on August 22, 1939 indicated that Reynaud was one of the few French statesmen to have adequately grasped the true design of Hitler toward Russia. The Führer, in order to avoid a two front war, maneuvered the

⁵¹L'Oeuvre (Paris), April 16, 1936, p. 2; L'Echo de Paris, November 21, 1936, p. 4; Ce Soir (Paris), March 21, 1938, p. 4; Conferencia, December 1937 - June 1938, p. 47 and May 1, 1937, p. 499; JOC, December 4, 1936, p. 3325 and February 26, 1938, p. 647.

soviets into a position of neutrality while he first took on Poland and then France. Later, with these defeated, he turned on Russia in June of 1941.

Activity of Russia after September 1939, however, indicated a weakness that Reynaud appeared not to have realized. Regard the difficulty the Soviets had in overcoming the Finns in the winter of 1939-40 and later, the terrible losses they suffered at the hands of the Germans, and still later, the enormous need the Russians had for British and American arms (in spite of what Reynaud had to say about the might of Russian industrialization and manpower). In light of this, how much weaker was Russia at the time of the Munich crisis when the Soviet Union was reeling under the effects from the mass executions of army officers, politburo leaders, and peasantry?

Moreover, the task of carrying off a pact with the Soviets was more difficult than Reynaud had made it out to be. Russia of the 1930s was not the tsarist regime of 1914 which willingly attacked from the east in order to open another front. To the contrary, the Russia of Stalin was a totalitarian system under a Machiavellian opportunist. The atmosphere of distrust and repression he created encouraged a hands off attitude among political and military leaders not only in France but elsewhere in western Europe. In the final analysis, the possible westward movement of Soviet arms and ideology was thus a qualified risk in any pact with

France; but in view of the disaster that befell la patrie in May of 1940, it might have been worth the taking.

On England, the keywords were mutual support and the maintenance of European equilibrium through the League of Nations. In his famous speech of December 27, 1935, Reynaud lamented the failure to pursue this aim following Mussolini's attack on Ethiopia (October 2, 1935).⁵² Although the League had enforced sanctions against Italy on November 8, 1935, French Premier, Pierre Laval, had in early December convinced Foreign Secretary Samuel Hoare to agree to a division of Ethiopia into spheres of influence giving two-thirds of the country to Italy. When the deal leaked to the press, the British people who for the most part supported sanctions were shocked not only at the action of the French but also at their own foreign secretary who in the course of the uproar was forced to resign and was replaced by Anthony Eden.

It was this deal primarily motivated by Laval that Reynaud denounced to the chamber as having done severe damage to Franco-British relations as well as to the effectiveness of the League Covenant. In his speech, Reynaud clearly differentiated between what served British interests and what the English people themselves really felt was correct. Surely it was true as Hoare had put it to the

⁵²JOC, December 27, 1935, pp. 2813-16.

House of Commons that the deal with Laval was prompted by the fact that not one nation offered England a ship toward policing the enforcement of oil sanctions in the Mediterranean. In light of this, a confrontation between Italy and Britain would have led to a war in which England would have been isolated; and this was something that Hoare wanted to avoid.⁵³

Reynaud noted, however, that Ethiopia had been a member nation of the League whose Covenant (including sanctions in face of an aggressor) the British people had really believed in. Reynaud then made a reference to Lord Robert Cecil's March 1934 Peace Ballot, a questionnaire put to the British on whether League sanctions should be applied in case of violation of the Covenant. "Do you believe," Reynaud asked the chamber, "that the British people were deranged when they voted on this question of peace and the League of Nations; [considering] that 9,627,000 voted they were ready to impose on their own country the sacrifice--in case a war would be unjustly declared--[of] economic sanctions and that only 670,000 voted against [?]"⁵⁴

⁵³ JOC, December 27, 1935, p. 2814.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 2813. In his Mémoires, Reynaud gives 10,027,608 for sanctions and 635,074 against. Another question on the referendum asked the British if they would support military measures if needed. Voting for were 6,784,368 and against, 2,351,981. See Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:452.

In spite of this setback, Reynaud never gave up on the need to work for closer ties between the two nations. In spite of the naval accords secretly drawn up between Britain and Germany in the spring of 1935 (to Reynaud, a measure taken by Hitler to break up the entente between France and England),⁵⁵ in spite of the Ethiopian fiasco, and later, the reoccupation of the Rhineland by Hitler in which Britain had failed to come to the aid of France, Reynaud's idea was the maintenance of mutual solidarity between the two nations through an effective and powerful League of Nations. This theme Reynaud repeated in both his chamber speeches of December 4, 1936 and February 26, 1938. In addition, commentary for press and radio argued either for closer ties or for the rapid rearmament of both countries.⁵⁶

On England, Reynaud lacked a critical perspective he had shown elsewhere. Perhaps this came from too close a belief in the antiappeasement forces in England centered around Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, and the British

⁵⁵JOC, December 27, 1935, p. 2813. This agreement which was in violation of the Versailles Treaty was signed in London on June 18, 1935. In the following ten years, it limited the German Navy to one-third the size of the British but accorded it the right to build submarines up to 60 percent of British strength and to 100 percent in case of a security threat.

⁵⁶Le Journal, June 19, 1936, p. 3 (Speech given at the Ambassadeurs); L'Echo de Paris, November 11, 1936, p. 4 and November 21, 1936; Paul Reynaud, Discours du Ministre, 2 vols. (Paris: Ministère des Finances, November 24, 1939), 2:2, 4.

people of Lord Cecil's Peace Ballot. Thus in the pages of Ce Soir (Paris) on March 31, 1938, Reynaud mistakenly predicted that England would not stand by and let Germany repeat in Czechoslovakia what she had done in Austria.⁵⁷ The truth was that the England of the thirties, a decade dominated by Prime Ministers Ramsay MacDonald, Stanley Baldwin, and Neville Chamberlain, was isolationist and appeasement orientated. These leaders were unwilling to become involved in continental affairs unless England's survival depended on it. A case in point was Britain's attitude toward the Spanish Civil War.

This imbroglio which broke out in 1936 was several years in the making. After the expulsion of King Alfonso XIII in 1931, a republic was established which undertook a program of social and economic reform. Its basic tone was anticlerical and antiwealthy since the government dissolved the Jesuit order and confiscated its property while at the same time, it broke up some of the large landed estates and redistributed their lands. When the 1936 elections were held, all the elements of the left--Republicans, Socialists, Syndicalists, Anarchists, and Communists--joined in a Popular Front platform against the elements of the conservative old regime--the monarchists, clerics, and army

⁵⁷Ce Soir (Paris), March 21, 1939, p. 4. This article also appeared on the same day in the Sunday Times (London). While most of Reynaud's newspaper articles are mentioned in his Mémoires, this one is conspicuously absent.

officers. The left won a victory and in July of 1936, General Francisco Franco then stationed in Spanish Morocco staged his famous coup. With the help of the German air force, he transported his followers known as Falangists to continental Spain where three years of bloody civil war ensued which ended in Franco's victory.

In actuality, the Spanish Civil War was a contest between rival European ideologies since Fascist Franco was supported by German and Italian arms and men while the Loyalists or Republicans received Soviet aid. This localized European war saw the almost complete absence of England and France, the latter under the influence of the former developed a position of nonintervention even when it later became clear that Germany, Italy and Russia were all in violation of the nonintervention agreement. Thus while Britain advised France to stay neutral so as to avoid a general European conflagration, Germany and Italy used Spain to test their new strategies based on a hardware of tanks and planes.

All of Reynaud's references to the Spanish Civil War followed this position of nonintervention. His first mention of the war came on July 26, 1936 when in a speech at Rouen, the deputy noted that a similar civil war in France could easily lead to an invasion by Hitler on the excuse that the Führer was reestablishing order.⁵⁸ While Reynaud

⁵⁸ Journal de Rouen, July 26, 1936, p. 3.

did not say that this was adequate grounds for nonintervention, he argued for neutrality five days later in the Chamber of Deputies. The issue at stake was the same, French security. If France became involved, the vital pathways to her colonies in North Africa would be endangered since Spain was the bridge across the western Mediterranean, a position which allowed her to choke off French traffic to the dark continent.⁵⁹

While a later position stated in Le Figaro on November 21, 1936 voiced frustration at the free for all the Fascists were having in Spain (in violation of nonintervention),⁶⁰ a second chamber reference of Reynaud to the civil war stuck to the line of neutrality. In this speech of December 4, 1936, Reynaud advised that if the fronts were to stabilize during the winter, France should attempt a mediation between the two antagonists "because we are unable to do anything else."⁶¹

Without mentioning why France could do nothing else, Reynaud made no further reference to the civil war until October 12, 1937 when he again voiced dismay at the "unfortunate Spanish affair" in which the French because they had cast their die with neither contestant had lost all

⁵⁹JOC, July 31, 1936, p. 2307.

⁶⁰Le Figaro, November 21, 1936, p. 2.

⁶¹JOC, December 4, 1936, p. 3323.

influence with both factions.⁶² This short reference in Le Journal thus hinted for the first time that Reynaud himself had made an error in choosing neutrality. The error was magnified because the war took place very close to French North Africa. Thus the French were reduced to the role of spectator: watching with uncertainty and apprehension, powerless to assure their best interests at the outcome of the war. A later commentary on Spain in 1939 reflected this position of weakness while at the same time attempting to assure France's best interests at the eleventh hour. France in cooperation with England, stated Reynaud in a radio broadcast, had to help the triumphant faction establish order which meant in turn ridding Spain of German and Italian troops who Reynaud made a veiled reference to as "people who have come to its [Spain's] aid."⁶³

Hugh Thomas in his lengthy book, The Spanish Civil War, has described Reynaud as "one of the strongest supporters of the Republic."⁶⁴ The evidence presented here does not agree with that statement. Reynaud never mentioned support for the Spanish Republic either in his Mémoires or in the accounts considered in this study. This in itself is

⁶²Le Journal, October 12, 1936, p. 1. On September 3, 1937, Reynaud in Le Journal made a passing reference to the continuing presence of German specialists in Spain.

⁶³L'Oeuvre, March 29, 1938, p. 4.

⁶⁴Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 537. Thomas does not present evidence to prove his statement.

puzzling because Reynaud in his speeches had encouraged the principles of democracy in face of Fascist dictatorships. The Spanish Republic was the representative of democracy in Spain. It had legitimately won the 1936 election and was now being challenged by an illegal Fascist contestant.

Several possible explanations as to what motivated Reynaud to choose neutrality do not stand up well. These included: that the French Popular Front support of Republican Spain would cause a civil war in France between the forces of left and right, and that because of such support, a victory of the Spanish Popular Front would mean a Communist take over in Spain paralleled by a strengthening of the Communist movement in France (with Reynaud portrayed to his electors and the nation as a Bolshevik); that under these conditions, Hitler had a perfect opportunity to invade France; and finally, French participation in the Iberian conflict would open a possible third hostile front along the Pyrenees.

The idea of a civil war in France was encouraged by an alarmist press of the extreme right who, fearful of the Communist element in the Popular Front, refused to recognize the fact that this leftist coalition was firmly and legally installed with the Socialists and Radicals dominating the cabinet. Further, in Conferencia of May 1, 1937, Reynaud interpreted the fear of a Communist takeover in the respective countries as more German propaganda than real:

The other result is that this [Franco-Soviet] pact has allowed Germany to conduct a campaign against us in which she declares:

- "France is sovietized." [Moreover] Since the Popular front has arrived in power, Germany has been able to say:

- "In February, it is the Popular Front in Spain, in May, it is the Popular Front in France. These are the same raised fists, the same International, the same red flag. That [spirit] has been destroyed in the Civil War in Spain. France will soon follow in its footsteps."

- So much for the German propaganda.⁶⁵

Other evidence indicated that in the initial stages of the civil war, the Spanish Communists did not occupy the predominant influence that later fell to them out of forced reliance upon Soviet aid. Historian Dante Puzzo has noted that this initial stage was crucial since the failure of Franco to win a quick victory could have led to his early defeat if the Madrid government had been permitted to purchase the necessary war materials in France.⁶⁶ On the other hand, historian Gordon Wright has maintained that French intervention was exactly what Hitler wanted because it would have involved Britain and France in a dragging, spreading war which would have allowed Hitler a free hand to strike eastward.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Conferencia, May 1, 1937, p. 498.

⁶⁶ Dante Puzzo, Spain and the Great Powers 1936-41 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 241.

⁶⁷ Gordon Wright, France in Modern Times (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1966), p. 499.

The truth was, however, that Hitler was still very weak in 1936 and had given the order to retreat from the Rhineland if the French took to the offensive. Thus it seemed highly unlikely the Führer would have attempted an invasion of France or an expansion elsewhere under the circumstances. Moreover, the Loyalists were mainly looking for arms and other supplies not soldiers. This was far short of an all out war that Reynaud tended to foresee in his speeches. Indeed Puzzo, in a vein of thought different from Reynaud's, saw French aid to the legitimate leftist government as the means of insuring the tranquility of the Pyrenean frontier as well as of safeguarding the legitimate interests of France in the Mediterranean and North Africa.⁶⁸

Historian Gordon Craig has stated that the triumph of Franco weakened France's strategical position in any dispute with Germany by placing a potential enemy on her flank. According to Craig, it also deepened the tendency toward defeatism in the democracies and carried the principle of collective security closer to bankruptcy.⁶⁹ This appears to be an accurate description of the disastrous results of nonintervention in which France out of deference to her "ally" England, deserted the camp of the legitimately elected government in Spain and thus lost a potentially

⁶⁸Puzzo, Spain, p. 85.

⁶⁹Gordon A. Craig, Europe Since 1815 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 714.

important ally. Reynaud in his support of close ties with England was a part of this blunder equivalent in impact to more highly publicized capitulations such as the Italian occupation of Ethiopia and the reoccupation of the Rhineland by Hitler.

In the presentation of Reynaud's ideas on defense, one becomes aware of the modification of his views after the chamber vote of February 2, 1937. This vote, a ratification of Daladier's attitude on military strategy, was an approval of the Maginot Line and the accompanying theories of the defensive: the predominance of fire power with the limitations it set upon movement, and the theory of the continuous front to be held by couverture troops.

After this vote, Reynaud's last major campaign for the armored corps and related military strategy occurred in June with the release of Le Problème militaire français. Other than this publication, Reynaud made only three newspaper references in 1937 to his armored engines and none at all to them in 1938-39.⁷⁰ Instead, Reynaud concentrated on the strong points of the French as well as on the improvement

⁷⁰The three newspapers were Vendémiaire (Paris), February 10, 1937; Paris Soir, June 3, 1937; and Le Figaro, December 23, 1937. Reynaud made a passing reference to the failure of the chamber to act on his 1935 amendment in the debate of February 26, 1938. See JOC, February 26, 1938, p. 647. From 1937 on, the de Gaulle correspondence to Reynaud also tapered off 'til by 1939, Reynaud received only two letters from de Gaulle. Contrast this with the eighteen received in 1936.

of defense within the existing systems (armaments, unified command, and the need for French unanimity).

Thus in a speech before the Kultur Bund of Vienna on October 15, 1937, Reynaud stated that France had the best army in the world and that, indeed, this would be the assurance peace would be maintained.⁷¹ Later, in the chamber on February 26, 1938, Reynaud stated that in face of the problems of Europe in 1938, the French were never farther away from surrender.⁷² Moreover, on March 21, 1938, in an article for Ce Soir (Paris), Reynaud wrote that once the country had overcome certain shortages in armament materials, the French army would be the first in the world. Continuing in the same article, Reynaud noted that no other army had such an extensive corps of officers or instructed reserves as did the French.⁷³

After joining the Daladier cabinet as justice minister on April 11, 1938, this burst of optimism continued. At Leeds, England on May 22, 1938, Reynaud stated that Daladier's government of national defense would not fail in its duty.⁷⁴ Much the same idea was pronounced in a radio discourse a year later when as finance minister, Reynaud

⁷¹Le Journal, October 16, 1937, p. 5.

⁷²JOC, February 26, 1938, p. 649.

⁷³Ce Soir, March 21, 1938, p. 4.

⁷⁴Le Figaro, May 22, 1938, p. 3.

remarked that in spite of the German advantages of secrecy and an army capable of lightning attack, the Daladier government of national union behind which the French people stood would rise to the occasion.⁷⁵

Needless to say, this change in attitude led to a decline in Reynaud's accuracy of vision and engendered a variety of errors. Thus Reynaud's statement about the superiority of the French army was exaggerated. His speech before the chamber on February 26, 1938 was in direct contradiction to the strong current of defeatism among the French. Further, the statement in Ce Soir that the English would not stand by and allow the Germans to repeat the Anschluss in Czechoslovakia was incorrect just as were Reynaud's assertions that the Daladier administration would be strong in face of the dictators, a mistake that became evident at Munich when France along with England capitulated to Hitler on the Sudetenland question. That Reynaud would repeat his belief in the strength of the Daladier regime the following summer in his radio broadcast of June 15, 1939 can only be explained as false optimism.

General Alfred Conquet, Marshal Philippe Pétain's personal secretary during much of the thirties, has suggested that this change in attitude was a kowtow to Daladier, a premier whose defense views were diametrically opposed to those of Reynaud's. Thus in order to be promoted from the

⁷⁵Reynaud, Discours, 2:5.

justice to the finance ministry, Reynaud according to Conquet, had to muzzle his ideas on defense, an arrangement also necessary for Reynaud to stay in power.⁷⁶

Conquet's conclusions, however, do not take into consideration the attitude of optimism Reynaud has assumed before his entry into Daladier's cabinet on April 11, 1938. This went back as far as the Kultur Bund speech of 1937. Moreover, Reynaud in his Mémoires stated that since it was impossible to alter Daladier's position on national defense, he would do better to enact a program of financial recovery beginning with his acceptance of finances on November 1, 1938. To effect this redressement, an attitude of optimism was the first prerequisite.⁷⁷

In the final analysis, a much better explanation for Reynaud's change and the errors that followed lay in his recognition that the vote of February 2, 1937 was sufficient proof that the French nation was thoroughly sold on the defensive. Why bother to be negative in light of this? "Daladier developed a war doctrine," wrote Reynaud in La France a sauvé l'Europe, "that he presented as that of his party and which corresponded, it is true to the feeling of

⁷⁶ Alfred Conquet, Auprès du Maréchal Pétain (Paris: Editions France-Empire, 1970), p. 432ff. Conquet presents his case by inference: the continued presence of Reynaud in the cabinet represented the sacrifice of integrity to ambition. For the Conquet-Reynaud literary feud, see Appendix A.

⁷⁷ Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:200.

the large majority of Frenchmen: the systematic defensive."⁷⁸

The diminished relevance and foresight that characterized the later pronouncements of Reynaud on national defense must be evaluated, however, within the framework of his overall views on how best to protect France. In this respect, Reynaud must be given credit for the broad range of his ideas: armored corps, collective security, unified command, rearmament (battle of the armies in the nonbloody zone of the war), civil defense, national union, readiness as well as the state of mind, morale, and attitudes of the French people.

On the other hand, this system of national defense demonstrated important weaknesses. A case in point was the armored corps. The need to change recruitment figures four times was a bad foundation since the viability of the armored corps lay in finding the necessary men to keep it a separate branch of the armed forces. This had to be done without weakening the national army, a source which Reynaud and de Gaulle had to tap, however, in order to place their corps in operation. While Reynaud and de Gaulle tried to diminish the effect of this borrowing by explaining the armored corps as an officer's training school for the national army, the draining of talented troops from the latter was to meet with objections.

⁷⁸Reynaud, La France a sauvé l'Europe, 1:211.

The role of aviation in the armored corps was undeveloped. No plan was put forth to tie the plane closely to the movement of tanks, a mistake that became evident when the French had to witness the dive bombers covering German tanks in May-June 1940. De Gaulle became aware of this after the German blitzkrieg in Poland and subsequently did a hasty revision of Vers l'armée de métier in 1940 called The Army of the Future⁷⁹ in order to include the new role of aviation in armored tank warfare. Noticeably absent from the title of the second work were the words "professional army," the direct translation from the French of the first title, a phrase that had caused consternation among both military and politicians since it provided fuel for the charge that de Gaulle's armored corps was a totally separate army.

In the realm of strategy, Reynaud never gave the exact details on how the armored corps would cover the unfortified area from Montmédy to the sea (approximately 218 miles) or what the armored corps would do if the Germans broke through the Maginot Line and the unprotected frontier at the same time. Reynaud never mentioned where in Belgium or Luxemburg the armored corps would pass on its way to Germany in case the latter attacked Czechoslovakia. Further, he never mentioned which cities or areas of Germany the

⁷⁹ Charles de Gaulle, The Army of the Future [translator unknown] (London: Hutchinson, 1940).

armored corps should aim for. Moreover, Reynaud never seemed to consider the hundreds of miles of Germany that separated France from her ally, Czechoslovakia, or the possibility that such assistance might overextend the armored corps supply line.

Another weakness in Reynaud's defense system was the unreliability of France's "friends" to the east. In part, this was due to the badly reconstructed Europe of the Versailles Treaty, an arrangement which created an impossible situation in central and eastern areas of the continent. The exclusion of Russia from the treaty negotiations, the granting of Russian Bessarabia to Rumania, the acquisition of Russian territory by the Poles (done after the treaty with the help of the French), the creation of the miscast state of Czechoslovakia with its German minorities and its duchy of Teschen coveted by the Poles created long term enmities among these powers that made effective collaboration between them and jointly with France out of the question.

An additional weakness in Reynaud's defense views was the undue reliance upon England. As later events were to prove (the Spanish Civil War an example), the British had become profoundly isolationist and did not intend intervention on the continent unless their own safety was seriously threatened.

Still, much of Reynaud's message: rapid rearmament, readiness, unified command, and national union were geared to make France strong. If these ideas had been followed, France could have played a more influential, more independent role in Europe instead of leaning on England, retreating behind the false security of the Maginot Line, and mumbling commitments to allies that had no credibility. As for the armored corps, in spite of its hypothetical character and its technical shortcomings, its proposed strategy of mobility, surprise, and armored warfare was a step away from the defensive mentality of the past and a move toward the war tactics of the future.

CHAPTER III

REYNAUD AND THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

The Background

The French Chamber of Deputies and the Senate were the legislative branch of the Third Republic. In this capacity, they dominated the executive or premier who had to get parliamentary approval on all important bills in order to keep his cabinet and himself in office. Unlike the president of the United States, the French premier's existence depended on the legislature's sanction of the next bill perhaps a day or a few weeks away. Attempts by the premier to establish an effective system of checks and balances failed which was the case with the 1934 proposal of right wing president, Gaston Doumergue.

His plan involved the president of the Republic, a figure elected every seven years by joint session of the senate and chamber (National Assembly). It was this president who was responsible for appointing premier whichever politician believed himself capable of establishing a parliamentary majority. According to Doumergue, in case of continued impasse between executive and legislature, the president would be allowed to dismiss the chamber and to request new elections as was the procedure in Britain. The

plan resulted in Doumergue's resignation following the defection of the Radicals from his cabinet. The chronic ministerial instability (see Table 3, p. 90) that came out of this imbalance between executive and legislature forced the government to rely increasingly on decree law powers. Since these powers allowed the premier and his cabinet to pass bills without legislative approval, they were a tacit affidavit to parliamentary paralysis. This weakness was compounded during the 1930s by three important factors.

The first of these, the Great Depression, had a profound effect on France. Along with the general symptoms suffered by most western nations such as loss of trade, loss of investment, and high unemployment levels, the French economic crisis was aggravated by the failure to understand that the franc was overvalued on international money markets and thus could not compete for what little import-export trade existed. Economic mismanagement by attempting to shut out foreign competitors with high tariffs and by deflation of government expenditures in the form of budget cuts resulted in additional loss of revenue that aggravated state indebtedness and discouraged private enterprise from making new investment. Ministry after ministry came and went because of the dissatisfaction of the legislative branch with the worsening situation. If one peruses the pages of the Journal Officiel for these years, the reader can easily see the diminished importance of national defense in turning

TABLE 3

CHIEFS OF THE GENERAL STAFF, PREMIERS, MINISTERS
OF WAR AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 1933-39

Year	Chief of General Staff	Premier	War	Foreign Affairs
1933	<u>Weygand</u> 1931-1935	<u>P.-Boncour</u> 12/18/32 - 1/30/33 <u>Daladier</u> 1/31/33 - 10/25/33 <u>Sarraut</u> 10/26/33 - 11/25/33 <u>Chautemps</u> 11/26/33 - 1/28/34	<u>Daladier</u> 12/18/32 - 1/28/34	<u>P.-Boncour</u> 12/18/32 - 1/28/34
1934		<u>Daladier</u> 1/29/34 - 2/8/34 <u>Doumergue</u> 2/9/34 - 11/7/34 <u>Flandin</u> 11/8/34 - 5/31/35	<u>Fabry</u> then <u>P.-Boncour</u> 1/29/34 - 2/8/34 <u>Pétain</u> 2/9/34 - 11/7/34 <u>Maurin</u> 11/8/34 - 5/31/35	<u>Daladier</u> 1/29/34 - 2/8/34 <u>Barthou</u> 2/9/34 - 10/9/34 <u>Laval</u> 10/10/34 - 1/23/36
1935	<u>Gamelin</u> 1935- 1940	<u>Bouisson</u> 6/1/35 - 6/6/35 <u>Laval</u> 6/7/35 - 1/23/36	<u>Pétain</u> 6/1/35 - 6/6/35 <u>Fabry</u> 6/7/35 - 1/23/36	
1936		<u>Sarraut</u> 1/24/36 - 6/2/36 <u>Blum</u> 6/3/36 - 6/21/37	<u>Maurin</u> 1/24/36 - 6/2/36 <u>Daladier</u> 6/3/36 - 5/17/40	<u>Flandin</u> 1/24/36 - 6/2/36 <u>Delbos</u> 6/3/36 - 3/12/38
1937		<u>Chautemps</u> 6/22/37 - 3/12/38		
1938		<u>Blum</u> 3/13/38 - 4/9/38 <u>Daladier</u> 4/10/38 - 3/20/40		<u>P.-Boncour</u> 3/13/38 - 4/9/38 <u>G. Bonnet</u> 4/10/38 - 3/20/40
1939				

page after page devoted to tariff walls, deflationary measures, unemployment relief, monetary panic, and government subsidization of faltering industries.

A second factor was the revelation of the Stavisky scandal.¹ Throughout 1933, the French had watched in frustration as a series of cabinets failed to cope with the nation's financial predicaments. While the people were becoming poorer, the exposure of the Stavisky episode in early January 1934 showed that certain politicians and their associates in public office were becoming richer. Serge Stavisky, a Jewish financier, was the brain behind a major fraud concerning the issue of millions of dollars of francs based on the fictitious assets of a municipal pawn shop in the small town of Bayonne. Before Stavisky could be questioned, he was found in January 1934--shot to death at the ski resort of Chamonix.

The fact that the public prefect of Paris, Georges Pressard, had put off prosecuting infractions of Stavisky nineteen times was serious enough but what was worse, his

¹On the scandal, see James Joll, ed., The Decline of the Third Republic (London: St. Antony's Papers, 1959), pp. 9-35; Alexander Werth, France in Ferment (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1934); Laurent Bonneville, Les Journées sanglantes de février 1934. Pages d'histoire (Paris: Flammarion, 1935); and France, Assemblée nationale, 1871-1940, Session de 1934, Rapport général fait au nom de la commission d'enquête chargée de rechercher les causes et les origines des événements du 6 février 1934 et les jours suivants ainsi que toutes les responsabilités encourues, 2 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie de la Chambre des députés, 1934).

brother-in-law was French Premier Camille Chautemps. About the same time, it was discovered that two men in Chautemps' cabinet, Albert Dalimier, minister of colonies, and Eugène Raynaldy, minister of justice were implicated in the fraudulent bond issue and thus forced to resign. In spite of sporadic street disturbances during January against the "crooks" in the Palais-Bourbon (Chamber of Deputies), Chautemps refused to appoint an investigating committee. This only served to increase public indignation and rather than risk further hostility, Chautemps resigned on January 28, 1934 in spite of the fact he had a parliamentary majority in both houses.

Daladier's arrival did not help. Almost immediately he was forced to remove the Paris Police Chief Jean Chiappe who had failed to take an active position against Stavisky on whom he had a stacked dossier. The firing of Chiappe, well liked on the right, became another reason for the leagues to demand the resignation of the Daladier regime. On the night of February 6, 1934, rightist demonstrators estimated at close to 10,000 mobbed the Place de la Concorde and attempted to storm the Seine bridge leading to the Palais-Bourbon. Cries of "Down with the Crooks" were mingled with gun shot as the Garde Publique killed several demonstrators.

The composition of the mob, mainly rightist leagues such as the Camelots du Roi, Jeunesses Patriotes, Croix de

Feu, and Solidarité Française along with veterans organizations such as the Union National des Combattants, led leftists to believe that a fascist coup was imminent. Three days later on February 9, 1934, the Communists staged a massive demonstration against the "fascists" and on February 12, 1934, a twenty-four hour strike by the Socialist dominated trade unions was held. Daladier was forced out on February 8, 1934 and the conservative Gaston Doumergue replaced him in a ministry of national union which boasted Marshal Pétain as war minister.

Aside from a severely damaged faith in the parliamentary process, the repercussions of the Stavisky affair helped to polarize the left against the right in an atmosphere of extremism that colored foreign affairs and inevitably weakened the development of a strong foreign policy. Thus the Popular Front coalition interpreted the concessions to Mussolini in North Africa as representative of appeasement by right wing fascists while the rightists looked upon a strengthened Franco-Societ pact as a means used by leftists (especially the Communists) to infiltrate France with Bolshevism. The Popular Front, in fact, with its coalition of Communists, Socialists, and Radicals was as much a front against fascism as it was an instrument for social reform.

A third factor that contributed to parliamentary weakness was the multiplicity of parties, a situation which

encouraged individualism over conformism and which sometimes forced premiers to rely on shaky coalitions. A look at Figures 2 and 3 (pp. 95-96), reflecting the distribution of political groups in the Palais-Bourbon's semicircular amphitheater, showed the number of parties to have been in excess of thirteen for the fifteenth legislature and in excess of ten for the sixteenth.

On the far left sat the Communists. Supposedly devoted to the goal of the Communist International (Komintern), their party was obliged in a doctrinal sense to work for the overthrow of bourgeois governments in the movement toward the spread of world communism. In reality, it was not a revolutionary force but a participant in the government of the Third French Republic. Under the leadership of Jacques Duclos and Maurice Thorez, it represented the workers and small wage earners.

To their right lay the Socialists under the leadership of Léon Blum, a jurist, scholar, and wealthy Parisian. His party also represented the workers and their needs but stressed the move toward social progress by working within the framework of legitimate national government. Understood was a strong desire for peace. Consequently, matters of national defense were neglected or poorly understood.

Their neighbor was the Radical party led by Edouard Daladier. The son of a baker, Daladier, a former teacher of

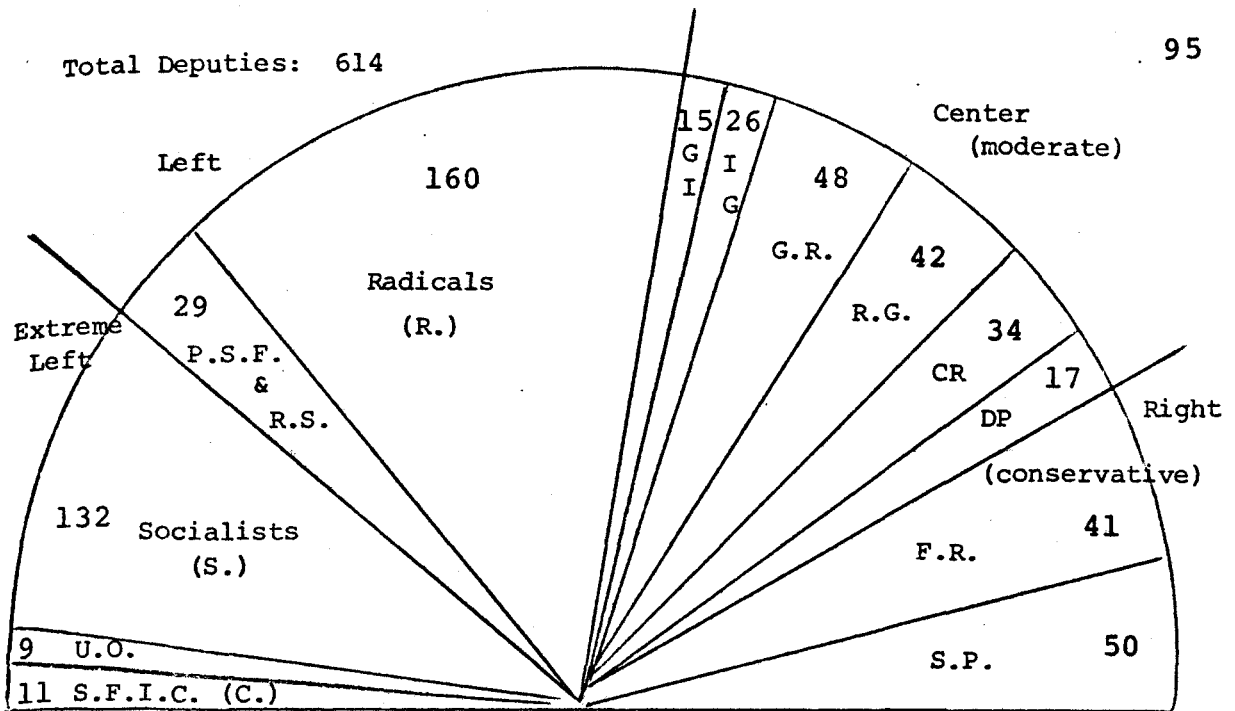


Fig. 2. Numerical distribution, location, and selected deputies of political groupings in the Chamber of Deputies, 1932-36 (Fifteenth Legislature).

- C. - Communist: Doriot, THOREZ
 U.O. - Unité Ouvrière: Garchery
 S. - Socialists: Auriol, BLUM, DÉAT, Dormoy, Février, LAGRANGE, Ramadier, Renaudel, SALENGRO, Perrin
 P.S.F. & R.S. - Parti Socialiste Français et du Parti Républicain Socialiste: Forcinal, Monzie, Painlevé
 R. - Radicals: Archimbaud, BERNIER, Bonnet, Campinchi, CHAUTEUPS, Chichery, Cot, DALADIER, Delbos, HERRIOT, Marchandeu, Mendès-France, Mistler, SENAC, Zay
 G.I. - Gauche Indépendante: La Chambre, Torrès, Renaitour
 I.G. - Indépendants de Gauche: PATENOTRE, MONTIGNY
 G.R. - Gauche Radicale: Carbuccia, Chappedelaine, Chéron
 R.G. - Républicains de Gauche: Coty, FLANDIN, Piétri
 C.R. - Centre Républicain: FABRY, LANIEL, REYNAUD, TARDIEU
 D.P. - Démocrate Populaire: Champetier de Ribes
 F.R. - Republican Federation: Bonnefous, MARIN, Taittinger
 S.P. - Splinter Parties: LE COUR GRANDMAISON, MANDEL, Vallat

SOURCES: Grand Larousse Encyclopédique (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1960-64), 3:819-21; JOC, June 21, 1932, pp. 2298-2300.

NOTES: The JOC lists 608 deputies in 1932 and 603 in 1935. Déat, Ramadier, and Renaudel defected from the Socialists in 1933 to form the Parti Socialiste de France. The Unité Ouvrière party was loyal to Trotsky while the S.F.I.C. or Section Française de l'Internationale Communiste obeyed Stalin.

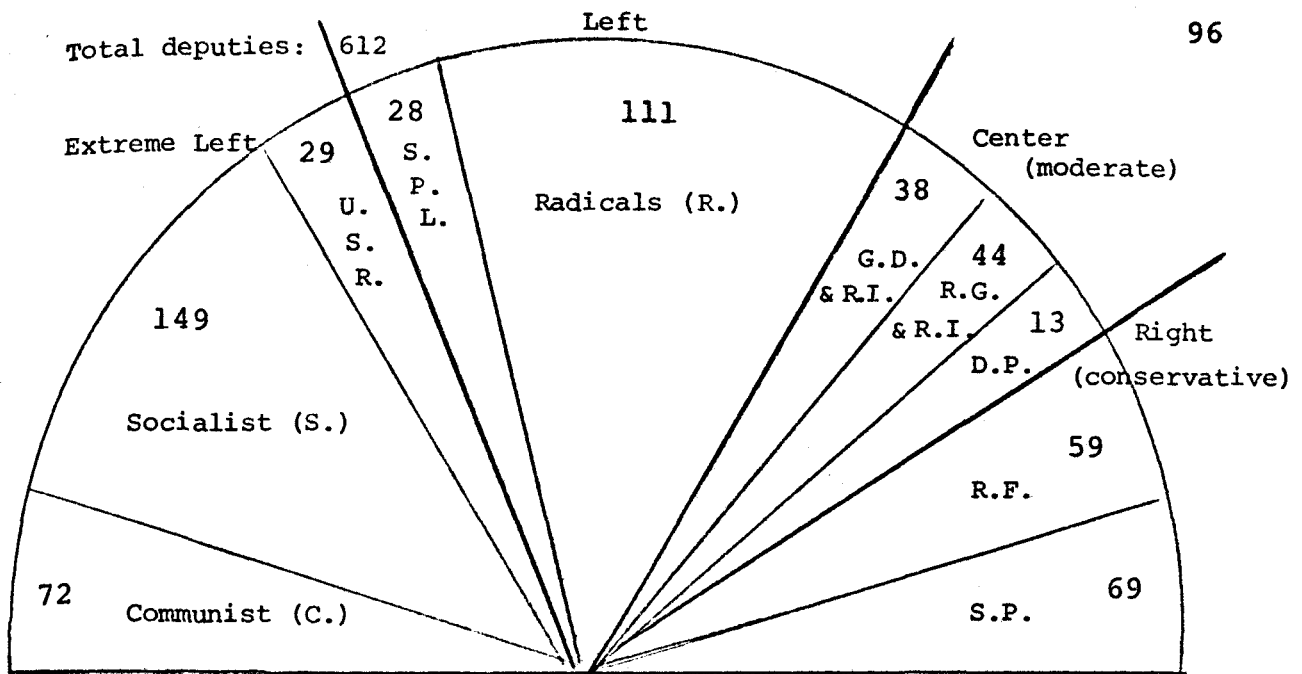


Fig. 3. Numerical distribution, location, and selected deputies of political groupings in the Chamber of Deputies, 1936-40 (Sixteenth Legislature).

- C. - Communist: Dewez, DUCLOS, Péri, THOREZ, Ramette
- S. - Socialists: BLUM, Dormoy, Garchery, Grumbach, LAGRANGE, Planche, Rous, SALENGRO, Spinasse, Thiolas, Auriol
- U.S.R. - Union Socialiste et Républicaine: Forcinal, Monzie, PATENOTRE, Pomaret, Ramadier, Vienot
- S.P.L. - Splinter Parties of the Left: Renaitour, SERRE, Doriot,
- R. - Radicals: Archimbaud, BERNIER, Bonnet, Bossutrot, Campinchi, CHICHERY, Cot, DALADIER, Delbos, HERRIOT, La Chambre, LE BAIL, Marchandeaudeau, Mendès-France, RIOU
- G.D. &
R.I. - Gauche Démocratique et Radicaux Indépendants: MONTIGNY de Chappedelaine
- R.G. &
R.I. - Républicains de Gauche et Radicaux Indépendants: Beauguitte, Blanc, Bonnevey, Dignac, FLANDIN, Jacquinet, Laniel, REYNAUD, Rocca-Serra
- D.P. - Démocrate Populaire: Pezet, Desgranges, Schuman
- F.R. - Republican Federation: Dupont, Henriot, des Isnards, MARIN, Taittinger, Valentin, Vallat, Dommange, LE COUR GRANDMAISON
- S.P. - Splinter Parties of the Right: Chiappe, Fernand-Laurent, KERILLIS, MANDEL, Scapini, Ybarnegaray, Grandmaison, Beaudoin

SOURCES: Grand Larousse Encyclopédique (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1960-64), 3:821; JOC, June 12, 1936, pp. 1443-1445. I have interchanged the U.S.R. and S.P.L. parties since the former is an offshoot of the Socialist party.

history and geography, replaced Edouard Herriot as leader of a party originally founded in the late nineteenth century on an anticlerical note. With this issue long dead, the party survived on the sheer inertia of a bourgeois electorate content to live in a closed circuit world and intent on maintaining the economic status quo. Its electorate of school teachers, civil servants, and small town merchants understood little of defense matters other than the name of Pétain and the security for which the Maginot Line supposedly stood. In the chamber, it was a pivot. If it voted right, it shared control with the moderates and conservatives. If it voted left, it shared control with the Socialists.²

To their right lay the center or what Yves Simon has described as the "spectacle of absolute confusion."³ Reflecting a post World War I tendency away from left and right, this conglomeration of political groupings represented more the individual concerns of electors and electorate rather than those of any particular political

² Reynaud in a conversation at the house of French man of letters, André Maurois, described the Radical party as a man who wants both wife and mistress. The mistress was the Socialist party and the wife, the moderates of the center. The mistress provided love but the wife owned the house and bank balance. According to Reynaud, these sentimental oscillations were the key to French politics. See André Maurois, Choses nues (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p. 132.

³ Yves Simon, La Grande crise de la république française, observations sur la vie politique des français de 1918 à 1938 (Montréal: Editions de l'arbre, 1941), p. 102.

individualism par excellence. Here reigned the cult of the personality: Pierre-Etienne Flandin, André Tardieu, Paul Reynaud, and Jean Fabry. Unified only during electoral periods under campaign agencies such as the Democratic Alliance, the centrist deputies voted more their conscience than they did party loyalties. Generally speaking, on economic and social issues, the groups of the center tended to support their more conservative neighbors to the right.

Here was Louis Marin's Republican Federation party, a group of deputies who believed in maintaining established economic interests which included the avoidance of state interference in business. Their electorate were farmers, conservative bourgeoisie and heads of small businesses. With the splinter parties to their right, they considered themselves republicans although among their ranks were those whose faces were turned toward the ancien regime. Here sat the most vocal of the anti-Semites (Xavier Vallat), the disabled World War I veterans turned super nationalists (Georges Scapini), the parliamentary representatives of extraparliamentary leagues such as Pierre Taittinger for Jeunesses Patriotes and Jean Ybarnegaray for Colonel de la Rocque's Croix de feu as well as Philippe Henriot, the spokesman for Action française, a pseudointellectual and xenophobic following of Charles Maurras devoted to the

restoration of authoritarian rule either by monarchy or in some other fashion.⁴

Aside from the shaky status of governments relying on a coalition, the multiplicity of parties had another debilitating effect: a deputy or group, once they had crossed the threshold from their electoral victories, entered a chamber influenced less by the campaign platform that elected them but by power swings from left to right. Thus the Socialists entered the 1936 legislature excited over carrying out socioeconomic reforms. One of these, a bill restricting the work week to forty hours, was their key measure. Caught in a web of financial difficulties, however, the Blum ministry (ruling in coalition with the Radicals) collapsed and power passed from Chautemps to Daladier who in a coalition government of Radicals and moderates included Reynaud as finance minister. One of Reynaud's first moves was to have the forty hour law repealed.

⁴Action française was extraparliamentary since it had no organized political party. Its center of action was its newspaper, L'Action française and its street league, Camelot du Roi. An unflattering but accurate portrait of the right can be found in Charles Micaud's The French Right and Nazi Germany, 1933-39 (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1943), pp. 14, 222, 225-26. Micaud cites the blindness of the right in their anti-Soviet attitudes, their overreliance on England, their subordination of national interests to class interests, as well as their fear of social revolution following such upheaval as the Spanish Civil War. According to Micaud the moderates stressed economic interests while the extreme right such as L'Action française, ideology.

Thus the Radicals who up to this point had supported the social reforms of the Popular Front were forced to look to the right for help with the economy. In doing so, they had to swallow other unpopular measures such as Reynaud's 2 per cent sales tax and the lay off of government workers. On the other hand, Reynaud had to play down his comprehensive program for defense reform much of which was unpalatable to Daladier. Later, his votes in support of Daladier's military policy, the Munich accords, and neutrality on the Spanish Civil War bore little resemblance to his 1936 campaign platform: armored corps, Franco-Soviet Pact, and a show of strength toward the dictators.

The ills of the fifteenth and sixteenth legislatures, however, were not restricted to the imbalance between executive and legislative, the internal weaknesses of the chamber, the divisions wrought by rival ideologies, financial difficulties, and scandal. They also surfaced in foreign affairs and military strategy. Foreign policy was directed by nine different ministers (see Table 3, page 89) whose efforts to protect France's interests, needless to say, lacked the same intensity and continuity of purpose that marked the efforts of Hitler and Mussolini.

Nineteen thirty-three as Jean-Baptiste Duroselle has put it was the "year of hesitations."⁵ Daladier desired a rapprochement with Hitler but was not encouraged in such by his foreign affairs minister, Joseph Paul-Boncour. Feelers were put out toward the Soviet Union with whom a commercial accord was signed in January 1934. Next came right wing Louis Barthou who with the note of April 17, 1934 disengaged France from the faltering disarmament conference and launched the nation on the search for allies. Barthou was well on the way to developing a military alliance with the Soviet Union when he was murdered in Marseilles on October 9, 1934.

After the assassination of Barthou, French foreign policy consisted of giving ground on all fronts. The Hoare-Laval Pact of December 1935 allowed Mussolini a free hand in Ethiopia; France allowed Germany to reoccupy the Rhineland without lifting a finger; Blum declared nonintervention in Spain while Hitler and Mussolini sent soldiers and arms to General Francisco Franco; Austria was annexed in March 1938; and the Munich Accord allowed the Germans to annex the Sudetenland thus leaving the remainder of Czechoslovakia ripe for occupation.

Somehow, it never seemed to dawn on any of these foreign ministers or their premiers to question whether a military strategy of Maginot Line and couverture were

⁵Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, La Politique extérieure de la France de 1914 à 1945 (Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, n.d.), p. 228.

compatible with assisting Belgium, the Petite Entente, and Poland. Did not such a strategy anticipate the development of a continuous front followed by static warfare? Was not a highly mobile and maneuverable column equipped with armored tanks and artillery more valuable in coming to the aid of potential allies?

The Other Deputies

The general atmosphere of the chamber, however, was not conducive to the proper examination of these questions. One reason for this was the predominance of electoral interests based on tradition and economics. As late as 1933, Albert le Bail, a Radical, as well as Oswen de Kérouartz and Albert Thibault, two independents of the right, protested the proposed reduction in the number of army horses. Prompted by the depressed horse racing markets in their districts, they argued that in wartime, blown out bridges would prevent motorized vehicles from fording rivers across which horses could swim.⁶

Another factor was the spirit of pacifism mixed with an ignorance of the true aims of Hitler. As late as December 1933, Blum, still convinced that the Geneva

⁶JOC, February 12, 1933, pp. 714-15, 717.

disarmament conference could bring the German dictator around, refused to vote the annual military budget.⁷

A third factor was the blindness to military realities resulting from preconceived but mistaken ideas. In late 1934, Blum vehemently denounced the professional army as laid down by de Gaulle in his Vers l'armée de métier. In a nostalgic look to the past, the Socialists, according to Blum, counted on the revolutionary rise of the masses to keep the enemy at bay.⁸ In the same unrealistic vein but even more so because of the fallacious nature of the charge, Communist chief, Maurice Thorez, claimed that the high command was going to use the professional army as part of a capitalistic plot to destroy the workers.⁹

Another reason why the chamber was at a disadvantage in discussing national defense was the failure of the civilian politicians to establish a satisfactory rapport with the military--this failure making it more difficult to understand the issues at hand. One of the best examples of this gap in civil-military relations was the debate that took place on December 19, 1933. The speaker for the bill was Joseph Bernier, a Radical. The measure he sponsored proposed to cut military expenditures by delaying the call

⁷JOC, December 19, 1933, p. 4706.

⁸JOC, December 18, 1934, pp. 3315-16.

⁹JOC, March 15, 1935, pp. 1025, 1036-38.

up of two months worth of draftees in every twelve month period. These men would not be inducted until the 1935-39 period of the années creuses.

The measure, presented in a vague fashion, was challenged by rightist Louis Marin who attempted to have it returned to the army commission for further clarification.¹⁰ General Maxime Weygand, chief of the general staff, noted in his Mémoires that the bill weakened an army already suffering the effects of a previous reduction. Weygand also noted that even though the CSG had been opposed to the issue, Daladier gave it his support in the chamber where it was passed by a large majority without benefit of adequate explanation or discussion.¹¹

The secondary role of the military was further in evidence when during the course of the same debate, Jean Fabry, a colonel-turned-politician and head of the army commission, attempted to assure the chamber that the bill did not weaken France's defense network even though he admitted not knowing what type of reception Minister of War Daladier had received from the CSG.¹² Moreover, proof that the high command was for some considered more of an opponent than anything else surfaced when Bernier warned the chamber

¹⁰ JOC, December 19, 1933, pp. 4688-89.

¹¹ General Maxime Weygand, Mémoires, vol. 2: Mirages et réalité (Paris: Flammarion, 1950-57), pp. 404-5.

¹² JOC, December 19, 1933, p. 4690.

that they had better adopt the resolution rather than let the CSG push through a measure lengthening the tour of duty from one to two years during the années creuses.¹³

Worse yet the debates were from time to time marked by pettiness and personal rivalry that diverted attention from the business at hand and reduced the chamber proceedings to something akin to a farce. Thus during the Bernier resolution debate, Daladier, vindictive, short-tempered and belligerent, got into a vocal sparring match with Tardieu. Having nothing to do with military affairs, the feud temporarily centered on the revolutionary banquets of 1848 before being concluded by having a number of leftist deputies attack Tardieu for his role in a French West African trading company scandal.¹⁴

The account of the important March 1935 debate, the session during which Reynaud announced his support of the armored corps, was unimpressive. General Joseph Maurin, minister of war, advocated the passage of the Two Year Law (then under discussion) while at the same time he affirmed his belief in the impregnability of the Maginot Line. Fabry,

¹³Ibid., p. 4694.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 4699. The affair involved N'-Goko Sangha, a colonial trading company in whose crooked dealings Tardieu was implicated. At the time, this centrist was editor of Le Temps. For details, see Rudolph Binion, Defeated Leaders (The Political Fate of Caillaux, Jovenal, and Tardieu) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).

president of the army commission, could only testify to the need for making the Two Year proposal a mandatory law rather than an optional affair for future governments to draw upon if they so wished to. Jean Sénac, a Radical and speaker for the bill stated that "We can look at the future with confidence based on the situation of the French army." The debate was rounded out by rightist Louis Marin and leftist Edouard Herriot whose unimpressive, subjective, and poorly documented deliveries supported the measure.¹⁵ The overall meeting thus suggested that few deputies, if any, were conscious of France's serious military weakness vis à vis German rearmament.

While somewhat more aware of the threat during the January-February debates of 1937, the deputies could not form a united front. Instead, they broke off into a series of disconnected criticisms involving the need for unified command, construction of more and better planes, air craft carriers, roads, and increased military expenditures. Little connection was made between foreign policy and military strength and on matters of strategy, the influence of Daladier predominated. Guy La Chambre, a Radical and friend of Daladier's, attacked Reynaud's fer de lance theory by saying that if the lance were broken, how could either part survive? La Chambre also pointed out that fire power

¹⁵JOC, March 15, 1935, pp. 1031, 1045, 1048, 1050-51.

from antitank artillery would prove deadly to the armored divisions.¹⁶

Louis Jacquinot, a member of Reynaud's Républicains de Gauche et Radicaux Indépendants, wondered how the specialists of the armored corps would be replaced if their ranks were decimated during wartime. The sum total of all this was general relief when Daladier concluded the four day debate by reassuring the chamber that France would hold the Maginot Line and that the army was strong.¹⁷ Daladier had spoken and the deputies were thus relieved of their responsibilities. Still even as Daladier was receiving general applause from all points in the chamber, Le Figaro was writing how distressingly poor the quality of the debate had been.¹⁸

The February 1938 debates were not much better. Concentrating on foreign policy, the deputies discussed the fast approaching Anschluss, North Africa, the Spanish Civil War, the Franco-Soviet Pact, and the general situation in Central Europe. Aside from the failure to connect military doctrine to foreign policy, there was no agreement over what to do about the various crises discussed. As in the 1935 debate, a false sense of optimism prevailed, but this time

¹⁶ JOC, February 2, 1937, p. 297.

¹⁷ JOC, January 26, 1937, p. 159.

¹⁸ Le Figaro, February 10, 1937, p. 8.

it was in reference to the departure of Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden from the Chamberlain government.

Eden, who had resigned because of Chamberlain's desire to recognize Italy's claims to Ethiopia, stated that such an action betrayed the principles of collective security as set down by the League of Nations. Only the Communist, Gabriel Péri, predicted that Eden's replacement, Neville Chamberlain, himself, would finish by appeasing the dictators.¹⁹

The ignorance the majority of deputies showed to Chamberlain's true nature was heightened by repeated dedications to the Maginot Line mystique. Such was the February 26, 1938 speech of Flandin. Wordy, longwinded, subjective and lacking in force for want of a specific program, Flandin tranquilized the chamber by reminding it that 80 per cent of both German and French youth desired peace. In the event that peace was not forthcoming, the French still had their magnificent frontier fortresses.²⁰

On the same day, the Chautemps ministry stated its international position when Minister of Foreign Affairs Yvon Delbos spoke unconvincingly of unity with Britain, of the need for Franco-Soviet cooperation, nonintervention in Spain, and some kind of economic plan to hold the Danubian

¹⁹ JOC, February 25, 1938, pp. 607-8.

²⁰ JOC, February 26, 1938, p. 640.

region (Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia) on the side of France.²¹ Similar to Flandin's, the speech lacked force. Feebleness characterized its proposals which Le Figaro described as weak, negative, routine, and worn out--an accurate description of the debate in general.²²

Indeed, one of the more lively moments of the session had nothing to do with solving national defense problems. Instead, it concerned the Alsatian Jew and Socialist, Salomon Grumbach. Grumbach found himself repeatedly assaulted from the right with such statements as the Socialists were responsible for French lack of military preparedness, that Grumbach had been pro-German during World War I, and that France was tired of being governed by Jews.²³ In such a charged atmosphere, constructive interchange was difficult.

In spite of all, a small but vocal group echoed the ideas of Reynaud. In December 1933, Jean de Nadaillac, a member of Reynaud's Center Republican group, protested the Maginot Line mentality with its accompanying false sense of security. A year later, Républicain de Gauche André Beauguitte demanded that the frontier fortresses be supplemented by armored divisions capable of repelling a lightning

²¹Ibid., p. 630.

²²Le Figaro, February 27, 1938, p. 1.

²³JOC, February 25, 1938, pp. 589-592. Even though the Blum ministry fell in June of 1937, the Jewish politician continued as vice-president of the cabinet under Chautemps.

attack; and in March 1935, Jean Le Cour Grandmaison, an independent on the right, repeated Beauguitte's idea by asking for the creation of a maneuvering corps, the rank and file of which would be selected from France's 500,000 unemployed.²⁴

Further support in the March 1935 debate came from Henri Franklin-Bouillon, a member of the Gauche Radicale. Franklin-Bouillon charged that the government and the deputies were ducking behind the shelter of the Two Year Law in order to prevent the country from seeing the serious weakness of France's military system. He felt it was wrong for the government to tell the people Germany would eventually become peaceful, and also for the Socialists to think that troop levels were the only issue at stake when alliances, aviation, and armaments were just as important. Until the government could reform the military, the alliance system, and national life, France remained in terrible danger. While Franklin-Bouillon did not touch directly on the armored corps, he indicated that the country needed an army of its foreign policy, the basic tenet of Reynaud's defense creed.²⁵

In 1936, both Paul Perrin, an independent Socialist, and Henri de Kerillis, an independent on the right, pleaded

²⁴JOC, December 19, 1933, p. 4703; December 18, 1934, p. 3325; March 15, 1935, pp. 1033-35.

²⁵JOC, March 15, 1935, p. 1051.

for the development of the armored corps so France could fulfill her international obligations in case of war.²⁶

In 1937, Jean Quenette, an independent on the right, warned that France needed Reynaud's armored corps or mobile force as soon as possible because history and logic worked against the Maginot Line theory. In the same debates, Philippe Serre, an independent on the left, and Xavier Vallat, a member of the Republican Federation, also argued for the project.²⁷

In 1938, it was the speech of Jean Montigny, a member of the Gauche Democratique et Radicaux Independants, that rose above the mediocrity of the debates by noting that foreign policy had to be joined to an effective military strategy. In this respect, the Spanish Civil War showed that a fortified front could not hold against tanks; and since these highly sophisticated weapons would play the decisive role, France needed a specialized army capable of taking the offensive as Paul Reynaud had described. France needed, according to Montigny, divisions adept at rupturing enemy lines. Such a mobile army could prevent another

²⁶ JOC, January 21, 1936, pp. 108-9; June 23, 1936, p. 1543.

²⁷ JOC, January 26, 1937, pp. 206-7; January 29, 1937, pp. 256-59.

Rhineland disaster. Did France have this army? No. Thus France did not have the army of her policy.²⁸

In weighing the effects of Reynaud on the chamber, it is clear that not only did others share his views, but they also used his ideas as a frame of reference. Moreover, most of these deputies came from splinter parties or were deserters from the more disciplined, influential groups where free opinions on national defense were not entertained. The extreme left, the left, and the conservative right of Louis Marin for the most part presented little innovative thinking on military reform.

Reaction to Reynaud's Speeches

In spite of this, Reynaud could, from time to time, elicit from these groups a noticeable reaction in terms of applause as indicated in Table 4, page 113. Applause, which when recorded by parliamentary stenographers served as a barometer of a deputy's oratorical effectiveness,²⁹ was on more than one occasion repeatedly received by Reynaud from all corners of the chamber. This is evident from looking at

²⁸JOC, February 26, 1938, pp. 633-34. Reynaud does not mention Montigny on connection with the armored corps. In La France a sauvé l'Europe, 1:403, Reynaud called the Deputy a partisan of the "resignation of France [in 1940]."

²⁹For an example of how this applause as well as other commentary were recorded in the Journal Officiel, see in Appendix B, a sample page of Reynaud's December 1935 speech.

TABLE 4

APPLAUSE FACTOR

Reaction of Chamber of Deputies to
Reynaud's Speeches 1933-39

Date of Speech and Description	Number of Separate Occasions Applause Received									
	E	E-L	E-L-C	L-C	Chamber			C-R	R	GA*
					L-C-R	L	C			
2/24/33--National defense credits**								1		
3/15/35--Armored corps					1			10		5
12/27/35--Anti-Laval, sanctions against Italy, pro-English		15	4			3				15
7/31/36--Franco-Russian Pact, armored corps, plea for unity					3		1	1		3
12/4/36--Franco-Russian Pact, viable foreign policy	1		2	3	1			4		3
12/5/36--Government iner- tia faced with Italo- German rapprochement**								1		
1/26/37--Armored corps, lack of arms, unified command								2	1	6
2/26/38--National union, arms weakness, weakness in military strategy		1	3		1					11
3/17/38--National union**	1	2								3
5/12/39--National union**								3		

SOURCES: JOC, 1933: p. 921; 1935: pp. 1040-43; 1936:
pp. 2306-7, 3323-25, 3352; 1937: pp. 168-73; 1938: pp. 646-9, 842-3;
1939: p. 1319.

*E-extreme left, L-left, C-center, R-right, GA-general
applause. **Brief speech.

the general applause column on the far right, an indice that testified to the nonpartisan appeal of certain aspects of Reynaud's speeches.

While the left and the extreme left were not enthusiastic when Reynaud presented his plan for the armored corps on March 15, 1935 and on January 26, 1937, they gave him remarkable response on his December 27, 1935 speech advocating sanctions against Italy and a joint hard line policy toward the dictators by Britain and France. They also gave him support on the Franco-Soviet Pact and on pleas for national union during 1938.

The situation of the center-right was somewhat different. Starting out by giving Reynaud a magnificent applause factor (number of separate occasions applause received) of ten on his March 15, 1935 speech, the center-right dwindled in its support of Reynaud following the devastating December 27, 1935 speech. From that point on, the center-right was no longer a focal point since it was submerged in the general applause.

This was most noticeable on February 28, 1938. It was this speech of Reynaud's--pleading for national unity and defense needs--that Paris Soir called magnificent in its ability to draw applause from three-quarters of the chamber, the exception being the Communists and the extreme right.³⁰

³⁰Paris Soir, February 28, 1938, p. 1.

Press comment on the centrist's other speeches noted Reynaud's power over the deputies. "A thunderous applause," wrote L'Echo de Paris of the December 27, 1935 speech, "rolled from the left. The Radicals [and] the Socialists literally drink the words of Mr. Paul Reynaud. . . . On the right, they look on with surprise and sadness."³¹ Eight months later, the same paper remarked that Reynaud's speeches were important, his ideas lucid, and his talent demanded the silence as well as the respect of the entire chamber.³² As if in affirmation of this, Vendémiaire, a weekly of the same center-right orientation, went so far as to suggest that Reynaud, in his capacity to transcend party barriers (as evidenced from the general applause column), had the necessary stuff to hew out for himself, a prime ministership.³³

The capacity to transcend, the powerful control over the chamber were, however, only momentary phenomena. At voting time, party and personal interests neutralized Reynaud's oratorical effect. His fatal flaw was to indulge in the luxury of political isolation, a chronic disease common to centrist deputies in the last years of the Third Republic and an ailment that interfered in dealing with the realities of chamber politics. Reynaud simply did not have

³¹L'Echo de Paris, December 28, 1935, p. 3.

³²L'Echo de Paris, August 1, 1936, p. 1.

³³Vendémiaire, January 3, 1936, p. 7.

the political force behind him that could have formulated and pushed through measures geared to his speeches and that could have got the needed parliamentary majority. An explanation of this contradiction between applause factor and voting urn was given by Revue bleue:

In an assembly where discourteous sectarianism is the daily rule, he [Reynaud] has succeeded in making himself listened to and it is a mystery to no one that his ideas are very often approved by those to whom political obedience will impose a hostile vote. . . .³⁴

Perhaps the best example of Reynaud's failure to connect parliamentary speech to political action was the national union fiasco of early 1938. France, beset with increasingly severe financial difficulties and mounting foreign peril, was in trouble. To cope with this, Blum attempted to broaden his government's political base. Thus on January 16, 1938, the Socialist leader in his capacity as vice premier of the faltering Chautemps ministry asked Reynaud to join a cabinet stretching from Jacques Duclos on the Communist left to Reynaud, himself, in the center. Reynaud responded by demanding that Louis Marin, head of the rightist Republican Federation, be included.³⁵ Blum's party refused this request. The next attempt at union occurred on March 12, 1938 at which time the Socialists acquiesced with Reynaud's demand of January 16, 1938. On this occasion,

³⁴Revue bleue, February 20, 1937.

³⁵Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:177-78.

however, Flandin along with the majority of moderates rejected the plan.³⁶

Finally, on March 23, 1938, Reynaud got a petition signed by seventy-seven moderates demanding national union in the form of a government of public safety; but this measure--essentially anti-flandiniste--evaporated without bringing the needed change.³⁷

Sennep, the famous French caricaturist, best summed up the impossibility of the situation in a cartoon depicting as women, the four important party leaders: Marin, Herriot, Blum, and Duclos. Each political chief has his pendulous breasts bared. Reynaud, sketched as a leprechaun, had just finished suckling the long shriveled breasts of Blum who in turn, held up the Lilliputian centrist to the enormous left mammary gland of Herriot. While Reynaud is tugging on the stretched out Radical nipple, Marin and Duclos wait in anticipation.³⁸

Aside from its coarse humour, Sennep's cartoon brought out a single important message: any national union government that involved Reynaud in some political combination was ridiculous. The deputies would applaud him and

³⁶ Joseph Laniel, Jours de gloire de jours cruels 1908-1958 (Paris: Presses de la cité, 1971), p. 97.

³⁷ Le Populaire, March 24, 1938, p. 2.

³⁸ Jean-Jacques Pennes [Sennep] and Gassier, H. P., Histoire de France 1918-38 (Paris: Editions Mana, 1938), not paginated.

his ideas but Reynaud's impact was more transitory than lasting.

Key Politicians

In the absence of strong political ties, another measuring stick of the reaction to Reynaud lay in his rapport with several key personalities: Daladier, Flandin, Jean Fabry, André Tardieu, and Henri de Kerillis. Of these, the relationship with Daladier was the most important since as head of the pivotal party, the Radicals, Daladier was frequently premier, war minister or both. Smaller than Reynaud, Daladier was introverted, distrustful, solitary, and at times, petty and belligerent. He was the perfect representative of the nothingness of the Radical party and French bourgeoisie in general.³⁹

Reynaud, who had had little direct dealing with Daladier's world before 1938, came more and more into the picture when the Radical chief had to look to the center for help with the financial crisis after the fall of the second Blum ministry in April of 1938. At that time, Reynaud

³⁹ Daladier's pugnacious nature comes through in his feud with Tardieu in the chamber debate of December 19, 1933, pp. 4699-4700. It was General Maurice Gamelin who described Daladier as mistrustful. See his Servir, 2:91-92. Pertinax in his description is more brutal. Daladier for him was spineless, jealous, suspicious, secretive, mediocre, incompetent, weak, lacking in drive, not intellectually alert, and unable to get results from the parliamentary regime. See Gravediggers, pp. 90, 93, 102.

obtained the justice portfolio in Daladier's cabinet and the finances, the following November.⁴⁰

Once at the finance ministry, Reynaud concentrated on France's economic recovery, but the rapport between the two men was strained. Fabry, a fellow centrist deputy, offered a clue as to the cause when he stated that:

He [Daladier] is of that caliber of political men in a hurry to get to the top where he knows, however, that he will encounter some difficulties beyond the resolution of the average man--Paul Reynaud--the same way only more so [italics mine].⁴¹

Other evidence indicated that the relationship between the two men was an uneasy truce of mutual toleration. Pertinax, a right wing journalist and editor who wrote for L'Europe Nouvelle and L'Ordre, quoted Daladier as having stated: "Let him stay if he wants to but he must stop repeating that my one idea is to be rid of him and he must stop trying to get my job."⁴² If Pertinax is to be believed, then L'Action française (Paris) simply reaffirmed him when it stated that "Daladier, although knowledgeable, is mistaken in believing he can contain Reynaud by including

⁴⁰Reynaud was offered the finances in April but states he declined because Daladier would have refused to do away with the forty hour law. See his Mémoires, 2:201.

⁴¹Jean Fabry, J'ai connu 1934-1945 (Paris: Editions Descamps, 1960), pp. 20-21.

⁴²Pertinax, Gravediggers, p. 107.

him in his cabinet. It is, however, Reynaud who will make him fall."⁴³

Another source of friction between Daladier and Reynaud concerned the position of the former on national defense matters. While Daladier conceded that an increase in the number of army specialists was needed, the Radical premier wanted to avoid cutting the army in two, a situation he felt would surely occur if Reynaud's professional corps were allowed to develop.⁴⁴ Moreover, Daladier was firmly ensconced in the theories of the defensive which included fire power, the Maginot Line, and couverture. In the area of foreign policy, the tone was appeasement with the Munich settlement serving as an example.

Reynaud, by silencing his criticism of Daladier's defense policy, paid a heavy price for obtaining a carte blanche to reform finances. In addition to being the target of post-Munich comment such as the ironic statement of L'Humanité (Paris) that Reynaud was still a member of the government even though an adversary of Daladier's treasonous policy,⁴⁵ Reynaud had to stifle a natural impulse to speak

⁴³L'Action française, April 24, 1939.

⁴⁴JOC, March 15, 1935, p. 1048 and January 29, 1937, p. 258.

⁴⁵L'Humanité, October 9, 1938, p. 2. Reynaud was strongly opposed to concessions to Hitler in the Sudetenland sector of Czechoslovakia. On September 22, 1938, two independents, George Mandel and Champetier de Ribes, went with Reynaud to Daladier in order to tender their resignation upon discovering that France under the influence of Britain

out against the growing gap between the military machines of Germany and France.

While it was true that Reynaud during his tenure of office at the justice ministry sent Daladier a letter on July 8, 1938 requesting energetic measures be taken to accelerate rearmament,⁴⁶ this note omitted any reference to an armored corps. Moreover, later evidence indicated that Reynaud had completely given up on his national defense program. In a memorandum dated May 4, 1939 and marked "not sent," Reynaud asked Daladier to reconsider the problem of war manufactures and to work for an immediate remedy to the lags in production. To make his point, Reynaud inquired:

1° Is it true that for lack of anti-aircraft guns our divisions when transported will be

was wavering in her support of Czechoslovakia. Daladier responded by stating that such a resignation was akin to treason since cabinet solidarity was needed and, at any rate, France was in the process of mobilizing. Reynaud states in his Mémoires, 2:209 that Winston Churchill in visiting Paris on the twentieth advised Reynaud against resignation on grounds similar to those put forward by Daladier. Keith Eubank in his Munich (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), p. 142, states that Reynaud stayed in the Daladier cabinet because he hoped the Czechs would refuse the agreement over the Sudeten thus forcing France to abide by the alliance system with the Petite Entente. Reynaud did not mention this in his Mémoires but whatever his intention, the fact remained he stayed in a government that ultimately betrayed an important ally.

⁴⁶ Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:205.

exposed to disasters similar to Guadalajara?

2° Is it true that our divisions have half as many antitank guns as the German divisions and that certain [divisions] have none at all?

3° Is it true that we are producing only 100 cannons of [?size] 25 a month?

4° Is it true that faced with German tank divisions, we are producing only a single battalion of B tanks a year?

5° Is it true that we do not have replacement pieces for our tanks?

6° Is it true that we lack antitank mines?

7° Is it true that we do not have [?size] 9 guns and medium range artillery in sufficient quantity?

8° Is it true that the majority of our C.A. [?antiaircraft divisions] do not have [?size] 105 long, model 36?

9° Is it true that ammunition for the 105 long and for the shells of 105 short is lacking?⁴⁷

This unsent letter was a fitting end to Reynaud's campaign for defense reform. Lacking any reference to the armored corps, it was reduced to calling Daladier's attention to armament shortages. Reynaud was, in fact, a prisoner in a government where he lacked the political influence to have his views on defense taken seriously. Thus his ascendancy to ministerial power that de Gaulle had

⁴⁷ Reynaud Papers, "Dossier Militaire 1936-38," AN, Reynaud to Daladier, May 4, 1939. Guadalajara is the capital of the Spanish province of the same name. It is located thirty-five miles northeast of Madrid. During the Spanish Civil War, Italian and German planes bombed Republican forces with devastating results on civilian populations.

predicted ironically marked Reynaud's complete impotence to further the cause of the armored corps.

Reynaud before the finance commission of the chamber on November 22, 1938⁴⁸ justified accepting the finance ministry on the grounds of the foreign peril. A financially bankrupt France, to Reynaud, would be useless in face of the dictators and dependent allies alike. Reynaud, however, was part of Daladier's political baggage, a cabinet in which the latter's views on defense were radically different. Here alas was the contradiction. What good did it do Reynaud to keep the country afloat financially if Daladier's defense policy was defeatist and appeasement orientated?

Reynaud's relationship with Pierre-Etienne Flandin was hardly better than that he established with Daladier. Flandin, a centrist, president of the Democratic Alliance, and member of Reynaud's political group, the *Républicains de Gauche et Radicaux Indépendants*, was 6'4" to Reynaud's 5'6". Their dissimilarities were not just a matter of height, however, Flandin, described by journalist Alexander Werth as the "living representative of reactionary bourgeois mentality,"⁴⁹ was pro-Chamberlain as well as appeasement

⁴⁸JOC, Commission des finances, Procès-Verbaux, AAN, November 22, 1938, p. 3.

⁴⁹Alexander Werth, "The Fourth Partner," New Statesman and Nation, February 26, 1938, p. 317.

orientated in his approach to Hitler and Mussolini. Further, his persistent opposition to the Popular Front government of Blum stymied Reynaud's appeal to the center for their participation in a national union government during early 1938.⁵⁰ Flandin, moreover, opposed Reynaud's views on devaluation and on the armored corps, the latter scheme which he termed "idiotic."⁵¹ Deflation and the defensive were his key words.

Flandin overshadowed Reynaud within the Democratic Alliance since the latter's advocacy of devaluation was unpopular among the majority of its members. At best, Reynaud played a minor role in this electoral organization whose members felt that a lot of antipathy expressed by Hitler and Mussolini for France was caused by provocations from French Communists.⁵² Significantly, it was Jean Fabry not Reynaud who developed the alliance's attitude on defense related questions at the party's annual congresses. Moreover, the party's weekly, the Alliance Démocratique, represented nothing more than a hymn of praise to Flandin.

⁵⁰ Le Journal, February 23, 1938, p. 1; L'Echo de Paris, March 12, 1938; Michael Brandstadter, "Paul Reynaud and the Third French Republic 1919-39: French Political Conservatism in the Interwar Years", Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1971, pp. 277-78. Flandin's veto of national union occurred at the Salle Colbert of the Palais-Bourbon on March 11, 1938.

⁵¹ Reynaud, Mémoires, 1:430.

⁵² E. Rebaud, Enquête sur les partis et groupements français (Marseilles: Editions Rébo, 1938), pp. 18-19.

Reynaud's strong pro-Soviet, pro-Eden, antiappeasement, and devaluationist stance were hardly mentioned. Thus it was inevitable that when Flandin sent Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain, and Daladier congratulatory telegrams following the Munich settlement, Reynaud, in protest, resigned from this electoral organization.⁵³

The differences between the two men in fact helped to prevent the center from acting as a united political force. Of the controversial military debate of January 1937 in which Flandin supported the position of Daladier, Le Petit Journal noted that "The right and a part of the center supported Paul Reynaud while another part of the center . . . the left, and a portion of the extreme left warmly supported P.-E. Flandin."⁵⁴ The same reaction was noted a year later after the foreign policy debate of February 26, 1938, a session in which Flandin demonstrated his satisfaction with France's defense system while Reynaud, on the other hand, found it lacking in several respects. Le Populaire observed that while the two men belonged to the same electoral party and while they sat on the same benches of the minority, "their party and the minority are cruelly tested by the divorce between them."⁵⁵

⁵³ L'Humanité, October 9, 1938, p. 2.

⁵⁴ Le Petit Journal, January 27, 1937, p. 4.

⁵⁵ Le Populaire, February 27, 1938, p. 2.

Of the three remaining politicians with whom Reynaud shared an important interaction, that with Henri de Kerillis was the best. Kerillis, a former running mate of Reynaud's in the 1926 Parisian by-election, an independent on the right, and editor of L'Echo de Paris, disagreed with Reynaud on devaluation. Although he was pro-Italian and for much of the decade, unsympathetic with the Russians, Kerillis was in agreement with Reynaud on three important issues: the armored corps, the need for a Franco-Soviet pact, and hard line tactics toward Germany. Whenever possible, he allowed the pages of his newspaper to be used in support of Reynaud and his ideas.

Finding Kerillis, "ardent, tormented, and generous," Reynaud wrote to him in August of 1935 that Italy as the starved nouveau-venu of the continent could not be trusted and that England was the only true "Gentleman of Europe."⁵⁶ Kerillis, in turn, was quick to express his affection and esteem for Reynaud whose individualism he admired even when it cost the deputy parliamentary friendships and ministerial portfolios. Writing to Reynaud prior to the 1936 elections, Kerillis noted that "If I were an elector in your district, I would vote for you with both hands raised."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Reynaud Papers, "Dossier Portalet N°XIV," AN, Reynaud to Kerillis, August 25, 1935.

⁵⁷ Reynaud Papers, "Dossier Rebut," AN, Kerillis to Reynaud, February 13, 1936.

The enthusiasm, however, was mixed with sadness as Kerillis noted the inability of Reynaud, Flandin, and Tardieu to come together in order to realize a united victory of center and right over the forces of the Popular Front.⁵⁸ Kerillis had the newspaper but these three men were too divided both on the issues and among one another to avail themselves of its full political support.

Tardieu, an influential centrist who had made Reynaud his finance minister in 1930, never made it to the 1936 fight against the coalition of the left. Frustrated by the ineptitude of his fellow parliamentarians and disillusioned by the malfunction of the political system, he withdrew from the chamber in 1936 in order to campaign for constitutional reform. In contrast to Kerillis, Tardieu made Reynaud's sanctionist position on Italy a matter of bitter enmity between them at a time when both were members of the same parliamentary group, the Centre Républicain. Sending an open letter to Reynaud in Le Temps on December 29, 1935, Tardieu resigned in protest from the Centre Républicain while at the same time, he castigated Reynaud for his position on devaluation as well as his pro-English, pro-Soviet, and anti-Italian stance.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ L'Echo de Paris, February 25, 1936, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Paul Reynaud, "Pour assurer la paix, revenons à la tradition française," discours prononcé le 27 décembre 1935, n.p., n.d., pp. 15-16.

Although Reynaud responded that Laval's appeasement of Italy was contrary to France's traditional policy of collective security, he was personally devastated by his colleague's literary thrusts and noted that "my separation from Tardieu caused me more pain than all the other attacks on me for my nonconformism."⁶⁰ The separation was to continue in the pages of Le Gringoire (Paris), an extreme right wing newspaper to which Tardieu, now a political drop out, contributed occasional articles. In one of these, Reynaud figured as a "friend of the Bolsheviks" with his foreign policy characterized as a continual string of errors.⁶¹

The last member of the cast was Jean Fabry. Equipped with a wooden leg, this army colonel-turned-deputy, president of the chamber army commission, occasional war minister, and editor of the conservative daily, L'Intransigeant (Paris), was described by Reynaud as having earned the esteem and sympathy all. According to Reynaud, this was due to Fabry's technical ability, his war wounds, his alert sense of patriotism, his anxious eloquence, and finally, by the confidence that General Joffre had placed in him during World War I.⁶² A member of the Centre

⁶⁰ Reynaud, Mémoires, 1:292.

⁶¹ Le Gringoire (Paris), April 15, 1938, p. 1.

⁶² Paul Reynaud, Au Coeur de la mêlée 1930-45 (Paris: Flammarion, 1951), p. 46.

Républicain, Fabry was considered by Reynaud to be the latter's friend in spite of the political differences that separated them.⁶³

Fabry in his critical role as president of the chamber army commission followed an erratic course on national defense matters that indicated only occasional comprehension of the changes in military technology and their relationship to foreign commitments. In many ways, his attitudes reflected the confused ideas that existed among the high command where he counted General Maurice Gamelin as one of his personal friends.

On December 19, 1933, Fabry was the only Centre Républicain who voted for the budget cutting measure of Bernier. For this, he was expelled from the group by Tardieu and Reynaud.⁶⁴

On March 15, 1935, he proposed to the chamber that the recruitment problem be combined with army organizational reform but this tactic, according to Reynaud, was simply to assure that the Two Year Law became official--future governments being required to keep the men under the colors

⁶³Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:155.

⁶⁴Jean Fabry, De la place de la Concorde au cour de l'Intendance (Paris: Editions de France, 1942), p. 172. While the stated reason for the ouster was Fabry's acceptance of a cabinet post (war ministry) under Daladier on January 29, 1934, Philip Bankwitz called it an act of personal revenge for the vote of December 19, 1933. See his Maxime Weygand and Civil-Military Relations in Modern France (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 175.

for two years instead of approaching the measure as an option to be drawn upon when needed, the manner in which Premier Flandin presented the bill.⁶⁵ Thus Fabry's measure anticipated no need for radical change in the system of defense in terms of strategy.

When Reynaud did present a specific program on military reform to the army commission in June of 1935, Fabry in his official capacity rejected it because he felt that the armored corps would be too vulnerable to artillery in light of the recent advances in fire power. Other reasons included the cutting of the national army in two by the creation of this elitist corps whose ranks, moreover, would be difficult to replace once they were depleted in the initial stages of combat.⁶⁶

⁶⁵The Two Year Law is a classic example of the vagueries and complexities of French parliamentary politics in which a measure was bent out of shape in order to gain the necessary parliamentary support for a government to stay in power. The intended bill was the Two Year Law. Flandin, however, needed support from the Radicals but many of these as well as the Socialists objected to this law. Thus Flandin had the measure phrased in such a way that not only was the measure optional with the extended time served unspecified, but it also affected only the men currently serving. To make it an official law affecting all future draftees was Fabry's goal. He apparently wanted the bill to become an amendment to the army organization laws of 1927-28 so future leftist (and possibly unsympathetic) governments would be prevented from taking the optional route of not enforcing it. On these insights, see Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:426 and La France a sauvé l'Europe, 2:311, 321.

⁶⁶JOC, Commission de l'armée, Procès-Verbaux, AAN, June 5, 1935, pp. 4-5. At this time, Fabry did recognize the need for an offensive weapon and he did state that the army was in the process of motorizing certain divisions, a

Minister of War Fabry took a different approach. On January 21, 1936, he reassured the chamber that the army was in the process of developing the mechanized and specialized corps which would, in fact, be superior to Reynaud's since it was to be constructed within the national army.⁶⁷ Fabry, however, offered no details on the specifics of the plan.

Speeches and articles after this date move from disillusionment with the Popular Front's military attitude to a position of resignation that France was restricted to an essentially defensive weapon. Thus in a 1937 issue of Revue militaire, Fabry lamented the government's feeble policy and pointed out that the type of army organization in France did not allow any bold diplomatic action.⁶⁸ At the end of 1937, Fabry's speech before the congress of the Democratic Alliance (Reynaud was not chosen to develop the Alliance's defense views) omitted any reference to a specialized armored corps and stressed only that France needed a policy commensurate with the possibilities of her army.⁶⁹

fact that he considered to be an evolution toward Reynaud's mechanized corps.

⁶⁷ JOC, January 21, 1936, p. 109.

⁶⁸ Lieutenant-Colonel Fabry, "La Strategie générale, affaires de gouvernement," Revue militaire générale 1 (1937): 387-90.

⁶⁹ L'Eclaireur de Nice et du Sud-Est, November 7, 1937, p. 2.

Fabry was never totally sold on Reynaud's armored corps. He was aware, however, of the need for an offensive weapon to complement France's foreign commitments. On the other hand, he never presented or encouraged such a detailed program as Reynaud demonstrated to the army commission in June of 1935. That Reynaud and he--both members of the Democratic Alliance and both adherents to the Centre Républicain--never pooled their talents was indeed tragic.

The Army Commission

On June 5, 1935, the date on which Reynaud explained his amendment to the army commission of the chamber, the centrist deputy was presenting it to a parliamentary body so influential that war ministers were almost forced to consult it before taking action and deputies were expected to seek approval from it before taking their defense related measures to the chamber. Second in prestige to the commission was its president, Jean Fabry, whose views on the amendment have already been discussed.

These views were shared by Radical, fellow commission member, and speaker for the Two Year Law, Jean Sénac. Sénac stated that it would be impossible to find the recruits needed for such an enterprise. Further, as Fabry was to observe later, Sénac felt that the development of a mechanized and highly mobile force was already being pursued by the high command but the commission member

emphasized that for purposes of morale, this development was being carried out within the framework of the existing army organization. Immediately following Sénac's commentary and without further discussion or question by any other member, the army commission voted unanimously to reject Reynaud's amendment.⁷⁰

Voted by means of raised hands, the rejection was accomplished by only nineteen of the forty-four members of the army commission. The other twenty-four deputies being absent, the political distribution of those present was respectively: 10-left, 5-center, and 4-right--giving the hostile left a disproportionate majority.⁷¹ Since the commission membership was based on the number of deputies in each parliamentary group, a full sitting would have been even more unfavorable with 24-left, 15-center, and 11-right. Thus in addition to having an influential centrist president opposed to the measure, the center, itself, was in a minority on the commission. Reynaud found no support for the armored corps among its members.

The Votes

How closely did Reynaud's votes in the fifteenth legislature (1932-36) as well as those of his political

⁷⁰JOC, Commission de l'armée, AAN, Procès-Verbaux, June 6, 1935, p. 2.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 3.

group, the Centre Républicain tend to support a stronger system of national defense?⁷² A look at Table 5, pages 135-6 shows that in 1933, when a series of financially pressed, Radical dominated governments (Daladier, Sarraut, Chautemps) attempted to reduce defense expenditures, Reynaud, his group, and the center-right opposed the measures. They did this by trying to suppress or return to the army commission measures reducing the numerical strength of the army such as on February 12 and December 19, 1933; returning to the army commission budgetary articles reducing expenditures such as on February 12 and February 25, 1933, as well as opposing outright on December 19, 1933, the passage of the Bernier resolution, a measure designed to delay the call up of troops until the années creuses.⁷³

In 1934-35, when control of the chamber moved to the right (Doumergue, Flandin, Laval) following the Stavisky related riots, the attempt to block defense appropriations came from the Socialists. Their measures included refusing to discuss military credits as on June 14, 1934, the adjournment of the discussion on military credits

⁷²Although Fig. 2, page 94 shows membership in the Centre Républicain to be thirty-four, departures after its original formation reduced its numbers to twenty-nine, the figures that will be used as a constant in this study. Fabry was one of the defections.

⁷³The vote numbers as given in Table 5 but presented in the order in which they are cited in the above text (and hereafter cited in this fashion) are: 146, 444, 148, 185, 447.

TABLE 5

SELECTED NATIONAL DEFENSE VOTES
 THE CHAMBER, PAUL REYNAUD AND HIS POLITICAL GROUP
 (Fifteenth Legislature: 6/1/32 - 3/21/36)

Vote #--Date--Initiator --Description	<u>Chamber</u> Pro-Con-Ab* Action	<u>Centre Républicain</u> ** Pro-Con-Ab-Ol Reynaud's Vote
#146--2/12/33--?--Suppression of Budgetary article eighty-nine calling for the elimination of 5,000 officers, 40,000 horses with a gradual move toward motorization	172-396-23 failed	27-1-1-0 pro
#148--2/12/33--Fabry (Centrist)--Return to the army commission of article nine calling for reductions in defense expenses	266-363-38 failed	29-0-0-0 pro
#185--2/25/33--Fabry (Centrist)--Return to the army commission of article one of a project reducing military expenses	205-378-8 failed	29-0-0-0 pro
#444--12/19/33--Marin (Rightist)--Return to the army commission of the Bernier Resolution calling for reductions in troop levels.	108-483-7 failed	26-1-2-0 pro
#447--12/19/33--Gov***--Bernier Resolution (reestablishment of budgetary equilibrium)	447-148-4 passed	0-28-1-0 con
#556--6/14/34--Moch (Socialist)--On the priority question opposed to the discussion of military credits.	121-466-6 failed	29-0-0-0 pro
#557--6/14/34--Auriol (Socialist)--On the adjournment of the discussion on military credits.	125-459-9 failed	0-29-0-0 con
#560--6/15/34--Gov--minister of war gets an additional 1,275 million francs for his budget	452-127-14 passed	28-0-0-1 pro
#652--12/18/34--Blum--Motion to adjourn the discussion on supplemental military credits.	124-437-25 failed	0-27-0-2 con

TABLE 5--Continued

Vote #--Date--Initiator --Description	Chamber	Centre Républicain
	Pro-Con-Ab* Action	Pro-Con-Ab- ^{**} Ol Reynaud's Vote
#653--12/18/34--Thiolas (Socialist) Amendment to nationalize armament industry	182-363-44 failed	0-27-0-2 con
#706--3/15/35--Blum--Proposal to prevent further military spending	176-365-44 failed	0-28-0-1 con
#707--3/15/35--Gov--Rejection of Fabry's plan to combine recruit- ment problem with army organi- zational reform	517-36-32 passed	16-11-1-1 con
#708--3/15/35--Laurent-Eynac (Radical)--Approval of Two Year Law	350-196-39 passed	27-1-0-1 pro
#723--3/25/35--Auriol--Proposal to block expenditures on naval reform program	157-409-15 failed	0-27-0-2 con
#724--3/25/35--Gov--On the credits for naval reform (1,065 million francs for new man of war, two torpedo boats, and stock)	445-127-10 passed	27-0-0-2 pro
#726--3/25/35--Gov--Proposal to improve civil defense in wartime	455-11-113 passed	27-0-0-2 pro
#784--12/14/35--Planche (Socialist) --Amendment to suppress armament credits for 1936 (Art 12)	134-337-105 failed	0-28-0-1 con

SOURCES: JOC, 1933: pp. 774-75, 776-77, 1059-60, 4727-28, 4731-2; 1934: pp. 1510-11, 1511-12, 1561-62, 3337-39; 1935: pp. 1057-61, 1295-97, 1322-23, and 2560-62.

*Abstention

**On leave

***Government

as on June 14 and December 18, 1934, and attempts to prevent further military spending as on March 15, 25, and December 14, 1935. The Socialists further attempted to limit the manufacture of arms by proposing a nationalization of the armaments industry on December 18, 1934.⁷⁴ On all of these bills, the Socialists joined by the Communists were defeated by Reynaud, the Centre Républicain, and a center-right coalition supported by the Radicals.

On measures aimed at strengthening defense such as the June 15, 1934 and March 25, 1935 requests for additional funds by the war and naval departments, the passage of the Two Year Law on March 25, 1935, and the improvement of civil defense on March 25, 1935, Reynaud and his party supported the proposals.⁷⁵

It was on a measure connected to the debate over the Two Year Law that Reynaud's group split. The bill, Fabry's previously discussed proposal of March 15, 1935,⁷⁶ would have slightly strengthened Flandin's legislation. In this respect, it was of secondary importance. Still, the Centre Républicain was divided on the issue, a fact that indicated the internal weakness of the group.

⁷⁴Votes: 556, 557, 652, 706, 723, 784, 653.

⁷⁵Votes: 560, 724, 708, 726.

⁷⁶Vote: 707.

In the fifteenth legislature, Reynaud's votes for the most part reflected his ideas on foreign policy. On the Four Power Pact, an agreement whereby Italy, Germany, England and France agreed to seek no territorial changes without the approval of the League of Nations, Reynaud, as noted in Table 6, p. 139, voted against its discussion on April 6, 1933 and against its approval on June 9, 1933.⁷⁷ To Reynaud, as he stated in La France a sauvé l'Europe, the pact was a walking invitation for the dictators to test the effectiveness of the Versailles Treaty by demanding revision.⁷⁸

Reynaud was not opposed, however, to coming to terms with Mussolini as evidenced on March 22, 1935 when the Centre Républicain and he approved the Rome Pact.⁷⁹ This accord, designed as a good will measure toward Mussolini, ceded Italy some desert territory in southern Libya and Somaliland, transferred shares in the Djibuti-Addis Ababa Railroad to Italy, allowed settlers in Tunisia to keep their Italian nationality, and insured that both France and Italy would consult with each other so as to preserve the status quo in the Danube and Balkan regions.⁸⁰

⁷⁷Votes: 235, 299.

⁷⁸Reynaud, La France a sauvé l'Europe, 2:88-89.

⁷⁹Vote: 719.

⁸⁰On page 63 of Reynaud's In the Thick of the Fight 1930-1945, trans. James D. Lambert (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951), the centrist deputy stated that the

TABLE 6

SELECTED FOREIGN POLICY VOTES
 THE CHAMBER, PAUL REYNAUD AND HIS POLITICAL GROUP
 (Fifteenth Legislature: 6/1/32 - 3/21/36)

Vote #--Date--Initiator --Description	Chamber	Centre Républicain
	Pro-Con-Ab Action	Pro-Con-Ab-01** Reynaud's Vote
#235--4/6/33--Marin (Rightist)-- Rejection of Four Power Pact talks	105-421-71 failed	28-0-1-0 pro
#267--5/18/33--Torrès (Independent Left)--Approve Franco-Soviet Pact.	554-1-41 passed	24-1-3-1 pro
#299--6/9/33--Herriot (Radical)-- Four Power Pact approved.	413-163-23 passed	0-28-0-1 con
#376--11/14/33--Delbos (Radical)-- Approve pacifism of country and safety through League of Nations.	533-10-48 passed	23-0-4-2 abstained
#377--11/14/33--Delbos--Approve government's attempt to realize a controlled and guaranteed disarmament.	389-158-44 passed	0-27-0-2 con
#378--11/14/33-- ___ --On both votes # 376 and #377.	394-144-54 passed	0-26-1-2 con
#719--3/22/35--Government--Rome Pact	560-10-17 passed	28-0-0-1 pro
#793--12/28/35--Delbos--Continue to interpellate Laval's foreign policy.	276-296-20 failed	1-26-1-1 pro
#794--12/28/35--Chappedelaine (Radical Left)--Approval of Laval's foreign policy (Hoare- Laval Pact).	304-261-28 passed	26-0-2-1 abstained
#823--2/27/36--Government--Ratify Franco-Soviet Pact.	353-164-45 passed	1-25-2-1 pro

SOURCES: JOC, 1933: pp. 1955-56, 2463-64, 2863-64, 4141-44;
 1935: pp. 1213-14, 2885-87; 1936: pp. 647-48.

*Abstention

**On leave

Reynaud and the rest of the chamber were not aware of the secret understanding attached to this pact as agreed to by Laval the previous January in which Italy was to receive a free hand in Ethiopia. When Italy invaded Ethiopia in October of 1935, Laval true to the arrangement, avoided league sanctions by signing with British Foreign Minister Hoare (December 7, 1935), a secret agreement carving up Ethiopia into economic spheres with the biggest piece going to Italy.

When the Hoare-Laval deal leaked to the press, the French premier was questioned (interpellated) by the chamber on December 28, 1935 as to why league sanctions had not been applied. Reynaud who had played an important role in attacking Laval was the only member of his political group to vote for continued cross examination of the Premier.⁸¹ When approval of Laval's foreign policy was sought on the same day, Reynaud and one other member of the Centre Républicain withheld it by abstaining.⁸² It was after these votes and Reynaud's speech against Italian aggression that a shocked and dismayed Tardieu withdrew from the Centre Républicain. The pro-Italian, pro-Laval sympathizers as well as those deputies of center-right who wanted to keep

colonial compensations in the Rome Pact had been promised to Italy under article 13 of the Treaty of April 26, 1915.

⁸¹Vote: 793.

⁸²Vote: 794.

the government from drifting left had an enemy in the midst: Paul Reynaud.

Leaving the Ethiopian crisis and returning to 1933--an era when the intentions of Hitler were not entirely understood--the votes of November 14, 1933 found Radical Yvons Delbos endorsing in a piecemeal fashion, the foreign policy of Radical Premier, Albert Sarraut. The first portion of this, a proposal approving the country's pacifism and safety through the League of Nations, saw Reynaud and three other members of the Centre Républicain abstain.⁸³ Later, when Delbos couched the second part of his proposal around disarmament and combined parts one and two, Reynaud and the majority of his group voted against the measures.⁸⁴ Thus it was evident early on in the thirties that Reynaud did not feel disarmament and pacifism were the solutions to France's defense problems.

The two foreign policy votes of the legislature that should have given Reynaud the most satisfaction were the Franco-Soviet Pacts of May 18, 1933 and February 27, 1936.⁸⁵ The first treaty was a reciprocal agreement not to join any coalition directed against the other country and the second provided for military aid of one country for the

⁸³Vote: 376.

⁸⁴Votes: 377 and 378.

⁸⁵Votes: 267 and 823.

other in case of attack by a third. The trouble with the February 29, 1936 agreement was that intervention could not take place until the League of Nations and the members of the Locarno Treaties had been consulted. By that time, the enemy could have either signatory at its mercy or defeated. In spite of this weakened arrangement--thanks to Laval and his War Minister Fabry neither of whom trusted the Russians--Reynaud was the only deputy in his political group to vote for the February 27, 1936 measure. Passed at a time when the preelectoral campaign of the Communist supported Popular Front was gaining ground, the Franco-Russian Pact for a goodly portion of the center-right aroused feelings of apprehension rather than of relief.

In the sixteenth legislature, Reynaud joined a group called the Gauche Démocratique et Radicaux Indépendants. Composed of thirty-eight deputies⁸⁶ among who was included Pierre-Etienne Flandin, the Alliance faced a chamber dominated by the Popular Front ministry which in turn faced the burden of rearmament and military preparedness. This centered around four areas: 1) control over the production of war manufactures; 2) military strategy; 3) organization of the nation in time of war; and 4) military expenditures.

⁸⁶The roster in 1936 showed forty-two deputies and in 1939, forty-one. However, the number of original deputies who were still with the Alliance in 1939 was thirty-eight. See JOC, June 12, 1936, p. 1444 and June 1, 1939, p. 1449.

In the first category, the Socialists, concerned with the threat from war profiteers or marchands de canons, had the armaments industry nationalized on July 17, 1936 as indicated in Table 7, p. 144.⁸⁷ Reynaud who had supported a more modified form of control on the previous day had abstained on the nationalization vote. Immediately evident from these votes was the lack of influence within the Alliance of both Reynaud and Flandin. The latter was the sole abstention on the July 16, 1936 vote calling for state controls.⁸⁸ The former was among the ten abstentions on the July 17, 1936 vote in which a majority of the Alliance voted for nationalization. On this measure, Flandin was absent.

On the votes of February 2 and November 19, 1937,⁸⁹ measures affirming Daladier's credo of Maginot Line and couverture, the Alliance split into a group of abstaining deputies that included Flandin and a number of opposing deputies that included Reynaud. It was these votes that demonstrated the "politicking" that dominated such important issues as national defense. An avid supporter of Daladier's military strategy, Flandin, by his abstentions was saying,

⁸⁷Vote: 57.

⁸⁸Vote: 52.

⁸⁹Votes: 270 and 419.

TABLE 7

SELECTED NATIONAL DEFENSE VOTES
 THE CHAMBER, PAUL REYNAUD AND HIS POLITICAL GROUP
 (Sixteenth Legislature: 6/1/36 - 7/10/40)

Vote #--Date--Initiator --Description	Chamber Pro-Con-Ab* Action	Gauche Démocratique et Radicaux Indépendants
		Pro-Con-Ab-01** Reynaud's Vote
#52--7/16/36--Valentin (Rightist) --State control over armament industry rather than national- ization	164-393-37 failed	32-0-1-5 pro
#57--7/17/36--Government--Arma- ment industry nationalized.	487-68-41 passed	21-2-10-5 abstained
#270--2/2/37--La Chambre (Radical) --Approval of Daladier's national defense policy.	413-124-64 passed	2-12-21-3 con
#419--11/19/37--Elbel (Radical) --Approval of Daladier's national defense policy.	399-160-50 passed	1-15-21-1 con
#593--3/24/38--Government-- Organization of nation in time of war.	603-0-0 passed	38-0-0-0 pro
#596--4/6/38--Government--Blum gets decree laws to cope with defense costs.	311-250-42 passed	0-37-0-1 con
#672--3/18/39--Kerillis (Indep. Repub.)--Daladier cannot have decree law powers.	265-323-6 failed	0-37-0-1 con
#677--3/18/39--Government-- Daladier gets decree laws for national defense.	321-264-6 passed	35-1-1-2 pro
#694--5/12/39--Chichery (Radical) --Approval of Daladier's handling of defense costs.	367-233-13 passed	38-0-0-0 pro

SOURCES: JOC, 1936: pp. 1977-78, 2002-3; 1937: pp. 317-18,
 2502-3; 1938: pp. 969-70, 1112-13; 1939: pp. 1089-90, 1095-96,
 1348-49.

*Abstention. **On leave.

"I support your policy but not the political baggage (the Socialists) that makes up the Popular Front cabinet."⁹⁰

One of the few measures where both the Alliance and the chamber supported the government was on the bill designed to organize the nation in time of war. Voted on March 24, 1938, the project relegated the general direction of war to the government and the conduct of operations to the chief of the general staff who was commander-in-chief in time of war. Included in the measure were plans for civil defense, the role to be played by public officials, the use of manpower and other resources as well as the general economic organization of the nation.⁹¹

On the remaining defense votes of the legislature--primarily concerned with requests for decree laws so as to better handle military expenses--Reynaud, Flandin, as well as the majority of the Alliance voted against Blum and for Daladier.

Blum, who in his second ministry forecast immense rearmament bills, requested plenary powers on April 6, 1938.⁹² The measure, which allowed the premier to enact

⁹⁰At the time of the February 2, 1937 votes, Blum was premier. On November 19, 1937, he was vice-president of the cabinet under Chautemps.

⁹¹Secrétariat d'état à la guerre, Loi du 11 juillet sur l'organisation générale de la nation pour le temps de guerre (Versailles: Imprimerie de l'Intendance, n.d. [?1951]).

⁹²Vote: 596.

legislation without the immediate approval of Parliament, passed in the chamber but failed in the Senate--forcing Blum out on April 9, 1938. His program for decree law powers understood a tax on capital as well as control of the international exchange, measures abhorrent not only to the center and right but also to a number of Radicals who voted against the bill.

Blum's successor, Daladier, was luckier. Having extended his cabinet right to include independent, Georges Mandel, and centrist, Paul Reynaud, he was successful in obtaining the decree laws on March 18, 1939,⁹³ although not without some difficulty.

Kerillis, clearly unhappy about the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Hitler three days before, proposed on the same day, a measure to reject giving Daladier the full powers.⁹⁴ Kerillis' proposal having failed, these decree laws served as a green light to Finance Minister Reynaud to continue his economic recovery program, an important part of which lay in finding the funds necessary to meet defense costs.

At the same time, the full powers were used by the government to voluntarily increase defense expenditures from twenty-five to forty billion francs on April 21, 1939; and even though he had the right to exercise these powers

⁹³Vote: 677.

⁹⁴Vote: 672.

through November 1939, Daladier allowed Radical party whip, Albert Chichery, to ask for a vote of approval on May 12, 1939 concerning a loan to meet defense needs.⁹⁵

All in all, the record of the sixteenth legislature on national defense was not encouraging in terms of bringing the chamber together to meet the foreign threat. Except for the organization of the nation in time of war bill, the votes were marked by a high rate of opposition and abstentionism first by the center and right toward the Popular Front and then by the extreme left toward the moderate orientation of the Daladier cabinet. Economics without a doubt played a key role in the failure of the Popular Front whose beginning saw the Socialists in ascendancy but who in the end wound up in the opposition.

Economics also saw Reynaud elected to the finance ministry in the fall of 1938. The price he paid to restore France's shattered finances was considerable. It meant supporting Daladier which in turn meant placing a muzzle on his defense views. Thus this legislature saw a lower level of correlation between Reynaud's defense views than in those reflected by his votes during the fifteenth.

Loss of initiative in the realm of foreign affairs marked the chamber from 1936-39. While collective security had been the aim of the previous legislature, the sixteenth

⁹⁵Vote: 694. Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:253, and JOC, May 12, 1939, p. 1318.

chamber turned its gaze inward attempting to impede at times the realization of that goal. This was particularly true of the center-right opposition which was not particularly excited about throwing itself into the arms of the Soviets while a Popular Front ministry reigned. Thus on July 10, 1936 (Table 8, p. 149), Kerillis demanded an investigation of a plan by the air force to ship the prototype of a French canon to Russia.⁹⁶ Kerillis, remarking that the French did not have a definitive military agreement with the Soviets, was supported in his request by the center-right which included a majority of the Alliance as well as Reynaud.

Further weakness was evident when the chamber voiced its approval of expressions aimed at mutual assistance, but in fact did little to expedite the passage of legislation capable of realizing this goal. This is clear in the votes of December 9, 1937 and February 26, 1938.⁹⁷ The former talked about peace through social progress, collective security, and the League of Nations while the latter, following a speech by Premier Chautemps, affirmed France's loyalty to Czechoslovakia and her concern for the situation in central Europe. Reynaud as well as a majority of the Alliance abstained on both issues. Two and a half weeks thereafter, Hitler occupied Austria.

⁹⁶Vote: 49.

⁹⁷Votes: 438 and 548.

TABLE 8

SELECTED FOREIGN POLICY VOTES
THE CHAMBER, PAUL REYNAUD AND HIS POLITICAL GROUP
(Sixteenth Legislature: 6/1/36 - 7/10/40)

Vote #--Date--Initiator --Description	<u>Chamber</u> Pro-Con-Ab* Action	<u>Gauche Démocratique et Radicaux Indépendants</u> Pro-Con-Ab-Ol** Reynaud's Vote
#49--7/10/36--Kerillis (Indep. Repub.)--Demand for investigation of why a French canon of national defense interest will be delivered to the Soviet Union	162-403-29 failed	33-0-3-2 pro
#88--7/31/36--Février (Socialist)--Approval of Blum's foreign policy.	385-190-15 passed	0-31-1-6 con
#187--12/5/36--Campinchi (Radical)--Approval of Blum's foreign policy (nonintervention in Spain).	350-171-77 passed	5-29-2-2 con
#254--1/15/37--Government--Prevent the departure of volunteers for Spain.	591-0-0 passed	37-0-0-1 pro
#438--12/9/37--Government--Chautemps ministry refuses to discuss further its foreign affairs policy: peace through alliances and League of Nations.	383-96-130 passed	2-1-34-1 abstained
#548--2/26/38--Chichery (Radical)--Approval of Chautemps' foreign policy.	439-2-170 passed	4-0-32-2 abstained
#584--3/22/38--des Isnards (Repub. Federation)--Demands to know whether arms are being shipped to Spain (Government rejects this priority question).	63-388-146 failed	1-2-34-1 abstained
#585--3/22/38--Marin (Republican Federation)--On the priority quest demanding the continuation of discussion on nonintervention in Spain.	155-398-44 failed	33-2-2-1 pro

TABLE 8: Continued

Vote #--Date--Initiator --Description	Chamber Pro-Con-Ab* Action	<u>Gauche Démocratique et Radicaux Indépendants</u> Pro-Con-Ab-01** Reynaud's Vote
#612--10/4/38--Government-- Daladier government tables Chichery's interpellation on foreign policy and moves to adjourn (approval of Munich agreement).	535-75-2 passed	38-0-0-0 pro
#623--12/30/38--Rous (Socialist) Full amnesty for French volunteers in Spain.	335-234-40 passed	1-33-4-0 abstained
#636--1/26/39--Chichery (Radical)--Approval of Daladier's position on foreign policy: continuation of nonintervention in Spain.	379-232-3 passed	38-0-0-0 pro
#659--2/24/39--Government-- Daladier rejects demand of Forcinal (Independent Socialist) for an explanation of whether France will legally recognize the government of Franco while Italian and German troops are still on Spanish soil.	323-261-16 passed	37-0-0-1 pro
#671--3/16/39--Government-- Financial assistance to Spanish refugees in France.	401-127-63 passed***	7-7-23-1 pro

SOURCES: JOC, 1936: pp. 1908-9, 2349-50, 3377-78; 1937: pp. 63-64, 2824-25; 1938: pp. 660-62, 916-18, 1596-98, 2235-36; 1939: pp. 265-66, 714-15, 1018-19.

*Abstention. **On leave. ***This vote was recorded as having failed but the absolute majority needed was only 265. The section of the debates for March 16, 1939 that pertained to aid for the refugees concluded by passing the relief measure (See JOC, March 16, 1939, p. 1004). When a print out of voters for and against the measure was recorded in the voting tabulation several pages after, the vote was recorded as having failed.

Later, an additional measure reflected not only the abdication of collective security but also an "action after the fact" vote. This was the proposal of October 4, 1938 or the approval of the Munich settlement.⁹⁸ Although done in an indirect manner by having Radical whip Albert Chichery's interpellation of foreign policy tabled, it did in fact imply that the chamber, outside of the Communists and Kerillis, was overwhelmingly satisfied with Daladier's capitulation on the Sudetenland question. Reynaud, once antimunichois and an ardent foe of appeasement but now a member of the Daladier government, voted in support of the motion.

One of the worse blunders committed by Blum and subsequent ministries was the decision for nonintervention in Spain. Occupying nine out of thirteen votes presented in Table 8, the war forced Blum into a position of neutrality on the grounds that England, for fear of a spreading war in Europe, opposed intervention, and that such intervention would open France to a potentially third hostile frontier on the Pyrenees. Thus in a gradual fashion, France closed the border to the passage of weapons.

This was done in a stop-start fashion. On July 31, 1936, Blum requested approval of his foreign policy which included a general statement of nonintervention but which

⁹⁸Vote: 612.

reserved the right to ship arms if Germany and Italy did so. Then on December 5, 1936, the Socialist Premier requested approval of his foreign policy which consisted of completely closing the frontier to the shipment of arms.⁹⁹ All seventy-seven Communists abstained on this last measure. They were in fact completely disillusioned with Blum who they felt should have surely supported the Spanish Republic, a regime whose political composition was similar to that of the Popular Front's. Indeed, this was the first crack in the marriage between the French Socialists and Communists.

Reynaud voted against both these measures. Because these bills were blanket statements approving government policy,¹⁰⁰ Reynaud was not simply voting against nonintervention in Spain. In fact in his Mémoires, Reynaud used the debate of July 1936 to discuss in general the feeble policy of Blum in the aftermath of the Rhineland coup and continuing aggression in Ethiopia.¹⁰¹ Still, he summed up the situation in Spain--in a rare reference to the civil

⁹⁹Votes: 88, 187.

¹⁰⁰The researcher in dealing with many of these votes is often confronted with vague or generalized statements on which the vote is taken. The vote of December 5, 1936 stated: "The Chamber approving the policy followed by the Government in order to assure the maintenance of European peace; confident in it to continue to defend the interests and the security of France and rejecting anything else, passes to the order of the day." Thus one is often forced to refer to the debate to focus on the main matter at hand. See JOC, December 5, 1936, p. 3377.

¹⁰¹Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:79, 82.

war--as the end result of a policy of pacifism and appeasement.¹⁰²

Reynaud, however, did not reproduce in his Mémoires his speeches examined in Chapter Two in which he stated that France, because of her internal weaknesses and need to keep communications open with her North African colonies, had to avoid becoming enmeshed amidst the quarreling factions.¹⁰³ This was in fact a position of neutrality and from this it can be deduced that if the measure of July had been limited to nonintervention and if the government that had proposed the measure had been politically favored, Reynaud would have voted for nonintervention.

When the French cabinet under Blum reopened the frontier on March 17, 1938 in order to let Russian arms across, Colonel des Isnards, a rightist, a member of the chamber army commission, and a foe of Franco-Russian collaboration demanded to know whether arms were being sent to Spain.¹⁰⁴ Although the demand was rejected and Reynaud abstained, he voted for the continuation of the discussion requested by Marin on the same day.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁰³JOC, July 31, 1936, p. 2307 and December 4, 1936, p. 3323.

¹⁰⁴Vote: 584.

¹⁰⁵Vote: 585.

Contrast these indecisive and negative votes with that cast by Reynaud on January 26, 1939.¹⁰⁶ Now a member of Daladier's cabinet, he voted for nonintervention. While this vote was also cast as a general approval of Daladier's foreign policy, the debate had centered on nonintervention and Daladier's support of it. In actuality, the general tenor of Daladier's foreign policy--appeasement as at Munich--was not much different than the feeble policy of Blum which Reynaud had criticized and voted against. Thus one can hardly escape the conclusion that Reynaud in terms of his votes was not the "lone wolf" he labeled himself in his postwar work, In the Thick of the Fight; but, rather, he was a joueur (player) in the parliamentary game of Third Republican politics: a man who because of his ministerial position sacrificed the integrity of his national defense views both on the armored corps and in the realm of foreign policy.¹⁰⁷

Another aspect of the January 26, 1939 vote was that Daladier, prior to this date, had delayed the passage through French canals of two Russian boats loaded with weapons. Destined to assist the Republican forces pinned down at Barcelona, the Russian ships were held up for two weeks after which time Daladier declared it was too late to

¹⁰⁶Vote: 636.

¹⁰⁷Reynaud, In the Thick of the Fight, p. 1.

help which in fact it was as Barcelona fell on January 26, 1939. Reynaud, A staunch promoter of improved Franco-Russian relations, had voted in support of a premier who had bottlenecked the Russians in their attempt to help relieve the siege of the Spanish loyalists.

Aside from votes pertaining directly to governmental nonintervention, other measures concerned French volunteers and Spanish refugees. On January 15, 1937, the French chamber unanimously forbade the departure of volunteers for service among the warring armies.¹⁰⁸ However, on December 30, 1938, the same chamber granted amnesty to French volunteers who had returned from service in the war.¹⁰⁹ On this vote, the center-right as well as some Radicals voted against. Ministers Reynaud, Daladier, and Mandel abstained. Daladier, now dependent on a left-center coalition to maintain power, sought safety in neutrality.

The situation was different for the Spanish refugees who since January 28, 1939 had been fleeing across the Pyrenees at the rate of 15,000 a day. By the time the chamber examined a relief measure to assist these starving soldiers as well as civilian men, women, and children, more than 490,000 of them were in France. The nation which unofficially had already spent \$2,288,000 (88,000,000 francs)

¹⁰⁸Vote: 254.

¹⁰⁹Vote: 623.

on the refugees was on March 16, 1939 asked to give more.¹¹⁰ Reynaud along with the extreme left, the left and some center voted the relief bill while another portion of the center and right opposed it leaving sixty-three centrists to abstain.

On this measure, the position of the Alliance again demonstrated the internal weakness of the group. Reynaud and six others voted for the aid, seven voted against it, and twenty-three including Flandin abstained. On the two other occasions where Reynaud and Flandin split over the Spanish Civil War, no discernible pattern can be established other than the fact neither man played a guiding light within the group. Although Flandin voted against amnesty on December 30, 1938--his ballot being one of thirty-two against--, on the December 5, 1936 motion, Flandin was one of only five who voted for Blum's policy of nonintervention.

On the recognition of the Franco regime by the chamber on February 24, 1939, Reynaud and the majority of the Alliance supported the government.¹¹¹ This was done in spite of the continued presence of German and Italian troops on Spanish soil, a situation that violated the non-intervention accords set up in London.¹¹²

¹¹⁰Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, p. 575. Vote: 671.

¹¹¹Vote: 659. Formal recognition occurred on February 27, 1939.

¹¹²Shortly after the outbreak of the war, a nonintervention committee composed of the major European powers met

In a sense, Reynaud's votes on the Spanish Civil War ranging from neutrality to nonintervention were like the disastrous approval of the Munich Accords. After it became clear that Italy and Germany were continuing to send troops and arms to Spain in violation of nonintervention, France, except for occasionally allowing the passage of Russian arms did little to help the Republican forces. It was this policy that Hugh Thomas called "craven indolence"¹¹³ --proof to the dictators that England and France were ready to be challenged in other areas of the European theater.

Brian Crozier, a biographer of Franco, has stated that if Republican forces had won, Spain would certainly have gone Communist.¹¹⁴ Surely this was the fear of many deputies who in seeing Russian arms being shipped to the loyalists had visions of a Stalin supported regime at the back door. Puzzo, however, blamed the initial failure of the French to supply arms as the reason why the Communist element in the Frente Popular gained strength. The Spanish Republic was forced to turn more and more to the Soviets for military assistance and this naturally enhanced the prestige of the Communists in their coalition with the Republicans and Socialists.

periodically in London in order to determine if violations had occurred.

¹¹³ Thomas, Spanish Civil War, p. 615.

¹¹⁴ Crozier, De Gaulle, p. 72.

Puzzo, moreover, states that the prime factor motivating the Soviets in extending aid was not for ideological or political reasons but to bring an end to the policy of appeasement and to "refurbish the system of collective security" with Britain and France against the fascist powers.¹¹⁵

What eventually developed after Franco's victory was the adherence of Spain to the Anti-Comintern Pact (March 26, 1939), an arrangement in which Germany, Japan, Italy, and Spain solidified fascist ties by pledging their mutual opposition to the Communist International. In the case of Spain, these ties were reinforced on March 31, 1939 by a five year friendship treaty with Germany. This was hardly the result Reynaud anticipated when he noted in a radio speech of March 1938 that "Since the beginning of the Spanish affair, I [have] said to the chamber that the interests of the [Spanish] party who would win would be one in common with those of France. . . ." ¹¹⁶

Reynaud, who has said little of the Spanish Civil War in his personal accounts, is in a sense no different than many other French contemporaries of the period. John Dreifort in his recent work on Yvon Delbos has commented on the paucity of personal accounts on the Spanish conflict, thus leaving the historian with a situation difficult to

¹¹⁵Puzzo, Spain and the Great Powers, pp. 83, 243.

¹¹⁶L'Oeuvre (Paris), March 29, 1938, p. 4.

reconstruct in terms of motives.¹¹⁷ In the end, however, Reynaud's chamber speeches, radio discourses, press articles, and a goodly portion of his votes proved his desire to have France remain neutral which in the Europe of the 1930s was appeasement.

Conclusions

Reynaud's failure to get his armored corps across must be judged in light of the fact the French Chamber of Deputies was not the ideal place to examine such an issue. It was rife with weaknesses one of which was the legislative record left to history. In 1933, without a proper understanding of Hitler and his designs, the chamber proceeded to reduce military expenditures and troop levels, a pattern which it later had to reverse. Its votes on foreign affairs: the Four Power Pact, the Rome Pact, the Franco-Soviet Accord, approval of Laval's foreign policy and that of Daladier's at the time of Munich were weak, or recognized the need for revision of the Versailles Treaty, or attempted to appease fascist aggressors.

In addition, the French deputies demonstrated a limited understanding of military affairs. Removed from the high command--the Bernier Resolution debate, an example--and

¹¹⁷ John Dreifort, Yvon Delbos at the Quai D'Orsay, French Foreign Policy during the Popular Front: 1936-38 (Wichita, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1975), pp. 33-34.

the problems at stake, the chamber for the most part failed to grasp the revolution in military strategy that characterized the postwar years. Part of this was due to the discouraging atmosphere of political and ideological factionalism that interfered with a dynamic approach to critical issues. The best example of this was the debate over the Two Year Law conducted at a time when major reform and change were needed. Flandin, to keep himself in office, proposed only an extension of military service, a measure which in itself was weakly worded and vague.

The chamber more or less relinquished control over defense matters to the war ministers especially Daladier whose budgets and decree laws were repeatedly passed with no satisfactory alternative presenting itself. Such a chamber could hardly be expected to handle anything as strategically sophisticated as Reynaud's armored corps. Moreover, the army commission which acted as a steering committee for much defense legislation was content with existing strategy and army organization. If such was the position of the commission, how could the chamber be expected to take the initiative in defense reform?

A critical aspect of Reynaud's armored corps that was unacceptable was the idea of a separate, professional army, a concept Reynaud tried to counter with his fer de lance theory but which nevertheless stuck--being helped to do so by de Gaulle's book, Vers l'armée de métier. Another

objection was recruitment possibilities. Where were the troops to come from and how would Reynaud's armored corps soldiers be replaced if decimated in action?

On these two points, Reynaud failed to properly reckon that: 1) French Republican tradition since the Revolution had been that of one, unified army (levée en masse) where specially trained troops were looked upon as a potential threat to peace (It was this reasoning that prompted Blum to ask if these mobilized units would prepare the country for a "great Napoleonic scheme" and Daladier, to warn that such a force would be an open invitation to the right Frenchman to make a "tour de l'Europe"¹¹⁸); and 2) because of World War I and the resultant huge loss of life, the French were particularly sensitive to schemes that suggested additional sacrifices. Thus it was not sufficient to point out that if the armored corps did its job, it would thwart the enemy and bring the war to a successful conclusion. To preserve its precious strategy of lightning maneuver and armored offensive warfare, the plan should have been padded against anticipated contingencies such as loss of life. In this respect, closer ties with the national army whose troops if properly skilled could have filled in casualty gaps was the best solution.

¹¹⁸JOC, March 15, 1935, p. 1025 and January 29, 1937, p. 258.

In the chamber, there were deputies who to varying degrees supported Reynaud's views but they were politically weak. More important personages were alienated from Reynaud or disaffected by his views or both; and if Reynaud could draw widespread applause from the chamber, it was transitory and without effect since there was no party to push his views.

Reynaud's political groups, the Centre Républicain and the Alliance, proved to be of little help amidst their differences and divisions. When Reynaud because of illness was absent from the chamber on December 26, 1935, the date his amendment was scheduled to be discussed, no one from the Centre Républicain defended his views.¹¹⁹ A year later, on March 28, 1938, practically no one from the Alliance supported Reynaud's proposal for a national union government.

From this, it can be concluded that Reynaud was an exceedingly bad politician, and yet this is an evaluation that carries both merits and disadvantages. Unfettered by party ties, he was free to develop his innovative system of defense, but in his isolation, he lacked the influence to make his views take hold. He was, in fact, the political counterpart to de Gaulle's isolation in the military world.

The rapid disintegration of Reynaud's defense views-- concurrent with his "burst of optimism phase"--took place

¹¹⁹ JOC, December 26, 1935, p. 2774. Even though Reynaud's measure had been voted down in the army commission, it was still entitled to a hearing in the chamber.

during Daladier's prewar cabinet of 1938-39. After he joined the Radical premier at the justice ministry on April 11, 1938 and then transferred to the finances on November 1, 1938, Reynaud voted for all the defense budgets as well as the measures approving foreign policy. This was done with the knowledge that Daladier was opposed to tactical warfare as laid down in Reynaud's amendment. It was done even though Daladier's policy of appeasement was opposed to Reynaud's concept of loyalty to allies especially in the case of Czechoslovakia.

The case of Spain also indicated that there were basic contradictions between what Reynaud said and how he voted or acted. By opting for nonintervention in co-operation with Great Britain, Reynaud defeated his foreign policy on two fronts: 1) by failing to come to the aid of a European democracy resisting fascist aggression and 2) in failing to further the aims of collective security by mutually assisting the Soviets in Spain and thus tightening the bond between Russia and France. This discrepancy became more pronounced after the commencement of the Daladier prewar ministry when it became clear both Italy and Germany were in violation of nonintervention in Spain.

In light of this pattern of action which on Spain predated the Daladier regime by two years, one tends to question the application to Reynaud of the phrase, antimunichois. Used loosely by historians to describe the

foes of appeasement in the last years of the Third Republic, it was meant to encompass those deputies who resisted fascist aggression. Surely this cannot apply to Reynaud's position on Spain over which he urged neutrality for fear of endangering the Marseilles-North Africa line of communication and later, recognition of the fascist regime of Franco helped to power by Germany and Italy. Reynaud's collaboration with Daladier and his refusal to bow out of the Radical's cabinet after Munich suggest that the term antimunichois was in this case, a misnomer.

Reynaud was totally submerged in the complicated politics of the last years of the Third Republic. In this respect, his voting pattern was motivated more by political or professional reasons than by his aforeexamined national defense views which in the end were limited in vision, were not well adapted to the climate of the chamber, and were crippled by Reynaud's parliamentary isolation.

CHAPTER IV

RESPONSE FROM THE MILITARY

The military who for the most part rejected Reynaud's ideas participated in only a portion of national defense administration which in France was controlled at the top by the Supreme Council of National Defense (CSDN). This body was made up of the premier, his war, navy, and air ministers, a research commission and the Secretariat General. Various members of the Supreme War Council (CSG) or high command attended in an advisory capacity but did not have the power to vote. Since the CSDN met infrequently during the 1930s, real control was vested in the premier and through him, in the war minister who convoked the CSG when he wanted advice. This arrangement truly reflected the aims of the founding fathers of the Third Republic who during the period of the provisional government (1871-75) had constructed a constitution giving ultimate power to the parliament. Thus the chamber approved premier appointed the war minister who in turn consulted the military leaders. Such a system intended that the army be kept strictly in a subordinate role, a position which would make a revolt or a coup difficult.

The CSG constituted the essence of the high command or general staff and included the war minister, the chief of

the general staff, the vice president of the same council, the three joint chiefs of staff (war, navy, air), the generals of the twelve largest divisions, the commander-in-chief of the troops in Morocco, the chief of staff of the colonies and Marshal Pétain. It served as an organ of study that the war minister consulted on such matters as mobilization, troop concentrations, adoption of new materials, and general organization of the army.

The Secretariat General, a body that directed defense expenditures and planning, weakened co-ordination by making itself directly responsible to the war minister instead of working jointly with the latter and the military chiefs. Administered by a controller general of the army but staffed to some extent by civilian personnel, the secretariat had representatives in most of the departments of national defense. Its unilateral decisions on finances, however, were often made without the consent of the high command, a factor that General Maxime Weygand has cited as having impeded defense efforts during the 1930s.¹

Weygand, who served as vice president of the CSG and generalissimo of French troops (de facto commander-in-chief) from 1931-35, was born an illegitimate in Brussels in 1867.

¹Weygand, Mémoires, 2:400. National defense organization in France during the interwar period was complicated. For an attempt at an explanation, see Lieutenant-Colonel Jean Vial, "La Défense nationale: son organisation entre les deux guerres," Revue d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale 1 (April 1953):11-32.

Physically small and high strung like Reynaud, he graduated in 1887 from St. Cyr (the French West Point) after which he taught at Saumer. In 1914, he became the military adjutant of Marshal Foch who in suffering from a difficulty in expressing himself made excellent use of Weygand's talent for translating ideas into an orderly and effective exposé.

Weygand, a general in 1918 (even though he had never commanded troops in action), became in the same year, France's permanent representative at the Versailles peace negotiations. Sent to Poland as the military advisor to Marshal Pilsudski in 1920, he was instrumental in pushing back the Russians which in turn brought a Polish victory the following year. In 1922, he put down a revolt in Syria and the year after, he became the high commissioner for both that country and Libya. In 1924, Weygand not only became director of the Centre des Hautes Etudes Militaires but also a member of the CSG. Appointed chief of the general staff in 1930, he was, following Pétain's retirement in 1931, made vice president of the CSG, generalissimo, and inspector general of the army, all at the age of sixty-four.²

Thus from 1931 to January of 1935, he held the nation's top military titles, an unenviable position since

²In 1929, Pétain suggested Weygand's name as his successor in the position of chief of the general staff, but Minister of War Paul Painlevé objected on the grounds that Weygand, a practicing Catholic and member of the Republican Federation, posed a possible threat to the regime. Painlevé was replaced by André Maginot and Weygand was appointed.

his time was spent arguing with Minister of War Daladier over budget cuts, dismissal of officers and troop reductions. Later, after the Stavisky riots when Daladier was replaced by the more sympathetic Doumergue government, Weygand was occupied by the effects of the approaching années creuses and the solution he felt was needed, the Two Year Law. Because of these problems and his other duties, Weygand as he noted in his Mémoires had little time for technical questions.³ To his credit, the General did motorize certain divisions as well as parts of others, and he did initiate the development of a DLM which in maneuvers during 1932, however, did not live up to expectations.⁴

Weygand was sixty-eight and retired when Reynaud and de Gaulle took their campaign to the public in March 1935. Yet in a series of articles in the influential Revue des deux mondes and other journals, he repeatedly expressed his opposition to the armored corps. France, noted Weygand, could not have two armies. The armored corps would turn the national army into one of second choice: ". . . a National Guard without pride and enthusiasm."⁵ From the viewpoint of

³Weygand, Mémoires, 2:407.

⁴Gamelin, Servir, 2:83. The DLM developed from the détachement mécanique de combat or unité blindée.

⁵General Maxime Weygand, "L'Etat militaire de la France," Revue des deux mondes, October 15, 1936, p. 725; Weygand, "L'Unité de l'armée," Revue militaire générale 1 (January 1937):18; Weygand, "L'Armée d'aujourd'hui," Revue des deux mondes 40 (May 15, 1938):334; Weygand, "La France doit être aussi forte que sage," Agence littéraire

strategy, firepower, the lesson of the last war, remained all powerful while couverture and fortifications were the mainstays against attack.⁶

Although Weygand did not wholly commit himself to the defensive, he never formulated a novel tactical plan of attack or counter attack. Speed, maneuverability, and tank action remained for him a nebulous affair and his writings led the reader to expect a World War I frontal system to develop characterized by a static, linear conflict. Silent on the technical revolution in strategy and tactics, Weygand in 1937 wrote that "The military forces of France are in a material and moral state to respond to all that the service of the country demands of it."⁷

The same vagueness on the new techniques in warfare permeated the writings of the aged but revered Marshal Pétain, minister of war in 1934. Born in 1856, Pétain graduated from Saint-Cyr in 1878, entered the Ecole de Guerre or war college in 1888, and taught an infantry course at the latter from 1909 to 1910. He was gradually promoted by the seniority system so that in 1914, he had reached the rank of colonel. Pétain, by his famous defense of Verdun in

internationale service de presse, n.d., unpaginated [in Reynaud Papers, "Dossier Militaire 1936-1938," AN].

⁶Weygand, "L'Armée," Revue des deux mondes, May 15, 1938, pp. 325-26.

⁷General Maxime Weygand, La France est-elle défendue? (Paris: Flammarion, 1937), p. 46.

1916 and by his success in restoring morale and discipline among the northern armies in 1917, won for himself the title of Marshal of France in November 1918. In 1920, he was made vice president of the CSG, a position which automatically made him commander-in-chief designate in time of war. Two years later, he was appointed inspector general of the army. These positions made him the top ranking soldier in the French army up to the moment of his retirement in 1931.

Pétain, married for the first time after he had reached the age of sixty, could best be described as cautious. Possessed of excellent health and blessed with endurance and longevity, the Marshal, through the system of army advancement, moved slowly to the top ranks of the military in a way that others could have only done through war time service. Pétain, of peasant stock, was orientated toward the ancien regime: a nominal Catholic, a nationalist, and a monarchist who felt that Third Republican politics and politicians were totally corrupt and rotten. The assessment of some contemporaries that Pétain wavered between senility and rationality during the 1930s was perhaps an overaction to his innate qualities of aloofness and secretiveness.⁸

⁸The charge of senility is raised by Gamelin in Assemblée nationale, Témoignage et documents recueillis par la commission chargée d'enquêter sur les événements survenus en France de 1933 à 1945 [annexes-dépositions] (hereafter cited simply as Témoignage), 9 vols. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1951-52), 2:462. Jacques Szaluta, however, in an extensive study of works on the Marshal in his "Pétain between Two Wars: 1918-40. Interplay of Personality and Circumstance" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia

Pétain was ambitious. His official retirement in 1931, in fact, marked the beginning of his most active role in the history of the Third Republic. He was assisted in this course by the fact that he was a life member of both the CSG and the CSDN. Because of these positions and the hero worship given him by an uninformed public, Pétain wielded an influence on military history during the 1930s equivalent to that he exercised as commander-in-chief designate during the first postwar decade.⁹

This influence was used to keep his name in the running independently from the two most important soldiers of the thirties, Weygand and Gamelin. In 1932 and in opposition to both of these generals, the then retired Pétain informed the CSG that fortified centers from Montmédy to the coast were a mistake. As a result, the CSG in a June 4, 1932 meeting voted (much to the chagrin of Gamelin and Weygand) 7-6 against permanent fortifications of this sector. Instead, the Marshal proposed that the French army go into Belgium, a plan he advocated two years later as war minister.

University, 1971), pp. 249-51, states that this was due to his personality and that Pétain was "alert."

⁹"The mass of historical evidence," wrote Szaluta, "bears that [Colonel Alphonse] Goutard's thesis [on the effect of Pétain on military thought] is more nearly correct [than Alfred Conquet's]. Szaluta continued that "Pétain's influence permeated French military thought, and although he was not very active in propagating his ideas, his influence nevertheless was enormous." See Szaluta, "Marshal Pétain," p. 249.

In 1933, his chief of staff, General Auguste Laure, submitted a proposal to the war minister drastically altering the composition of France's twenty divisions, a plan constructed without the approval of either Gamelin or Weygand. Moreover in December 1933, when Weygand was soliciting support in opposition to the Bernier resolution, Pétain refused to inform him of his position until the moment of the showdown between Daladier and the CSG on December 18, 1933.¹⁰

Pétain also chartered an independent course vis à vis his aspiring literary career be it through books or journals such as Revue des deux mondes. His staff writers took his ideas and put them into words to which the name of Marshal Philippe Pétain was attached. In this respect, he came into a direct clash with de Gaulle who during the 1920s had been one of the Marshal's ghost writers but who now desired recognition. The affair concerned La France et son armée, published in 1938 under the authorship of de Gaulle. Prepared during the 1920s by de Gaulle, the manuscript was intended to reflect the ideas of Pétain on the French army down through the ages. When feelers were put out for publication around 1930, de Gaulle demanded credit. Although the book did not appear at that time, de Gaulle and

¹⁰Gamelin, Servir, 2:100; Bankwitz, Weygand, p. 103; David Coox, "French Military Doctrine 1919-1939: Concepts of Ground and Material Warfare" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1951), pp. 46-48. Pétain was opposed to the reduction of troops as anticipated by the Bernier resolution.

Pétain were alienated one from the other, a factor that did not favorably dispose Pétain to de Gaulle's military theories as later expounded by his political mentor, Reynaud.

In Pétain's defense, he was not unaware of certain aspects of the revolution in military strategy. A 1935 article written in Revue des deux mondes recognized that armored engines required new strategy and that success in avoiding stabilization of fronts demanded brutal aggression.¹¹ That same year in a speech at the Ecole de Guerre, the Marshall observed that victory would go to those who would be able to exploit modern engines to a maximum, combining their action in some plan so as to defeat the adversary.¹² Moreover, at St. Quentin on October 4, 1936, Pétain noted that the defensive had seen its day and that only modern means or the offensive would ultimately be effective.¹³

Pétain, however, never indicated the details of this plan and a result, ambiguity, confusion, and contradiction marked many of his more important pronouncements.

¹¹ Marshall Philippe Pétain, *La Sécurité de la France au cours des années creuses*, Revue des deux mondes 26 (March 1, 1935):i-xxi. Pétain supported Reynaud's idea of a unified command. He also foresaw that aviation would change future wars, how exactly was not clear. See Pétain, "Défense nationale et commandement unique," Revue des deux mondes, May 1, 1936, pp. 5-17 and Le Devoir des élites dans la défense nationale (Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault, 1939), pp. 26-27.

¹² Speech given on April 6, 1935. Michel Dacier, "Les Responsabilités politiques du désastre de 1940. A propos d'une lettre de M. Paul Reynaud," Ecrits de Paris, no. 236 (April 1965), p. 7.

¹³ Ibid.

This began with his appearance as war minister before the Senate army commission on March 7, 1934. French troops, Pétain told the senators, would move up into Belgium in case of attack.¹⁴ What strategy they would follow once there remained to be seen. No mention was made of whether tanks would be allowed to take independent action instead of being made subordinate to the infantry. Further, in his eight months as war minister, Pétain never made a public pronouncement on Vers l'armée de métier, then on sale in the bookstalls and at a time when Pétain had a great deal of influence. Later, when Gamelin suddenly became aware of the importance of armored divisions and tried to get the approval of the CSG on the matter, Pétain did not second Gamelin's request.

Pétain's first mention of Reynaud's proposal came in his preface to General Narcisse Chauvineau's 1939 book, Une Invasion est-il encore possible? In the forward, Pétain warned that the professional army risked having no tomorrow if no guarantee could be taken against its initial failure; and since reserves were lacking for this corps, its capabilities remained in doubt. Further, the Marshal stated: "It seems also that the technical possibilities of tanks and the possibilities of the command of armored divisions might not have been sufficiently studied." Pétain in fact anticipated the return to the 1914-18 system when he endorsed the

¹⁴Gamelin, Servir, 2:128.

"less ambitious but more sure" ideas of Chauvineau. "The outstanding merit of General Chauvineau," wrote Pétain, "will have been to show that the continuous front is at the same time founded on the lessons of history and on the technical effectiveness of arms and fortifications. . . ." ¹⁵

The Marshal in a course given at the Ecole de Sciences Politiques downplayed the effects of tanks which he claimed were limited as evidenced by the Spanish Civil War and which he felt should be kept strictly as accompaniment for the infantry. ¹⁶ In an incredibly naive passage which canceled out his previous insights, Pétain wrote:

But the era of technical surprise in relation to it [armored vehicles/tanks] is passed, and this has resulted from the development of the antitank weapon, an auxiliary weapon destined--like the artillery--to help the infantry. . . . The latter will stimulate defensive power which by means of permanent fortifications in open country will restrain the mobility [?of armored vehicles] and will necessitate a vast organization of the infantry proper to the defensive. ¹⁷

Mistaken on military strategy but venerated by both parliament and public alike, Pétain refused to withdraw from the military arena of the 1930s. His few observations on armored engines came after his eight months as war minister.

¹⁵General Narcisse Chauvineau, Une Invasion est-elle encore possible? with a Preface by Marshal Philippe Pétain (Paris: Editions Berger Levrault, 1939), pp. xii, xiii, xxi.

¹⁶Marshal Pétain et al., Cours de défense nationale (Paris: Ecole Libres des Sciences Politiques, 1939), pp. 103, 112.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 113.

Moreover, these later pronouncements were fragmentary, generalized and did not seize the initiative in working for a drastic alteration of the 1921 system. What benefit of truth that lay in them was eventually lost by his identification with poorly conceived and badly mistaken works. Pétain in the postwar parliamentary investigation implied that he was weak and lacked influence.¹⁸ If such was the case, why did he not retire instead of involving himself in the military-politico imbroglio of the 1930s?

General Maurice Gamelin, chief of the general staff and commander-in-chief designate from 1935-39, was more direct in his objections to Reynaud's project than either Weygand or Pétain. Born in 1872 and graduated from St. Cyr in 1893, Gamelin served on the staff of General Joffre from 1902 to 1911 and later became his military secretary or chef de cabinet. A major in the opening year of the First World War, Gamelin had been the first to grasp the significance of German General von Kluck's swing southeast (Schlieffen Plan) and as a result, he got Joffre to act immediately, an action which led to the Marne victory.

In 1916, Gamelin became brigadier general and in 1917-18, he served as commander of the ninth division, keeping it in action when in the last year of the war it was almost completely surrounded. Appointed head of a military mission to Brazil in 1919, Gamelin served there until 1925

¹⁸Témoignage, 1:167-70.

when he was transferred to Syria after which came his commission as commander of the twentieth army corps at Nancy (1929). In 1931, he was made chief of the general staff, a position which still left him subordinate to Weygand until the latter's retirement. In January of 1935, a sixty-three year old Gamelin became commander-in-chief.

A small, stout man, Gamelin has been described by various sources as learned, cerebral, academic, and skilled in the discussion of ideas--a characterization that suggested he had become another fatality of peacetime in which the practical skills of a military commander rusted. His relationship with his immediate subordinate, General Alphonse Georges, commander in chief of the important armies of the northeast, was less than harmonious, a situation which caused divided loyalties to develop in the highest ranks of the army. More important, Gamelin because of a basic personality clash, got on badly with Weygand with whom he had to work during the difficult period from 1931 to 1935. In contrast, he enjoyed good relations with Daladier (as well as with other key politicians such as Fabry) and on more than one occasion during the defense cuts and troop reductions of 1933, he sided with Daladier much to the chagrin of Weygand.

Gamelin in a 1935 report stressed that an armée de métier would: 1) result in two separate armies; 2) require too many men; and 3) cost too much. Moreover, the armored

corps would not lighten the tasks of the troops defending frontier fortifications and in actual combat, it would wear out too fast since properly trained replacements would be lacking.¹⁹

In another study, Gamelin questioned the effect the specialized corps would have on the morale of a national army relegated to a secondary position. Reynaud's proposal to teach and train the regular army's active and reserve ranks by members of the armored corps, Gamelin argued, was a serious error. The colonels of the regiments would feel alienated from their officers and men by the interference from this elite. A natural sense of inferiority was sure to follow. What France needed according to Gamelin was the opposite of Reynaud's proposal: one, single, unified army, an army with no preference given to any special sector.²⁰

Gamelin repeated the same idea when in response to the Blum ministry's demand for information on the armored corps, he wrote that the national army not the armée de métier had to be the dynamic element. Further, modern warfare envisaged the "saturation of fronts" which called more for large numbers of troops rather than for their specialization. Finally, the problems of instruction, supply,

¹⁹General Maurice Gamelin, Etude relative à l'amendement de Paul Reynaud, n.d., pp. 1, 3, 6-7 [in Reynaud Papers, "Dossier Militaire - 1935," AN].

²⁰Etat-major de l'armée, Examen du contre projet de M. Paul Reynaud, n.d., pp. 4-5, 7, 13 [in Reynaud Papers, "Dossier Militaire - 1935," AN].

antitank artillery, finances, and matériel all worked against justifying the glorified position of the armored corps.²¹

In spite of these objections, Gamelin was not opposed to moving in the direction of Reynaud's instrument of maneuver. He was aware, in fact, that tanks were more important than permanent fortifications.²² Indeed, the largest portion of the fourteen billion francs allocated for the four year plan of rearmament (January 1937 - December 1940) was devoted to the production of mechanized and motorized equipment.²³ Moreover, on October 14, 1936 and December 15, 1937, Gamelin suggested to the CSG that the army develop an offensive instrument of attack or counter attack similar to the German panzer divisions.²⁴

Gamelin, however, did not allow the tank to be liberated so as to pursue its tactical action of surprise and maneuver. It was still harnessed to the ideas layed

²¹L'Etat-major de l'armée, SECRET: Notes pour le cabinet militaire du ministre: réponses aux questions posés par la note N° 3689 du 7 juin 1936 au sujet du corps spécialisé et des améliorations à apporter à notre organisation actuelle, July 1, 1936, pp. 1-6 [in Reynaud Papers, "Dossier Militaire 1936-38," AN].

²²Gamelin, Servir, 1:306.

²³Témoignage, 1:199-200 and Gamelin, Servir, 2:244-46.

²⁴Témoignage, 1:107 and in the conclusions of the same study: Rapport fait au nom de la Commission . . . par M. Charles Serre (hereafter cited simply as Rapport), 2 vols., 2:182-197.

down in the Instruction sur l'emploi tactique des grandes unités as stipulated in 1921 and reiterated in 1936. The infantry was still the primary fighting force and tanks along with the artillery were to join with it in a supportive role.²⁵

Resistance to Reynaud's proposal characterized the ideas of other leading generals. Most noticeable among these was General Marie-Eugene Debeney, chief of the general staff from 1923-30, who although retired after this date was still active from a literary point of view. Debeney, who had begun his career as a rifleman, worked his way up through the ranks until by 1914 he had become a professor at the Ecole de Guerre. In May of 1915, he was made commander of a division and in 1917, he was appointed major-general to Pétain assisting the latter in the breakthrough victories of 1918. Described as cautious, pessimistic, as well as Pétain's mouthpiece, Debeney played a major role in the composition of the Instruction of 1921 and the plans concerning the Maginot Line.

In addition to criticizing the armored corps for its costliness, lack of reserves, impracticality in terms of instructing the regular army, destruction of morale, and bifurcation of the national army, Debeney in a 1935 article argued that the mechanized corps would fare poorly in the frontier region because of the wooded terrain. With this

²⁵Témoignage, 1:105 and Gamelin, Servir, 2:237, 306.

factor impeding its progress and mobility, the professional army would be of limited value assisting the covering troops. Consequently, any thought of mutual assistance beyond the frontier was an "intolerable pretention."²⁶ If the country was to be subjected to a lightning attack, Debeney wrote in 1938, France had to rely on its fortifications and covering troops.²⁷

Aside from their distrust of an elitist corps, the belief of Debeney and other generals that mechanized divisions were tactically limited followed from the failure to carry out sufficient maneuvers.²⁸ In this regard, the role of General Julien Dufieux, inspector general of infantry and tanks (1931-38) and member of the CSG during the 1930s, was crucial. Chief of Pétain's operations bureau during World War I, literary critic for Le Figaro's military pages, and friend of Weygand's, Dufieux--following improperly held operations near Valmy (Camp Mailly) in 1932--advised Weygand against the concept of tanks as autonomous

²⁶General Debeney, "Encore l'armée de métier," Revue des deux mondes 28 (July 15, 1935):281-95. Debeney thought the frontier could be expanded if the German-Belgium border was considered as an extension of France's border. In this situation, according to Debeney, the armored corps might have possibilities.

²⁷General Debeney, La Guerre et les hommes (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1937), pp. 176-208.

²⁸The 1932 chamber protested the heavy expenses incurred from "grandes manoeuvres spectaculaires." Thereafter, the maneuvers were kept smaller and several forms were combined into one exercise. See Coox, "French Military Doctrine," p. 131.

units. It was his opinion that the tank was meant to accompany the infantry.²⁹ Thereafter, Weygand until his retirement in January 1935 encouraged little experimentation with independent mechanized corps. This lack of practical application thus forced high ranking officers to rely on supposition and conjecture.

General Georges, a member of the CSG, maintained that German panzer division tactics were a serious error and that their tanks would be destroyed in open country.³⁰ Georges, commander of an infantry division in 1914, later served under Weygand on Foch's staff. In 1926, he was chief of staff to Pétain during the suppression of the Riff tribe rebellion in French Morocco, and in 1931, after having served as War Minister Maginot's chef de cabinet, Georges was appointed commander of the nineteenth corps in Algiers. Seriously wounded during the 1934 assassination of Barthou and King Alexander of Yugoslavia, Georges sufficiently recovered to become the framer of the 1936 Instruction on the tactical employment of divisions. If war broke out, the General was to become commander of the armies in the north-east. Shortly before World War II, Georges stated in a

²⁹Rapport, 1:78-79.

³⁰Pertinax, Gravediggers, p. 11.

course that no new methods of warfare had evolved since 1918.³¹

In contrast, General Joseph Maurin, war minister in 1934-35, knew that factors of success in future war moved around mass and surprise.³² Maurin who had been the prodigée of Joffre and who had been attached to his general staff since 1914 was a retired gunner and on the point of going blind when his appointment as war minister was carried out at the recommendation of his predecessor and friend, Marshal Pétain. Maurin's ideas, however, never progressed beyond the generalizations of one who was unsure of the changes in strategy. Indeed, four years before the publication of his 1938 book, L'Armée moderne, in which Maurin recognized some of these changes,³³ the former artillery officer stated to the chamber that ". . . a man protected by cement or by steel has more value than another--not only because he lasts longer but because he feels that his life is protected."³⁴

³¹E. Tollemache, "French Military Training for Defeat," Quarterly Review, October 1941, pp. 182, 186, 188.

³²General Joseph Maurin, L'Armée moderne (Paris: Flammarion, 1938), pp. 87-88, 132, 134.

³³Pertinax refers to this book as the "best of all the second rate military literature of the day." See his Gravediggers, p. 328.

³⁴JOC, November 22, 1954, p. 2589.

Maurin took an immediate dislike to Reynaud's Le Problème militaire français. In an article in Paris Soir entitled: "No, Mr. Paul Reynaud, the Military Chiefs are not Conformist," Maurin charged that the elitist corps would not only drain the regular army but that it would also make the latter feel inferior.³⁵ Worse still were Reynaud's claims that military personnel were nothing more than technicians, that they could not be relied upon to activate important reform, and that it was up to civilian leaders to engage such an action. In his article, Maurin reacted to this portion of the book by stating that such attitudes were erroneous and that they in turn made the job of the high command even more difficult. Further, Maurin in a veiled reference to de Gaulle (who he is reputed to have removed from the promotion list in 1936) frowned upon politicians who with the aid of ambitious officers took off on exhilarating but irresponsible adventures in the military arena.³⁶

By far and large the best example of how the departure from strategic reality retarded the evolution of French military thought lay in the 1939 book of General Chauvineau, Une Invasion, est-elle encore possible? A brilliant technician on fortifications and one of the most celebrated professors at the Ecole de Guerre, Chauvineau,

³⁵Paris Soir, July 27, 1937, p. 4. To Maurin's credit, he did argue for the need to increase tank and gun production.

³⁶Ibid. See Appendix C for details on de Gaulle's removal from the promotion list.

"the high priest of fire power," wrote that the tank because of fuel limitations was entirely subordinate to the infantry, the latter continuing as the true protector of the frontiers. Cement fortifications, antitank obstacles, and especially antitank guns would cause armored vehicles to fail in an invasion. In the end, the tank was an instrument of couverture, an armored engine which along with the infantry was designed for defensive action in the maintenance of frontal continuity.³⁷

With such attitudes expressed by the more illustrious members of the high command, it was no surprise that attempts to foster the ideas of Reynaud in the CSG met with a great deal of opposition. Almost all of its fifteen generals repeatedly voted against Gamelin's proposal for a French counterpart to the German panzer divisions with the comment that the idea needed "more study."

One of the few officers to disagree was General Pierre Héring, commander of France's only DLM (Rheims) and a correspondent of Reynaud's during 1937. To Héring, French armored divisions capable of taking the offensive were an absolute must. Still, when the CSG finally decided on the creation of two of these divisions on December 2, 1938, the details of their composition and strategic

³⁷Chauvineau, Une Invasion, pp. 100, 106-7, 205-6.

direction were left to some later date.³⁸ Thus no clear cut proof existed that the CSG as a whole had been converted from the 1921 Instruction with its emphasis on the supremacy of the infantry.

Very much the same frame of mind was evident in an opinion handed to the war minister by the Secretariat General, an organization charged with administrative control over military expenditures and which at the same time expanded on its duties by giving opinions on military strategy. In addition to echoing the high command's distaste for the form of Reynaud's project, the expense, the number of recruits involved, the professional army as a teaching staff for the national army, the Secretariat General objected to the tank strategy as set down in Reynaud's 1935 amendment:

Properly speaking, there is no tank tactic. There is a tactic of infantry detail in which tanks have their place--on the same level as the machine gunners, general artillery or canons and accompanying mortars.

Far from grouping the tanks in units which would have a tendency to conduct their own battle in disinteresting themselves from the infantry,

³⁸Rapport, 2:182-197. These pages contain minutes of the meetings of April 29 and October 14, 1936; December 15, 1937; and December 2, 1938. The CSG included: Generals Bellotte, Besson, Colson, Condé, Dufieux, Gamelin, Garchery, Georges, Héring, Huntziger, Maurin, Pretelat, and Prioux. Marshal Pétain was marked absent from these sittings.

it would be necessary to portion them out organically--at least in certain divisions.³⁹

Levels of the army below the high command and secretariat also shared the same lack of receptivity to new ideas on strategy. Enormous amounts of time were spent having the officers do ritual paper work while the schools kept them occupied with abstract theory instead of sending the cadres out to the field for maneuvers. To aggravate this, army code was too scholarly and too involved to excite the imagination while at the same time, military literature was poor since it was addressed more to 1914-1918 than to the world of the 1930s.⁴⁰ Finding little to gain from the higher ranks in terms of strategical innovation, less well known, subordinate officers reflected the misconceptions of their superiors.

General Jean Mordacq, in his 1934 publication, Les Lecons de 1914 et la prochaine guerre, believed that Maginot Line garrisons were capable of temporarily stopping a lightning attack by means of fortifications and fire power.

³⁹Secrétariat Général de la Guerre, Etude sommaire sur la constitution d'un corps spécialisé, n.d., pp. 11-13 [in Reynaud Papers, Dossier Militaire - 1935, AN].

⁴⁰Commander Tony Albord, Pourquoi cela est arrivée ou les responsabilités d'une génération militaire (Nantes: Aux Portes du Lorge, 1946), pp. 98-99. Albord has testified that many military journals and reviews remained on library tables--their pages uncut and unread. This author has the same impression. Some of the articles analyzed in this dissertation had to be opened page by page with a pair of scissors.

While agreeing with the ideas of Reynaud that France had to remain strong and that she had to work closely with her allies at the outbreak of hostilities, Clemenceau's personal military assistant during World War I said little on the particulars of tank tactics and maneuvers.⁴¹

The reliance on fire power a la mode 1914-18 also imbued the 1936 article of General X, "L'Armée de métier."⁴² Since the missile was still superior to armor, the response to the German tank had to be the antitank gun. Moreover, according to this World War I veteran whose identity is unknown, it was wrong to believe that armored corps divisions would replace France's modern cavalry in wooded regions. In addition, this elitist corps of Reynaud, a euphemism used to mask the professional army so that it would be swallowed by the antimilitarists, would only succeed in weakening the regular army by bleeding its specialized troops. As in the case of Mordacq's thinking, General X's thesis had little to say of tank maneuvers or of that portion of the frontier unprotected by fortifications.

The inability to understand the strategical importance of the tank was widespread throughout the ranks.

⁴¹General Jean Jules Mordacq, Les Leçons de 1914 et la prochaine guerre (Paris: Flammarion, 1934), pp. 198, 242, 256-57.

⁴²General X, "L'Armée de métier," Mercure de France, April 1, 1936, pp. 9, 14-17.

Colonel A. Grasset in his review of Reynaud's Le Problème militaire français stressed that couverture troops in large numbers stayed the important factor. To him, the Spanish Civil War showed that tanks did not have an undeniable superiority.⁴³ In this analysis, however, Grasset neglected to consider that on the Spanish front, the antagonists failed to mass their tanks--dispersing them instead in dribblets. In contrast, as such places as Malaga and Guadalajara where this massing action had been carried out, advances into enemy territory had been considerable.

These successes failed to convince such officers as Colonel Mainié who claimed in 1937 that the speed of the tank would create a fatal separation between the rest of the army and itself. It was necessary, observed Mainié, that an armored force depend on infantry and artillery.⁴⁴ Sharing his view, Commandant Armand Krebs wrote in the same year that tanks had the triple role of accompanying the infantry, engaging in antitank fights and carrying out reconnaissance.⁴⁵

⁴³Colonel A. Grasset, Le Vrai problème de la sécurité française (Seine-et-Oise: La Cause Carrières-sous-Paissy, 1937), pp. 9, 12.

⁴⁴Colonel Mainié, "L'Offensive et la défense avec les engins blindés," Revue militaire générale, February 1937, pp. 154, 171.

⁴⁵Commandant Armand Krebs, "Considerations sur l'offensive," Revue militaire générale 2 (September 1937): 363, 366.

Other officers stuck to vague generalities without ever mentioning the specifics of strategy. In a review of Reynaud's Le Problème militaire français, General Duchene denied Reynaud's premise that French military doctrine condemned the offensive. "The most logical and sure way of safety," wrote Duchene, "is . . . to contain the aggressor by a combined use of men and fortification." Once the containment had been effected, it was Duchene's conclusion that the French could pass to the offensive.⁴⁶ Inherent in this view was an inability to grasp the idea that a lightning attack had to be met by immediate counter attack and not by a holding action aimed at containment.

Aside from the failure to grasp the nature and implications of the coming war as well as the innovations in weapons strategy, the officers shared the negativism of their chiefs. In reviewing the technical aspects of Reynaud's proposal, General Julien Brossé, a professor at the Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques, wrote that such an army would interfere with the proper build up of reserves since it would bleed men from the regular army. It would also drain human resources and matériel. Like Gamelin, Brossé stated that the losses sustained by this elitist group in actual combat could not be easily replaced.⁴⁷ On

⁴⁶L'Echo de Paris, June 17, 1937, p. 1.

⁴⁷General Julien Brossé, Les Eléments de notre défense nationale (Paris: Librairie Militaire Universelle, 1936), pp. 89-91.

this last point, however, Brossé never allowed for the fact that if the armored corps carried out its strategical operation properly, it would reduce loss of life by cutting short a long and costly war.

Among these officers--Brossé, Duchene, Krebs, Mainié, Grasset, X, Mordacq--caution reigned. Gazes turned toward tradition and the events of 1914-18 for help in preparing the battles of the future. Such attitudes preempted innovative daring and creative response. Thus, the tank was deprived of its strategic potential and other concepts such as speed and maneuver remained undeveloped.

To a lesser extent, the same views characterized another group of officers who although being able to recognize certain beneficial aspects of Reynaud's armored corps, either clung to the skirts of the high command or failed to salvage those parts of Reynaud's ideas they found acceptable. An example of this was General Emile Allehaut who noted in his Être prêts that the doctrine of invulnerability of fronts based on the Maginot Line was fallacious and that motorization and mechanization could not be effective in the presence of outdated formulas and paralyzing dogmatisms. Further, Allehaut argued for taking the battle to enemy territory but in order to do this, an army of maneuver composed of professional men was needed.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Général Emile Allehaut, Être Prêts (Paris: Berger Levrault, 1935), pp. 146, 157, 168, 177, 220.

In trying to fit de Gaulle's ideas to his book, however, Allehaut ran into difficulty. In addition to recruitment problems and cost, the creation of the professional corps outside the national army would have the unfortunate effect of reducing the regular troops to the status of a militia.⁴⁹ Thus although Allehaut came close to the armored corps in terms of strategy, maneuver and the offensive, he could not hurdle the fear of a separate army developing.

Two years later, Colonel Epailly proposed that shock troops might be formed from the existing army in order to meet a critical situation. Nevertheless, Epailly did not give specifics on how this was to be carried out. Further, Epailly underestimated the effects of the German panzer divisions. "Certain people," he wrote, "imagine that the German army is capable of pushing its armored divisions into the heart of France within a few days." Epailly went on to say that "There is nothing to this [idea]. Our neighbor knows perfectly well that one cannot conquer the French army by taking a few divisions on an adventure."⁵⁰

Other officers mirrored confusion when faced with the dawn of a new age of warfare. One of these was Commandant Jean de Cugnac, a famous French cavalry officer

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 178-79.

⁵⁰Colonel Epailly, "La Défense contre une attaque allemande par surprise," Revue militaire générale, May 1937, pp. 606, 610, 618.

from World War I and a participator in the 1927-28 laws on the organization of the army. Writing in 1937, de Cugnac noted that the Spanish Civil War showed the definite limits of tanks and planes. This brought the French back to the lesson of 1914-18, the cooperation of arms in which the infantry predominated. The contradiction was, however, that while de Cugnac denied the tank its independence, he advocated a war of movement plus a rapid plan of attack--an impossible combination unless the planes and tanks were freed from the fetters of a relatively nonmobile infantry.⁵¹

Like de Cugnac, General Henri Niessel favored bringing the war to the enemy, but similarly, he gave no details on how the operation was to be carried out. Niessel, a famous French air force officer and de Gaulle's immediate superior in Warsaw during the Polish campaign, wrote in 1937 that success in wartime could only be assured by assuming the initiative which naturally meant the need to attack first. Niessel, however, was far from the Reynaud-de Gaulle thesis. In a direct attack on their approach without mentioning either name, he wrote:

The [political] orators are indeed without exception by themselves incompetent. Their documentation when it has some foundation has been collected from irresponsible military personnel; the occasionally deductive originality of these views is in general of the most debatable value.

⁵¹Commandant Jean de Cugnac, "Préparons-nous la guerre de mouvement ou la guerre de stabilisation?" Revue militaire générale 2 (October 1937):5, 8, 11.

The best among the officers content themselves to keep their place and to do their work in silence instead of seeking political relations advantageous for their professional career.⁵²

Niessel went on to write that he would not support an offensive based on an armored corps. The armored corps which was nothing other than a professional army was economically, socially, and politically foreign to the French and their resources. Moreover, according to Niessel, the professional army had been uniformly condemned by the "great chiefs of our army."⁵³

This was not to say that Reynaud lacked supporters. A small group of unknowns reiterated for the most part, his ideas on strategy. Lieutenant-Colonel Magne wrote in 1936 that France needed an army capable of maneuver and attack.⁵⁴ Lieutenant-Colonel Lançon elaborated on this. Masses of rapidly moving tanks would enter into the action free from dependence upon the infantry. Moving in successive waves, they would overwhelm an enemy position in one blow after which the infantry would follow with mop up operations.⁵⁵

General Segonne in a review of Reynaud's Le Problème militaire français wrote that each Frenchman had to be

⁵²General Henri Niessel, Le Déséquilibre militaire (Paris: Editions à l'Etoile, 1937), pp. 166, 170, 196.

⁵³Ibid., p. 178.

⁵⁴Le Petit Journal, November 17, 1936, p. 2.

⁵⁵Lieutenant-Colonel Lançon, "La Défense devant la mécanisation," Revue militaire française, October 1936, p. 39.

inspired by Reynaud's study. Given the gravity of the hour, this patriotic work of Reynaud's, according to Segonne, presented an excellent solution to the anguishing problem of how to defend France.⁵⁶

Other officers such as General Velpry argued for the offensive by means of armored engines equipped with offensive tactics. Velpry, a noted French tank expert who commanded the first French tank battalion in May of 1918, felt that the maximum employment of tanks was as equally important if not more so than the use of cement fortifications.⁵⁷

In a surprising departure from the ideas of many of his colleagues, Colonel Charles Gautier in his 1938 book, Nos Alliances,⁵⁸ predicted a short, swift war that would in no way resemble the war of 1914-18. France, according to Gautier, simply could not look back to the history of other wars for advice. Even the Spanish Civil War was not a good example of how future conflict would unfold since the two opponents were neither well armed nor organized.

The date of Gautier's future war was predicted by General Daubert to be about 1940. Writing in Mercure de

⁵⁶Le Journal, June 3, 1937.

⁵⁷General Velpry, "Tactique d'hier et de demain," Revue militaire générale, February 1938, pp. 188-89.

⁵⁸Colonel Charles Gautier, Nos Alliances (Paris: Berger Levrault, 1938), p. 93.

France in 1938,⁵⁹ Daubert was one of the few officers to stress the need for military collaboration with Belgium, Poland, England, and members of the Petite Entente. Further, since the Maginot Line was of limited value and since the future conflict would be a war of movement, specially trained troops would be needed to operate tanks used for speed, surprise, and fire power.

In examining the reaction from the military, one is struck by the lack of response to Reynaud's plan for collective security involving the Petite Entente, Poland and Russia. In a sense, this was the result of a defensive frame of mind developed over the years by military as well as civilians which was reflected in the 1921 Instruction, the 1927-28 army, and the Maginot Line. Still paying lip service to the pacts agreed to during the 1920s, the French in reality had no intention of going to the aid of allies. One of the best examples of the resulting inconsistency occurred with Hitler's reoccupation of the Rhineland--a violation of both the Versailles and Locarno Treaties. When Foreign Minister Flandin asked General Maurin what could be done, the war minister responded that "The French army had been entirely conceived for a defensive mission and

⁵⁹General Daubert, "Défense nationale," Mercure de France, April 15, 1938, pp. 258-59, 265, 282.

that it had nothing prepared and was even less ready for a military intervention of this type."⁶⁰

Another reason for the inconsistency was an attitude best described by John Young in his doctoral dissertation, "Strategy and Diplomacy in France: Some Aspects of the Military Factor in the Formulation of French Foreign Policy 1934-39." "The prospect of a long war," wrote Young, "which was as likely to end in defeat as in victory encouraged cautious generals and politicians to avoid being provoked by issues which did not present an immediate and direct threat to security."⁶¹ To Young, this was why the military shied away from intervention in the Rhine, Spain, and Ethiopia.⁶²

To the reader of military periodicals, it explained the desire to avoid risk as typified by General X's spring, 1936 article in Mercure de France. After noting the non-existence of the Versailles Treaty and resigning himself to the inevitability of German rearmament and reoccupation of the Rhineland, X made a reference to Reynaud's armored corps.

⁶⁰Pierre-Etienne Flandin, Politique française 1919-40 (Paris: Les Editions Nouvelles, 1947), p. 194.

⁶¹John Young, "Strategy and Diplomacy in France: Some Aspects of the Military Factor in the Formulation of French Foreign Policy 1934-39," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1969), p. 519. After a well researched study of more than 500 pages, Young concluded that there was inadequate liaison between military and diplomatic circles. This helped to explain why France failed to rectify the overextension of her diplomacy.

⁶²Ibid., p. 519.

To fly across Europe in order to help friends, X observed, was downright pretentious considering that the German army could utilize upward of 4,000,000 men.⁶³

In actuality, the main criticism leveled against Reynaud concerned not the quest for allies but the manner in which the armored corps would be used to guarantee pacts and agreements. In this respect, there was an overreaction to Reynaud's plan that suggested he had not adequately gauged the resistance to a French force going beyond the frontier. General Victor Bourret argued that the sending of such a force vite et loin (fast and far) or from one end of Europe to the other had never been witnessed in European history. Further, in case something went awry, the French with their capital and industries near the border did not have the great spaces to retreat and maneuver as did the Russians.⁶⁴

Indeed, the overriding view of the day was one of caution. One officer writing under the pseudonym of trois étoiles (three stars or ***) noted in his reaction to Reynaud's Le Problème militaire français that where an armored corps was developed, it would be questionable as to whether the high command and the nation would allow this

⁶³X, "L'Armée de métier," p. 14. This figure included paramilitary organizations such as the SS, the SA, portions of the German police force, railroad and postal workers as well as former veterans from the previous war.

⁶⁴General Victor Bourret, La Tragedie de l'armée française (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1947), pp. 54, 61.

trump card to travel to a theater of operations remote from national territory.⁶⁵ Just such an attitude was reflected in the words of War Minister Maurin who during Reynaud's discourse of March 15, 1935 said to Premier Flandin: "Would we be so foolish as to go beyond this barrier [Maginot Line] to I do not know what adventure?"⁶⁶

Such attitudes naturally discouraged the tightening of ties with the Czechs and Soviets, the latter being the core of Reynaud's foreign policy. There was, however, some justification in not expecting too much from these allies. A commitment to the Czechs naturally understood assistance from Russia but the latter was a mystery. Indeed, aside from its internal turmoil and the unclear aims of communism under Stalin, Russia remained an enigma to the French military.

In 1935, General Loiseau, sent by the general staff to Russia on an observation tour, returned with glowing reports about the material and moral strength of Stalin's army. Loiseau strongly felt, moreover, that concord with

⁶⁵Lieutenant Gelot, "Chronique des livres," Revue d'infanterie 542 (November 1937):1128-33. De Gaulle credits the work of *** to the entourage of General Gamelin. See Reynaud Papers, "Lettres de Gaulle," AN, de Gaulle to Reynaud, December 12, 1937.

⁶⁶Reynaud, Mémoires, 1:434. Two years later, in the July 27, 1937 issue of Paris Soir, Maurin claimed that his 1935 statement meant the Belgium-German border as a frontier. Note that he did not refer to the word barrier.

Russia would help insure the safety of both Poland and Czechoslovakia.⁶⁷ On the other hand, a report delivered to the high command made by another officer returning the following year stated that the Red Army was insufficiently prepared for a war against a great European power.⁶⁸

Because of these conflicting accounts and because of a natural reserve toward Stalinist Russia, the chiefs of the French army avoided encouraging a pact with teeth in it until the summer of 1939--too late since Stalin was convinced neither England nor France could stand up to an attack from Germany.

Among the postwar commentary on why Reynaud's armored corps miscarried was that of General Jean Perré, an officer who served in de Gaulle's fourth army division during May-June 1940. Writing in Ecrits de Paris in 1955, Perré cited lack of materiel and prohibitive costs. More important in this failure were the tactics used by de Gaulle. Perré not only disapproved of de Gaulle's door to door

⁶⁷ Le Temps, September 20, 1935.

⁶⁸ Document of General Schweissguth in Daladier to Delbos, October 13, 1936, Documents diplomatiques française, 2e série, 1936-1939, iii, no. 342, pp. 510-14. Reynaud has repeatedly attached considerable responsibility to Marshal Pétain for condemning an effective alliance with the Soviets. He cites as evidence Pétain's interview with Le Journal, April 30, 1936. In this interview, however, Pétain never used the word "condemned"--an expression attributed to him by Reynaud. Rather, the Marshal stressed the dangers of an alliance with a power whose raison d'être was its belief in communism. See Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:157.

campaign among politicians but he also felt that de Gaulle's 1934 publication, Vers l'armée de métier fatally compromised the armored corps by mixing it with a professional army-- an impossible concept in a country wracked by internal political turmoil.⁶⁹ In such a situation, how could France use an armored corps to conduct preventative and repressive action against an enemy?

Most important to Perré were the technical weaknesses inherent in de Gaulle's conceptions. His ideas were too general to find specific solutions to tactical problems. Among other defects was the fact heavy tanks in the 1930s could not exceed fifteen kilometers an hour (9 3/8 miles). This would prevent them from being effectively integrated into line divisions. Further, the length of the column itself would make it a monster--difficult to control and to manage.⁷⁰

Joining Perré in this criticism was Commandant Jacques Minart, one time secretary of the CSDN during the disarmament conferences (1932-34) and later a provost-marshal under Vichy. Minart went straight to de Gaulle's

⁶⁹General Jean Perré, "De Gaulle, prophète de la guerre des blindées?" Ecrits de Paris, June 1955, pp. 75-78.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 75, 78. In his article, Perré noted that the 1940 panzer divisions were too large and had to be thinned down both in the number of tanks and troops. The same proved true of American divisions later on in the war. These had to be divided into three parts and then, there was a need to lighten them further. Note, however, Perré did not raise this point before the war.

1934 publication and severely criticized it for its failure to go into more detail on speed and production. Where were the point by point specifics on the rules of deployment for the armored corps--be they used in autonomous enterprises or in conjunction with operations by the rest of the army? What were the details on how the artillery would combine with the tanks or how the tanks would combine with the infantry?⁷¹

The weakest spot according to Minart was the failure to adequately pair aviation with the tanks. The Germans in 1940 had succeeded in combining the speed of the tank engine with the power of the dive bomber, the latter being used as an extension of artillery. De Gaulle had no comparable plan for French planes which were to serve mainly in the role of reconnaissance and as fighters. "The military readers," wrote Minart, "would have been really excited by his [de Gaulle's] work if it had shown how to combine the aerial trump of power with the armored trump of speed."⁷²

Minart, however, felt that Vers l'armée de métier was needed if only to strike the spirit of French officers who for the most part had slipped into apathy and indifference.⁷³ The book should have been a stepping stone toward stimulating

⁷¹Commandant Jacques Minart, "La Doctrine militaire du Commandement de Gaulle," Le Crapouillot, no. 17 (1952), p. 27.

⁷²Ibid., p. 28.

⁷³Ibid., pp. 27-28.

more creative thinking; but instead, almost to a man, it was ignored or rejected.

Postwar military did not exclude their fellow comrades from the blame in this rejection of de Gaulle's ideas. General Gabriel Gluck in a 1947 article noted the mistakes of Colonel Perré and General Keller in believing that in 1940, the tank remained an auxiliary to the infantry or the mistake of General Dufieux in believing that the German blitzkrieg in Poland would not be repeated in France. Yet Gluck quite frankly felt that if the political interference by Reynaud in March of 1935 had not caused such a fracas, then perhaps modern tanks would have been built much sooner.⁷⁴

Echoing this opinion of Gluck was Colonel George Groussard, head of Marshal Franchet d'Esperey's staff and a leading light in La Cagoule (an unofficial protection service organized by certain military for the purpose of tracking down Communists in the army). Groussard stated that the intervention of Reynaud urged by de Gaulle raised such an outcry that when their ideas were forcibly reviewed by the general staff, they had already formed an unfavorable

⁷⁴General Gabriel Gluck, "La Doctrine militaire française d'avant-guerre et la situation réelle de nos armements au 10 mai 1940," Ecrits de Paris, August 1947, pp. 42-43, 45.

judgement. "It was not always right," observed Groussard, "but it was human."⁷⁵

Groussard like Gluck spread out the blame to the lack of imagination he encountered among his fellow junior officers at the Centre des Hautes-Etudes Militaires. When a proposal was made during 1935-36 to use tanks en masse for special operations, the majority of Groussard's colleagues along with the director pooh-poohed it. According to these officers, communications and refueling problems prohibited the tank from assuming an independent role.⁷⁶

Still, the armored corps received high postwar marks from such Generals as Victor Bourret and Alfred Conquet. Bourret, head of the defense cabinets of Daladier during the thirties and later, commander of the fifth army in 1940, felt that the use of the specialized army as an offensive in Belgium would have been a disaster but as a counter offensive, it would have been précieux (invaluable).⁷⁷ In other words, as an instrument of offensive reply, the specialized units were perfect.

Conquet, cabinet director of Pétain from 1934-37, regretted not only that the proposals of de Gaulle did not get the attention they deserved and but also the overemphasis

⁷⁵Colonel Georges Groussard, L'Armée et ses drames (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1968), p. 27.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 29.

⁷⁷General Victor Bourret, La Tragedie de l'armée française (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1947), pp. 54-55.

by the military of the professional army aspect of Reynaud's proposal. Conquet, however, suggested that de Gaulle and Reynaud made a basic historical error. In a democratic state such as France where the war policy was exclusively defensive, anything as specifically offensive as the armored corps was taboo. The project should have been written up as an "instrument indispensable to a maneuvering defensive."⁷⁸ This would have cloaked their offensive weapon in the form of a defensive instrument

In retrospect, the Reynaud project on national defense suffered from a number of defects not the least of these was the choice of Reynaud as the defender of de Gaulle's ideas. The military, aside from paying little attention to Reynaud's ideas on readiness, rearmament and related topics, responded more to de Gaulle's Vers l'armée de métier than to Reynaud's Le Problème militaire français. Reynaud, in fact, by means of his chamber speeches and publications, managed to elicit an adverse reaction from those soldiers who felt he was usurping the role of army officers in trying to dictate the direction of military policy.

Worse still was the badly worded, ill conceived, and poorly delivered plan for the armored corps. Badly

⁷⁸ General Alfred Conquet, Auprès du Maréchal Pétain, le chef, le politique, l'homme (Paris: Editions France-Empire, 1970), pp. 139, 146, 257.

worded in the sense that the expression "professional army" raised the specter of a separate elitist group, the project failed to satisfactorily fit the framework of the national army to which the military were devoutly attached. At best, officers favorably disposed such as Flavigny (see Chapter I) still objected to the high level of professionals among the ranks of the armored corps.

At worse, the wording of Vers l'armée de métier as well as Reynaud's stress upon the elitist nature of the corps sidetracked attention from the strategic utility of the plan and prompted chiefs such as Gamelin and Weygand to concentrate on why a separate army was out of the question. Naturally the preoccupation with this unacceptable aspect of the plan delayed acceptance of the very valuable strategy inherent in the project. No matter how hard Reynaud and de Gaulle tried to overcome this error--described by Reynaud as regrettable--the damage was done.⁷⁹ The idea of borrowing specialists from the national army in a time of recruitment shortages, the dispensation granted armored corps soldiers from routine but upsetting induction/discharge procedures, and the role of armored corps officers as the training staff of the national army only further convinced the high command of the elitism and separateness of the plan.

One reason for this semantic error was the poorly conceived ideas of Charles de Gaulle. De Gaulle wrote as if

⁷⁹Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:144.

denying the historical past as represented by the levée en masse of 1793. The French in fact preferred a strong army only for the duration of a crisis. Standing, professional armies for Third Republican Frenchmen smacked too much of nineteenth century Napoleons with their coups and armies of adventure. More recently and across the newsprint of the Boulanger and Dreyfus affairs, many had become wary of the army and its elitism. To the credit of Weygand, he was aware of this when before the postwar parliamentary investigating committee he testified that the armée de métier was not to the liking of Frenchmen.⁸⁰

De Gaulle seemed not to be aware of this as he had not shown much understanding of the reasoning (World War I slaughter) behind the 1921 directive, the 1927-28 army organization laws, and the Maginot Line. Thus such terms as "offensive weapon" and "maneuver beyond the frontier" should have been modified so as to gain the strategical advantage without upsetting the system or alarming the powers to be. Instead, de Gaulle plunged in: predicting future warfare based on technical revolution without adequately adjusting his ideas to what had gone before--a classic case of hasty planning and lack of foresight. In these errors, Reynaud was simply de Gaulle's echo.

The third weakness in the Reynaud-de Gaulle plan were the holes in the delivery of the armored corps

⁸⁰Témoignage, 6:1609.

especially in the area of foreign aid. Since no specifics were given on how far the armored corps was to travel, its foreign trajectory was left open to the imagination of the military. Telescoping the role of the armored corps by describing it as traveling all over Europe, they drew attention from its main purpose of relieving pressure on a western front and thus contributed to its eventual rejection as being impractical and even outlandish.

The errors of Reynaud and de Gaulle were matched by those of the high command. Taken as a collective unit, they knew enough to eventually push for more tanks and to admit that changes in strategy had occurred. This in itself was contrary to what some authorities have stated when they described the general staff as closed to all new ideas. Nevertheless, many of these top military such as Georges and Chauvineau were still committed to the old school as reflected in the directive of 1921. Thus the changes in attitude among subordinates were slow, confused, not well organized, and not well directed toward any final goal. More than any other officers, Weygand, Pétain, and Gamelin were responsible for these conditions.

Weygand presented a bizarre study in the annals of French military history. Described by Bankwitz as completely passive in the quest for doctrinal and organizational change after his retirement in January 1935, Weygand, during the remainder of the decade, took it upon himself to

personally refute the armored corps after having mistakenly interpreted it as a completely separate army. Weygand in postwar years claimed that Reynaud's scheme was not in good taste with the French. Although this was true, it was the strategy of the armored corps that led to the defeat of the French in 1940. Little attempt on Weygand's part was made to salvage this important strategy.

Of Pétain, occasional war minister during 1934-35, little can be said other than that he was one at the same time, influential and incompetent--the convolutions of his confused thinking spiraling on down to his 1939 course. Pétain understood fragments of the changes in warfare but he did not use his prestige to encourage the development of these changes. Instead, he fell back on supporting men's ideas that were more traditional and thus less open to controversy.

More than Weygand or Pétain, Gamelin was at fault since he passed official judgement on the potential capabilities of the armored corps and related strategy. Perhaps the critical point was his lengthy report of July 11, 1936 to War Minister Daladier which had the effect of minimizing the importance of mobile armored units capable of assuming a lightning offensive in case of war. Gamelin made little attempt to grasp the strategical advantages of Reynaud's proposal and remodel them around an army form more acceptable to him. Later, when it became apparent to him

that Reynaud's theories held weight, his feeble attempts to adequately convince the CSG failed.

Of the lower ranking officers, the vast majority were content as Niessel put it, to keep their place and to do their work in silence. Those officers who did realize in bits and pieces the validity of the new strategy could not look to the high command in order to have their doctrinal confusion cleared up. The small percentage who were aware of the mistaken attitudes of the army leaders were in the minority. The fact, however, that a tiny minority of mostly unknowns overlooked the phrase "professional army" as well as the other technical defects of the Reynaud/de Gaulle plan heightened the responsibility of the remaining officers who failed to speak or who failed to realize that the armored corps was a stepping stone in the evolution of strategy.

Many arguments by the military trying to explain the failures of the 1930s pinned the blame on the lack of funds for maneuvers, the resistance of Parliament, pacifism, the lack of tanks, planes, and men as well as the work stoppages due to social unrest. Surely, there was some truth to all of these; but before a stronger army could be achieved, the military mind had to think through its strategy in order to have an effective plan of defense and attack to which national efforts could be put to work. The high command never hit upon a plan of armored corps movement in which

tanks predominated. The rejection of Reynaud's plan was just one example of this error which the postwar parliamentary investigating committee explained as the failure to present early on a comprehensive program making maximum use of armored corps and motorized machines.⁸¹

⁸¹Rapport, 1:68, 72, 79.

CHAPTER V

RESPONSE FROM THE PEOPLE AND THE PRESS

France of the 1930s was a violent world. Natural disasters such as train wrecks, floods, avalanches and gruesome automobile accidents were supplemented by man made horrors. Murder and such crimes as the Lindburgh baby kidnapping vied with the exploits of French mafia who specialized in "les hold-ups," bank robberies, counterfeiting, black market operations, prostitution rings, and heroin traffic.¹

Political violence was frequent and demonstrated a wide variance from assassinations such as those of President Paul Doumer (May 7, 1932) and Foreign Affairs Minister, Louis Barthou (October 10, 1934), to suicide following national disgrace as in the case of Socialist deputy and Minister of Interior, Roger Salengro (November 17, 1936).²

¹For a detailed account of these people of the demimonde, see Roger Peyrefitte's biography of Germaine Germain: Manouche (Paris: Flammarion, 1973).

²When the Popular Front government had Charles Maurras arrested in 1936 for incitement to murder Blum, l'Action française (of which Maurras was editor) retaliated by charging that Salengro was a traitor during World War I. Le Gringoire, another extremist newspaper of the right, took up the defamation. Four days after the Chamber of Deputies cleared him of the charges, Salengro went home to Lille and turned on the gas jets. For the best account, see William Shirer, The Collapse of the Third Republic (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), pp. 310-11.

Other politicians came close to getting killed during the Place de la Concorde riots of February 6, 1934. Edouard Herriot, Radical leader, was almost bodily thrown into the Seine by a rightist mob who converged on the Chamber of Deputies in order to get the "rats" implicated in the Stavisky scandal. Two years later, a group of Action française fanatics yanked Léon Blum from his car when by accident it intersected the funeral cortege of right wing historian, Jacques Bainville. Blum, punched, kicked, and bleeding, was saved at the last minute by construction workers.³

The investiture of Blum and the Popular Front cabinet on June 3, 1936 served only to intensify an already growing anti-Semitism in a country where to be a Jew was equivalent to having a repugnant birth defect. "If you have a baby by your Jew[ish] lover," spoke the mother of French beauty, Germaine Germain, "I will never see you again in my life."⁴

To shut out this grimness, the French turned to the world of Hollywood. The film media, the stars, their loves and traumas filled column after column of newspaper print. On the screen, Snow White, Mickey Mouse, Gone with the Wind,

³Le Populaire, February 14, 1936. On the life of Blum, see Joel Colton, Léon Blum, Humanist in Politics (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1966) and Léon Blum, L'Oeuvre de Léon Blum, 6 vols. (Paris: Albin Michel, 1955-65).

⁴Peyrefitte, Manouche, p. 30.

and the movies of Charlie Chaplin reigned. Off the set, the transatlantic trips of Marlene Dietrich, the Parisian trousseau of Claudette Colbert, the pneumonia of France's exported actress, Danielle Darrieux, and the death of Jean Harlow figured prominently.

The papers kept high society and royalty before the public eye. Such nonconformists as King Edward VIII and Mrs. Wallis Simpson were pursued by readers as the soon-to-be Duke and Duchess of Windsor made the circuit from chateau to chateau. Edward's successors, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth picked up where the Duke left off as the press oggled them and their daughters, the Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret. Other attention getters were the beautiful Queen Astrid of Belgium, King Farouk of Egypt, and the monarch in exile, Hailie Selassie of Ethiopia.

Another form of escape was provided by the airplane and its courageous pilots. Readers launched themselves into the daring exploits of the nation's famous aviators such as writer-flyer, Antoine de St. Exuperey, and the courageous woman with wings, Maryse Hilz, as they broke or set nonstop records. Foreign pilots were spotlighted especially if their exploits were dangerous as in the case of Amelia Earhardt whose disappearance over the Pacific created a sensation. Indeed aviators like Lindburgh were often surrounded by an almost mythical adulation. His flight to France to escape unwanted publicity following the kidnap of

his son rivaled in attention the self imposed exile of Edward VIII.

The French, however, did not restrict themselves to being passive observers of aviators, stars, and kings. They in fact sought relief from depression doldrums by diving into a variety of amusements ranging from horse racing at Longchamps (le sport hippique) to charter cruises on the Mediterranean. Many of the latter and other group travel excursions were sponsored by party owned newspapers such as Le Populaire. Thus as Easter or some other big holiday season approached, the press would sponsor a train trip to some vacation spot, a kind of come one come all affair. For the more sedentary, the cabarets offered relief but the old standby for the Frenchman was the neighborhood café. There the customer could forget the troubles of the world as he drank beer, had his espresso, nursed an apéritif, or enjoyed a petit verre.

Still, the French could not escape the realities of the pocketbook and in this depression decade, economic and financial problems were the harshest reality. The nature of these problems was international in character. The components included stock market slumps, bank failures, decline in prices, drop in industrial production, fall in international trade, and rise in unemployment. Although the remedies varied, the basic treatment followed was monetary devaluation: the British lowering the pound by

40 per cent in 1931 and the Americans, the dollar by 59.06 per cent in 1934. Other measures such as Roosevelt's New Deal did more to boost morale than to bring recovery.⁵ This psychological lift, however, was the crucial factor. Historian John Garraty observed that the genius of both Roosevelt's New Deal and Hitler's Nazi revolution lay in the ability of these two charismatic leaders to sympathize with the masses thus revitalizing societies mired in despair and listlessness.⁶

In France, neither economic nor psychological relief arrived. Because many stockholders had been ruined during the monetary panics of the midtwenties, the governments of the thirties were extremely reluctant to devalue the franc. The gap between the franc and devalued foreign currencies that resulted caused trade and profits to continually descend on the graph of economic indices.

The center-right governments of Flandin and Laval which concentrated on reducing government expenditures were devoid of imagination in handling the crisis. Thus although Flandin acknowledged the daily receipt of hundreds of heartbreaking letters from people looking for work, he told

⁵For accounts of this effect, see John A. Garraty, "The New Deal, National Socialism, and the Great Depression," American Historical Review, 78 (October 1973):907-44 and Alfred Sauvy, Histoire économique de la France entre les deux guerres, 2 vols. (Paris: Fayard, 1967), 2:145-46.

⁶Garraty, "The New Deal," p. 936.

the National Assembly in February of 1935 that France was too broke to undertake large scale unemployment relief. Moreover, public works such as those in the U.S. were out of the question since France lacked the necessary capital to carry out these measures.⁷ The net result of such a policy increased budget deficits and aggravated unemployment.

The left in a reaction pushed for more jobs, higher wages, and a shorter work week without understanding that such a policy inhibited production. Motivated by a sense of economic injustice but unable to grasp the causes of the crisis, the Blum Ministry's "100 days" established: paid holidays, collective bargaining, a forty hour work week, public works programs, government control over the Bank of France and government regulation of prices, armaments, and wheat production. Since these measures were not preceded by a voluntary devaluation of the franc or a sustained increase in production, an appreciable economic recovery did not take place.

Amidst this bungling by left and right, Reynaud was one of the few who knew what was wrong and what remedies were needed. At the end of 1932, Reynaud had written that the termination of the crisis would come from the readjustment of the currency exchanges between

⁷Ministère du travail, Bulletin, 42 (1935):114-19.

countries.⁸ In late 1933, still avoiding the word devaluation, he told the chamber that deflation of government expenses had to be coupled with deflation of domestic prices which were far too high on the international market.⁹ In June of 1934, Reynaud mentioned the word devaluation for the first time, urging this monetary adjustment in order to restore international trade.¹⁰

In 1935, he noted that since Britain had devalued the pound, unemployment had dropped and some restoration of trade had taken place.¹¹ During 1936, while refusing to support the forty hour week and public works bills, Reynaud warned Blum that such measures along with wage increases had to be curtailed until the forced devaluation of 1936 took hold. Business, according to Reynaud, needed a chance to take advantage of the fall in gold prices which would allow France to compete in foreign markets.¹²

The reaction to this was for the most part negative. Tardieu as well as other important politicians disavowed Reynaud's stand on devaluation. Eminent economists such as Bertrand Nogaro and Charles Rist either doubted the "mad

⁸Paul Reynaud, "Reflexions sur la crise américaine," l'Illustration (December 24, 1932), p. 569.

⁹JOC, December 7, 1933, p. 4426.

¹⁰JOC, June 28, 1934, pp. 1942-44.

¹¹JOC, January 25, 1935, pp. 208-10.

¹²JOC, September 28, 1936, pp. 2773-76.

course of monetary depreciation" or reaffirmed their belief in the Poincaré France of 1928.¹³

Less renowned Frenchmen resorted to what Fabre-Luce called "individual reflexes encouraged by the public powers."¹⁴ Thus Reynaud not only had his daughter's life threatened but he also received a variety of menacing letters:

- a) Monsieur Commander-in-Chief of speculators and extortioners:

. . . The owner of modest stock portfolios will not be indifferent if the franc is devalued. He will get even and will do anything to get you with a gun, you and your colleagues--whether in the chamber or elsewhere.

- b) . . . My life being finished, I will have a bullet for myself but there will be another for you and one also for that lousy Blum

- c) Under the guise of benevolence and good intentions, you are the apostle of devaluation and the reason is for personal interests of which nobody is mistaken. This letter is a warning. Take into consideration that if the devaluation comes, you will ruin a lot of honest workers. . . . On that day, your head will roll like a hazel nut. . . .¹⁵

¹³Bertrand Nogaro, "Le Problème de la dévaluation en France," Revue économique 1 (1935):48 and Henri Denis, Les Récentes théories monétaires en France (Paris: Librairie du Recueil Sirey, 1938), p. 85. Nogaro was the administrator of the Bureau of Economic Statistics and Rist, a former president of the Bank of France, was director of the Institute of Economic and Social Research.

¹⁴Alfred Fabre-Luce, Histoire de la révolution européenne (Paris: Domat, 1954), p. 160.

¹⁵Reynaud, Mémoires, 1:406-7.

These citizens were hardly interested in Reynaud's patriotic plan for military reform. The same conclusion is reached when one examines the congratulatory messages received by Reynaud following the hotly contested election of 1936 in which he won over his Communist opponent by twenty-seven votes.¹⁶

Of these numerous election mementos, kept by Reynaud, some reflected anxiety over "la vie chère" or over the threat from the "revolutionary hordes" of the Popular Front. Others reflected predetermined positions based not on reason but on prejudice, ignorance, or a sense of hopelessness. An example of such was the following letter sent to Reynaud by Georges Sampieri, an elector of the second district:

. . . I have told you that I am regrettably in complete disagreement with you on the Franco-Soviet Pact which I consider an error and [on] the devaluation (or monetary alignment) on which I am perhaps imperfectly informed. I am resolutely opposed to the sanctions against Italy and in a general way, against Geneva [League of Nations] whose cynicism has disgusted its most devoted followers. One can discuss them. But I am certain that whatever comes out of it, and the

¹⁶The reason for this close vote stemmed from the fact that [?first name] Dailly, a Union Republican and Socialist candidate of the right refused to withdraw his name at the second ballot. Reynaud's position on the devaluation and the Franco-Soviet Pact were the cause. Dailly at the run-off thus took 1,966 votes away from what normally would have gone into Reynaud's pocket. The left in a maneuver had the Radical and Socialist competitors desist to their Communist colleague, Dilon, who at the second ballot took 4,057 votes to Reynaud's 4,084. Reynaud was saved by a few right wing Radicals who feared a Communist

future is hardly reassuring, you will be in control of the situation and of the decisions regarding French interests and order.

One can have confidence in a man such as you.¹⁷

The vast majority of electors, however, were simply relieved and happy to see Reynaud elected. A good number of these must have figured among his elite: ambassadors, ministers, military, newspaper editors, deputies, senators, nobility, doctors, lawyers, public accountants, businessmen and other prominent people.¹⁸

Out of 636 communiqués received by Reynaud, only two supported in writing the deputy's foreign policy and military reform program. One letter congratulated Reynaud for demanding closer ties with Great Britain and the Soviet Union as well as for encouraging an army of shock

victory in their sector. Data taken from Le Temps, April 28 and May 5, 1936.

¹⁷Reynaud Papers, "Dossier Portalet N°XIV," AN, George Sampieri to Paul Reynaud, May 4, 1936.

¹⁸"Dossier Portalet N°XIV," AN. Among the letters, calling cards, telegrams, and pneumatiques were congratulations from Paris Police Chief, Jean Chiappe; historian and former deputy, Georges Bonnefous; the directors of Le Petit Parisien and Le Figaro; the French ambassador to London, the Marquis de Castellane; the Secretary General of the Quai d'Orsay, Alexis Léger; and Dorival of the La Comédie française. The military included General Catroux, General Nollét, Lt. Colonel Magne, and Lt. Colonel de Puy. Among the deputies were Georges Bonnet, Joseph Courtier, Maurice Delabre, Alcide Delmont, Charles des Isnards, Oswen de Kerouartz, Guy Mentant, Michel Parès, Le Chanoine Polimann, Louis Proust, and Louis Tourès. Among the senators were Eugène Dumont, Antonin Gianotti, Justin Godart, Paul Jourdan, and Alphonse Rio.

"indispensable" to France's safety.¹⁹ The other supported closer ties with England and Russia while adding endorsement of devaluation and sanctions against Italy. This last letter ended with a plea for Reynaud to find the elector a job so he could "keep his family in bread."²⁰

Thus other issues no matter how important played second place to economic concerns. In this atmosphere, a real fear existed that an alteration of the monetary structure would accelerate the decline in the standard of living. Mingled with this fear was an ignorance of the benefits to be accrued from a devaluation (Reynaud's job seeking elector being the exception rather than the rule). Moreover, such evidence as Sampieri's letter indicated that Reynaud failed to explain devaluation effectively.

This failure was not limited to one or two of Reynaud's constituents. In a letter to him during the 1936 election, Marcel Lamy, a political activist and ally of Reynaud's from the fourth voting district, lamented this failure:

. . . Truthfully, my dear Minister [?Deputy], nobody has understood your thesis [on the devaluation] and it is this ignorance that has allowed your adversaries to give you such a hard time.

Let me suggest that you become more down to earth . . . so as to establish a more direct

¹⁹"Dossier Portalet N°XIV," AN, unsigned letter of May 2, 1936.

²⁰"Dossier Portalet N°XIV," AN, Emile Briatte to Reynaud, May 4, 1936.

contact with ignorant humans whom passions agitate. . . . You have got to enlighten not by scientific explanations but by a reasoning which anticipates the intellectual insufficiency of those to whom they [the ideas] are presented and [to those] who reject abstractions. Tardieu will have to take note of this because his books have only the elite for a following and his ideas, designs, and systems will not penetrate the crowd who for the time being are a great deal more important than the elites. . . .²¹

At first glance, one is tempted to prove Lamy wrong since according to various newspapers, the effect of Reynaud on his listening public (both on financial as well as defense matters) seemed for the most part to be positive. His numerous conferences, speeches, and lectures were marked by their lucidity and clairvoyance. Reynaud was convincing, persuasive, and enlightening. His talks reflected intelligence, frankness, and objectivity. Reynaud was listened to with an almost passionate attention. He conquered his audiences as much by his verve as by the subtle charm and force that he placed in the expression of his thoughts. His listeners were numerous and enthusiastically attentive--almost in a religious sense. Inevitably, Reynaud conquered his hearers with his political style. He was at one and the same time a joy to listen to and a terror to be heard. The applause was always frenetic or warm or passionate or repeated or unanimous or lengthy or vigorous.²²

²¹"Dossier Portalet N°XIV," AN, Marcel Lamy to Reynaud, May 6, 1936.

²²Comoedia, April 30, 1936, p. 1 and June 20, 1936, p. 1; L'Eclaireur de Nice et de Sud-Est, November 6, 1936,

A closer look at Reynaud supporters, however--the newspapers that carried the above commentary--indicated press coverage limited to a narrow political persuasion. Thus in addition to the provincial press cited, the newspapers and journals that repeatedly and favorably opened their columns to Reynaud's defense views such as:

Paris Soir	- - - - -	Independent
Le Journal	- - - - -	Right
Le Figaro	- - - - -	Right
L'Echo de Paris	- - - - -	Center-Right
L'Epoque	- - - - -	Center-Right

were for the most part center-right in orientation which eliminated a goodly portion of the left and far right.

Not surprisingly, many of the meeting halls from where the newsmen glowingly reported Reynaud's speeches were filled by members of special interest groups such as the well educated at the Ambassadeurs, the patrons of the lecture society known as Conferencia, members of local Democratic Alliance chapters, as well as participants in the University Club of Paris, the Alliance Francaise, and the American Club of Paris.²³

p. 3; Le Journal, October 16, 1937, January 29, 1938, p. 2; Conferencia, December 1937 - June 1938, p. 37; Journal de Rouen, July 26, 1936, p. 3; Le Petit Marseillais, November 11, 1936, p. 3; Le Moniteur, June 14, 1937, p. 3; Les Dernières Nouvelles de Strasbourg, December 21, 1936, p. 6.

²³ Les grandes conferences des Ambassadeurs were lectures given under the patronage of the Minister of Education. Conferencia, founded and directed by Yvonne Sarcey, was a program of speeches and articles put out by well known personalities and patronized by Belgian and French nobility as well as political leaders. These

A different view of Reynaud presented itself on April 16, 1936 at the Dussoubs Street school for boys, a view that not only reiterated Lamy's evaluation of Reynaud but also suggested that Reynaud had a problem in relating to common crowd mentality.²⁴

Described by Germaine Decaris, a writer for the leftist newspaper, L'Oeuvre, the campaign speech took place before the electors of the second arrondissement. Attempts by Reynaud to rationally discuss foreign policy, defense and financial problems fared badly. At any given time, he was never more than in half control of the assembly. Amidst booing, catcalls, and obscenities, Reynaud's struggle to argue a stronger defense policy was met with shouts of "Down with war!" His endeavors to plead for a healthier financial policy were sidetracked to answering questions about his position on the 200 families. At one point, the action deteriorated into a vocal war between two opposing factions in the audience with Reynaud partially eclipsed on

presentations were bound and published semiannually in Le Journal de l'université des annales.

²⁴There are both primary and secondary sources that reinforce the idea Reynaud had major communication difficulties. See La Depeche de Rouen et de Normandie, July 26, 1936, p. 2; Elie Bois, Truth on the Tragedy of France, trans. N. Scarlyn Wilson (London: Hodder Stoughton Ltd., 1941), pp. 191-218 and Dan les coulisses des ministères et de l'Etat-Major 1930-40 (Paris: Pierre Lafitte, 1943), p. 261.

the platform.²⁵ The session ended after midnight on a Reynaud covered with perspiration and verbal abuse.²⁶

The almost total lack of receptivity to Reynaud's defense views among the working class and petit bourgeoisie was no more in evidence than in the pages of L'Humanité, Le Populaire, and L'Oeuvre. Composed of a daily reading public of over one-half million (Table 7, p. 227), these papers seldom mentioned Reynaud's armored corps. If and when reference was made to the project, it was in a negative sense. Indeed, none of these three dailies reviewed Le Problème militaire français. After Reynaud's assignment to the finance ministry, the leftist press finally gave Reynaud its attention but it amounted to notoriety due to the additional misery his decree laws visited upon the worker.

With rare exceptions, Reynaud and L'Humanité always seemed to be on different wave lengths. When Reynaud presented his plan for the armored corps in 1935, L'Humanité, the mouthpiece of the Communist Party, was busy decrying the

²⁵The dispute centered on a question put to Reynaud: "Are you for or against the Croix de feu?" Without giving Reynaud a chance to answer, a member of the Croix yelled back: "The Croix de Feu shits on you." See L'Oeuvre, April 16, 1936.

²⁶L'Oeuvre, April 16, 1936, pp. 1-2, 7.

TABLE 9
 PROFILE OF SELECTED PARISIAN DAILIES
 DURING THE 1930s

Newspaper (founded)	Circulation-- Contributors	Audience--Attitudes--Quality
L'Humanité (1921)	300,000 Marcel Cachin, Maurice Thorez, Jacques Duclos, Gabriel Péri	Communist, extreme left, workers-- anticapitalist, antifascist-- sensationalist, considerable dis- tortion
Le Populaire (1918)	300,000 (1936) 100,000 (other yrs) Léon Blum, Paul Faure	Socialists, extreme left, workers, petit bourgeois--concerned with the economic and social plight of workers and the poor--considerable distortion
L'Oeuvre (1915)	110,000 Geneviève Tabouis, Jean Piot, Herriot	Radical, petit bourgeois, moderate left--hostile to fascism especially Hitler--good
L'Echo de Paris (1884)	100,000 Kerillis, Pironneau, Pertinax Montherlant	Center-right, bourgeois, Catholic, moderate nationalists, military-- pro-Italy, antimunichois, anti- Hitler--some distortion especially toward Popular Front
Le Figaro (1854)	100,000 Vladimir d' Ormesson, Lucien Romier	Right, conservative, military--emu- lates policy of order and work, carries official viewpoint of high command--very good
L'Action française (1908)	40,000-70,000 Charles Maurras Léon Daudet	Extreme right, royalists, military-- anti-Republic, anti-Popular Front, fascist, pro-Italy--poor to fair, considerable distortion, hate journalism

SOURCES: Henry Coston, Lectures Françaises--partis journaux et hommes politiques d'hier et d'aujourd'hui (Rennes: Imprimeries réunis, 1960), pp. 517-55; Raymond Manery, La Presse de la IIIe république (Paris: J. Foret, 1955), pp. 257-59; Geneviève Vallette et al., Munich (Paris: Armand Colin, 1964), pp. 286-97; Pierre Milza, L'Italie fasciste devant l'opinion française 1920-40 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1967), pp. 255-60.

Two Year Law.²⁷ Not only did it encourage mass assemblies of workers against this statute requiring two years of military service, but it also attacked the treatment of army soldiers who in their opinion were poorly fed, housed, and clothed. To L'Humanité, Reynaud's plan was in fact the recreation of Bonaparte's elitist corps--a separate army and a classic example of overarmament.²⁸

In 1936, his proposal for military reform was totally eclipsed by his stand on devaluation. Reynaud, the "shipwrecker of the franc," and the "impenitent devaluator," was intent on making the poor pay.²⁹ How could he ask the workers to make sacrifices when it was the employers who violated economic and social laws?³⁰ These opinions were reinforced when Reynaud became finance minister and unleashed a string of decree laws in 1938-39.

These regulations included the cancellation of the forty hour work week, a 2 per cent tax on all income, a 1 per cent surcharge on all goods, tax reductions to businessmen involved in new investments, the reduction of wasteful

²⁷ L'Humanité, March 16, 1935, p. 2.

²⁸ Ibid., March 19, 1935, p. 1.

²⁹ Ibid., May 1, 1936, p. 2.

³⁰ Ibid., February 12, 1936, p. 2.

spending among communities, the laying off of 40,000 railroad workers and the reduction of public works.³¹

To L'Humanité, the laws spelled one thing: more torment for the poor and more profit for the rich capitalists involved in armament industries. In a series of front page stories in April of 1939, L'Humanité attacked the policy of misery and unemployment of Daladier-Reynaud. "Imposed solely on the working classes," wrote L'Humanité, "the sacrifices ruin the country instead of helping national defense."³² The workers, caught in the web of socio-economic malaise, were in fact no longer listening to Reynaud, a man for whom "a pedestal is [was] necessary" since he claimed to have done better than Raymond Poincare's financial reforms of 1926.³³ A front page cartoon of July 30, 1939 best summed up the situation. Reynaud, delivering a broadcasted speech, was represented by reams of paper issuing forth from a radio speaker. Sitting by were a Parisian couple sound asleep. Underneath the caption read: "There are those who take costly trips to the country so they can sleep under the murmuring pines when without moving, they can find sleep in the lulling waves of Paul Reynaud's speeches."³⁴

³¹Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:235-38.

³²L'Humanité, April 24, 1939, p. 1.

³³Ibid., March 8, 1939, p. 2.

³⁴Ibid., July 30, 1939, p. 2.

Le Populaire, the Socialist party organ, pursued much the same idea as L'Humanité. Military and foreign policy events were interpreted in light of the economic misery of the worker and his exploitation by rich capitalists. This approach resulted in an eerie sense of unrealness: Hitler howling at the door while the front pages concentrated on mass rallies to shorten the work week, increase wages, and extend social security benefits to the aged. Le Populaire, in fact, sacrificed a more balanced picture in order to further the aims of its party. This closed circuit atmosphere inevitably produced misrepresentations stemming from ignorance and party propaganda.

Thus the professional army of de Gaulle superimposed on the Two Year Law was the grand design of a conspiring general staff.³⁵ Other evidence of Le Populaire's departure from reality occurred in 1937 when Reynaud presented the chamber with his proposals for military reform. Instead of reporting on the merits of his ideas, Le Populaire reminisced back to the pre-World War I days of Jean Jaurès. Would that this great Socialist leader, tragically assassinated, would return. Certainly he would have known what to advise on military problems.³⁶

³⁵Le Populaire, March 28, 1935, p. 1.

³⁶Ibid., January 27, 1937, p. 1.

In 1939, as the clash with Germany neared, the concern over the plight of the little man increased. Reynaud's decree laws, designed to gear the economy for the coming battle, were the straw that broke the camel's back. The undemocratic and antiworker regulations of Reynaud had to be resisted.³⁷ The forty-eight hour work week had to be reduced to forty. The government was exaggerating the foreign peril so war profiteers and armament manufacturers wrested more sacrifices from the workers without the latter rebelling.³⁸ Under such circumstances, a patriotic stance on national defense died.

L'Oeuvre, the Radical daily, in contrast to L'Humanité and Le Populaire, soft-pedaled class conflicts. Its watered down presentation of social and economic issues was in line with the stagnating Radical party at the head of which sat Daladier.³⁹ Still, L'Oeuvre was tied politically to its leftist neighbors by the strings of the Popular Front. Thus it looked askance at any military project that tended to strengthen the army, that smacked of the offensive, or that challenged the defensive credo implicit in the Maginot Line network, a bastion of security to petit bourgeois mentality.

³⁷ Ibid., January 14, 1939, p. 1.

³⁸ Ibid., April 22, 1939, p. 1.

³⁹ For an explanation of the party's blandness, see François Goguel, La Politique des partis sous la IIIe République (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1946), pp. 325-27.

L'Oeuvre, in fact, gave the same minimal coverage to military related problems as it did to social and financial issues. Thus news on a rally involving a mass demonstration for peace was not a headline sensation but a plodding story on page five. The arts, literary life, sport, and crime played a more important role than they did in L'Oeuvre's sister publications to the left.

Its 1935 reporting of Reynaud's armored corps was perfunctory, indicating simply the outline of his proposal.⁴⁰ Follow ups later on treated the whole matter lightheartedly or as an affair of secondary importance. In a capsule summary of Reynaud's position during the 1937 debates, L'Oeuvre noted that "In short [according to Reynaud], it is necessary to adapt the army to new conditions. Mr. Paul Reynaud who must have had a bad breakfast is pessimistic.--'The army is in incredible disorder.'"⁴¹

The one area on which L'Oeuvre (and to a lesser extent L'Humanité and Le Populaire) supported Reynaud strongly was foreign policy. It agreed with Reynaud when he warned that Hitler intended to separate England from France. It agreed with Reynaud on sanctions against Italy

⁴⁰L'Oeuvre, March 16, 1935, p. 4.

⁴¹Ibid., January 27, 1937, p. 4.

and more importantly, it agreed with him on the ratification of the Franco-Soviet Pact.⁴²

Still, L'Oeuvre at best produced a bland kind of coverage. It was a newspaper sitting on the laurels of a party made influential in another epoch of French history. Its pages were no longer open to radical change and thus it was not the place to look for support vis à vis military reform.

One of Reynaud's staunchest supporters was the center-right newspaper, L'Echo de Paris (later, L'Epoque). André Pironneau, its military affairs columnist, repeatedly called for the establishment of an armored corps. To Pironneau, the days of clinging to the 1927-28 system were over.⁴³ The army of the next war could not rely on the concept of large nonspecialized divisions in which each arm was of equal importance.⁴⁴ Such a theory denied the evolution in weapons and war strategy by which the tank and plane in a lightning attack would play the predominant role.

If France had had the armored corps on March 7, 1936, Hitler would have thought twice before invading the Rhineland.⁴⁵ How sad it was to see de Gaulle's armored corps realized by the Germans while Sénac before the army

⁴²Ibid., December 31, 1935.

⁴³L'Echo de Paris, January 5, 1936, p. 1.

⁴⁴Ibid., July 28, 1935, p. 2.

⁴⁵Ibid., March 30, 1936, p. 1.

commission condemned Reynaud's proposal as having "logic and history" against it.⁴⁶ Strange that Fabry had "just discovered" in the pages of his moderate newspaper, L'Intransigeant, that the Germans by June 1, 1936 had four armored divisions consisting of 600 tanks each.⁴⁷ Why had Fabry ignored Reynaud's warnings? The cause lay in the impotence, timidity, and conformism of the directing circles of both the army and the nation.⁴⁸

To General Debeney's criticism that not enough specialists could be found to service the armored corps, Pironneau responded:

Let us add that this discussion of numbers in an Empire which furnished and pays over and above 240,000 called up soldiers, 250,000 French professionals (army, navy, air, militia), 200,000 natives serving average to long term, 20,000 foreign legion, 20,000 auxiliaries (African Goumiers [Arab Scouts]), special troops from the Levant, 25,000 military agents, appears to us in itself almost ludicrous. . . . But in this matter [of military reforms], it is necessary to see things in their overall perspective, it is necessary especially to want them in order to realize them.⁴⁹

To Debeney's contention that the national army would suffer a loss of pride in itself, Pironneau countered that perhaps there might be a temporary psychological problem but this situation would result not from the injection of an

⁴⁶ Ibid., January 20, 1936.

⁴⁷ L'Echo de Paris, June 1, 1936.

⁴⁸ Ibid., January 5, 1936, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Ibid., July 28, 1935.

unacceptable idea but from the painful changes progress engendered. Further, the use of the armored corps recruits as teachers in the officer's training school (école de cadres) would foster an atmosphere of dynamism and enthusiasm.⁵⁰

The time had come to open the way to new ideas, to impart the arguments of the new school.⁵¹ Heed had to be taken of Reynaud's reform proposals as set down in his Le Problème militaire français, an intelligent and powerful book characterized by talent, persuasiveness, conviction, and grandeur.⁵²

While Pironneau focused on supporting Reynaud's military ideas, Kerillis spent equal time on Reynaud's economic and foreign policy. Kerillis could not understand how Reynaud could support a policy of devaluation.⁵³ He could not see how Reynaud could argue sanctions against Italy since that country was France's latin brother and an economic war against her was fratricidal. Kerillis, in fact, felt that Reynaud's speech of December 27, 1935 (attacking Laval's concessions to Mussolini), was a sell out to the Popular Front.⁵⁴

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 2.

⁵¹Ibid., January 5, 1936, p. 1.

⁵²Ibid., July 20, 1935 and May 18, 1937, p. 1.

⁵³Ibid., November 7, 1935, p. 1.

⁵⁴Ibid., December 28, 1935, p. 1.

How were the center and right ever to form a solid party of nationalists if Reynaud played the game of the left? Reynaud lacked a sense of political realities, a direct result of expressing too much individualism. Finally, Reynaud's tango with Daladier as the latter's finance minister was worrisome. Was not this ministry morally condemned and irremediably tarnished by the Munich capitulation?⁵⁵

Still, on the whole, Kerillis was favorable to Reynaud. In his columns, the newspaper editor admired the courage and disinterest with which Reynaud coldly sacrificed popularity in order to defend his personal conceptions. In the political world, such personalities were rare.⁵⁶

Kerillis was quick to defend Reynaud in a variety of situations such as the attacks made on him by the moderates after Reynaud delivered his 1935 opposition speech to Laval. The editor found himself disgusted with these attacks upon a man whom he knew to be honest and loyal, a man "that I admire and love."⁵⁷ Further, it was L'Echo de Paris who

⁵⁵ Ibid., and l'Époque, November 3, 1938, p. 1. L'Echo under the direction of Kerillis cannot be called extreme right as several historians have labeled it. Kerillis repeatedly refers to a nationalist party arising out of the center and right. When Kerillis left L'Echo midway in 1937 to form L'Époque, he favored a Franco-Soviet Pact, an anathema to the extreme right.

⁵⁶ L'Echo de Paris, November 7, 1935, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Ibid., December 28, 1935, p. 1.

came to Reynaud's defense during the 1936 election, a time when the deputy from the second sector of Paris came perilously close to defeat.⁵⁸

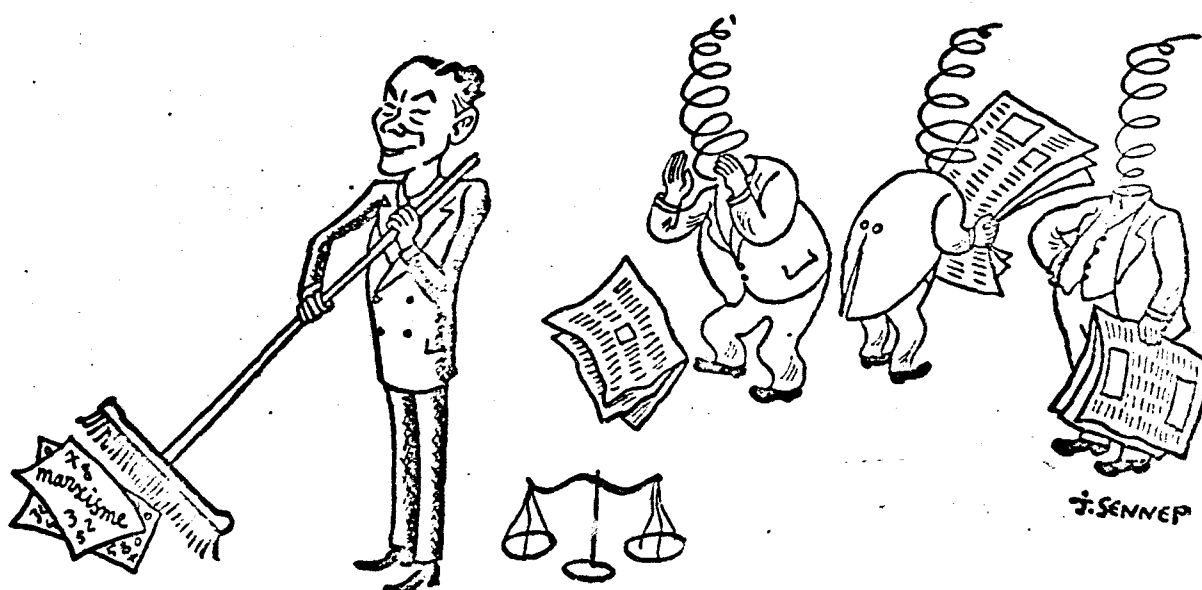
In 1938, when several rightist newspapers wrongly accused Reynaud, the new finance minister, of being an accomplice of the Communists and an agent of Moscow, a furor arose. L'Epoque, in an attempt to capture this, showed a cartoon (Fig. 2, p. 238) in which Reynaud was sweeping the floor while some headless (uncomprehending) readers in the background followed the news of Reynaud's appointment. The subtitle ran: "Those who no longer understand--Finally, yes or no? Is he the valet of Stalin at the justice department or the broom of Stalin at the finances?" Dismayed, Kerillis noted that even before Reynaud had a chance to improve the nation's miserable financial situation, all artillery had been trained on him.⁵⁹

Kerillis displayed a keen insight into both Reynaud's assets and limitations. On the latter, he noted that Reynaud was too talkative, did not accept discipline, and didn't have a notion of what a democratic party meant.⁶⁰ More important and perhaps the crucial factor crimping Reynaud's style was a personality analysis by Kerillis that echoed the letter of Marcel Lamy:

⁵⁸Ibid., May 2, 1936 and May 4, 1936.

⁵⁹L'Epoque, November 5, 1938, p. 1.

⁶⁰Ibid., December 19, 1937, p. 1.



CEUX QUI NE COMPRENNENT PLUS

— Enfin, oui ou non ? Est-il le « Valet de Staline aux Balances »
ou le « Balai de Staline aux Finances » ?

Fig. 4

SOURCE: L'Epoque, November 4, 1938, p. 1.

It is true that his marvelous talent [as a speaker/statesman] does not appeal to the masses. He speaks to reason rather than to imagination and feeling. This very great orator has neither the impulsiveness nor the feeling nor the special "sex appeal" which excites and carries away modern multitudes. His vivid but logical speech is made for the great elites.⁶¹

In treating Reynaud's assets, Kerillis looked to Reynaud as did de Gaulle--in expectation of great things. Reynaud was "a politician in whom the country places hope."⁶² Reynaud was "a man of state in every respect of the word." He had "a mind always turned toward the future."⁶³

Kerillis, in lamenting the decadence in French society hoped that Reynaud would bring France out of this decline as well as out of the avalanche of misfortunes that had beset the nation.⁶⁴ Was not the Reynaud of Kerillis the same Reynaud that de Gaulle was looking for: a saviour to bring France out of her difficulties?

At first glance, Le Figaro, a conservative daily of the right, appeared to give Reynaud a sympathetic audience. In reviewing Jeunesse, quelle France veux-tu?, Le Figaro called his chapter on military affairs "masterful." "The views, the arguments, the philosophy," it wrote, "are

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² L'Echo de Paris, June 14, 1937, p. 3.

⁶³ L'Epoque, December 19, 1937, p. 1.

⁶⁴ L'Echo de Paris, January 27, 1937, p. 1 and L'Epoque, April 22, 1939, p. 1.

convincing without a fault."⁶⁵ In addition to giving him fair coverage in the chamber, the newspaper reported favorably on Reynaud's lectures at the Ambassadeurs.⁶⁶ Moreover, in 1939 when practically all the other journals attacked Reynaud for his decree laws, Le Figaro lent Reynaud its utmost support.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, in its military columns, Le Figaro supported the high command's point of view at almost every turn. In general, the articles followed a traceable pattern: recognition of new forms of strategy and weaponry, desire to diminish their importance, and finally, a turning back to the lessons of World War I.⁶⁸

Reynaud was severely criticized by military critic Jean Rivière for inflating the importance of the tank which according to the latter did not change the strategic character of terrestrial battle. It would be better in Rivière's mind if France concentrated on the construction

⁶⁵Le Figaro, April 8, 1936, p. 5.

⁶⁶For good examples of this coverage, see Le Figaro for October 3, 1936 and November 21, 1936.

⁶⁷Le Figaro, April 22, 1939, p. 1.

⁶⁸Interspersed in this pattern were moments of insight such as when Reynaud's Le Problème militaire français prompted Jean Rivière to decry the fact France lacked a civilian elite capable of discussing positively, the great military questions of the day. Why did not Reynaud, wrote Rivière, launch a center of independent civilian and military studies where the two parties could meet? See Le Figaro, June 10, 1937, p. 6.

of antitank arms rather than on the tanks themselves.⁶⁹ To Rivière, the fear engendered by the appearance of German panzer divisions was exaggerated since the tank simply would not play a preponderant role in the life of future battles.⁷⁰

In reviewing Le Problème militaire français, Rivière attacked Reynaud's idea that an offensive beyond the frontier was necessary in order to help allies. Who wanted another slaughter in the style of 1914? Defend France first. Firepower was still king and it was to be used to the maximum effectiveness especially at fortification points. Lastly, the tank had not given sufficient proof of its usefulness in order to make it a unique line of strategy.⁷¹

Various articles by Rivière and other authors reflected the views of the general staff as references were made to a protracted war or a war in which horses still played an important role.⁷² Tanks were described in terms of supporting the infantry. Artillery or fire power would ultimately clear the way for the infantry.⁷³ Chauvineau's

⁶⁹Le Figaro, February 10, 1937, p. 8.

⁷⁰Ibid., March 10, 1937, p. 6.

⁷¹Ibid., June 25, 1937, p. 8.

⁷²Ibid., July 10, 1938 and September 9, 1938, p. 8. There were some rare exceptions. General *** warned of the dangers of the doctrine of the defensive which while agreeable to the electors would inevitably put the country on the road to defeat. See Le Figaro, April 10, 1938, p. 6.

⁷³Le Figaro, December 10, 1938, p. 9.

ideas--especially those that stressed fortification--were given a very favorable review by Dufieux who envisaged elongated fronts encompassing vast portions of the frontier.⁷⁴

Some of the articles pointed to Reynaud's weak grasp of technical detail. The proof was in the Spanish Civil War which General Dufieux used to point out the limitations of light tanks in rough terrain. The defeat of two divisions of Italian 1933 Fiat-Ansaldo tanks at Guadalajara was due primarily to the fact they went too fast--the resultant jerks and bumps translated into a loss of control over direction and firing accuracy. Moreover, the weak spanning capacity of these tanks often impeded their progress especially on wet ground. These disadvantages demoralized the crew who had to occupy these "moving coffins."⁷⁵

In a similar vein, G. Guilhermy claimed that a lightning attack on French borders would not know how to

⁷⁴Ibid., April 12, 1939, p. 6 and June 10, 1938, p. 6.

⁷⁵Le Figaro, June 10, 1938, p. 6. Spanning capacity here means the ability of tanks to cross the terrain as efficiently as possible no matter what the condition of the ground underneath. In this article, Dufieux mentioned a comment of Colonel von Xylander in the 1937 issue of Militar Wochenblatt. Von Xylander, a professor at the Berlin War Academy, stated that the failure of the two Italian divisions at Guadalajara was due to the intervention of the Russian T-28 tank. By means of the demoralizing noise of its gun combined with the action of low flying bombers, the Russian made tank contributed to the Italian defeat. Dufieux, however, did not stress this lesson in his article.

obtain decisive results since an armored column was extremely fragile and subject to communication problems and even to dislocation. The proof was in the German invasion of Austria, carried out in a haphazard and sloppy fashion. Further, according to Guilhermy, an armored division could only be effective on a front of one kilometer five hundred meters (nine-tenths of a mile) and could only penetrate to a depth of ten to twelve kilometers (6.2 - 7.5 miles). When he added the spatial limitation factor to the anticipated loss of trained specialists due to battle casualties, Guilhermy concluded that an armored corps could only be used locally and then only at the beginning of a campaign.⁷⁶

L'Action française, a royalist daily of the extreme-right headed by the fanatical xenophobe, Charles Maurras, undertook a five year campaign of vituperation against Reynaud unequalled by other Parisian tabloids of the 1930s. To this widely read newspaper of the French intellectual community, Reynaud was a war monger, a firebrand (boite de feu), a sinister little devaluator, a little skunk, "pro-German yesterday and pro-Soviet today," wheeler dealer in Mexico, killer of the franc, sanctionist against

⁷⁶Le Figaro, August 10, 1938, p. 6.

Italy,⁷⁷ man of intrigues, shady deals, and treasonous politics.⁷⁸

According to L'Action française, Reynaud was a man who could do nothing right. His attacks on the mistakes of the general staff defamed the nation's military chiefs on whom France would have to rely in future conflicts.⁷⁹ His campaign for national union during 1937-38 indicated he was in collaboration with the Communists, the Soviets, Moscow, and even Stalin himself.⁸⁰ His decree laws of November 1938, devised in part to support rearmament, were a clear sign to the Germans that England and France wanted war.⁸¹

In a cartoon appearing on October 10, 1938, L'Action française summed up its feelings toward Reynaud. The quote below the caricature ran: "First measures to take in order to safeguard peace." The picture showed Reynaud ousted from a cabinet meeting, lying flattened like a pancake outside the door. His portly Jewish friend and "Russian twin,"

⁷⁷ L'Action française, May 1, 1936, p. 1. The pro-German comment referred to Reynaud's 1920 speeches calling for an economic rapprochement with Germany vis à vis reparations.

⁷⁸ L'Action française, May 2, 1936, p. 1.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, January 23, 1937, p. 1.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, February 13, 1938, p. 3; February 20, 1938, p. 5; and February 27, 1938, p. 2.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, April 26, 1939, p. 1.

George Mandel, was also being ousted by a vigorous kick to the derrière.⁸²

L'Action française's foreign policy of rapprochement with Italy and the avoidance of war at all costs naturally ran counter to Reynaud's anti-Laval, pro-British stance. Reynaud, by supporting England on the matter of sanctions over the Ethiopian conflict, pitted Italy against France and thus brought Europe to the brink of a Mediterranean War, a war in which Berlin would naturally help Rome.⁸³ The whole affair would result in this bellicose little rogue triggering the death of two or three million French children.⁸⁴ Similarly, Reynaud's meddling in Daladier's negotiations with Hitler at Munich could endanger an already jeopardized peace.⁸⁵

In the realm of military affairs, L'Action française devoted a special biweekly section to the army, air and navy. Not surprisingly, a considerable portion of this section was given over to promotions or salary increases. Nevertheless, when the paper did examine military tactics, many of its ideas resembled those of Reynaud such as its insistence on the idea that the tank permitted the rupture of an enemy

⁸²Ibid., October 10, 1938, p. 3.

⁸³Ibid., December 12, 1935, p. 1.

⁸⁴Ibid., December 29, 1935, p. 1.

⁸⁵Ibid., September 23, 1938, pp. 1, 5.

front.⁸⁶ Indeed, L'Action française advocated the use of an "armored cavalry" operation of tanks that was:

1) deployed independently in large groups; 2) characterized by speed and surprise; 3) remained tied together by radio communication.⁸⁷

L'Action française, however, felt that an armored cavalry was more important as an instrument of defense and counter attack rather than as one used for the initial assault.⁸⁸ Moreover, the daily could not agree with the de Gaulle theory of saddling tank units with cumbersome support infantry. In other words, it wanted more freedom from the infantry than even de Gaulle was willing to allow in his Vers l'armée de métier.⁸⁹

Still, the real hiatus between L'Action française and Reynaud concerned not strategy but the form and technicalities involved in developing an armored corps. Echoing other critics, the newspaper attacked Reynaud for linking the armored corps to a professional army. Such an army would be difficult to recruit. It would cause a

⁸⁶Ibid., October 4, 1937, p. 6.

⁸⁷Ibid., January 10, 1936, p. 5. The main contributors to the military columns were H. de Trezene and Video, the latter having written a book summarizing all of his articles in L'Action française (L'Armée et la politique, 1937). Video was a pseudonym. The author's real name is unknown.

⁸⁸Ibid., March 24, 1935, pp. 5-6.

⁸⁹Ibid., August 25, 1935, pp. 5-6.

scission between the national army and itself thus creating a morale problem. Moreover, it would also suffer irreplaceable losses since untrained recruits from the national army could not fulfill the tasks of the specialized corps. In sum, the armored corps as Reynaud presented it was foreign to the molecular stability of the French army.⁹⁰

In spite of these differences, this extreme right wing newspaper was more in agreement with the Reynaud-de Gaulle strategy than any of the other dailies discussed above. Unfortunately, any positive contributions that L'Action française had to make in terms of improving national defense were destroyed by a selfdestruct pathology. The newspaper would deliver an excellent article on the latest in tank strategy only to complete it with the observation that "all problems of national defense are nothing other than a problem of regime, the present one [the Third Republic] must be vomited by all well born soldiers."⁹¹

This reductionist technique in explaining France's woes not only undermined confidence in the government but also closed the door to real reform. Ironically, L'Action française was correct when it observed that reform could not get through due to insufficient national vigor;⁹² but its

⁹⁰L'Action française, February 25, 1937, p. 5.

⁹¹Ibid., June 25, 1937, p. 6.

⁹²Ibid., March 24, 1935.

military pages, steeped in hate literature toward the government, written in a turgid, convoluted French, and replete with contradictions as well as overly simplistic views on the causes of French malaise, did not help to revive this national vigor.⁹³

In light of the evidence that has gone before in this chapter, little has been uncovered as to the reaction of the people themselves toward Reynaud's defense position. Instead what has emerged is a mostly unfavorable reaction toward him based on his devaluation stance as well as on numerous other issues. This appears to indicate that if national defense had been a more important facet of French life, Reynaud would still have had serious difficulties in light of his aforesaid communication problems as well as his limited appeal and this considered in addition to his political isolation and his lack of influence in the military world.

⁹³One of the best examples of this writing style is contained in L'Action française, February 25, 1937, pp. 5-6. These overly simplistic views included as causes of the malaise: the Jews, stock market speculators, the Communists, Socialists, and assorted leaders such as Blum, Chautemps, Herriot, Daladier, Flandin, Sarraut, and Reynaud. One outstanding contradiction was the newspaper's attack on Reynaud for criticizing the high command before the chamber. L'Action française, itself, had been attacking the logic, conformism, and work methods of the general staff since 1935. Compare L'Action française of March 24, 1935, pp. 5-6 with its issue of January 29, 1937, p. 1.

As it was, precious little reaction from the Parisian press was favorable. Reynaud was not a popular personality nor were his views the type that excited the typically downtrodden or disillusioned Frenchman of the 30s-- be he of left or right. Moreover, shortcomings in the form and technique of the armored corps came to light which echoed those discussed in Chapters III and IV. Yet (and to Reynaud's credit), certain characteristics were present in French society which would have made the Reynaud campaign difficult even if his political personality, monetary views, and armored corps had been technically perfect.

Among these was a desire not to meddle in military affairs. "You are civilian to the bone marrow," wrote a Radical journalist, Nicolas Lerouze, of himself. "Let the military speak." Certainly, felt the journalist, an illustrious general such as Debeney would expose the fallacies of a professional army.⁹⁴

Hand in hand with this attitude went a profound ignorance of the capabilities of military personnel. An eye witness survivor from this period, a librarian at the Bibliothèque Nationale, stated that at the time, Marshal Pétain was considered a great chief.⁹⁵ This error in judgement was shared by others such as poet-writer François

⁹⁴ La République, August 15, 1935.

⁹⁵ Conversation with the author, winter, 1973.

Mauriac who in recollecting the events of 1940 wrote that while on the one hand, the name of de Gaulle was unknown, "the glorious name of Pétain was resounded by me as well as by all Frenchmen."⁹⁶

Without adequate leadership and left to their own devices, the people drifted. The 1936 congratulatory letters received by Reynaud showed little concern over defense related questions. When such interest was expressed as in the case of Sampieri, it indicated a lack of understanding of the issues at hand. Eyewitnesses talked of a general lack of interest and a general ignorance of military questions. The French were far from these issues, they did not want their intellectual comfort disturbed by the need to reform, they wanted to believe only what pleased them, they did not know or understand military problems, they were not excited by the affaire des blindées, they neglected these issues, or they were asleep.⁹⁷

Another aspect of the drift was the recurring fear of war related suffering--perhaps an important reason why the French subconsciously desired to avoid facing defense questions. Tabloids depicted line sketches that showed battle dead or that relived the psychological pain brought

⁹⁶ Francois Mauriac, Mémoires politique (Paris: Grasset, 1967), p. 19.

⁹⁷ Reynaud, Auburtin, Baumgartner, Palewski, Conquet and Laniel interviews at Paris and Fontainebleau, 1973.

on by wartime separations of the past (see Figs. 5 and 6, pp. 252-3). "The people did not want war," stated Madame Paul Reynaud,⁹⁸ whose sentiment was also shared by Jules Supervielle in his 1937 poem, Prayer to an Unknown:

My God, without feeling and perhaps without hope,
 I would like to draw your attention away from so
 many wandering heavens,
 To the men who can no longer find rest in this world.
 Listen, the hour is late, they are all becoming
 discouraged
 And soon, they will be unable to recognize the
 young from the old.
 Every morning they wonder if the killing is going
 to start
 On every side they are preparing frightful
 instruments of unhappiness, tears and blood.
 One wonders if the wheat does not already hide
 the guns.
 Are you through concerning yourself with men?

 Let us breathe yet without thinking of new poisons,
 Let us look at our children without constantly
 thinking of death.⁹⁹

⁹⁸Interview with Madame Reynaud, Paris, March 23, 1973.

⁹⁹Germaine Brée, ed., Twentieth Century French Literature (New York: Macmillan Company, 1968), pp. 171-72. Excerpt translated by Joseph Connors.

L'EAU LUSTRALE...



Fig. 5

SOURCE: Vendémiaire, January 3, 1936, p. 1. L'Eau Lustrale
translates best as "baptismal water."



JOUR DES MORTS

— Toi, tu es revenu... que la Paix soit bénie !

(Dessin d'Abel ZAYRE)

Fig. 6

SOURCE: Le Journal, November 1, 1938, p. 1. Bold print translates as "All Soul's Day." Comment beneath reads: "You have come back . . . Oh that peace be blest!" This line sketch recalls the armistice day following World War I in which some did not come back.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

On May 13, 1940, seven German panzer divisions crashed through the Ardennes Forest and arrived at the banks of the Meuse River. Covered by screaming Stuka dive bombers that temporarily stunned the French artillery units into silence, the German advance guard forded the stream in rubber dinghies and established bridgeheads on the south bank while German engineers on the far side set up pontoon bridges in order to allow the tanks to cross. Paralyzed by this combination of armored thrust, terror, speed, and surprise, the French of General Corap's ninth army retreated allowing a hole to develop thirty miles wide and ten miles deep through which poured the divisions of General Ewald Von Kleist.

The German breakthrough in the Ardennes between Sedan and Namur (see Fig. 7, p. 255) caught the Franco-British armies off guard since they had anticipated a main thrust further north. Thus they had concentrated their armies between Namur and the sea where the least initial fighting took place. Unprepared for Blitzkrieg, the main allied forces were attacked from behind by General Guderian who in racing to the ocean pinned down the allies at Dunkirk, thus effectively cutting them off from the rest of

OFFENSIVE DE MAI-JUIN 1940

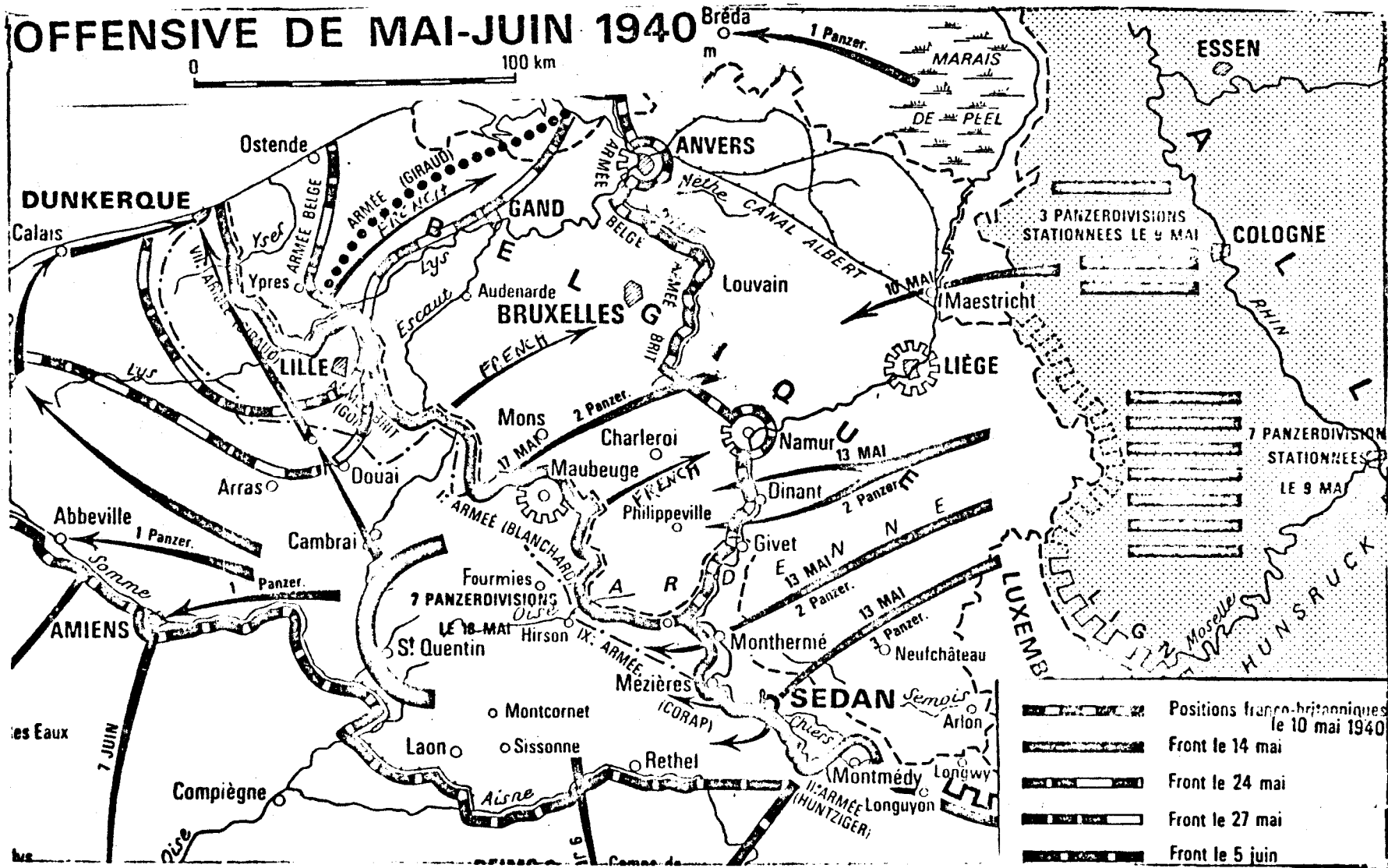


Fig. 7. German offensive, May - June, 1940*

* Reynaud, Mémoires, 2:478.

the French army and precipitating in turn the historic evacuation.

With the capitulation of the Belgian forces on May 28, 1940, the Germans mopped up in Belgium and then turned their armored machines south toward the Somme River (June 5, 1940) where the retreating French army with its static artillery proved no match for the deadly plane-tank duet of Hitler's forces. The flight psychosis engendered by this lightning warfare did the rest. Millions of retreating soldiers and fleeing civilians made the use of military arteries a sheer impossibility. Paris fell on June 14, 1940 and the armistice was signed on June 21, 1940.¹

Thus, much of the strategy Reynaud advised--tank warfare, mobile armor, lightning attack--was used by the enemy in a five week campaign that ended in France's defeat.

¹On the military aspects of the fall of France, see: Marc Bloch, Strange Defeat, trans. Gerard Hopkins (New York: Norton Inc., 1968); John Cairns, "Some Recent Historians and the 'Strange Defeat' of 1940," Journal of Modern History 46 (March 1974):60-85; Guy Chapman, Why France Fell. The Defeat of the French Army 1940 (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1968); Winston Churchill, The Second World War, vol. 2: Their Finest Hour (London: Cassell and Co., 1948); Theodore Draper, The Six Week War: France May 10 - June 25, 1940 (New York, 1940); Jean Dutourd, The Taxis of the Marne, trans. Harold King (London: Secker and Warburg, 1957); the nine volumes of Témoignage and the two volumes of Rapport; Gamelin, Servir; Charles de Gaulle, Mémoires de guerre, vol. 1: L'Appel (Paris: Plon, 1954); Alistair Horne, To Lose a Battle, France - 1940 (Boston: Little, Brown, Inc., 1969); Shirer, The Collapse; Sir Edward Spears, Assignment to Catastrophe (New York: A. A. Wyn Inc., 1954); Weygand, Mémoires and John Williams, The Ides of May: The Defeat of France, May - June, 1940 (New York, 1968).

Reynaud's armored corps plan, however, had a certain haziness about it, a factor that allowed French military personnel to criticize it for lack of technical depth and practicality. Cases in point were its geographic range and recruitment figures.

A more serious flaw was the limited role of aviation. Reynaud never predicted the close interplay between tank and dive bomber that Guderian demanded from his panzers and stukas. Airplanes, in fact, played a largely secondary role to tank maneuvers and tank strategy. In light of this, Jacques de Launay, a French historian, has speculated that even if de Gaulle's armored corps had been applied in 1940, it probably would have been pinned down by German dive bombers.²

An additional imperfection in the plan concerned the use of the term, "professional army"--an error stemming back to de Gaulle's 1934 book and which in fact denied the basic incompatibility between Third Republican French history and a standing army of professional men. Moreover, foes of the plan anticipated that such an arrangement would divide the army into two divisions: professionals or grade As and the conscripts or second choices. Reynaud and de Gaulle were never able to satisfactorily convince the

²Jacques de Launay, De Gaulle and his France [A Psychopolitical and Historical Portrait of Charles de Gaulle], trans. Dorothy Albertyn (New York: Julian Press, 1968), p. 268.

skeptics that the armored corps could be effectively integrated into the national army. Much precious time was thus lost in semantics while the valuable strategy inherent in the scheme failed to be appreciated for its full worth.

The debacle of 1940 was also a witness to the defeat of Reynaud's foreign policy: Russia aligned with Germany with England unable to help France in its quest for collective security. Yet, in a sense, collective security--along the lines which Reynaud preached (entente among the Petite Entente, Russia, and Poland)--was a sheer impossibility. The Versailles Treaty had caused too much enmity and distrust between these powers. Further, England never really embraced the concept of collective security until 1939 when it was too late. A lesson to be learned from this was that France should have struck out on her own (Rhineland) and should have insured her security by her own means. A sad example of the failure to do so was Spain where French passivity (Reynaud's included) was an invitation to opposing European forces to continue their desire to expand and aggrandize.

Another explanation of why the armored corps and related defense planning failed was due to the relative isolation of Reynaud and de Gaulle within their respective political and military systems, an effect that reduced their rapport with peers and thus discouraged compromise. They never bridged the gap from their own constructed ideals to

those of the real world of officers and politicians around them. The integrity of an idea was in fact more important to them than party politics and the realities of power play within the military hierarchy. The unpopular de Gaulle pursued the professional army as if the high command and history did not exist while Reynaud repeatedly called for national union although he himself was incapable of forming the necessary ties to bring about such an arrangement.

Reynaud, moreover, took on too many projects. His involvement in finances interfered with defense matters to the point where after his entrance into the Daladier ministry, national defense receded into the background while the integrity of his defense views collapsed. In addition, Reynaud's stand on devaluation was a direct hindrance to furthering the armored corps since attention was distracted by the divergence of Reynaud's views on the monetary depreciation of the franc.

It was on the issue of devaluation that is revealed Reynaud's distance from the people for there was nothing more distasteful to the French of the 1930s than devaluation. Reynaud simply plunged in without regard for consequence or realities--much the same as de Gaulle did with Vers l'armée de métier.

Little in the de Gaulle correspondence is related to the socio-economic climate of the day such as the Great Depression and the Popular Front with its accompanying social

reform program. Defense matters were discussed as if in a vacuum, revealing scant insight into the domestic turmoil of the decade. Moreover, unlike others who had criticized Reynaud's communication failures with the public, de Gaulle encouraged Reynaud to continue along what he considered the promising path of future leadership of the French nation. The fact that Reynaud lasted less than three months as premier in 1940 is a telling commentary on how far removed de Gaulle was from the limitations of Reynaud as a political leader.

Beyond the shortcomings of these men were those of the institutions in question, the government and the military power. Other historians such as Philip Bankwitz have focused on the imbalance between the two and the repercussions of this imbalance. This thesis, however, sees their interrelationship as secondary to the dysfunction within each one. The chamber's voting record on defense matters showed a haphazard and ineffective approach to defense related issues where continuity of purpose was impossible because of the many cabinet changes. Further, many deputies were profoundly ignorant of defense questions and it is revealing that no cabinet ever fell on a defense question per se. Rather, defense budgets were frequently voted by raised hands with the details left to a few such as Fabry and Daladier.

Certainly the lack of dynamic leadership (both in the military and political spheres) was the single most important resource lacking in France during the 1930s. There was no great leader (and no great party) to overcome the multiple divisions on foreign policy and there was no great leader to guide the people through the depression. Instead, an intense and destructive individualism reigned where the cult of personality--be it Pétain's, Gamelin's, Daladier's or Fabry's--triumphed to the detriment of the collective good.

The military especially the high command did not make the necessary effort to pursue effectively and quickly the new ideas purported by de Gaulle and Reynaud. Tied down to strategies of the past, it concentrated its energies on more immediate problems such as recruitment and budget matters, neglecting the impact of technological change on the battlefield. Its obsession with the shortcomings of the armored corps rather than with its assets slowed down acceptance of armored mobile warfare until it was too late.

Beyond the shortcomings of the institutions were those of the people themselves. Other than being self assured by the presence of the Maginot Line, the people were not sufficiently concerned with national defense nor did they want to be concerned with it. As eyewitnesses have stated, they had no interest in it, ignored it, or remained

oblivious to it. Perhaps this is why so many deputies also lacked interest in national defense matters.

In recapitulation, the ignorance of the people, the narrow interests of socio-economic groups reflected in the press, as well as the rigidity of both chamber and military are only part of the explanation as to why the nation failed to grasp the dangerous implications of insincerity in collective security and of revolution in military technology.

This study also reveals the important failures of the main protagonist, Paul Reynaud. At first, this is difficult to comprehend since his Mémoires and other works left to history portrayed him as a clairvoyant who was correct on the issues be they mechanized warfare or the need for the democracies to work together for collective security. In contrast, these pages show a Reynaud whose deep immersion in the Third Republican political machine emphasized his role as a jouisseur and whose actions have left history with legacy of inadequacies and contradictions.

Appealing to the French people's collective will to work for national union and for national recovery, he in turn lacked the capability of working collectively within his parliamentary groups. He even lacked the personality and feel for the times to convince people of the idea in the first place. A staunch supporter of the Czechs, he stayed on in the Daladier regime after the Munich accords were signed. An ardent foe of fascist aggression in such places

as Ethiopia and the Rhineland, he took a noninvolvement stand on the Spanish Civil War akin to appeasement.

The errors also extend into the area of bad judgement. In spite of the fact that there was in every arena examined here, supporters of mechanized warfare and collective security, a great deal of resistance was encountered from the military, parliament, and press. Much of this can be directly attributed to the framework and presentation of Reynaud's national defense plan--an error that had at its base, insufficient planning and foresight, the foresight to find a means to transcend the differences among Frenchmen so that an adequate reform of national defense could be undertaken.

The only real winner to come out of this study in failure was Charles de Gaulle. Protected from the high command by Reynaud until 1940, he escaped to England during the debacle with 100,000 francs given him by Premier Reynaud. This allowed him to set up a free French government in exile, an event that led to fame and later successes.

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APPENDIX A

THE REYNAUD-CONQUET FEUD

General Conquet had made it his special study to examine the change in Reynaud's position on defense in 1938-39. In a 1964-65 literary war between the two men, Conquet, joined by Marcel Dacier, presented a compromised Reynaud more interested in personal advancement than in the welfare of the nation.

Conquet and Dacier cited the facts that: 1) Reynaud stayed in the Daladier cabinet even though he knew on May 31, 1938, that Daladier had refused Gamelin the construction of three armored divisions; 2) at Leeds, England during May 1938, Reynaud called the French army the first in the world; 3) Reynaud stayed in the cabinet at the time of the Munich capitulation, and 4) on July 25, 1939, in his capacity as finance minister, Reynaud reduced the credits on war materials from thirteen to six billion francs.¹

Later, Conquet pursued the same theme when in his biography of Marshal Pétain, he called attention to a letter Justice Minister Reynaud sent to Daladier on July 8, 1938, in which he asked the premier to accelerate armament production without every mentioning the armored corps.²

The General's energy for these indictments was fueled by Reynaud's attacks upon his former boss and hero, Pétain. Reynaud, in his postwar accounts, has heavily accused Pétain of contributing to the collapse of France both before and during the war. On these issues, Conquet called Reynaud a liar.³

¹Alfred Conquet, "En lisant les Mémoires de Paul Reynaud," Ecrits de Paris, December 1964, p. 46 and January 1965, p. 63; Marcel Dacier, "Quelques observations sur les thèses de M. Paul Reynaud," Ecrits de Paris, April 1965, p. 14 and May 1965, p. 137. Responses of Reynaud are contained in the April and May 1965 issues of Ecrits de Paris.

²Alfred Conquet, Auprès du Maréchal Pétain (Paris: Editions France-Empire, 1970), p. 342.

³Interview with General Alfred Conquet, Fontainebleau, May 14, 1973.

APPENDIX B

✓ Nous savons, lui ont-ils dit, que vous êtes naturellement tournés vers vos dominions sur les mers. Nous savons votre répugnance à entrer dans les querelles des petits Etats de l'Europe centrale. Mais nous faisons appel à vous, dans un sentiment de moralité. Il faut barrer la route à l'agresseur, au fort qui veut opprimer le faible.

✓ On s'est battu alors sur la définition de l'agresseur.

✓ Les politiques anglais résistaient. Ils restaient attachés, par mille liens, à leur conception insulaire traditionnelle.

✓ Nous leur disions, nous: Ce qui est capital, c'est l'automatisme des sanctions, car si un débat intervient sur les mobiles de l'agresseur, si on discrimine suivant les fautes ou les mérites de la victime, tout est perdu.

✓ Nous précisions: le jour où l'Allemagne attaquerait l'Autriche, elle dirait: « Mais la population de l'Autriche vient à moi, les bras ouverts. » Le jour où elle attaquerait la Tchécoslovaquie, elle dirait: « Il y a en Tchécoslovaquie une majorité allemande et une minorité slovaque. » Le jour où elle attaquerait la Yougoslavie, elle dirait: « Les Croates de Yougoslavie supportent difficilement le joug des Serbes. » Le jour où elle attaquerait la Roumanie, elle dirait: « Il y a une puissante minorité hongroise. »

✓ Et nous ajoutions: « C'est pourquoi il faut une formule sur laquelle aucun débat ne puisse s'ouvrir: Halte à l'agresseur, quel qu'il soit et quelle que soit la victime. » (*Vifs applaudissements à gauche, à l'extrême gauche et sur divers bancs au centre et à droite.*)

✓ La violence, disions-nous, voilà notre ennemi commun.

✓ Mais nous n'arrivions pas à les convaincre, car les hommes d'Etat sont si surmenés qu'ils épuisent souvent le stock d'idées et de réflexions qu'ils ont pu se faire avant d'arriver au pouvoir.

✓ C'est alors que s'est produit un fait nouveau, le plus grand depuis la guerre, un fait nouveau qui, pour nous, peuple menacé — car nous sommes le seul grand peuple au monde qui soit menacé dans sa vie — était l'événement le plus heureux depuis l'entrée de l'Amérique en guerre en 1917, un fait dans lequel les hommes politiques anglais n'ont été pour rien: un mouvement puissant, irrésistible s'est formé dans les profondeurs du peuple anglais. (*Applaudissements à gauche, à l'extrême gauche et sur divers bancs au centre et à droite.*)

Lorsqu'il a vu que, de nouveau, sur le continent, la vieille histoire dramatique et sanglante allait recommencer, que le faible allait être écrasé par le fort, brusquement, ce peuple a vu, dans la Société des Nations, un moyen d'apporter la justice et la paix à l'Europe et au monde. (*Applaudissements à gauche, à l'extrême gauche et sur divers bancs au centre et à droite.*)

C'est cela qui a signifié un événement dont la gravité semble nous avoir échappé. Il y a eu ce qu'on appelle en Angleterre la « peace ballot », le scrutin pour la paix, et il est bien nommé.

Songez que le peuple anglais s'est dérangé pour voter sur cette question de la paix et de la Société des Nations: que 9.627.000 électeurs ont voté qu'ils étaient prêts à imposer à leur pays le sacrifice — au cas où une guerre serait injustement déclarée — des sanctions économiques et que 670.000 électeurs seulement ont voté contre.

Tout cela se passait avant l'époque où l'opinion anglaise a été saisie de l'affaire éthiopienne. (*Applaudissements à gauche et sur divers bancs.*)

Malas! nous n'avons pas compris, parce que nous n'avons pas été informés, la chance que nous offrait le destin. (*Nouveaux et vifs applaudissements sur les mêmes bancs.*)

Tandis que ses dirigeants discutaient encore, le peuple anglais répondait « oui » à la question que nous posions depuis tant d'années. Le problème de la paix était virtuellement résolu et résolu — soyons-en fiers — par la victoire d'une idée française. (*Vifs applaudissements à gauche, à l'extrême gauche et sur plusieurs bancs au centre et à droite.*)

C'était un fondement stable pour la paix, parce que la volonté d'une démocratie qui demeure est plus stable que celle d'un homme d'Etat qui passe. (*Très bien! très bien! à gauche et sur divers bancs.*)

On pouvait dire que l'Allemagne avait perdu la partie, puisque je vous ai démontré que les Allemands savent qu'il n'y a pas de guerre possible contre la France si on ébranle cette puissance colossale qu'est le monde anglo-saxon.

Seulement il fallait que cette volonté encore confuse dont les dirigeants anglais eux-mêmes ne sentaient pas la profondeur et la puissance — l'événement l'a bien prouvé — pût s'extérioriser et s'affirmer sur un cas précis.

C'est à ce moment que l'affaire d'Ethio-

APPENDIX C

OPPOSITION TO DE GAULLE'S

PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT

To this day, no one knows who slipped the note into de Gaulle's dossier eliminating him from the important promotion to colonel, an act which also terminated all further advancement.

There is a school of thought, however, that believes General Maurin or General Gamelin or both were involved. Reynaud cites the conclusion of a CSDN meeting in which Maurin said to de Gaulle: "Goodbye, de Gaulle, there where I am, you no longer belong."¹ Moreover, Brian Crozier states that de Gaulle was struck off the promotion list on the "direct orders of Maurin."²

Lucien Nachin states that Gamelin, in order to win favor with the war minister [?Daladier or Maurin], inserted the note.³ It would appear that Nachin is more accurate since a letter de Gaulle wrote to Reynaud on December 14, 1935 discusses the incident for the first time.⁴ This would make Gamelin chief of staff and Daladier, war minister. On the other hand, it is possible that the setback for de Gaulle had been put in motion as far back as the spring of 1936 when Maurin had been war minister.

¹Reynaud, Mémoires, 1:434.

²Crozier, De Gaulle, p. 69.

³Lucien Nachin, Charles de Gaulle, Général de France (Nancy: Berger-Levrault, 1944; reprint ed., 1971), p. 85.

⁴"Lettres de Gaulle," AN, de Gaulle to Reynaud, December 14, 1936.

APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Joseph D. Connors has been read and approved by the following committee:

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

December 19, 1976

Date

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Director's Signature