29 October 2012

The Fall of France

Opera House
Vichy, France
France after World War One

“What is France?”—questions about gender dynamics and demographic change

colonized peoples: in theory, could be “French”;

class: heavy industry emerges during and after war;

Third Republic’s parliamentary politics

“Do you have a place in your heart for us?” (U.S. charity postcard)

The Fall of France: Background
“La France profonde”...

*France at Work* in the series “The Face of France”

The Fall of France: France in the 1930s

grape pickers eating lunch (Burgundy)

grapes being delivered to the winery
... and its Capital City

Paris Demographics between the Wars

total population approx. 4,000,000
foreign born 400,000
foreign born as % of workers > 20%

Immigrants by nationality (official census figures)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>1926</th>
<th>1921-1926 increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italians</td>
<td>101,800</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>44,500</td>
<td>120%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poles</td>
<td>36,300</td>
<td>145%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Africans”</td>
<td>27,500</td>
<td>340%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turks/Armenians</td>
<td>18,300</td>
<td>900%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechs</td>
<td>6,600</td>
<td>245%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“there were nearly three times as many foreigners in Paris than in all of Germany” (Rosenberg, p. 31)

Society and Politics in the 1930s: return of “revolutionary tradition”?

**LEFT**
1930 Communists (PCF)  Socialists (SFIO)  (split in 1920 from Socialists)

**CENTER**
Radicals  Democratic Alliance

**RIGHT**
Republican Federation  the Leagues

**Popular Front against Fascism**
“Radicals”—Edouard Daladier
Socialists—Léon Blum
Communists—Maurice Thorez

**The Leagues**
Action Française: Catholic monarchists
(paramilitary branch “Camelots du Roi”)

Croix de Feu: veterans’ organization,
expanded to corporatist anti-Communism

Solidarité Française: founded in 1933 in
imitation of Nazis; “France for the French”

“Stavisky Riots” Feb. 6, 1934
Neither Left nor Right? “fascism” in interwar France

Stavisky Riots, February 1934

Croix de Feu (Cross of Fire) marchers

Camelots du roi

Croix de Feu emblem
The Popular Front against Fascism (and for the working class?)

**June 1936, Matignon Accords**

- 40-hour work week
- 12% wage increase
- Armaments factories nationalized
- 2 weeks paid vacation/year

**CGT (General Confederation of Labor) membership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>785,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>4,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

May-June 1936, workers occupy factories (strikes as celebration)

France in the 1930s
The Collapse of the Popular Front

salary increases $\rightarrow$ price increases $\rightarrow$ further strikes

“Radical Republicans” in the coalition: French nationalists worried about Russian-style revolution and that on-going labor reforms are slowing the pace of French re-armament

Socialists in the coalition: some nationalist, some internationalist and pacifist, don’t want to be dragged into Spanish Civil War by the Communists

Communists in the coalition: oppose nationalism [and eventually put in a very difficult position by the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression treaty (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact summer 1939)]

“Blum’s coming to power is undoubtedly a historic event. For the first time, this old Gallo-Roman country will be governed by a Jew. I am only saying what the country is thinking deep inside: it is preferable for us to be led by a man whose origins belong to French soil…”

Xavier Vallat (World War One veteran; member of the French National Assembly; Action Française sympathizer).
Maginot Fortifications, 1930-1939 and the 1940 Defeat

The Fall of France: Military Defeat
The Exodus, May-June 1940

Population changes, May-June 1940

- northern France
  - Chartres 23,000 → 800
  - Lille 200,000 → 20,000

- southern France
  - Pau 38,000 → 150,000
  - Brive 30,000 → 100,000
  - Bordeaux 300,000 → 600,000
Memory and History: the Fall of France

Our leaders, or those who acted for them, could not think in terms of a new war. In other words, the German triumph was essentially a triumph of intellect—and it is that which makes it so peculiarly serious. Let me be precise. … The ruling idea of the Germans in the conduct of this war was speed. We, on the other hand, did our thinking in terms of yesterday, or the day before. Worse still: faced by the undisputed evidence of Germany’s new tactics, we ignored, or wholly failed to understand, the quickened rhythms of the times. So true is this, that it was as though the two opposed forces belonged to an entirely different period of human history. We interpreted war in terms of assagai [spears used by Zulu people of South Africa] versus rifles… But this time it was we, who were cast in the role of the savages!

June 1940—armistice signed in Compiegne

HERE ON THE ELEVENTH OF NOVEMBER 1918
SUCCEEDED THE CRIMINAL PRIDE OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE...
VANQUISHED BY THE FREE PEOPLES WHICH IT TRIED TO ENSLAVE.
The Dark Years: France, 1940-1944

After the Fall of France: the Dark Years
Marshall Pétain explains the defeat

Work – Family – Fatherland

**Frenchmen, remember!**

Today when France is in the grips of true misfortune, there is no more place for lies and fantasies.

Too few babies, too few weapons, too few allies—these are the causes of our defeat.

We tried to make things easy for ourselves, and today we face misfortune.

Philippe Pétain

---

*Philippe Pétain, 1856-1951*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>&quot;saviour of Verdun&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Army Commander in Chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-5</td>
<td>Minister of War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1940</td>
<td>joins War Cabinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1940</td>
<td>named Head of French State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 1945</td>
<td>convicted of treason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>dies in prison</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Fall of France and the Creation of the “French State”
FRANCE and COMPANY
gambling, capitalism, Jewishness, Communism, greed, freemasonry, fear, bribes, anti-militarism
LAZINESS, DEMAGOGY, INTERNATIONALISM

FRANCE
school, artisans, peasants, Legion [of Honor] discipline, order, savings, bravery
WORK, FAMILY, FATHERLAND
Man’s fundamental rights come from nature. But these rights are only guaranteed by the communities that surround him: the family that raises him, the work that nourishes him, the nation that protects him.

Citizens owe their work, their wealth, even their lives, to the Fatherland. No political conviction and no doctrinal preference, can exempt them from these obligations.

The State must be strong and independent. No division can be tolerated, if it sets citizens against each other, and hence leads to the state’s ruin.

The School is the extension of the Family. It should teach students to understand the benefits of the order that surrounds and supports them. It should make students sensitive to the beauty, grandeur, and traditions of the Fatherland. It should teach them to respect morality and religion, especially those that France has professed since her national origins.

Neither birth nor wealth give the right to lead. The only real hierarchy is that of merit and talent.
“In France, there is a café for every 87 inhabitants, and only one sportsground for every three communes [towns or cities]. The sportsground is a field of health!”

Mother’s Day, Sunday, 31 May 1942

The Fall of France and the Creation of the “French State”