

## ***L’Affaire Galmot: Colonialism on Trial in 1931***

**Keywords:** Nantes; Guyane; republicanism; representation; memory; colonial trials; race

### **Abstract**

Between 9 March and 21 March 1931 twelve men and two women, all French citizens from Guyane, were put on trial at an extraordinary session of the *cour d’assises* in Nantes. All were accused of looting and murder during riots which had taken place on 6 and 7 August 1928 in Cayenne; all were acquitted. Despite being one of the largest trials of the interwar period in France, the event was largely forgotten until a major exhibition staged in Nantes in 2011.

Examining the public reaction to the trial in 1931, this article has two key aims. First, it will explore attitudes towards colonialism and republicanism in the provinces and metropolitan France. Second, it will use the exhibition of 2011 as a means of addressing the memorial debate to show how such recoveries of forgotten events, however laudable and necessary, risk perpetuating an image of an idealized republicanism based upon universalism.

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## Introduction

2011 marked the eightieth anniversary of the opening, on 9 March 1931, of an extraordinary session of the *cour d'assises* in Nantes held for the trial of twelve men and two women. Mathurin Concel, Eugène Flambant, Fernand Fréduze, Marc Hauradou, Charles Hibade, Edouard Iqui, Josephine Lamer, François Mathar, Marius Mondor, Gustave Mustapha, Léopoldine Radical, Jean Rosemond, Robert Soyon and Georges Thibéron, all French citizens from Guyane, were accused of looting and murder during riots which had taken place on 6 and 7 August 1928 in Cayenne and over the course of which six men had been killed.<sup>1</sup> On 21 March all fourteen were acquitted. The riots had broken out following the sudden death of Jean Galmot, a populist politician, in the wake of flagrant electoral fraud in the legislative elections of April 1928 which had seen his candidate blocked from victory despite a majority vote. Jean Galmot, author of an oath of 15 May 1924 in which he swore that he would ‘rendre la liberté à la Guyane’ (a promise which he repeated on 6 April 1928 during the elections) and restore civil and political rights to the French overseas territory that had, since 1854, been ruled by decree, was known affectionately in Guyane as ‘Papa Galmot’; thanks to an over-hasty post-mortem, his death was put down to poisoning by his maid (Galmot, 1928; Brunet, 2013: p.41). When rumours of his murder spread—stoked, in part, by incendiary articles in the *galmotiste* newspaper *La Guyane*—an estimated 10,000 people rioted, and, according to contemporaneous reports, ransacked the houses of Galmot’s enemies and murdered six people, including the doctor, Clément Jean, who had treated Galmot (Magne, 1990: pp.189–90). Investigations were opened in Cayenne, but on 31 May 1929 the *Cour de cassation* moved the trial to Nantes ‘pour cause de sûreté publique’. The judicial investigation had been marked by intimidation of witnesses and by confusion, so much so that, ostensibly in the interests of public safety, a company of *tirailleurs senegalais* had been sent from metropolitan France on 30 August 1928 to maintain order (*Le Petit Parisien*, 1928c: p.1).

The trial, a national event covered by all the major newspapers, was one of the largest of the interwar period in France, in terms of the dossiers generated, the number of defendants and witnesses, the costs incurred, and the public profile of the legal personnel. The defence was led by the flamboyant Henry Torrès (a leading trial lawyer since the Schwartzbard trial of 1927) and Gaston Monnerville (the Guyanese lawyer who would become President of the Sénat) (Danet, 2011, p.3). With the defence effectively demonstrating that the riots, and the crimes committed during their course, were the direct result of electoral fraud in the 1928 election, the trial revealed the political servitude still experienced by France's former slave colonies. Despite the media coverage, and the very fact that this colonial trial was being held in the *métropole* in the year in which France celebrated its overseas empire with the *Exposition coloniale*—an event invariably viewed by historians as the high point of the popularity of empire among the public, with analyses tending to rehearse the fact that nearly eight million people visited the Parc des Vincennes (Ezra, 2000; Cooper, 2001: 65–90; Blanchard and Lemaire, 2004; Wilder, 2005; Thomas, 2005; Blevins, 2008)—the story of the fourteen proved to be ‘un oubli de l’histoire’, and the trial dossiers held by the departmental archives of the Loire-Atlantique were unknown until 2006. What revealed the extent of the documentation in the archives on this affair linking the history of Nantes with that of Guyane was a request in July of that year by the popular historian André Bendjebbar for special dispensation for a reduction to seventy-five years of the law which usually necessitates a hundred-year delay before public access to judicial records (Boche, 2011, p.2). In February 2011, the departmental archives of Loire-Atlantique staged a four-month long exhibition entitled ‘Le Procès des Insurgés de Cayenne’. Alongside the exhibition itself there was a series of cultural and academic events, including an academic conference, hosted in partnership with Nantes university; a music concert dedicated to *musique aléké*, the music of Guyane; and cinema screenings, notably of the documentary by Barcha Bauer and André Bendjebbar, ‘Les insurgés de Cayenne: Le premier procès colonial à Nantes’, a documentary which had first been broadcast by France 5 on 21 March 2010. As Mareschal explained in the editorial to the

exhibition guide, the aim of the exhibition at the archives was to tell the forgotten story: ‘une histoire d’injustices et de droit, où la loi a été bafouée, où des vies ont été prises, où la parole des avocats a fait s’exprimer la solidarité républicaine entre métropole et Guyane, entre ville au passé négrier et colonie atlantique’ (2011: p.2).

The staging of the exhibition in 2011 was well timed in terms of national, regional and commemorative political agendas. Nationally, 2011 was officially designated France’s ‘Année des outre-mer.’ A year-long programme of events designed by Sarkozy’s government to spotlight France’s overseas territories, to reject stereotypical exotic imagery, and to challenge habitual clichés of the DOM-ROM as areas prone to natural and economic disaster, the programme was greeted, particularly by associations in the DOM-ROM themselves, as perpetuating colonial discourses (Liyannaj Kont Pwofitasyon, 2011). Regionally, the exhibition coincided with the ‘fraternité’ exhibition, the third in a triptych organized by the conseil général de Loire-Atlantique since 2005 on the *devise républicaine*, and was staged a year before the port’s Mémorial de l’abolition d’esclavage de Nantes was finally inaugurated (Loire-Atlantique, Conseil général, 2011). Commemoratively, the recovery of this forgotten story, another example of what Coquery-Vidrovitch views as the ‘rejet français de l’histoire de l’esclavage’ (2011: pp.1–2) offered a concrete example of how the history of the DOM-ROM was indelibly linked with that of provincial France, and it did so during a year-long programme of politically inspired celebrations organized by the Ministère des outre-mer. In his editorial, Mareschal, yoking the history of the trial to the other exhibitions staged by Loire-Atlantique on the *devise républicaine*, inscribed the trial within a republican universal narrative, describing it as ‘une leçon d’histoire’: ‘Le Conseil général de Loire-Atlantique a à cœur de l’exposer, en écho aux manifestations qu’il a conçues autour de la devise républicaine, pour que ses valeurs soient toujours aussi présents chez nos compatriotes et contemporains.’ (2011: p.2). This universalizing and conciliatory message about the importance for the twenty-first century of recovering the forgotten story of the Guyanese fourteen was adopted elsewhere. In the press pack produced to accompany the 2010

documentary, its director, Bauer, similarly stressed how ‘Ce procès fut un détonateur mettant en lumière les carences de la République sur les colonies. Ce procès sera le révélateur de la prise de conscience que l’homme noir est égal à l’homme’ (2010: p.4). Such rhetorical marketing served a useful municipal memorial agenda in the departmental capital of Nantes, a socialist stronghold, which, under the political domination of Jean-Marc Ayrault (1989–2012), had begun to confront its history as France’s leading *port négrier* (Gualde, 2013: p.81); more widely, the discourse of equality served a useful political function, particularly in the context of the ongoing controversies over France’s colonial legacy in the DOM-ROM and France’s difficulties, as Manceron puts it, in ‘viewing head-on’ its history as a colonizer (2007: p.29). But both Mareschal’s idealization of republicanism, and Bauer’s teleological reading backwards from the end of the French empire after 1945 to posit the trial as a turning point in attitudes towards the colonies, are inherently problematic, necessarily overlooking how the Nantais public and the metropolitan French responded to the trial in 1931, and, indeed, how the defendants themselves responded to the events. It is the contention of this article that the public reaction to the trial not only offers a new perspective on how the empire affected the lives of people in France during the early twentieth century but also provides an explanation of how *l’affaire Galmot* could be forgotten so quickly. The analysis thus has two key aims. First, it will explore attitudes towards colonialism and republicanism in the provinces and metropolitan France, as revealed by the trial and the public response to it. Second, it will use the exhibition of 2011 as a means of addressing the memorial debate to show how such recoveries of forgotten events, however laudable and necessary, run the risk of perpetuating an image of an idealized republicanism based upon universalism.

The problems of using newspaper accounts as historical sources are well rehearsed. As Bellanger cautioned in 1972, any study of the press that takes journalistic opinion as evidence of a prevalent public belief should be treated with extreme caution (p.135). By analysing the representational strategies employed in the daily reports on the *affaire Galmot*, the aim here is to

interrogate how the notion of the French empire, *la plus grande France*—a conceptual lynchpin of the Exhibition which opened weeks after the trial ended—was construed and propagated by influential individuals and organizations, operating both regionally and nationally and from across the political spectrum. By concentrating on the discourses generated around the trial, the aim here is not to detract from the lived experience of the defendants who, along with nineteen others (all of whom had their cases dismissed and were returned to Guyane), arrived in Le Havre on 12 October 1929, or from the reality of the colonial abuses in Guyane and elsewhere which the defence successfully brought to light during the twelve-day trial. The aim, rather, is to elucidate an imbrication between colonialism and republicanism which may be seen in the emphasis by the defence on the failures of French colonial policy, and in Monnerville's call to acquit the defendants by showing them 'le vrai visage de la France: la France généreuse et comprehensive, la France éprise d'idéal, la France de la Justice et de Paix' (1931: p.24). While condemning electoral corruption and a failure of French republicanism in Guyane, the journalistic representations of the trial show how colonial citizens could be racialized and particularized within the republican narrative. Indeed—and somewhat paradoxically—while the trial with its verdict corrected a colonial injustice, the discourses surrounding it reified the representation of colonial citizens as unequal.

### **Staging Cayenne in Nantes**

During the twelve days of the trial, the Nantes Palais de Justice was the centre of local and national press attention, with correspondents from the major Parisian dailies, *Le Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, *Le Matin*, *Le Populaire*, *Le Petit Journal*, *Le Petit Parisien*, *Le Quotidien*, *L'Œuvre*, *L'Echo de Paris*, *L'Humanité*, *Excelsior* and *Candide*, all in attendance alongside the local daily papers from across the political spectrum: *L'Ouest-Eclair*, *Le Phare de la Loire* (both republican papers), *Le*

*Populaire de Nantes* (a socialist paper) and *L'Echo de la Loire* (Catholic and conservative). All published detailed *comptes-rendus* of the cross-examinations and debates, supplemented by commentaries on the action in court, and frequently did so as front-page news. Also present was the Swiss author and journalist, Blaise Cendrars, who had written a highly romanticized, quasi-hagiographical biography of Jean Galmot, serialized in the magazine *Vu* between 8 October and 10 December 1930 and then published as a novel, *Rhum: L'Affaire Galmot*, by Grasset (1930). Although the judicial archives contain a *procès-verbal* of the trial, this is not a verbatim account of the debates in court. Handwritten and incomplete (in keeping with all the other accounts produced at this time for the *cour d'assises*), it limits itself to detailing the order of events, swearing of oaths, interrogations, and depositions, and ends on 20 March, the day when the pleadings commenced (Cours d'assises, 1931). In terms of recovering a story previously absent from the historiography of the 1930s, the press coverage offers the opportunity to fill some of the lacunae left by the archives, lacunae compounded by the fact that the full court documents are still under official ruling and will not be released until 2035. *Le Populaire*, *L'Ouest-Eclair*, *L'Echo de la Loire* and *Le Populaire de Nantes* regularly printed verbatim accounts of what was said in court, accounts which consistently concur and thus suggest a degree of accuracy. They also provided detailed descriptions of the principal actors: the defendants, the defence, the *Procureur*, the *Président*, the witnesses and the atmosphere in the courtroom. Published daily (with the exception of Monday 16 March, as there was no sitting on Sunday 15 March), the accounts, as was invariably the way in coverage of sensational trials (Maza, 2011: pp.140–73), took on many of the generic features of a *chronique* or *feuilleton*—relying on such techniques as the rhetorical address of readers to ensure their inclusion in what was presented as a dramatically unfolding spectacle; the use of analepsis to remind readers of the ‘dreadfulness’ of the crimes under consideration; and prolepsis to generate anticipation (*L'Ouest-Eclair*, 1931a: p.4). Often accompanied by photographs and sketches of the defence barristers and defendants, they allow some reconstitution of the trial as an oral and visual event, and were put to great effect by the exhibition in Nantes in 2011.<sup>2</sup>

The trial itself, presented to metropolitan readers as a spectacle of the colonial exotic, ‘le sombre et tumultueux drame de la Guyane’, displaced to a provincial courtroom—‘au doux pays de muscadet’ as Prax, writing in *Le Petit Parisien* on 13 March 1931, described it (1931: p.1)—was rendered even more so by the conduct of the *cour d’assises*. As Berenson has argued, by its very nature the *cours d’assises* created a theatrical atmosphere (1992: p.5); but this staging of Cayenne in Nantes was the culmination of two years of reports which had stressed the difference and distance, geographically, culturally and politically, between France and its South American colony. Having previously printed (on 9 August) small news items on the death of Jean Galmot, the metropolitan press reported on the riots of 6 and 7 August 1928, with newspapers such as *Le Petit Parisien* and *Le Temps* publishing on 12 August 1928 the communiqué issued by the Ministère des Colonies announcing the unrest and the decision to send fifty additional *gendarmes* from Martinique to Guyane (*Petit Parisien*, 1928a; 1928b). Such brevity, with the vague euphemistic catch-all ‘incidents’ being used to elide the bloody riots, was not uncommon in reports about France’s colonies, particularly the *quatre vieilles colonies* which had been relegated to the status of peripheral oddities (Cottias, 2003: p.29). In an opinion piece, ‘Pour et contre’, published in *Le Petit Parisien* on 13 August 1928, the question of distance and the French empire was problematized by Prax. Satirizing the bureaucratic language of understatement used by the Ministère des Colonies, Prax highlighted the gravity of the situation, as well as the indifference of metropolitan France towards its former slave colonies: ‘Six morts, ça compte. Même à Cayenne!’ (p.1). Invoking the geographical, and implied cultural, distance between Paris and Guyane (‘Cayenne, évidemment, c’est assez loin de Montmartre et c’est assez loin aussi du Ministère des Colonies...’), and Guyane’s past as France’s penal colony, Prax crystallizes the inherent contradiction of the colonial relationship between France and its overseas territories. That relationship, which came to be known by Paris-based administrators in the interwar period as *la plus grande France*, stressed the political and cultural differences between the diverse territories and peoples of the French empire but, in the case of the *vieilles colonies*, classed the inhabitants as



French citizens following emancipation in 1848. Prax, in invoking Montmartre—the area of Paris where most colonial and other migrants resided—is alluding to a difference between metropolitan-based blacks and all other ‘French blacks’. After pointing out that the French flag flies over Guyane, he continues: ‘Cayenne fait partie de notre plus grande France. Ce qui se passe à Cayenne se passe chez nous, sous la responsabilité de la France...’ (p.1). The failure of the French colonial administration in Guyane was a key aspect of the defence lawyers’ case in the Nantes trial of 1931, with Monnerville’s closing speech for the defence indicting the ‘politique néfaste qui a créé un dangereux malaise dans les vieilles colonies françaises’ and using the Republic’s own court system to expose the lack of rights and liberties enjoyed by colonial citizens even while they were termed *citoyen* (Monnerville, 1931, p.24; Wilder, 2005: p.170). The reporting of the trial, however, demonstrated the discursive and political continuation of these contradictions, showing how racialized identities could be elaborated within a republican narrative, at the very moment in which a legal process was revealing the inequities within the French republican colonial system.

The decision by the *Cour de cassation* to transfer the case to Nantes, in the *département* then known as the Loire-Inférieure, naturally made the court investigation and trial an important item of regional news. The main local papers (*L’Ouest-Eclair*, *Le Phare de la Loire*, *Le Populaire de Nantes* and *L’Echo de la Loire*) followed events avidly, reporting on the arrival of the dossiers in armoured boxes (reported 18 August 1929), the arrival of the original thirty-three Guyanese defendants charged in the affair (reported 12 October 1929), the decision to dismiss all charges against Adrienne Cernis, Jean Galmot’s maid who had been accused of administering arsenic to him (13 April 1930), and the arrangements leading up to the trial itself. A recurring theme throughout these reports, aside from the difficulty of the task which faced *le juge d’instruction* Lemarchand, was the distance involved. This was a matter not only of miles, although geographical distance was a recurring refrain in *L’Ouest-Eclair*, but also of the political and cultural differences encountered (1929b, p.4). Using geodeterminist tropes that would not have

been out of place in eighteenth-century travel literature, the reportage posited the whole affair as being as unfathomable as the Amazonian forests themselves. Meanwhile, the understanding of justice is presented as being reliant on hearsay and thus different from that in France (1929e, p.4).

After the arrival of the ‘émeutiers de Cayenne’ in France, as the press invariably termed them, the reporting exemplified Todorov’s definition of the exotic (1998: p.276), with the influential regional paper *L’Ouest-Eclair* emphasizing the difference of Guyane, and, in doing so, ensuring that the riots, and the impending trial, were offered to its readers as a theatrical event to be viewed and consumed from a safe distance. On 17 October 1929, after the thirty-three *inculpés* had arrived by steamer at Le Havre, it published a front-page exclusive first-hand account of the riots, purportedly from a *Rochefortais* who had witnessed the events. While up to this point the paper had relied on ‘récits câblés de Cayenne donc suspects de partialité’ (1929d: p.1), this eyewitness report had the advantage of being written by a Frenchman who, according to the newspaper, could successfully negotiate the difference between the *métropole* and ‘là-bas’ for the readers (1929d: p.1). Using stock tropes of colonial discourse, including a geodeterministic description to explain the devotion of the Guyanais to Galmot (‘On peut difficilement s’imaginer en France, nous dit-il, le prestige qu’avait là-bas M. Galmot; sous un climat ardent vibre un peuple passionné qui lui vouait un culte enthousiaste’), the report emphasizes the savagery of the rioters: the crowd is ‘Livrée désormais à un sanglant délire’; the rioters commit ‘[u]n meurtre horrible’ during a tragedy in which there is a ‘multiplicité des scènes de ce drame sauvage’ (*L’Ouest-Eclair*, 1929d: p.1). Theatrical metaphors are dead figures of speech, the clichéd stock fare of journalese, but the frequency here (*tragédie*, and its related adjective *tragique*, appear three times, and *drame* twice) rhetorically distances the metropolitan French spectators from violent misrule in a far-off colony.

Such devices assumed a banal frequency during the trial itself; in both the local and national contexts, and regardless of political perspective, reportage reified the image of Guyane

and codified ethnic and moral prejudices about the defendants. In some respects, such reification relied on recycling familiar tropes. The establishment of a French penal colony in Cayenne in 1852 gave Guyane something of a questionable reputation, encouraging a view in the *métropole* of the territory as both monstrous and immoral (Redfield, 2000: p.64). As with other small and neglected colonies (notably Oubangui-Chari in *Afrique central*, and the five Indian *comptoirs* which were the remnants of the French colonial adventure on the subcontinent), the colony earned the soubriquet ‘la Cendrillon des colonies’, distinguishing it from areas of expansion and *mise en valeur* under the Third Republic (Brégeon, 1998; Weber, 2002: p.400; *Chemins de l’histoire*, 2013). The unevenness of practices, jurisdictions and investment across the French empire is something of an axiom, but even by the standards of a system that was characterized by centre–periphery divergences, Guyane was peripheral: peripheral to the other *vieilles colonies* in the Antilles (Martinique and Guadeloupe) and to France itself (Burbank and Cooper, 2009: p.25). In a report published the day before the trial opened, the regional paper *L’Echo de la Loire* put it thus:

CAYENNE...

Le bagne... les boulets... la ville noire, entourée, pour les Français de la métropole, d’une sinistre auréole.

Une ville étrange, comme tout ce drame: un mélange disparate de population saine et d’individus tarés. Des fonctionnaires, des commerçants, des agriculteurs qui exploitent les trésors de cette terre tropicale. A côté des blancs de la métropole, des créoles, des noirs, des mulâtres indigènes, le plus complet ramassis de métis de toutes races, d’arabes, de chinois, des annamites, de syriens, venus librement du dehors, ou demeurés dans la colonie après leur libération du bagne (1931a: p.3).

In addition to the racialized discourse, what is conspicuous here is the assumption that everyone in Guyane has a suspect past. *Métissage* is rife, and Guyane is beyond all ‘normal’ law and civilization. For *L’Echo*, all inhabitants are tainted by association with the penal colony: ‘Voilà le milieu. L’esprit? Dans ce pays tropical, ces fils de condamné ont leurs nerfs à fleur de peau. Et leur nervosité n’a d’égal que leur naïveté et leur crédulité’ (1931a: p.3). From such a perspective,

the savagery of the riots which took place following the reported death of Galmot is easily explained. Moral codes are different; *L'Echo* took salacious delight (as is implied by the liberal use of exclamation marks and irony) in the acerbic aside that the French, Catholic conception of a good family is alien to the inhabitants of Guyane: 'Pour nombre d'accusés, les renseignements sur la moralité sont déclarés bons, alors que célibataires, ils sont également, pour la plupart, pères ou mères de nombreuses famille. [*sic*] Tout est relatif! [...] Il [Iqui] est célibataire (à la manière de la Guyane!!)' (1931b: p.3). The impression of Guyane's strangeness is reinforced by the editorial on the penultimate day of the trial: 'La Guyane! Terre étrange, de soleil et de rêve, de paresse et de mort, et peuplée de quelle non moins étrange population' (1931c: p.3). In an editorial which bears a remarkable linguistic and thematic similarity to that which appeared in *L'Echo* on 8 March, rehearsing the same racialized explanations for *métissage* and evoking Guyane's past as a penal colony, the republican *Le Populaire de Nantes* offered a geographical and determinist reason for the savagery of the riots. Pointing out that Guyane had limited connections with mainland France, reliant as it was upon a monthly steamer link with the *mère-patrie*, the piece suggested that the credulous population, subject to levels of superstition and ignorance that the Nantais readers would have difficulty believing, easily gave way to violence (1931a: p.1).

Such fare was not confined to the regional press. In his 'Pour et contre' column in the mass daily and ostensibly apolitical *Le Petit Parisien* on 13 March 1931, Prax speculated about how viable it was for the jurors in Loire-Inférieure to rule on such a case. How could provincial Frenchmen possibly pass judgement on a place with such primitive mores, without visiting it? He conceded, nonetheless, that the lawlessness of Guyane meant that the trial could not have been held there, for 'On imagine facilement ce qui se serait passé si les débats de ce procès si particulier s'étaient déroulés à Cayenne... Après quelques tempétueuses audiences, magistrats, jurés accusés, témoins et spectateurs auraient été sans doute transférés tous à l'hôpital—sinon au cimetière....' (1931: p.1)<sup>3</sup>

Distance and difference, however, were not confined to representations of the ‘émeutiers des Cayenne’; they raised practical and financial considerations. In an exchange of correspondence between the Parquet de Nantes and the mayor’s office in Nantes, the practicalities of transporting what the *Procureur* described as ‘un nombre important de témoins—une soixantaine environ’ from Guyane to metropolitan France and accommodating them became a vexed subject. Although the *Procureur* expressed concern for the witnesses, who were travelling for the first time to France and who ‘risqueront de se trouver isoler à Nantes, dans des conditions qui ne seront pas convénients pour eux’, articulating the further anxiety that ‘[u]n certain nombre d’entre eux, une trentaine peut-être, paraissent être sans ressources et il est à craindre que l’indemnité légale qui leur sera allouée soit insuffisante pour leur permettre de se défrayer de leurs dépenses quotidiennes de logement et de nourriture’ (Procureur, 1931), the practicalities and financing fell to the town of Nantes itself. It was eventually decided (on 28 January 1931) that the old Lycée de jeunes filles, rue Harrouye, could be used for accommodation, but the remarks from functionaries appended to the report of this decision are revealing. An administrator in the office of the mayor, M. de Bigault, added by hand the comment ‘D’accord tout en regrettant que le Parquet se décharge sur la Ville d’une besogne et de frais qui ne lui incombent en aucune façon.’ Caillaud, the *Chef-Régisseur* (operating officer), went further, remarking: ‘Ce qui est admirable, c’est l’idée de faire juger à 2.000 lieues du lieu où elle s’est produite, alors qu’aux Antilles on a tout l’appareil judiciaire une affaire comme celle-là’, a sentiment echoed by the mayor, Cassegrain (Denis, 1931). Concern for the welfare of the defendants and the witnesses oscillated between paternalism and outright racism. Throughout the trial, the press expressed unease about the defendants, unused to the cold climate of western France. *L’Ouest-Eclair*, reporting on the first day of the trial, speculated that ‘Ils auront aussi, sans doute, à souffrir du froid. Trois d’entre eux qui, en entrant, s’étaient débarrassés de leur pardessus, le mettent de nouveau, dans un geste frileux’ (1931a: p.4). The Parisian based *Le Populaire*, with its socialist narrative of the exploitation of the proletariat, stressed the impact of

the trial on individuals, reporting on 13 March that ‘Le climat de Nantes ne vaut rien pour les accusés. Déjà mardi, Léopoldine Radical, atteinte d’une bronchite, avait dû être admise à l’infirmerie; aujourd’hui, c’est le vieux Moustapha qui s’est fait porter malade’ (Huret, 1931c: p.2). Aside from this covert racism manifesting itself as paternalist concern, there were overtly racist assumptions evident in the decision by the court to arrange for the presence of a translator on the opening day of the trial, an arrangement rejected by Monnerville. As *L’Echo* reported: ‘On avait requis les services d’un interprète, à qui l’on a rendu sa liberté, M<sup>e</sup> Monnerville se portant garant que “du moment que témoins et accusés viennent de la Guyane, ils parlent tous le français”’ (1931b: p.3).

### **The Trial in the Press**

When the trial opened on 9 March 1931, the coverage provided by different papers was remarkably similar. If the strategy of the defence was to use the proceedings to put the colonial administration on trial, demonstrating the inadequacies and corruption evident in Guyane and exculpating the defendants, the story told by the press was somewhat different. Even the socialist newspaper *Le Populaire*, whose political agenda was based on promoting reform of the colonies in line with the policy of the Section française de l’internationale ouvrière (SFIO), expressed initial reservations about the innocence of the fourteen defendants.<sup>4</sup> For the press, the defendants were guilty of barbarity well beyond the norms of civilized France. The headlines used on the first day of the trial itself are, in this respect, revealing. For the republican *L’Ouest-Eclair*, whose reporting of the events prior to 9 March had emphasized the savagery of the riots, the trial is introduced in the same way: ‘L’Epilogue d’une sanglante tragédie politique: Les débats de la ténébreuse affaire Galmot ont commencé hier devant les assises de la Loire-Inférieure’. The four-column report repeats the adjective ‘sanglante’ twice more, inviting the imagined

community of readers to be present, like the jury in the *cour d'assises*, at the spectacle of justice (1931a p.4). For the Catholic and conservative *L'Echo de la Loire*, the condemnation is more severe. The defendants are called 'émeutiers', a term which, as Mari has pointed out, is not a judicial appellation but was inspired by the crimes for which the defendants were charged, immediately designating them as beyond the norms of civilization and order (2011: p.3). This designation was not uncommon, also being adopted by *L'Ouest-Eclair*, *Le Petit Parisien*, the *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* and *L'Humanité*.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, only the republican *Le Populaire* and the Nantais equivalent, *Le Populaire de Nantes*, queried this designation by putting it in quotation marks. For *L'Echo de la Loire*, the riots were not only bloody and violent but, in line with the conservative, Catholic and monarchist agenda of the paper, were to be seen as part of a narrative of revolutionary violence—not the republican narrative of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, but one of unleashed hatred: 'mais terrible surtout, et qui fait penser, par la soudaineté de son explosion, par la cruauté et la sauvagerie de son déchaînement aux plus sanglantes des journées de notre Révolution' (1931a: p.3). The evocation here of revolutionary violence would have had a certain resonance for Nantais readers, with the drownings popularly known as 'mariage républicain' (carried out in Nantes on the order of the Jacobin Jean-Baptiste Carrier during the reign of terror) having a memorial currency (Shusterman, 2013: p.213). For *l'Echo*, the guilt of the defendants is axiomatic given that they are *guyanais*. As the 'Chronique Nantaise' pointed out on the day before the trial opened on 9 March, the crime 'est marquée d'un caractère de fanatisme farouche et sauvagerie raffinée.' (1931a: p.3).

In some respects the reporting across all the newspapers, be they local or national, is unsurprising and predictable, relying on well-worn colonial discourses. The sensational aspects of the savagery of the riots themselves is a recurring theme, as is the exotic otherness of Guyane. Any trial which took place in the *cour d'assises* had an inherent theatricality, but the special arrangements required for *l'affaire Galmot* were sure to inspire curiosity in provincial and metropolitan France. This curiosity was of a specifically colonial and imperial sort, associated

with the desire for possession, with Guyane being staged for consumption by France. The scene-setting by *L'Ouest-Eclair* on the first day of the trial introduces what would be a recurring emphasis on curiosity and the picturesque:

Un premier coup d'œil dans la salle permet d'apercevoir de spéciaux aménagements. Belle place a été réservée à la Presse tant parisienne que régionale ou locale. Quant aux photographes—innombrables,—ou peut dire que l'enceinte de justice leur a appartenu avant l'entrée des magistrats, du jury et des accusés. [...] Sur les six avocats de l'affaire, trois sont hautement colorés et le moins coloré n'est pas M<sup>e</sup> Fourny, du barreau nantais. Le superbe coloris de sa large face s'harmonise avec les tons terre de sienne très brûlée de ses voisins immédiats (1931a: p.4).<sup>6</sup>

Public interest in the court case provided a significant dimension to the press reports themselves. *L'Ouest-Eclair* and *L'Echo*, as regional papers, were particularly anxious to stress the local interest in proceedings, with *L'Ouest-Eclair* emphasizing on 14, 18, 19 and 22 March 1931 the number of people in the courtroom and the chaos that reigned there. For *L'Echo*, the contrast between the austere surroundings of the entrance hall and the chaos of the *caractère spectaculaire* of the *affaire* was worthy of note, as was the high attendance on the day of the verdict itself (1931b, p.3). The adoption of theatrical terminology ('drame et son prologue', *coups de théâtre*), along with the writing of the reports in the style of *chroniques*, further adds to this impression (1931b: p.5).

Infantilization is another recurring technique used to represent the defendants. For *L'Echo de la Loire*, they are '[â]mes simples', '[c]andides, naïfs et crédules' (1931b: p.3). Employing a tactic similar to that adopted by anti-communist commentators such as Coty and Gautherot, who whipped up fears about the spread of Bolshevism among the naïve peoples of Africa, *L'Echo* portrays the Guyanese as dupes, acted upon by the *excitations haineuses* of unscrupulous activists, namely the defendant, Eugene Flambant, who worked as a journalist on the pro-Galmot newspaper, *la Guyane* (Coty, 1931; Gautherot, 1931). *L'Ouest-Eclair* remarks on the look of Robert Soyon: 'le plus jeune des quatorze. 27 ans. Un visage d'enfant—d'enfant sage



d'ailleurs' (1931a: p.4). The commentator Verax, in *Le Populaire de Nantes*, takes this infantilization even further:

*Tous les personnages de l'affaire Galmot donnent l'impression de grands enfants. On a de la peine à les prendre au sérieux.*

*Et pourtant, ils ont participé non pas à une comédie, mais à une horrible tragédie [sic] (1931, p.1).*

Racial difference is a key aspect here, with racialized subjectivities elaborated to explain how the events of Guyane could take place within the republican narrative. The defendants may have been politically French but they were resolutely not *metropolitan* French; describing them as children suggested that they were not to be considered as active citizens—not, at least, in accordance with revolutionary notions of citizenship (Lefebvre, 2003: p.23). In addition, the newspapers explore the relationship between racial identity, citizenship and migration within the boundaries of *la plus grande France*. The spectacle of the defendants in the courtroom is a leitmotif; photographs, sketches and references to skin colour variously reinforce that spectacle. All newspapers are at pains to point out that while one of the accused, Hauradour, who was an accountant in the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique*, was white, all the others were black. For *Le Populaire*, 'Leur peau varie de noir mat au gris cendre' (Huret, 1931b: p.1); the regional papers are more trenchant, if rather figurative in their use of language. *L'Echo*, for example, describes the witnesses as bringing exotic colour to Nantes: 'La couleur des témoins, allant de ton café-crème ou plus beau noir de jais, jette dans la salle une note toute spéciale et inhabituelle. Parmi les défenseurs eux-mêmes, il y a deux avocats de couleur: M<sup>es</sup> Monnerville et Odet-Denis' (1931b, p.3); and *Le Populaire de Nantes* reports that all witnesses and defendants are 'plus au moins colorés' (1931a, p.1).

The reporting in the Parisian *Le Populaire* offers an interesting angle on the trial and the Cayenne riots. Of all the newspaper reports published before the speeches by the defence—speeches in which Monnerville made reference to the history of the *vieilles colonies* as slave

colonies—those in *Le Populaire* are the only ones to link the history of Nantes as a *port négrier* to the actions of those on trial:

L'histoire locale nous dit que la fortune des armateurs nantais fut surtout assurée au dix-huitième siècle par le fructueux commerce des négriers. La Deuxième République a aboli l'esclavage et accordé les droits de citoyen aux indigènes des vieilles colonies et c'est parce qu'ils ont pris trop au sérieux le cadeau fait à leurs pères, que ces pauvres gens, emportés par la fougue de leur tempérament, ont été entraînés dans l'aventure tragique dont ils ont à répondre (Huret, 1931b: p.1).

Adopting the line that was taken by the defence—that the trial was one of colonialism as practised in France's colonies, not of the defendants themselves—this report is revealing. On 8 March, in an article subtitled 'Le drame et son prologue', Huret had made it clear that the case was one of electoral fraud, which, he stressed, was rampant in France's *vieilles colonies* (1931a: p.1). This view allowed the condemnation of individuals who had failed to deliver successfully the promises of republicanism, the key villains for *Le Populaire* being the mayor of Cayenne, Eugène Gober, and Eugène Lautier, who was elected *député* but left the country immediately after the election results. Neither attended the trial as a witness, both protesting administrative responsibilities. The line adopted by *Le Populaire* permitted the events in Guyane to be presented as an aberration, neatly avoiding any suggestion that colonial inequalities were an intrinsic part of republicanism. As such, the idealized view of the system of republicanism as universalist and munificent, in which slavery had been abolished, and in which the forefathers of the defendants had been granted full rights of the citizen, could be adduced unproblematically (Huret, 1931b: p.1). In propagating such an argument, however, the report exhibited a very acute example of the peculiarities of French imperial republicanism. The *indigènes* of Guyane may be citizens but they are racially different, characterized by 'affection naïve' and superstition (Huret, 1931a: p.1); an inequality is thus established which is predicated upon racialization. In an example of what Lefebvre calls *l'universalité à la française*, which 'both recognizes and accepts the inequalities

between cultures' (2003: p.23) the Guyanese are portrayed using the universalist narrative of republicanism but are, simultaneously, outside it. Naturally passionate, they have enacted their rights too tempestuously (Huret, 1931b: p.1).

This uneasy combination of colonial inequalities and an idealized vision of universalist republicanism was perpetuated in the jubilant reports published after the acquittal of all fourteen defendants. In some cases, as with *L'Ouest-Eclair*, any discursive contradiction between inequality and universalism is simply elided in the form of a laudatory report on the triumph of republicanism. In common with all of the other newspapers, the piece describes how shouts of 'Vive la France!' greeted the announcement of the verdict; eighteen days later, an editorial volte-face becomes apparent, with the 'émeutiers de Cayenne' becoming 'Les héros de l'affaire Galmot' when their return to Guyane is reported on 9 April 1931 (1931c: p.4). The reports published by other papers are more complicatedly problematic. For Huret, writing in *Le Populaire*, the verdict of the jury is consistent with the values of French republicanism, and it is viewed as an endorsement of the line adopted by the paper throughout—namely, that the situation was a result of a few corrupt officials (1931e: p.1). However, while propagating an idealized image of universality, a comprehensive and humane republicanism, it stresses at the same time inequalities between cultures (a particularist view) by stressing the biocultural difference of the Guyanese. In Huret's report of 21 March, summing up the case for the prosecution, the *Procureur* is censured for the ignorance which his statement is deemed to show of 'des populations de couleur'; according to Huret, returning to the well-worn colonialist trope, 'l'âme affectueuse des populations de couleur si promptes à s'attacher à qui leur plaît, à qui sait leur parler' (1931d: p.2). This jostling between colonialist rhetoric and republican discourses is perhaps at its most blatant in the *Le Populaire de Nantes*. In a short article published on 25 March, the paper reported on the activities of the former defendants after their acquittal and before their return to *Guyane*. Giving an account of a meal hosted in their honour in Nantes, an article entitled 'Les Guyanais ont retrouvé un "papa" et une "maman"' reported:

M. et Mme Gazel, gérants de la caserne des Marins de Passage, rue du Rol-Baco, sont père et mère de quatre enfants.

Samedi soir, ils en avaient seize.

Ces douze enfants nouveaux qui leur venaient ainsi, tout d'un bloc, étaient pourtant d'un certain âge, et il y en avait un qui mesurait 1m 95 de hauteur: Ils étaient de couleur foncée: il y avait dix garçons et deux filles.

Oui, ce sont vraiment de grands enfants vous dit M. Gazel, et qui sont si heureux d'être enfin libres!

(1931c: p.2)

The article ends with the observation that 'Ainsi s'écoulent doucement les jours qu'ont encore à passer à Nantes ceux que nous appelions les "émeutiers de Cayenne". Grands enfants timides et point méchants, qui aspirent à la tranquillité chez eux, à la vie de famille, en citoyens conscients de leurs devoirs lorsque leurs droits sont respectés.' On 22 March 1931, *Le Populaire de Nantes*, stressing that the Guyanese defendants had been enacting their republican rights, emplotted their actions within a metropolitan French Revolutionary narrative, praising M<sup>e</sup> Torrès's defence which had explained that the rioters in Cayenne had been defending 'ces lois de liberté et de justice qui sont nées de la Révolution et que la France lumineuse et humaine a rendu applicables dans ses colonies' (1931b: p.2). For all their adoption of a discourse of universal republicanism, however, the newspapers, considered collectively, demonstrate in their post-trial reporting how universalism and particularism co-existed. This is epitomized in the article 'Les Guyanais ont retrouvé un "papa" et une "maman"' of 25 March. Using the language of republicanism and *citoyenneté*, the report simultaneously relies upon racialization to stress the inherent difference of those formerly known as the *émeutiers de Guyane*.

## Forgetting and Remembering 1931

Monnerville's defence speech centred on the argument that the rioters in Guyane in August 1928, of which, he stressed, the fourteen accused had been selected randomly, had been defending their liberties and, in doing so, had embodied the essence of republican Frenchness: 'Messieurs les Jurés, la France nous a enseigné qu'il faut mettre avant tout, au-dessus tout, le respect de la personne humaine, et la sauvegarde de nos libertés. [...] comment pourrez-vous reprocher aux Guyanais, outragés et tyrannisés de s'être spontanément dressés en ces chaudes journées d'août 1928 pour la défense de leur liberté?' (1931: pp.23–24). The complete text was published in the May 1931 issue of *La Dépêche Africaine*, and was used to advance the press's advocacy of a black republicanism, which highlighted the colonial contradictions embodied in the citizens of *la plus grande France* (Wilder, 2005: p.170). For the communist press, whose coverage was not as extensive as that of other Parisian dailies, the trial, although front-page news, was a typical bourgeois distraction; the real trial, it repeatedly stressed, should be 'celui du colonialisme, des mœurs honteuses des politiciens coloniaux: le vrai procès, c'est celui de l'impérialisme corrompueur, des banques de proie et de leurs agents' (*L'Humanité*, 1931a: p.1). While it welcomed the general acquittal of all defendants, it eschewed any republican narrative in favour of a wider condemnation of the imperial system which, according to *L'Humanité*, must end: 'En acquittant les quatorze accusés que le gouvernement français voulaient rendre responsables d'un mouvement qui fut *irrésistible* [emphasis added], le jury a manifesté sa réprobation contre les crimes coloniaux' (1931b: p.1). Actively pursuing its policy of anti-imperialism, encouraging Bolshevik revolutions in all colonized countries in accordance with the decisions taken by the Second International Communist Congress in 1920, *L'Humanité*, the official organ of the Parti communiste français, was more concerned about challenging the imperial system itself as manifested by the *Exposition coloniale* which opened in May 1931 than pursuing a 'familiar' case of colonial abuse.

Given the size of the trial, the media interest generated in France, and the regional reactions which the case stimulated, the side-lining of the case, and its subsequent recovery in 2011, are curious. In many respects, press coverage reveals a relatively familiar story about the peculiarities of French imperial republicanism. That said, *l'affaire Galmot* did not excite the same mobilization against a blatant injustice, in which racialized discourses played their part, as did other cases. The Scottsboro case, which began in March 1931, with the campaign of support for its defendants organized by the international Communist movement, is an obvious comparison here, with the French Left expertly mobilized and vocal at a Scottsboro meeting held at the Salle Wagram in Paris in June 1932 (Miller, Pennybacker and Rosenhaft, 2001: p.403). Moreover, the trial is largely overlooked in recent scholarship, either reduced to Monnerville's *plaidoirie* (Wilder, 2005: p.170) or subsumed under the story of Monnerville and misdated (Marshall, 2009: p.238). The national and international political climate of the 1930s might offer an explanation for the disappearance of the trial in metropolitan memories and historiography, while, conversely, national and municipal politics might explain its recovery in 2011. Although the trial revealed colonial injustices, the defence of republican ideals by the rioters lay at the heart of Monnerville's successful defence; these ideals increasingly fell out of favour with reactionary and far-right elements over the 1930s, while the Parti radical to which Monnerville belonged became increasingly discredited, even before July 1940 (Jackson, 1988: pp.249–67; Bernstein, 1982: pp.570–90). Meanwhile, following the example taken by the Third International in 1935, the PCF's stance on imperialism changed. With the evolving situation in Europe, specifically the rise to power of Hitler in Germany and the consolidation of Mussolini's fascism in Italy, anti-imperialism was abandoned in favour of more pragmatic approach which favoured the retention of France's colonies as an effective buffer against fascism and Nazism (Moneta, 1971: p.105). If republican ideology, or specifically disaffection with it, offers an explanation for the forgetting of the trial in metropolitan France, it may also provide a reason for its recovery. A universal and inclusive republicanism was central to Ayrault's leadership in Nantes, and the republican

narrative was a key theme of the exhibition of 2011, with it, like the documentary broadcast a year before it, making effective use of the trial as a critical juncture in the history of France's relationships with its Atlantic colonies. While in 1931 only the Parisian-based *Le Populaire* made reference to Nantes' past as a slave-trading power, this was a crucial tenet of the exhibition of 2011. According to this narrative, an exceptional court session, held in a former *port négrier*, had recognized the rights of the inhabitants of France's *vieilles colonies* and confirmed that they were full citizens. The civic memorialization agenda here is obvious, and took place against a backdrop of long discussions and competing viewpoints of how the port could and should recognize its slave-trading past (Chérel, 2012). The academic conference which was hosted as part of the exhibition continued this theme, opting for the title 'Quand l'injustice crée le droit: Le procès des insurgés de Cayenne à Nantes en 1931'. The neat opposition of 'injustice' and 'droit', rhetorically emphasizing what was perceived as a correction to the unjust colonial order, once more emplots 1931 as a watershed. The fourteen defendants, invariably termed 'des émeutiers' by the press in 1931, were in the 2011 exhibition, and previously in the documentary by Bauer and Bendjebbar, called 'des insurgés'. As Mari postulated in his article of 2011, 'des émeutiers' was not a judicial appellation, being rather a convenient and condemnatory form of journalistic shorthand; moreover, it shows 'les limites de l'appréhension par le droit des phénomènes sociaux et, en meme temps, souligne comment par le droit une qualification tente de borner, voire instrumentaliser un évènement.' (2011: p.2). While it is true that the newspaper reporting demonstrates such an instrumentalization of the events in Guyane in 1928, there is a further point which has been thus far overlooked: the instrumentalization taking place with the choice of term 'insurgés' in 2011. Although this new appellation restores agency to the fourteen defendants, and shows their active rebellion against the inequities and corruption in the electoral system in Guyane, it subsumes them under a revolutionary and republican narrative, flattening out the specificities of Guyane and its status as a former slave colony to work it into a teleological progression. A narrative of idealized republicanism is perpetuated, in which the

metropolitan French courts had corrected abuses happening ‘là-bas’ in Guyane, and the rights of the colonized were henceforth recognized. Curiously, moreover, the accompanying exhibition, for all its thoroughness and emphasis on the experiences of the fourteen defendants, did not include two handwritten letters of thanks that were sent to Alexandre Fourny by Iqui and by Léopoldine Radical on their return to Guyane. Both letters, perhaps unsurprisingly, emphasize the personal, rather than political, trajectory of the trial and its outcome. Iqui thanks Fourny for his personal ‘accueil chaleureux et fraternel’ and for the hospitality shown to them in the period between their release and return to Guyane; he promises to send Fourny some high-quality rum by the next steamer for mainland France (1931). For Léopoldine Radical, the trial is one of discomfort. In ungrammatical but evocative French she describes her sense of *dépaysement* on her return home as being like that of an unhomed bird: ‘Me voilà, chère Maître arrivé dans mon pauvre petit foyer, étrange comme une oiseau qui étais évacué part le flot et il a retrouve son nid perdu pendant plusieurs année [sic]’; she, too, is anxious that the population of Nantes be thanked for their hospitality (1931). In other words, the idealized narrative of republicanism ignores both how the relationship between France and its overseas territories was conceptualized and realized and how it was experienced by those accused of the riots in Guyane. Certainly, all fourteen defendants were acquitted, and Monnerville and Torrès were able to publicize colonial abuses and inequalities, but the trial was not a turning point either in colonial administration or in how the colonies were perceived. As the press reports of 1931 reveal, Guyane was represented as an exotic exception and colonial inequalities could co-exist with the rhetoric of universalism. In the short term, after the return of the thirteen to Guyane on 9 April (Mustapha died in Nantes) and as the preparations for the opening of the *Exposition coloniale* on 6 May 1931 gathered pace, the *affaire Galmot* rapidly disappeared from the press. In an article by Lesbats in *Le Populaire* on 27 April 1931, previewing the upcoming exhibition and denouncing the ‘intolérables abus des administrations coloniales au suffrage universel’ in the colonies not mentioned in the pomp and display of the *Exposition*, the reader was reminded of ‘l’affaire Galmot, les horreurs du



Viet-Nam, les pages émues d'André Gide sur le Congo' (193: p.2), but this protest was very much the exception.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, the *commissaire* of the Guyane pavillon at the *Exposition* was anxious that the image of the country be rescued from the popular stereotype of the 'sauvage guyanais à demi-civilisé' (Hodeir, 2011: p.1). The Nantes trial of 1931 was important for acquitting fourteen Guyanese who protested for their rights as citizens. It revealed the contradictions and interactions between the universal and specific that were at the heart of French republicanism during the interwar period. The discourses generated around the trial, however, and its entry into commemorative history show how an idealized vision of republicanism, which ignores its imbrication with colonialism, continues to this day.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The 'Registre d'Ecrou' at the Prison de Nantes, where the defendants were transferred on 7 Oct. 1930, records that Hibade, Lamer, Thiberon, Mathur, Mustapha, Mondor, Rosemond, Hauradou, Flambant, Concel, Soyon, Frédusse were accused of 'complicité d'assassinat'; Iqui and Radical were accused of 'pillage' (Registre d'Ecrou, 1930: pp.53–60).

<sup>2</sup> 'M<sup>e</sup> Torrès (vu par Ex)', *L'Ouest-Eclair*, 10 March 1931, 4; 'Fernand Frédusse, inculpé de complicité dans l'assassinat de Jubel', and 'Joséphine Lamer, accusée d'avoir participé au meurtre de Bourgarel', *L'Ouest-Eclair*, 14 March 1931, 4; 'M<sup>e</sup> Torrès (vu par Pierre Baudrier)', and M<sup>e</sup> Monnerville and Léopoldine Radical, *L'Ouest-Eclair*, 19 March 1931, 5; M<sup>e</sup> Fourny, *L'Ouest-Eclair*, 21 March 1931, 5. Meanwhile, *Le Phare de la Loire* contained sketches of 'le président Lemonnier', 'maître Torrès plaidant au cours de l'audience', and all the 'avocats de la défense'. These sketches were used in the exhibition.

<sup>3</sup> *Le Petit Parisien* was essentially right wing but often adopted an apolitical stance to ensure its status as a mass-circulation paper (Bellanger, 1972: pp.348–50).

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<sup>4</sup> On the first day of the trial, Huret's report emphasized the brutality of the crimes for which the defendants stood accused, adding that on the weapons used (which were on display in the court room) 'on pourrait peut-être retrouver trace de la cervelle de plusieurs victimes, qui moururent assommées' (1931a: p.3).

<sup>5</sup> *L'Ouest-Eclair*: from 11 March to 22 March the trial was consistently under the headline 'procès des émeutiers'; *Le Petit Parisien* similarly adopted the rubric 'Le procès des émeutiers de Cayenne', 11–22 March 1931, as did *L'Humanité*, 10–22 March 1931, while the *Journal* alternated between referring to the rioters (11 and 12 March 1931) or the riots themselves (14 March). The national *Le Populaire* was more circumspect with its headline on 10 March 1931: 'L. Huret, A Nantes: Le Procès des quatorze "émeutiers" de Cayenne a commencé hier'; the headlines in *Le Populaire de Nantes* referred repeatedly to 'L'affaire Galmot' (11–22 March 1931), and when the phrase 'émeutiers de Cayenne' was used it was put in quotation marks (25 March 1931, p.2).

<sup>6</sup> The emphasis on the curiosity afforded by the spectacle of the defendants is repeated in the report on the return journey by the defendants to Guyane (*L'Ouest-Eclair*, 1931d, p.4).

<sup>7</sup> Although Hodeir claims that no mention at all was made of the *affaire Galmot* by the press either in the run-up to the *Exposition* or over its course, research for the present study has uncovered *Le Populaire* making judicious political use of the trial on 27 Apr. 1931 (2011: p.2).

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