



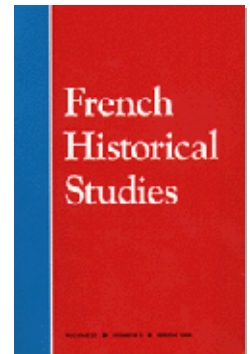
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Newsreels, Ideology, and Public Opinion under Vichy: The Case of La France en Marche

Brett Bowles

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Newsreels, Ideology, and Public Opinion under Vichy: The Case of *La France en Marche*

Brett Bowles

During the Second World War, cinema was an important part of everyday life in France, its influence rivaling that of newspapers and radio. From 1940 to 1944 the French went to the movies more often than ever before or since, buying over 250 million tickets annually and devoting two-thirds of their entertainment spending to cinema.¹ In addition to fiction films that offered an escape from the hardships of daily life, spectators saw a constant stream of short documentaries and newsreels in both the southern zone governed by Vichy and the northern zone controlled by the Germans. Both regimes placed a high value on cinematic propaganda, which they considered one of the most effective tools for shaping public opinion. The mandatory screening of a newsreel and/or documentary prior to each feature film in both zones during most of the war offered spectators a highly selective vision of reality and an ideologically charged interpretation of key social and political issues.

Despite their rich potential as historiographical sources, wartime documentaries and newsreels have received sparse scholarly attention²

Brett Bowles is assistant professor of French at Iowa State University. He recently completed a cultural history of Marcel Pagnol's rural films in the context of the Popular Front and is now developing a second manuscript on newsreels, politics, and public opinion during the Occupation.

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¹ Jacques Durand, *Le cinéma et son public* (Paris, 1958), 209, 218.

² Max Pevsner, "Les actualités cinématographiques de 1940 à 1944," *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale*, no. 64 (1966): 88–96; Jean Gili, "Les journaux d'actualités cinématographiques de 39 à 44," *Cahiers de la Cinémathèque*, no. 8 (1973): 21–23; Marcel Huret and Henri Veyrier, *Ciné-actualités: Histoire de la presse filmée, 1895–1980* (Paris, 1984), 102–12; Jean-Pierre Bertin-

and remain conspicuously absent from even the best cultural histories of the Occupation.³ Fiction films made during the war have been thoroughly studied, yielding insights into French collective mentalities and highlighting the cinema industry as a key site of cultural, political, and economic activity.⁴ Postwar fiction films set during the “dark years” have proved equally influential, by illuminating changes in public memory of collaboration and resistance.⁵ Nonfiction films have traditionally been overlooked for a combination of reasons: their dispersion among a wide range of public and private archives,⁶ access restrictions, physical fragility, and poor cataloging.⁷ However, the situation has improved con-

Maghit, *Le cinéma sous l'Occupation: Le monde du cinéma français de 1940 à 1946* (1989; rpt. Paris, 2002); Bertin-Maghit, “Le cinéma et les actualités filmées,” in *La propagande sous Vichy, 1940–1944*, ed. Laurent Gervereau and Denis Peschanski (Paris, 1990), 195–204; Vincent Guigueno, “Le coq, l’aigle et la couronne: Images d’actualités de l’année 1940” (PhD diss., Ecole Polytechnique, 1990).

³ Jean-Pierre Rioux, ed., *La vie culturelle sous Vichy* (Brussels, 1990); Philippe Burrin, *La France à l’heure allemande* (Paris, 1993); Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida, eds., *La France des années noires*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1993); idem, *Le régime de Vichy et les Français* (Paris, 1993); Dominique Veillon, *Vivre et survivre en France, 1939–1947* (Paris, 1995); Denis Peschanski, *Vichy, 1940–1944: Contrôle et exclusion* (Brussels, 1997); Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940–1944* (New York, 2001).

⁴ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Le cinéma français sous Vichy et les films français de 1940 à 1944: Signification et fonction sociale* (Paris, 1980); Jacques Siclier, *La France de Pétain et son cinéma* (Paris, 1981); Raymond Chirat, *Le cinéma français des années de guerre* (Paris, 1983); François Garçon, *De Blum à Pétain: Cinéma et société française, 1936–1944* (Paris, 1984); Evelyn Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox: French Filmmaking under the German Occupation* (New York, 1985); René Château, *Le cinéma français sous l'Occupation (1940–1944)* (Paris, 1995); Pierre Darmon, *Le monde du cinéma sous l'Occupation* (Paris, 1997).

⁵ Henry Rousso pioneered the film-as-memory approach in his seminal *Le syndrome de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours* (Paris, 1987), 259–75. Among numerous recent applications, see Suzanne Langlois, “La Résistance dans le cinéma français de fiction, 1944–1994” (PhD diss., McGill University, 1997); Sylvie Lindeperg, *Les écrans de l’ombre: La Seconde Guerre Mondiale dans le cinéma français, 1944–1969* (Paris, 1997); Naomi Greene, *Landscapes of Loss: The National Past in Postwar French Cinema* (Princeton, NJ, 1999), 64–97; Leah Hewitt, “Identity Wars in *L’Affaire (Lucie)* Aubrac: History, Fiction, Film,” *Contemporary French Civilization* 22 (1998): 264–84; Richard Golsan, “Claude Berri’s *Uranus*: The Pitfalls of Representing *les Années Noires* in the Nineties,” *Contemporary French Civilization* 22 (1998): 284–303; Rosemarie Scullion, “Family Fictions and Reproductive Realities in Vichy France: Claude Chabrol’s *Une affaire de femmes*,” in *Identity Papers: Contested Nationhood in Twentieth-Century France*, ed. Steven Ungar and Tom Conley (Minneapolis, MN, 1996), 156–77; Leah Hewitt, “Salubrious Scandals/Effective Provocations: Identity Politics Surrounding *Lacombe Lucien*,” *South Central Review* 17.3 (2000): 71–87; Richard Golsan, “Collaboration and Context: Louis Malle’s *Lacombe Lucien* and the *Mode Rétro*,” in *Vichy’s Afterlife: History and Counterhistory in Postwar France* (Lincoln, NE, 2000), 57–72; Lynn Higgins, “If Looks Could Kill: Louis Malle’s Portraits of Collaboration,” in *Fascism, Aesthetics, and Culture*, ed. Richard Golsan (Hanover, NH, 1992), 198–211.

⁶ The largest collections of wartime documentaries and newsreels are housed at the Archives du Film of the Centre National de la Cinématographie (Bois d’Arcy), the Institut National de l’Audiovisuel (Paris), the Cinémathèque Gaumont (Paris), Pathé Television Archives (Saint-Ouen), and the Etablissement de Communication et de Production de la Défense (ECPAD; Ivry-sur-Seine). Other significant holdings exist at the Cinémathèque de Toulouse, the Cinémathèque Gaumont (Neuilly-sur-Seine), the Conservatoire Régional de l’Image (Nancy), and the Compagnie Lyonnaise de Cinéma (Villeurbaine). For details, see Martine Roger-Marchart et al., eds., *Guide des collections audiovisuelles en France* (Paris, 1994); and Brigitte Blanc and Henry Rousso, eds., *La Seconde Guerre Mondiale: Guide des sources conservées en France, 1939–1945* (Paris, 1994).

⁷ For an international overview of newsreel archives and issues related to preservation and

siderably in recent years. Scholarly interest is beginning to swell as a growing number of cinema archives are restored, indexed, and opened to researchers.⁸ A small corpus of groundbreaking publications on wartime newsreels and documentaries in France and Belgium has already emerged, with more on the way.⁹

The general public is aware of the subject primarily through Claude Chabrol's montage documentary *The Eye of Vichy* (1993), which chronicles the Occupation by stitching together excerpts from the three principal newsreel series made during the war: one German, one French, and one Franco-German production. Each series had its own distinct geographic and chronological limits as well as crucial differences in content and ideological thrust, yet *The Eye of Vichy* effaces the films' heterogeneity and inaccurately presents them as interdependent components of a cohesive, unified propaganda campaign—a surprising lapse, given that Robert Paxton and Jean-Pierre Azéma served as historical consultants and cowrote the film's voice-over commentary.¹⁰

The history of filmed propaganda during the Occupation comprises two distinct phases. During an initial period of autonomy from 1940 to 1942, Vichy and the Germans independently controlled documentary film production, censorship, and distribution in their respective zones, with each regime promoting a distinct ideological agenda through its own weekly newsreel. In the North audiences saw exclusively the *Actualités Mondiales* (AM), a French-language edition of the

restoration, see Roger Smither and Wolfgang Klaue, eds., *Newsreels in Film Archives: A Survey Based on the FIAF Newsreel Symposium* (Teaneck, NJ, 1996).

⁸ Begun in 1995 at the behest of the Association Française de Recherche sur l'Histoire du Cinéma (AFRHC), the initiative is being coordinated by the Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC).

⁹ Christian Delage and Vincent Guigueno, "Montoire: Une mémoire en représentations," *Vertigo* 16 (1997): 45–57; James Charrel, "Les actualités cinématographiques en France, 1940–1944" (master's thesis, Université de Paris VIII, 1999); Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, "Encadrer et contrôler le documentaire de propagande sous l'Occupation," *Vingtième siècle*, no. 63 (2000): 23–50; Sylvie Lindeperg, *Clio de 5 à 7: Les actualités filmées de la Libération, archives du futur* (Paris, 2000); Roel Vande Winkel, "Nazi Newsreels and Foreign Propaganda in German-Occupied Territories: The Belgian Version of UFA's Foreign Weekly Newsreel (ATW), 1940–1944" (PhD diss., University of Ghent, 2003); Vande Winkel, "Nazi Newsreels in Europe, 1939–1945: the Many Faces of UFA's Foreign Weekly Newsreel," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 24 (2004): 5–34; Brett Bowles, "La tragédie de Mers-el-Kébir and the Politics of Filmed News in France, 1940–1944," *Journal of Modern History* (forthcoming); Steve Wharton, *Screening Reality: French Documentary under German Occupation* (Bern, 2004).

¹⁰ For more detailed critiques and discussion of the film, see Henri Amoureux, "Deux simulacres de vérité," *Le figaro*, May 9, 1994; Christian Delage and Vincent Guigueno, "L'oeil de Vichy de Claude Chabrol," *Vingtième siècle*, no. 39 (1993): 99–105; Laurent Greilsamer, "Les images de Vichy: Entretien avec Henry Rousso," *Le monde*, May 5, 1993; idem, "C'était vraiment ça, Vichy? Entretien avec Robert Paxton et Jean-Pierre Azéma," *Le nouvel observateur*, Mar. 4, 1993; Jean Daniel, "Lettre à Claude Chabrol," *Le nouvel observateur*, Mar. 4, 1993; Laurent Lemire, "Vichy, ou les infortunés de la mémoire," *La croix*, Mar. 7–8, 1993; Annette Lévy-Willard, "'Maréchal, te voilà': Entretien avec Claude Chabrol," *Libération*, Mar. 10, 1993.

international series known collectively as the *Auslandstonwoche* (ATW), exported in seventeen versions and twenty-two languages throughout the Reich's sphere of influence. In the southern zone and the French Empire, cinemas screened *France-Actualités Pathé-Gaumont* (FAPG), produced by Vichy's Ministry of Information in Marseille using the combined resources of France's two largest prewar cinema companies. The situation changed dramatically in August 1942 with the establishment of *France-Actualités* (FA), a Franco-German newsreel that exercised a monopoly throughout the country. By supplanting the *AM* and *FAPG*, *FA* initiated a second phase of interzone collaboration that homogenized the ideological discourse of filmed propaganda across the demarcation line.¹¹

In addition to these weekly newsreel series, spectators also saw many short documentaries, of which several hundred were completed during the Occupation.¹² In both zones the making of movies was tightly regulated, requiring governmental preapproval of all participants (Jews were excluded from all sectors of the industry), the script, and virtually every detail of production (including shooting locations, duration, and the use of rationed commodities such as electricity and gasoline). Prior to release, each film was also subject to review and editing by censors. Until mid-1942, controlling filmed news in their respective zones was a political imperative for Vichy and the Germans, which meant that few camera crews crossed the demarcation line.

Production strategies contrasted sharply between the two zones. Whereas a high percentage of the German *Kulturfilme* shown in the occupied zone emanated from the powerful studios of Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft (UFA) or Tobis, which between them enjoyed a virtual monopoly sanctioned and financed by the Reich, nonfiction film in Vichy France was a cottage industry divided among many small, privately owned firms that received governmental support on an ad hoc basis.¹³ Though most of the documentaries distributed in the unoccu-

¹¹ The Institut National de l'Audiovisuel holds nearly complete runs of the *Actualités Mondiales* and *France-Actualités*, both of which are available for viewing on DVD at the Inathèque de France in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Certain titles can also be viewed at www.ina.fr/voir_revoir/guerre/mondiales.fr.html. For a detailed inventory, see Edith Réta, ed., *Les archives de guerre, 1940–1944* (Paris, 1996). At present no published catalog of *France-Actualités Pathé-Gaumont* exists, but the films have been preserved on videocassette at Pathé Television Archives and a searchable index is available at www.pathearchives.com.

¹² Based on information collected thus far, the CNC estimates the total number of surviving documentaries at five hundred. My thanks to Eric Le Roy of the CNC for providing this information.

¹³ The Comité d'Organisation de l'Industrie Cinématographique (COIC), a Vichy-created organism responsible for managing the film industry, officially recognized a total of between fifty-five and sixty French production companies for the 1941–42, 1942–43, and 1943–44 seasons. Of

ped zone did not treat explicitly political topics, focusing primarily on items of social, cultural, and scientific significance, they often carried a palpable ideological undercurrent.

One of the most successful documentary series was *La France en Marche*, a sixty-six-episode bimonthly distributed throughout the unoccupied zone and the colonies from late 1940 to late 1944.¹⁴ Because *La France en Marche* ran concurrently with all three weekly newsreels and competed directly with the *FAPG* and *FA*, it serves as an illuminating comparative case study in the dynamics of cinematic propaganda. In addition to revealing the layers of compromise and conflict that lay below the surface of Vichy cultural politics, *La France en Marche* underscores the ideological ambiguities and paradoxes of filmed news and its evolution over the course of the war. Perhaps most important, juxtaposing the series' reception with that of its competitors allows us to evaluate the relative effectiveness of Vichy and German filmed propaganda in shaping public opinion, as well as to understand how going to the movies informed the mentalities underlying collaboration, resistance, and *attentisme*.

Genesis of *La France en Marche*

Following the armistice and occupation of northern France, German military officials moved quickly to reopen cinemas and begin screening the *AM*, which premiered in Paris during the final week of July 1940. Custom-made in the capital by combining on-site reports with items sent from Berlin, the *AM* were produced by UFA and the film section of the Propaganda Abteilung (a subsidiary of Joseph Goebbels's Ministry of Propaganda), then distributed by UFA's Parisian branch, the Alliance Cinématographique Européenne (ACE).¹⁵ By early September the Germans had made showing the *AM* obligatory in all occupied-zone cinemas and had started to extend their monopoly across the demarcation line by negotiating contracts with several theaters in Lyon.¹⁶ Moreover, representatives from ACE had asked Vichy's Office of Information (Secrétariat Général à l'Information [SGI]), to authorize distri-

these companies, about a third specialized in documentaries. "Répartition du contingent de la production," May 30, 1943. Archives Nationales (hereafter AN), F 41, 365.

¹⁴ Original thirty-five-millimeter copies of forty-eight episodes have survived at either ECPAD or the CNC-Bois d'Arcy, which has recently completed restoring its collection. For information on missing films, I have relied on the catalog of written synopses in AN, F 41, 368.

¹⁵ For details about the ATW, see Vande Winkel, "Nazi Newsreels and Foreign Propaganda in German-Occupied Territories"; and Vande Winkel, "Nazi Wartime Newsreels."

¹⁶ "Les actualités reparaissent," *Le film*, Oct. 12, 1940, 35.

bution throughout the unoccupied zone, citing the lack of any competing series there as a justification.¹⁷

In the face of such pressure, establishing an independent news service was crucial to preserving Vichy's political autonomy vis-à-vis the Germans and its credibility in the eyes of the French public. Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour, head of the radio and cinema section of the SGI,¹⁸ outlined these concerns in a strategic report that stressed the "pressing and immediate need to fill the absence of filmed propaganda on our screens in the free zone," recommending the creation of "a national instrument of cinematic propaganda that would not be used in an aggressive way but would instead help safeguard all that still can be salvaged of French life." Tixier-Vignancour envisaged a pair of complementary film series. The first, a weekly newsreel intended as a counterpart to the *Actualités Mondiales* in the North, would present "news of general and regional interest in a French perspective and report on manifestations of the new order being established in France." The second, a bimonthly "filmed magazine" modeled after the influential American series *The March of Time*, would expound on "important current issues and highlight the spiritual and material riches of the French nation while safeguarding its patrimony."¹⁹

Implementing the proposal was problematic for several reasons. First, the SGI was at a significant material disadvantage vis-à-vis the Propaganda Abteilung because two-thirds of France's operational sound cinemas (1,950 of 3,000) fell under German jurisdiction north of the demarcation line.²⁰ In addition, France's three principal prewar news series—*Pathé-Journal*, *Eclair-Journal*, and *France-Actualités Gaumont*—had ceased activity and abandoned their production facilities, as well as most of their equipment, in occupied Paris. Except for a few cameras and a small quantity of film stock salvaged by the French army's Cinema Service (Service Cinématographique de l'Armée [SCA]) during its retreat from Paris to Marseille,²¹ the SGI did not possess sufficient material resources to create and sustain two long-term film series.

¹⁷ Weekly report of the Propaganda Abteilung (Referat Film), Sept. 1, 1940. AN, AJ 40, 1005.

¹⁸ Tixier-Vignancour was a lawyer and former National Assembly deputy from the Basses-Pyrénées with prewar ties to the nationalist right. First elected in 1936, he supported Colonel François de La Rocque's Parti Social Français in its fight against the Popular Front and in its push for constitutional reform. For further biographical details, see Jean Mabire, *Histoire d'un Français: Tixier-Vignancour* (Paris, 1965); Alexandre Croix, *Tixier-Vignancour: Ombres et lumières* (Saint-Ouen, 1965).

¹⁹ "Note sur les actualités cinématographiques," Aug. 3, 1940. AN, F 41, 368.

²⁰ Weekly report of the Propaganda Abteilung, Mar. 5, 1941. AN, AJ 40, 1005.

²¹ "Note au sujet des principes généraux qui devraient guider la section cinéma de la direction de l'information et de la propagande," Sept. 3, 1940. Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre (hereafter SHAT), 2 P, 62.

Just as important, the regime had little experience in the production of filmed propaganda compared to the Nazis. Although newsreels had consistently been one of French cinema's best drawing cards and become an expected part of going to the movies since the early 1930s,²² the French government had not consistently used cinema for political purposes during the prewar period. The first concerted effort to shape public opinion through film began only in late 1938 following the Munich accords.²³ To compensate for these shortcomings, it was necessary for Vichy to recruit private companies with the knowledge and equipment to produce effective propaganda films.

At the time there were only three locations in the unoccupied zone offering both studios and on-site development laboratories: Nicaea Films (Saint-Laurent-du-Var, near Nice), La Victorine (Nice), and Les Films Marcel Pagnol (Marseille). Nice was considered risky because of its proximity to the Italian border and logistically problematic because of its distance from Vichy.²⁴ Marseille was safer and better situated for distributing films, both within France and to the colonies. Pagnol's facilities were small but well equipped, having been renovated in 1938 to rival the best Parisian studios.²⁵ Finally, Pagnol had at his disposal an efficient distribution network that included offices in Paris, Bordeaux, Lyon, Marseille, Algiers, and Geneva.

Exactly how and when the SGI approached Pagnol is unclear, but on August 9, 1940, a production team from the French Navy Cinema Service was already on site processing footage of the British attack on Mers-el-Kébir a month earlier.²⁶ The Mers-el-Kébir film proved crucial not only because it established the framework for long-term partnership between the SGI and Pagnol²⁷ but because it gave Tixier-Vignancour and interzone cinema liaison officer Guy de Carmoy a valuable bargaining chip vis-à-vis the Germans.²⁸ The SGI initially offered to

²² Huret and Veyrier, *Ciné-actualités*, 72–89.

²³ Marianne Benteli et al., "Le cinéma français: Thèmes et public," in *La France et les Français en 1938–39*, ed. René Rémond and Janine Bourdin (Paris, 1978), 27–41.

²⁴ Though deemed unsuitable for producing government-financed newsreels and documentaries, La Victorine and Nicaea were used extensively for making fiction films, first by French directors, then by a Franco-Italian production company. Initially requisitioned in October 1940 by the COIC, the studios were shut down in November 1943 because of the war in Italy. For further details, see Bertin-Maghit, *Le cinéma sous l'Occupation*, 40–44; and Jean Gili, "La vie cinématographique à Nice de 1939 à 1945," *Annales de la faculté des lettres de Nice*, no. 19 (1973): 179–88.

²⁵ "Grâce à Marcel Pagnol, un centre important de production se crée à Marseille," *La cinématographie française*, Mar. 25, 1938, 87–88; "Les Studios Pagnol à Marseille," *La cinématographie française*, June 24, 1938, 132.

²⁶ "Note pour monsieur le ministre de la Défense nationale concernant le film des événements de Mers-el-Kébir," Aug. 9, 1940. AN, AG 41, 62.

²⁷ Contract between Pagnol and the SGI, Sept. 21, 1940. AN, F 41, 368.

²⁸ Confidential memo from Guy de Carmoy, chef du Service du cinéma à la vice-présidence du conseil, to Tixier-Vignancour, Oct. 2, 1940. AN, F 42, 119.

share the film with the Propaganda Abteilung in mid-August but took nearly two months to process the footage and to deliver the final montage, using the time to establish its own newsreel series.²⁹

By mid-October the SGI had set up a small but functional production center in Pagnol's facilities by combining his material resources and personnel with those of France's two largest prewar filmed news companies, Pathé and Gaumont. Their prewar competitor, the Jewish-owned *Eclair-Journal*, was excluded and its unoccupied-zone resources expropriated by Vichy. Work on the weekly *France-Actualités Pathé-Gaumont* began immediately under the supervision of Philippe Este, former director of *Pathé-Journal*. *FAPG* would be developed, mounted, and sonorised in Marseille, then distributed through a Pathé-owned consortium of theaters that extended throughout the unoccupied zone and French North Africa.³⁰

To produce the SGI's bimonthly "filmed magazine," *La France en Marche*, Tixier-Vignancour hired André Verdet-Kléber, owner of a small company in Avignon (Veka Films) specializing in documentaries on Provençal culture, and Jean des Vallières, a well-known regionalist who had founded the Alphonse Daudet Society and authored several popular novels and screenplays during the 1930s. As with *FAPG*, all laboratory work would be carried out in Marseille, but Pagnol would serve as exclusive distributor in Vichy France and the empire. The SGI agreed to reimburse its contractors fully for production and distribution expenses, share box-office receipts equally, and guarantee preferential access to rationed commodities such as film stock, electricity, and gasoline. *FAPG* had first priority, followed by *La France en Marche*.³¹

As the government's primary vehicle of filmed propaganda, *FAPG* was controlled closely by the SGI, which dictated content and oversaw the montage, as well as the composition of the crucial voice-over commentary. *La France en Marche* was managed less prescriptively, its subject matter, images, and commentary determined by Verdet-Kléber in consultation with relevant ministries in the Vichy government, including Youth, Colonies, and the Armed Forces. To compensate for a lack of equipment and personnel, most of which were allocated full-time to

²⁹ The Germans reedited the SGI's montage and incorporated it into the October 11, 1940, edition of the *Deutsche Wochenschau* newsreel shown in Germany, as well as the Dutch, Belgian, and Spanish versions of the ATW. For further details, see Bowles, "La tragédie de Mers-el-Kébir."

³⁰ Confidential memo from de Carmoy to Tixier-Vignancour, Oct. 10, 1940. AN, F 42, 119; Letter from Tixier-Vignancour to unoccupied-zone cinema owners, Oct. 24, 1940. AN, 2 AG, 555.

³¹ Letter from Verdet-Kléber and des Vallières to Tixier-Vignancour, Oct. 4, 1940. AN, F 41, 368. Des Vallières, a personal acquaintance of Pétain's, appears to have been instrumental in initially securing the contract with the SGI, but he did not participate in producing the series beyond March 1941, when he was named subprefect of Arles.

FAPG, Verdet-Kléber agreed to combine his own meager resources with those of cinema services operated by the Army, Navy, and the Ministry of Tourism. Though the SGI did not directly oversee the day-to-day operation of the series, it retained final censorship power over each completed edition.³²

Vichy on Film: *FAPG* and *La France en Marche*

FAPG appeared weekly beginning October 30, 1940, covering current events and promoting the social and cultural programs of the Vichy government. The inaugural episode set the mood for the series by showing Admiral Jean-Charles Abrial decorating sailors who had survived the British attack at Mers-el-Kébir, the aftermath of flooding in the Roussillon region, and a long segment titled “Sous le signe de Pétain,” in which the Marshal meets with his council of ministers, demobilized soldiers return to their families, houses damaged in the war are rebuilt, and youth volunteers harvest grain together by hand. The film ends with a majestic close-up of a flag-raising ceremony accompanied by Pétain’s voice: “Take with me this oath of faith, the oath of those who vow their determination not to doubt their destiny.”³³

Subsequent episodes followed suit by emphasizing the themes of mourning and collective effort to rebuild the nation. During its first two months, *FAPG* included reports on pilgrimages to Saintes-Marie-de-la Mer, the celebration of the Toussaint in major cities throughout the unoccupied zone, the resettlement of refugees from Lorraine in Provence, the repatriation of wounded soldiers from England, and disaster aid provided by the American Red Cross and the French National Relief Agency.³⁴ Overall, the ideological tone of *FAPG* is consistently measured and surprisingly anodyne. The series systematically omits references to collaboration, anticommunism, anti-Semitism, and the German presence in France. Instead, *FAPG* stresses the themes of French autonomy, strict neutrality in the war, and the idealized leadership of Pétain, whose cult of personality is celebrated continuously in clips covering his tour of cities throughout the unoccupied zone.³⁵

FAPG camera crews were not allowed across the demarcation line,

³² Letter from Tixier-Vignancour to Verdet-Kléber, Oct. 25, 1940. AN, F 41, 368.

³³ Film viewed on videocassette at Pathé Television Archives.

³⁴ *FAPG*, Nov. 6, 1940, to Jan. 1, 1941. Films viewed on videocassette at Pathé Television Archives.

³⁵ For a detailed analysis of how these clips function semantically and psychologically, see the metadocumentary by Christian Delage, Denis Peschanski, and Henry Rousso, *Les voyages du maréchal* (Paris, 1990). The film is available through the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) at www.cnrs.fr/diffusion.

but an exchange agreement negotiated with the *AM* allowed spectators in the South to see occasional reports on life in the occupied zone and abroad, including French prisoners in Germany opening Christmas presents and packages of food sent from home.³⁶ Because the clips forwarded by the Propaganda Abteilung often expressed a strong pro-Nazi bias, the SGI repackaged them to promote its own ideological agenda. Prior to incorporation into *FAPG*, the images were routinely edited and remounted with a recomposed voice-over commentary.

Such was the case in the brief segment of the December 11, 1940, edition alluding to Pétain's meeting with Hitler at Montoire on October 24, which officially inaugurated Franco-German state collaboration. Whereas the German version of the film, distributed as part of the October 30 *Deutsche Wochenschau* newsreel in the Reich and the November 13 *Actualités Mondiales* in the occupied zone, underscores the subservience of France toward Germany, *FAPG* represents the event as a diplomatic triumph for the "the Victor of Verdun [who] has given the French cause for hope. Each of his acts tells them: 'We must restore France, follow me!'"

In this instance the *FAPG* version was an exercise in damage control intended to counteract the widespread confusion and disbelief sparked by Pétain's national radio address of October 30, in which he stated: "This collaboration must be sincere. It must be free of all thoughts of aggression. It must involve constant and patient effort. This policy is mine. It is I alone that history will judge."³⁷ The *FAPG* montage of the Montoire film, combined with Pétain's dismissal of unpopular prime minister Pierre Laval on December 13, appears to have effectively persuaded the public that the Marshal's endorsement of collaboration was disingenuous political rhetoric meant to placate the Germans and preserve French autonomy.³⁸ Widely perceived as sycophantic and venal for his unabashed bargaining with the Nazis, Laval played the perfect foil to Pétain, whom the mass media and popular sentiment cast as a selfless patriot committed to defending France against the Germans just as he had done in World War I.³⁹ By the new year, prefects throughout the unoccupied zone reported that the credibility of the Vichy government

³⁶ For details on the films exchanged and their uses, see Charrel, "Les actualités cinématographiques," 84–90.

³⁷ Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux Français: 17 juin 1940–20 août 1944*, ed. Jean-Claude Barbas (Paris, 1989), 89.

³⁸ See Delage and Guigueno, "Montoire: Une mémoire en représentations," 50–52, and their documentary *Montoire: L'image manquante* (Paris, 1998), available through the CNRS at www.cnrs.fr/diffusion.

³⁹ On the development and articulation of Pétain's cult of personality from 1916 until his death, see Pierre Servent, *Le mythe Pétain: Verdun, ou les tranchées de la mémoire* (Paris, 1992); and Michèle Cointet, *Pétain et les Français, 1940–1951* (Paris, 2002).

had been restored and that confidence in the Marshal was higher than at any point since the armistice.⁴⁰

As for *La France en Marche*, its content overlapped closely with that of *FAPG*, emphasizing French unity, political autonomy, and renewed strength while scrupulously excluding references to collaboration, the German occupation, and the war abroad. However, the forms of the two series were different. Whereas *FAPG* provided a broad news survey in five to ten short segments totaling seven to fifteen minutes, each episode of *La France en Marche* offered an in-depth report of eight to twenty-five minutes on a single topic. The difference was in large part a function of the series' production schedules. Whereas *FAPG* appeared weekly with virtually no deadline flexibility, *La France en Marche* could modify its bimonthly regimen as needed, allowing Verdet-Kléber to be more selective in his choice of topics as well as to maintain a tighter thematic continuity and offer a more polished product. From its debut in mid-November 1940, *La France en Marche* was structured around the triptych of the colonial empire (eleven of the series' sixty-two episodes), the Armistice Army (twelve episodes), and the National Revolution (twenty-three episodes), interspersed with reports on various aspects of French history and cultural heritage (twelve episodes).⁴¹

Guided by the motto "Work, Family, Country," the National Revolution was an initiative to restore the essence of French grandeur by purging the causes of the Third Republic's supposed decadence and humiliating demise. In practice, this meant reviving agrarian patrimony and its attendant salutary values through a return to the earth, an embrace of regional culture, and a restoration of the moral and physical vigor of French youth. *La France en Marche* devoted roughly equal coverage to each of these themes. For example, "Camp 1008" (no. 7) shows resettled refugees from Alsace and Lorraine establishing farms in upper Provence; "Jeunes Françaises aujourd'hui" (no. 13) depicts a *foyer rural* in Limousin where young women are being trained to perform farm-related jobs normally handled by men who had been taken prisoner in the war; "Mains françaises" (no. 8) and "La magie du fil" (no. 59) detail the essential role of artisanal labor in traditional village life and celebrate its transmission from one generation to the next.

The series' role as a vehicle of unity and national renewal is expressed in its evocative logo, which shows two long rows of beret-clad figures marching behind a leader who sows seeds from a bag around his waist (fig. 1). The image, which appears prominently at the begin-

⁴⁰ Pierre Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy* (Paris, 1990), 243–44.

⁴¹ See Appendix 1 for a complete list of titles and archival information.



Figure 1 Logo of *La France en Marche*.
© ECPAD/France

ning of each film and on the company's stationery, reflects the attire and collectivist spirit of several key Vichy organizations: the Légion des Combattants, the Compagnons de France, the Chantiers de Jeunesse, and of course the Armistice Army. As *La France en Marche* was taking shape in fall 1940, these groups provided "harvest volunteers" to do the work of farmers killed or imprisoned during the war—a picturesque symbol of unity and rebuilding featured prominently in the first three episodes of *FAPG*.

La France en Marche's coverage of regional culture is equally strong, including "Le moulin enchanté" (no. 4), a meditation on the sites that had inspired the short stories of Alphonse Daudet; "Rhapsodie arlésienne" (no. 26), a guided historical tour of Arles that emphasizes the grandeur of France's Greco-Roman heritage; and "Le passé vivant" (no. 49), which retraces the history of Provence from the arrival of the Phocéens to the present. The motif of regenerating the nation figured most strongly in episodes devoted to French youth, who are shown training to be physical fitness instructors at the Fort Carré in Antibes ("La cité du muscle," no. 6), learning skiing and mountaineering skills near Grenoble ("Les hommes de la neige," no. 34; "En cordée," no. 55), and receiving specialized job training in Chantiers de Jeunesse throughout the unoccupied zone ("Jeunesse de la mer," no. 21; "Groupement 13," no. 47; "Jeunesse et montagne," no. 51; "A bloc," no. 61).

As a complement to the process of national renewal it depicted in the metropole, *La France en Marche* also offered extensive coverage of life in the empire in episodes that dramatized the continued success of the "civilizing mission." French representatives are thus shown curing sleeping sickness in the jungles of Central Africa ("Les chasseurs du sommeil," no. 52), directing the economic *mise en valeur* of Senegalese forests ("Basse côte," no. 57), converting natives to Christianity ("Avant-

garde blanche,” no. 54), and teaching modern agricultural techniques (“Paysan noir,” no. 62). In turn, France’s colonial subjects demonstrate unwavering loyalty, as personified by Algerian chieftains and cavalry who welcome French army officers (“Aux portes du désert,” no. 30), as well as Indochinese soldiers stranded in Provence after the armistice (“Fils de terres lointaines,” no. 58). Even those colonials who have not been completely assimilated are depicted as offering solidarity in France’s time of need. As a voice-over tells spectators in the episode showing Tunisian Muslims celebrating the end of Ramadan (“Le Ramadan en Tunisie,” no. 2): “Despite their vibrancy, this year the nightly feasts that end the day’s fast are also marked by unmistakable discretion, a gesture of solidarity with the mother country still in mourning.”⁴²

The third primary focus of *La France en Marche* was the French armed forces, which the armistice had reduced to the bare minimum necessary for defending the empire and the southern zone.⁴³ Although the so-called *armée nouvelle* had neither the size nor the munitions to mount a counterattack against the Germans, it fulfilled an important symbolic role in Vichy’s program of national renewal. From July 1940 until the invasion of the southern zone by the Germans in November 1942, the Armistice Army regularly engaged in lavish parades, commemoration ceremonies, and civic activities that were consistently promoted in *FAPG*, as well as in numerous mural posters, pamphlets, an elaborately illustrated monthly magazine titled *La revue de l’armée française*, and a triweekly newspaper, *La France militaire*.⁴⁴

The impetus for including military topics in *La France en Marche* came from Lieutenant Colonel André Brouillard, director of the SCA. Having assumed command of the SCA in September 1940 after its relocation to Marseille, Brouillard was a former tank commander and longtime member of the Army’s military intelligence division, known as the Deuxième Bureau. Using the pseudonym Pierre Nord, he had also authored two best-selling spy novels dramatizing the Deuxième Bureau’s efforts to thwart the Nazis: *Double crime sur la Ligne Maginot* (1936) and *Terre d’angoisse* (1939), both immediately made into successful feature films. Brouillard thus brought a unique savvy to reorganizing the SCA. To compensate for what he perceived as the SGI’s “weakness” and “spirit of abandon” in negotiating cinema policy with the Germans, Brouillard established a proactive, nationalistic agenda that included

⁴² Film viewed at the ECPAD.

⁴³ For details, see Claude d’Abzac-Epezy, “Forces armées de Vichy,” in *Dictionnaire historique de la France sous l’Occupation*, ed. Michèle Cointet and Jean-Paul Cointet (Paris, 2000), 308–12.

⁴⁴ Robert Paxton, *Parades and Politics at Vichy: The French Officer Corps under Marshal Pétain* (Princeton, NJ, 1966), esp. 40–49 and 172–74.

making training films for internal army use as well as short reports and documentaries about the army for public consumption.⁴⁵ Whereas the training films were intended to prepare French forces to reenter the war against the Germans at an undetermined future date, the publicity reports aimed “to preserve the French national soul against Nazi propaganda” by promoting civilian enlistments and national pride in the army.⁴⁶ Brouillard initially attempted to incorporate his publicity films into *FAPG*, but disputes with the newsreel’s editors over length and content soon prompted him to seek other alternatives.⁴⁷ The extended format and more flexible production schedule of *La France en Marche* made it an ideal distributor. Working with Verdet-Kléber and trusted contacts in the Navy and Air Force, Brouillard developed episodes around two thematic threads: the proud tradition of the French armed forces and their rebuilding under Vichy.

The first category includes three historical retrospectives: “Cadre noir” (no. 19), on the training of an elite army cavalry unit that featured magnificent black horses; “Burnous et chéchias” (no. 28), on the Algerian cavalry units known as *spahis*; “Marches et batteries de l’empire” (no. 50), a musical homage, performed by the Air Force band, to Napoléon Bonaparte’s exploits. The second set of films documents the activities of the various branches of the Armistice Army. “Cale sèche” (no. 9) takes spectators on a guided tour of a demobilized battleship in dry dock at Toulon; “Régiments modernes” (no. 14) shows a day in the life of infantry troops during basic training; “Missions aériennes” (no. 23) provides a step-by-step explanation and re-creation of an aerial reconnaissance mission.

The guiding motifs of these films are dedication, unity, and strength, which are expressed in recurring images of soldiers, sailors, and aviators working in unison to perform their duties. The feeling of pride and confidence created by the visual narrative is amplified through a soundtrack composed primarily of jaunty clarion music similar to that played in military parades. To promote spectators’ identification with the action on screen, first-person point-of-view camera angles are used frequently—a technique appearing occasionally in fiction films of the era but rarely in documentaries and newsreels. First-person perspective is particularly strong in “Bombardiers” (no. 27), which casts the spectator as a bombardier on a training mission that

⁴⁵ “Situation de l’industrie cinématographique au début de novembre 1940,” SHAT, 2 P, 62.

⁴⁶ “Rapport sur la réorganisation du SCA et demandes de ce service,” Jan. 31, 1941, SHAT, 2 P, 62.

⁴⁷ Memos from Brouillard to General Labusquière, Commandant en chef des forces terrestres, Feb. 17, 1941, and Mar. 18, 1941, SHAT, 2 P, 62.

includes studying topographical maps, supervising the loading of explosives into the belly of the plane, and ultimately pulling the payload trigger as the target appears in the bombing scope (figs. 2–5). In similar fashion, “Chasseurs du ciel” (no. 32) has viewers assume the role of a French fighter pilot in training who scrambles to intercept a squadron of dive bombers and engages in a simulated aerial dogfight (figs. 6–7).

**Screening *La France en Marche*:
Distribution and Reception, 1940–1941**

Since tight restrictions on production time, cost, and film stock limited the number of copies that could be made of each film, *La France en Marche* circulated among theaters holding prepaid rental contracts whose length ranged from a day or two in smaller towns to an entire week in large cities. The series made its way throughout the unoccupied zone and North Africa via Pagnol’s distribution offices in Marseille, Lyon, and Algiers. Each new edition premiered in these cities, then moved on to other locations in the same region, with the largest and closest served first.

Commercially, the system maximized the public exposure and profitability of each copy. From the SGI’s perspective, it had the added advantage of ensuring that filmed propaganda reached the most populous areas as quickly as possible after release, thereby enhancing its potential to shape public opinion. As a point of reference, the inaugural episode of *La France en Marche*, released in mid-November 1940, played at thirty theaters during its first month in circulation and grossed just over twenty thousand francs in rental fees.⁴⁸ The series’ popularity and geographic range grew quickly thereafter, reaching French West Africa and Indochina by the end of February 1941.⁴⁹

The films’ precocious commercial success is clear from the frequent solicitations Verdet-Kléber and Pagnol received from distributors and theater owners anxious to acquire the films. The comments of Maurice Archambeau, who owned a network of theaters in Algeria, Tunisia, and Senegal, were typical. “Spectators are starved for entertainment and hope in these difficult times,” he wrote in January 1941. “*La France en Marche* leaves a deep feeling of comfort that creates a strong public desire for other films of the same type. I subscribe to

⁴⁸ “Encaissements du film *Dakar* au 31 juillet 1941,” table attached to a letter from Verdet-Kléber to Vichy’s Inspector of Finance, Dec. 16, 1941. AN, F 41, 92.

⁴⁹ Dossier of shipping invoices from *La France en Marche* to Maurice Archambeau (distributor for North and West Africa) dated Dec. 24, 1940, and to Pachod Frères (distributor for Indochina), dated Jan. 21, 1941. Archives de la Compagnie Méditerranéenne de Films (hereafter ACMF), formerly Les Films Marcel Pagnol.



Figure 2 Loading bombs prior to the mission. © ECPAD/France



Figure 3 Bombers racing toward their target. © ECPAD/France



Figure 4 An aerial view of the target zone. © ECPAD/France



Figure 5 Bombs falling from open doors. © ECPAD/France



Figure 6 A French top gun in training. © ECPAD/France



Figure 7 A pilot's view from the cockpit. © ECPAD/France

all of your films sight unseen. Please send me the next episode in the series as quickly as possible.”⁵⁰ By late March 1941 the success of the series was such that Verdet-Kléber visited Vichy to request authorization for a weekly production schedule and that *La France en Marche* be exempted from the thirty-eight-hundred-meter (two-and-a-half-hour) limit placed on all cinema programs by the government. SGI officials rejected the proposal, citing concerns that *La France en Marche* “is already directly competing with *FAPG*” and that “such authorization would undermine the purpose of having an official weekly newsreel.”⁵¹

The possibility that *La France en Marche* might overshadow its sister series was real indeed, for although the average print run of *La France en Marche* between November 1940 and July 1941 was only about a third of *FAPG*'s (20–25 versus 60–65 copies),⁵² its subject matter held the interest of the public longer because it was not as closely tied to changing current events. Whereas each installment of *FAPG* typically fell out of circulation after about six weeks, episodes of *La France en Marche* could be recycled until the market was exhausted geographically and financially. The inaugural episode, “Dakar,” circulated continuously for a full year, playing at 209 cinemas in all and grossing just under 150,000 francs in rental fees.⁵³

The series' success was directly linked to its unique form and content, which stood apart from those of both *FAPG* and the Germans' *Actualités Mondiales* shown north of the demarcation line. Cinematically, *La France en Marche* is more polished than either of the other newsreels, featuring smoother editing, cleaner sound, and a wider variety of camera angles. The aerial footage that appears in Air Force episodes such as “Bombardiers” and “Chasseurs du ciel” is particularly impressive, both aesthetically and technically. Significantly, these films provided a direct visual and emotional response to the spectacular battle footage shot by Luftwaffe camera crews and featured regularly in the *AM* to create the impression of unstoppable Nazi military prowess.

In addition, the voice-over narration of *La France en Marche* is more fluid, allusive, and subtle than the descriptive, succinct, and often heavily didactic commentary accompanying its peer newsreels. Combined with its extended length, these qualities give *La France en Marche*

⁵⁰ Letter from Archambeau to Marcel Pagnol, Jan. 16, 1941. ACMF.

⁵¹ “Note sur le journal *France-Actualités Pathé Gaumont*,” memo from Pierre Mary to the vice-présidence du conseil, Apr. 17, 1941. AN, F 42, 119.

⁵² “Note concernant la diffusion de *FAPG*,” May 16, 1941. AN, F 42, 119. “Liste des copies tirées de *La France en Marche*,” May 15, 1942. ACMF.

⁵³ “Contrôle de la comptabilité du film *Dakar*,” memo from René Thuillier (SGI accountant) to Vichy's inspector of finances, July 8, 1942. AN, F 41, 369.

the feel of a feature film. Whereas *FAPG* and the *AM* often draw explicit conclusions from their reports and present them in magisterial lecture style, *La France en Marche* appeals to the audience inductively through an intellectually and emotionally engaging story that shows rather than tells spectators why they should subscribe to a particular point of view.

When didactic commentary does appear, it typically comes at the end of the film, as the climax and summation of the narrative just presented. For example, the biography of Henri IV and tour of his childhood home in Gasconne presented in “Nouste Henric” (no. 18) culminates by likening the revered king to Marshal Pétain: “The good king of Nanterre extends his hand across the centuries to the great soldier of Verdun, another son of the soil who has put his nation on the path of recovery with honor.” Such is also the case in “Taureaux de combat” (no. 42), a look at the cowboys of the Camargue that ends by comparing them to “medieval knights who never doubted France’s mission or her destiny.”⁵⁴

As early as September 1940 Parisian audiences had begun whistling, coughing, and sneezing in unison during the *Actualités Mondiales*, prompting German military authorities to publish a decree warning that such “provocations” were considered acts of aggression and that their continuation would result in the closing of all theaters in the capital.⁵⁵ At the request of the Propaganda Abteilung, in mid-October the Paris Prefect of Police directed cinema owners to interrupt the projection and turn on the lights at the first sign of unruly behavior, warning them that they would be held personally responsible for any future incidents.⁵⁶ To ensure compliance, undercover French police officers began attending “problematic” theaters at about the same time. In early November German authorities closed twenty-six cinemas temporarily for repeat offenses.⁵⁷

By early January 1941 audience dissent had become so widespread that the *AM* were shown in only partial darkness so that uniformed French and German sentries could identify and arrest unruly spectators.⁵⁸ The prefect of the Landes department reported that 80–90 percent of moviegoers in the town of Dax (near Bordeaux) responded by exiting to the lobby during the newsreel and returning at its conclusion

⁵⁴ Films viewed at the CNC–Bois d’Arcy.

⁵⁵ “Manifestations dans les cinémas parisiens,” *Le film*, Nov. 1, 1940, 3; weekly report of the Propaganda Abteilung (Referat Film), Nov. 3, 1940. AN, AJ 40, 1005.

⁵⁶ “Actualités,” *Le film*, Nov. 1, 1940, 4.

⁵⁷ “Note sur la surveillance des salles de cinéma,” Oct. 14 and Nov. 4, 1940. Archives de la Préfecture de Police de Paris (hereafter APP), Fonds “Situation de Paris.”

⁵⁸ “Avis important: Les actualités doivent être obligatoirement projetées en salle demi-éclairée,” *Le film*, Jan. 15, 1941, 8.

for the feature film.⁵⁹ In March 1941 the Germans began levying fines against recalcitrant theater owners and closing problem cinemas indefinitely,⁶⁰ but to no avail. When the August 1, 1941, edition of the *AM* showed Russian soldiers firing repeatedly into dead Wehrmacht troops on the Eastern Front,⁶¹ residents of Angoulême applauded loudly, prompting an indignant newspaper editorial: “During the recent projection of newsreels in a city theater, some people felt the need to applaud war scenes showing German soldiers being cruelly massacred and mutilated by the Bolsheviks. It goes without saying that such demonstrations are out of place, and that they are all the more serious since nobody thought of protesting or intervening.”⁶² Conversely, Parisian moviegoers who derided on-screen images of Hitler drew gleeful praise in a clandestine edition of *L’Humanité*: “During the newsreels audiences get up and shun [*boudent*] the doctored images produced by Goebbels the dwarf. In other theaters viewers whistle loudly at Hitler’s ugly mug each time it appears. Bravo, French spectators.”⁶³

The unpopularity of the *AM* was hardly surprising, for the series bluntly and incessantly promoted the German war effort, the anti-Bolshevik “crusade” of the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front, Franco-German collaboration, and the role of National Socialism in building a “new Europe.” In contrast, during its first year fewer than 10 percent of the stories presented in the *AM* were devoted to specifically French cultural topics, with most of these imported from *FAPG*.⁶⁴ At a time of increasingly severe material restrictions (especially food shortages), this glaring disproportion rendered the propagandistic function of the series transparent to occupied-zone spectators and fueled anti-German resentment.

During the same period, audience response to filmed news in the unoccupied zone was strongly favorable, with no traces of the dissent that plagued the *AM*. Yet by summer 1941 Vichy was also facing a crisis in managing propaganda and public opinion. Prefects across the unoccupied zone reported growing disillusionment with the National Revolution and the progressive hardening of state collaboration between the French state and the Reich that had taken place during the first half of the year under the leadership of Prime Minister François Darlan. The wave of Anglophobia that had swept through

⁵⁹ “Information et propagande” section of a report to the Ministry of the Interior, Jan. 4, 1941. AN, FIC III, 1160.

⁶⁰ “Manifestations au passage des actualités,” *Le film*, Mar. 1, 1941, 6.

⁶¹ This footage appears in the Aug. 1, 1941, edition.

⁶² *Le matin charentais*, Aug. 8, 1941.

⁶³ *L’humanité*, Aug. 7, 1941.

⁶⁴ Data compiled from Réta, *Archives de guerre*, 17–29.

the population in late 1940 following the attacks on Mers-el-Kébir and Dakar had dissipated following England's weathering of the Blitz, and Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 had created new hope that Germany might lose the war. Prefects' reports and the SGI's *contrôle postale* (the monthly opening of some 350,000 letters to gauge public mood) concurred that although Marshal Pétain's prestige remained largely intact, public opinion was turning definitively against collaboration.⁶⁵

In addition, the first organized Resistance movements were taking shape—Libération-Nord in the occupied zone, Combat and Libération-Sud in the unoccupied zone, as well as the Front National and the Francs-Tireurs on both sides of the demarcation line.⁶⁶ In an August 12, 1941, radio address intended to quash a growing current of public disaffection, Pétain summarized the situation with characteristic terseness:

During the past few weeks I have felt a bad wind rising up from several regions of France. Worry is filling minds; doubt is taking over souls. The authority of my government is questioned; orders are often badly executed. In an atmosphere of false rumors and intrigues, the will to rebuild is fading. Other forces, which are neither noble nor disinterested, are attempting to take their place. My name is invoked too often, even against the government, to justify supposed acts of patriotism, which are in fact only calls to indiscipline. A veritable malaise is afflicting the French people.⁶⁷

Public unrest was in part the result of a political shift within the SGI since the beginning of the year. In February 1941 Admiral Darlan had appointed Paul Marion—longtime propaganda officer for the profascist, Germanophile Parti Populaire Français—as *secrétaire général à l'information* and replaced the original architects of *La France en Marche* and *FAPG*, Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour and Guy de Carmoy, with officials committed to homogenizing filmed news policy across the demarcation line instead of preserving Vichy's autonomy. Marion and his new interzone cinema liaison officer, Pierre Mary, abandoned the liberalism of their predecessors and adopted a hegemonic approach to filmed propaganda. Shortly after taking office, Marion began negotiating an accord with the Germans to create a jointly produced newsreel series that would replace both the *AM* and *FAPG*.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, 248–53; Peschanski, *Vichy, 1940–1944*, 48–49.

⁶⁶ For a rich inventory of Resistance movements during the summer of 1941, see Henri Noguères, *Histoire de la Résistance en France de 1940 à 1945*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1967–81), 2:23–107.

⁶⁷ Pétain, *Discours aux Français*, 121.

⁶⁸ For a detailed account of these negotiations, see Bertin-Maghit, *Le cinéma sous l'Occupation*, 106–10.

Marion and Mary also modified the ideological tack of *FAPG*, incorporating reports from the *Actualités Mondiales* that pointedly stressed the need for closer Franco-German collaboration. The May 20, 1941, edition of *FAPG* featured a segment touting Darlan's meeting with Hitler to negotiate the Paris Protocols, in which Vichy offered the Germans access to French military bases in Damascus (Syria), Bizerte (Tunisia), and Dakar (Senegal) as an incentive to ease the restrictions imposed on mainland France by the armistice agreement. The June 6, 1941, edition began with a segment that presented the war in the Middle East as a joint Franco-German effort to defend the empire from usurpation by England. On June 17, 1941, *FAPG* commemorated the anniversary of Mers-el-Kébir, recycling footage shot during the attack in an attempt to reignite the Anglophobia of fall 1940 and to justify the bloody battles taking place between Free French and Vichy forces in Syria. Significantly, whereas the original Mers-el-Kébir film had represented the attack as a *tragédie*, the rewritten voice-over commentary now used the denunciatory term *attentat* (a treacherous surprise attack)—a semantic shift that encapsulates the evolution of Vichy's newsreel production policy over the course of the previous year.⁶⁹

Spectator reaction was immediately negative in both zones. By mid-July 1941 audiences in Vichy France and North Africa were exiting en masse to the lobby during the newsreels, just as their counterparts continued to do in the North. To ensure a captive audience, the SGI and the Comité d'Organisation de l'Industrie Cinématographique (COIC) forbade the practice and ordered theater owners to charge any offending patrons a second admission fee on reentry, with the money going to Vichy's National Relief Agency. The edict, whose text was distributed in poster format and posted in theater lobbies, concluded with a telling sentence printed in boldface: "Good Frenchmen will thus be able to view the newsreels without hindrance and to enjoy these images of National Recovery and Life."⁷⁰ Finally, on July 18, 1941, *FAPG* was made an obligatory part of all movie programs in the unoccupied zone and the colonies.

Vichy résistante: Anatomy of a Cinematic Myth

This was the context in which audiences saw the first episodes of *La France en Marche* depicting the training of the Armistice Army. "Régi-

⁶⁹ The original film, released in late October 1940, was titled *La tragédie de Mers-el-Kébir*. The *FAPG* segment is presented under the rubric "Anniversaire de l'attentat de Mers-el-Kébir." Films viewed at the ECPAD and Pathé Television Archives.

⁷⁰ Text reprinted in *Filmafric*, Aug. 1941, 5.



Figure 8 Sailors scrub the deck in unison under a plaque that reads “Honor.” © ECPAD/France



Figure 9 The *Strasbourg*'s gun turrets poised for action. © ECPAD/France



Figure 10 Technicians in inflammable suits load the guns. © ECPAD/France



Figure 11 The guns fire simultaneously at a distant target. © ECPAD/France

ments modernes” (no. 14), on the Second Dragoon Division stationed at Auch, premiered in late May 1941; “Vaisseau amiral” (no. 15), a detailed chronicle of daily life aboard the battleship *Strasbourg*, followed in mid-June. Judging from the effusive reviews that appeared in newspapers and cinema magazines, the films made a strong impression on spectators, particularly “Vaisseau amiral,” which culminated with a live-ammunition combat drill (figs. 8–11). Emile Vuillermoz, a nationally known film critic for the Lyon-based daily *Le temps*, was lyrical in his praise. “Good technique, carefully crafted images, precise rhythm, and solid overall balance,” he wrote. “It would be truly insulting to our compatriots to remain indifferent in the face of a production so closely linked to our current preoccupations.”

Indeed, what could be more hallucinatory than these servants of a 330-millimeter cannon, their heads shrouded in white hoods, seated

in their steel cathedral, immobile, silent, hieratic, like priests of a new Moloch whom death obeys. At their command the turret springs to life, thinks, calculates, computes figures, and corrects decimals while simultaneously searching for its prey, visible or still unseen, as the enormous, gleaming shell takes the elevator to the deck where the steel monster will give it wings. . . . These images all express singular grandeur, nobility, and strength. Who would dare claim that such spectacles, which under present circumstances move our hearts and our minds so deeply, cannot speak to the imagination of a Frenchman in 1941?⁷¹

Such a demonstration of military prowess was emotionally compelling evidence that France had recovered from its crushing defeat and was again a force with which to be reckoned. The effect was particularly strong since the *Strasbourg*, the pride of the Mediterranean fleet, had sustained heavy damage at Mers-el-Kébir. For spectators who had seen the widely distributed film of the attack the previous fall, “Vaisseau amiral” helped wipe away the traumatic visual memory of the mighty battleship engulfed in smoke and flames.

Yet as Vuillermoz’s comments suggest, the film’s significance ran deeper than just national recovery. The battle simulation in “Vaisseau amiral,” like those that would subsequently appear in “Bombardiers,” “Chasseurs du ciel,” and other military episodes, actively encouraged the viewer to adopt the perspective of weapons operators by frequently using camera angles from first-person points of view. The targets fired on are never explicitly identified in any of the films; instead, they are referred to generically as *l’adversaire* (the adversary) or *l’ennemi* (the enemy). Psychologically, the ambiguity allows each member of the audience to select among France’s potential rivals according to ideological orientation and personal prejudice. Spectators might have imagined attacking a variety of enemies—German, Russian, Italian, English, American, or even Gaullist Free French units, which clashed with Vichy troops in Syria during June and July 1941.

Under the terms of the armistice France was officially neutral in the war, and Vichy worked proactively to preserve that neutrality, along with its attendant political advantages, by maintaining diplomatic relations with both the Allies and the Axis.⁷² Safeguarding the empire against foreign invasion was particularly crucial as leverage for negotiating with the Germans to ease the restrictions imposed on metropolitan

⁷¹ “Le cinéma: ‘Vaisseau amiral,’” *Le temps*, July 8, 1941.

⁷² Robert Paxton, “Le régime de Vichy, était-il neutre?” *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, no. 194 (1999): 149–62; Robert Frank “Vichy et les Britanniques, 1940–41,” in *Le régime de Vichy et les Français*, ed. Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida (Paris, 1992), 144–61.

France. The mass media touted the policy as a sign of French honor and independence, thereby drawing on the deeply rooted sense of national grandeur and pride that the colonies had long represented. This discourse appears frequently in *La France en Marche* and is articulated with particular force in “Vaisseau amiral,” whose closing shot foregrounds a lone sentry patrolling the battleship’s deck against a long, sparkling shoreline in the distance. As the sailor marches deliberately through the shadow of a massive gun turret and executes a turn, the narrator comments: “France still has a well-trained and unified fleet to ensure the defense of the empire.”

Though the Allied attacks on Mers-el-Kébir (July 1940) and Dakar (September 1940) had initially sparked a wave of virulent Anglophobia, by summer 1941 it had abated, and prefects throughout the unoccupied zone were reporting that public opinion had shifted in favor of the British and against the Germans.⁷³ In addition, the free-zone daily press interpreted the fratricidal battles taking place between Anglo-Gaullist and Vichy forces not as a justification for denouncing the Allies but as a painful, tragic necessity for defending national honor under the armistice and maintaining the political credibility of the French state in its dealings with Germany. Two of the largest-circulation newspapers in the South, *Le temps* and *Le journal*, provided remarkably moderate, balanced coverage of the war in Syria and Madagascar. Both papers avoided inflammatory anti-British, anti-Gaullist rhetoric, and *Le temps* regularly published official communiqués from London alongside those issued by Vichy. The day following the armistice in Syria, *Le journal* ran a front-page editorial that concluded:

Our soldiers fell so that our word would be kept and so that even with hope waning, our honor would at least remain safe. Less scrupulously, we could undoubtedly have asked Germany for support. But we alone wanted to answer the allegations [of Franco-German military collusion] that motivated the British attack. And our greatest victory came the day that England recognized that no German soldier was fighting in Syria. With our good faith intact, we entered into a battle whose outcome was a foregone conclusion. France has paid dearly for its loyalty, honor, and political independence. But she now shines in the eyes of the world.⁷⁴

At the same time, police officials reported widespread demonstrations of French nationalism in movie theaters across the unoccupied zone. *Les trois tambours* (1939), a film about the French Revolution in which a

⁷³ Laborie, *L'opinion publique*, 248–51.

⁷⁴ “Nos sacrifices en Syrie,” *Le journal*, July 15, 1941.

soldier proclaims his intention “to push the Prussians back over the border with bayonets sticking in their butts,” drew “enthusiastic applause” in Lyon and Marseille.⁷⁵ In contrast, a German-made adaptation of Maupassant’s novel *Bel Ami* that ridiculed French cultural decadence and the “civilizing mission” in Morocco was greeted with whistles and cries of protest. On July 4, 1941, members of the social-aid organization *Compagnons de France* interrupted a screening in Vichy by exiting the theater while singing the “Marseillaise.” Other spectators and passersby on the street joined them, bringing the number of demonstrators to two hundred and prompting police intervention.⁷⁶ After similar incidents in other locations, Prime Minister François Darlan pulled the film from circulation as a precautionary measure, then banned it formally just before the end of the year.⁷⁷ Perhaps most important, in August 1941 a fifteen-minute Nazi documentary called *The War on the Eastern Front* sparked choral foot stamping and outraged catcalls of “What lies!” and “Do they take us for idiots?” Prefects from several regions wrote Vichy Minister of Information Paul Marion to request that the film be banned, but he took no action.⁷⁸

Combined with the overall tenor of French public opinion at the time that “*Vaisseau amiral*,” “*Bombardiers*,” and “*Chasseurs du ciel*” were released, the negative reaction of French moviegoers to Nazi newsreels depicting the Wehrmacht battling the English and the Soviets suggests that a majority of spectators who applauded *La France en Marche* would have visualized German rather than Allied targets in their virtual crosshairs or bombsights.

A pro-Resistance mode of viewing is all the more likely since it coincides with the intentions behind the films’ production. As SCA director André Brouillard testified after the war, in late 1940 he received orders from Lieutenant Colonels Louis Baril (head of military intelligence) and Alain du Vigier (head of the operations division) to make training films instructing certain units of the Armistice Army (including the Second Dragoons of “*Régiments modernes*”) in the techniques of guerrilla warfare using explosives and antitank weapons prohibited by the armistice agreement. Brouillard conceived “*Régiments modernes*,” “*Vaisseau amiral*,” and the other military episodes of *La France en Marche* with two goals in mind: “to glorify the French military

⁷⁵ “Rapport de l’Inspection Générale des Services des Renseignements Généraux,” July 15, 1941. AN, F 7, 15293.

⁷⁶ “Rapport de l’Inspection Générale des Services des Renseignements Généraux,” July 5, 1941. AN, F 7, 15293.

⁷⁷ Memo from Darlan to Paul Marion, Dec. 20, 1941. AN, F 60, 300.

⁷⁸ “Rapport de la Commission de Contrôle Téléphonique,” Aug. 11, 1941. AN, F 7, 15293.

tradition” and “to prompt young men to depart for North Africa (the likely base for our campaign of liberation) and to encourage them to enlist in our North African Army units.”⁷⁹

In addition to his duties as head of the SCA, Brouillard also participated in a clandestine counterespionage section based in Marseille and with branches in Limoges, Toulouse, Lyon, and Alger. Operated under the guise of a business called the Rural Development Corporation (Entreprise Générale des Travaux Ruraux [TR]), the organization took shape during the last trimester of 1940 at the initiative of officers from the Deuxième Bureau and other military special services. Though not officially sanctioned by Vichy, the TR was supported and protected by several influential members of the Etat Major, including Baril, du Vigier, General Maxime Weygand (minister of national defense until September 1940), and his successor, General Charles-Léon Huntziger. The TR engaged in a wide variety of activities: stockpiling weapons in hidden caches, identifying and eliminating Nazi spies in the unoccupied zone, producing false papers and smuggling intelligence agents across the demarcation line, counteracting collaborationist propaganda, and collecting and relaying information on German military activities to American and British contacts. In so doing, the overall objective was to lay the groundwork for an Allied landing while at the same time preparing French forces to reenter the war.⁸⁰

Brouillard describes his personal responsibilities in the following terms: “To inform all Frenchmen who had already or could still rally the collective will to resist, recruit soldiers, or procure arms. To enlighten the French about the potential for Germany’s progressive military weakening, and about the resources of the Allies. Also to point out opportunities for resistance, and to push them to seize such opportunities. . . . It was equally crucial to protect the morale and the material resources of our remaining and rebuilding military forces against enemy propaganda, suspicion, and betrayal.”⁸¹ *La France en Marche* addressed these goals by providing spectators a representation of strength, unity, meticulous preparation, and the collective desire to *faire face* (to face up), an expression that recurs frequently in the series’ military episodes.

⁷⁹ Affidavit from Brouillard to the Comité Régional Interprofessionnel d’Epuración (CRIE) on behalf of Verdet-Kléber, June 25, 1946. AN, F 42, 133.

⁸⁰ Colonel Paul Paillole (director of the TR), “Résumé de l’action des services de contre-espionnage militaire français de juillet 1940 à novembre 1944”; AN, 72 AJ, 82. Pierre Nord, *Mes camarades sont morts*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1947–48), 1:24–26, 46–47. For a concise overview of the special services under Vichy, see Philip John Stead, *Second Bureau* (London, 1959), 36–175; for a detailed history, see Michel Garder, *La guerre secrète des services spéciaux français, 1935–1945* (Paris, 1967), 223–498.

⁸¹ Nord, *Mes camarades*, 1:26–27.

In retrospect, the presence of a pro-Resistance message in a film series that proudly celebrated the National Revolution and the cult of Pétain may appear paradoxical, if not downright contradictory. Yet during the first two years of the war there was no perceived incongruity in the minds of unoccupied-zone residents. Thanks to the combined weight of their collective faith in Pétain, growing sympathy for the Allies, and suggestively nationalistic, bellicose episodes of *La France en Marche* and *FAPG*, many French let themselves believe that the Marshal was playing a double game against the Germans, using Vichy as a shield behind which to strengthen and rebuild France until the nation was strong enough to liberate itself. Erroneous though it was, this belief was pervasive during the first two years of the Occupation among the general public, French armed forces, and numerous ministers within the Vichy government.⁸² Writing from Marseille in November 1941, Bouches-du-Rhône prefect André Viguié highlighted the contradiction in his comments on public reaction to a documentary titled “Un an de Révolution Nationale.”

The film drew strong acclaim in all the cinemas where it played, except for the passage showing the arrival of Marshal Pétain at Montoire and his handshake with Chancellor Hitler, which gave rise to boisterous dissent in numerous theaters. But it should also be noted that the very same people who whistled at this scene also vigorously applauded the ensuing sequence featuring the Head of State’s portrait, thereby showing their attachment to and respect for the Marshal’s person. In general, the rumors circulating among the population show little support for the current policy of collaboration, and our propaganda is having great difficulty slowing this current of opinion.⁸³

Given that the same footage of Montoire had been well received a year earlier as part of *FAPG*, the negative audience reaction provides a measure of how far public opinion had swung against the Germans in the interval, while remaining faithful to Pétain. This attitude also manifested itself in resistance movements on both sides of the demarcation line. In 1941 and early 1942 *Combat*, *Les Petites Ailes*, *Défense de la France*, *Le Mouvement de Libération Nationale*, *Liberté*,

⁸² On the general public, see Laborie, *L’opinion française sous Vichy*, 255–61; on the army, see Augustin de Dainville, *L’ORA: La résistance de l’armée, 1939–1945* (Paris, 1974); and Paxton, *Parades and Politics*, 63–140, 282–311; on Vichy officials, see Léon Marchal, *Vichy: Two Years of Deception* (New York, 1943); Henry du Moulin de Labarthète, *Le temps des illusions: Souvenirs, juillet 1940–avril 1942* (Geneva, 1947); Denis Peschanski, ed., *Vichy, 1940–1944: Archives de guerre d’Angelo Tasca* (Milan, 1986); David Bidussa and Denis Peschanski, eds., *La France de Vichy: Archives inédites d’Angelo Tasca* (Milan, 1996).

⁸³ Monthly report to Vichy’s Ministry of the Interior, “Opinion publique” section, Nov. 3, 1941. AN, FIC III, 1143.

L'Organisation Civile Liberté, and the Loustaunau-Lacau network all viewed the Vichy regime not as an adversary to undermine or as a foil against which to define themselves, but as a kind of political *hypothèque*, or emergency second mortgage, taken to cope with a sudden catastrophe and to allow the rebuilding of the French nation.

Though never adopted by Gaullist and Communist resisters, who remained adamantly anti-Pétain and anti-Vichy from the outset, *maréchalisme* and belief in the value of the National Revolution were integral to conservative currents of Resistance ideology.⁸⁴ Looking back on mid-1941, Combat founder Henri Frenay recalls in his memoirs: “Since Montoire my initial confidence had not stopped waning. The hope that I had placed in Pétain grew slimmer with each passing month. However, I did not draw the conclusions that should logically have come to me. Deep within me I was loath to admit that the old Marshal, whatever his intentions, was in fact aiding the enemy.”⁸⁵

“Vaisseau amiral” contains several hagiographic references to the Marshal. His portrait hangs on the wall of the ship’s game room, and a plaque featuring an excerpt from a speech he made aboard the ship on December 4, 1940, is prominently displayed on the main deck: “In this recovery [*redressement*] that we all envision and in which you will play a major role, I am counting on you” (figs. 12–13).⁸⁶ Both images appear in quick succession immediately following the firing drill, linking Pétain visually and psychologically to the Armistice Army’s preparations for battle. In so doing, the film encourages spectators who longed for liberation to equate the *redressement* mentioned in Pétain’s quote with armed resistance against the Germans.

The notion that Pétain would lead France to victory over the Germans is reinforced in other episodes of *La France en Marche* stressing the Marshal’s role as commander-in-chief and his fabled exploits at Verdun during the First World War. The series frequently identifies Pétain as “le Vainqueur de Verdun” (the Victor of Verdun), “le premier/le grand soldat de la France” (the chief/the great soldier of France), and “le Sauveur/le Défenseur de Verdun” (the Savior/the Defender of Verdun)—

⁸⁴ On the wide variety of Resistance ideologies, see Henri Michel’s classic *Les courants de pensée de la Résistance* (Paris, 1962). On the links between the Resistance, Pétain, and Vichy, see Laurent Douzou and Denis Peschanski, “La Résistance française face à l’hypothèque Vichy,” in Bidussa and Peschanski, *La France de Vichy*, 3–42; Dominique Veillon, “The Resistance and Vichy,” in *France at War: Vichy and the Historians*, ed. Sarah Fishman et al. (Oxford and New York, 2000), 161–77; H. R. Kedward, “Rural France and the Resistance,” in Fishman et al., *France at War*, 125–43, esp. 136–40. For an extended case study of “Pétaino-Resistance,” see Pierre Paen’s discussion of the Centre d’Action des Prisonniers and its clandestine wing La Chaîne in *Une jeunesse française: François Mitterrand, 1934–1947* (Paris, 1994), 111–295.

⁸⁵ Henri Frenay, *La nuit finira* (Paris, 1973), 118.

⁸⁶ Film viewed at the ECPAD.



Figure 12 Pétain's portrait in the game room. © ECPAD/France



Figure 13 The plaque commemorating Pétain's visit. © ECPAD/France

allusions that invite spectators to imagine that Pétain would again save France by defeating the Germans in battle, just as he had in 1916. “Images et paroles du Maréchal Pétain” (no. 3) reinforced the same theme in a retrospective biography that covered Pétain's training at Saint-Cyr, heroic service in the Great War, role in “pacifying” the Rif uprising, and speech of June 17, 1940, in which he made “the gift of [his] person to France to lessen her misfortune.”

Although the film was released in December 1940, shortly after Montoire and the official inauguration of state collaboration, neither is mentioned. Instead there are passages devoted to Pétain's tour of cities across the unoccupied zone and his review of a company of French soldiers who had fought in the 1940 campaign, the latter scene accompanied by the commentary: “For those who have paid a heavy tribute to the motherland, having lost both eyes but whose pride never bowed under adversity, they know that all nations have experienced triumphs and setbacks, and that it is by their reaction to adversity that they show themselves to be weak or great.”⁸⁷

The suggestively *revanchiste* interplay of image and word present in “Vaisseau amiral” and “Images et paroles du Maréchal Pétain” occurs frequently in *La France en Marche*, which cultivates the image of a *Vichy résistante* committed to cultural renewal as a prelude to liberating France. The political message encoded in the series was never explicitly articulated, and this ambiguity was essential to its survival. In practice, the episodes celebrating *maréchalisme* or the various facets of the National Revolution camouflaged the insertion of increasingly belligerent representations of French military training. Beginning with “Régiments modernes” and “Vaisseau amiral” in May and June 1941, Brouil-

⁸⁷ Film viewed at the CNC–Bois d'Arcy.

lard and Verdet-Kléber established a regular pattern of production in which every fourth or fifth episode featured the Armistice Army. Hence “Cadre noir” (no. 19), on the elite cavalry unit stationed at Tarbes, appeared in August, followed by “Mission aériennes” (no. 23) in October, “Bombardiers” (no. 27) in December, and “Chasseurs du ciel” (no. 32) in February 1942.

The strategy proved effective, for in July 1941 SGI cinema head Pierre Mary purchased twenty-two copies (including several each of “Vaisseau amiral” and “Images et paroles du Maréchal Pétain”) for shipment to far-flung destinations underserved by or beyond the reach of Pagnol’s distribution network, including Madagascar, Djibouti, Réunion, the Antilles, Japan, and Portugal.⁸⁸ Shortly thereafter Mary distributed a memo to prefects and mayors throughout the unoccupied zone and North Africa urging them to organize free screenings of *La France en Marche* for students, enlisted men, religious leaders, and state-sponsored organizations. Ironically, the initiative was intended to compensate for the diminishing popularity of *FAPG*.⁸⁹

An anonymous journalist who attended a special screening of “Vaisseau amiral” in Lyon for the Compagnons de France noted that “this extremely interesting session was highlighted by extended applause from all the fine young people in attendance, who should be shown such films more often. Let us sincerely congratulate the producers of *La France en Marche* for their constant effort.”⁹⁰ In July 1941 the SGI also granted Verdet-Kléber’s long-standing request that *La France en Marche* be exempted from the length limit placed on cinema programs. Yet the exemption was allowed only in the colonies, apparently for fear that *La France en Marche* might overshadow *FAPG* entirely if accorded equal status in metropolitan France.⁹¹

Though the series’ *maréchalisme* and promotion of the National Revolution shielded it from suspicion within the Vichy government, the same was not true for other potentially hostile audiences. The ultracollaborationist, anti-Semitic daily *Au pilori* denounced the series from Paris on several occasions, targeting both Verdet-Kléber’s head cinematographer, a decorated Jewish veteran of the 1940 campaign named Jacques Berr, and the SGI. After chastising Mary and Paul Marion for not pursuing a more collaborationist, ideologically aggressive propaganda campaign, a May 1941 editorial charged that: “In Vichy France

⁸⁸ “Relevé des copies tirées pour le SGI,” July 30, 1941. AN, F 41, 92.

⁸⁹ “La propagande par le cinéma,” Aug. 28, 1941. AN, F 42, 133.

⁹⁰ “Un film de *La France en Marche*,” *Le film à Lyon*, July 19, 1941, 2.

⁹¹ “Les reportages de *La France en Marche* seront désormais loués hors-programme,” *Flimafric*, Aug. 1941, 9.

the Jews still control the film business. A glaring example: The *La France en Marche* series, produced under the table by Jacques Berr, ex-director of *Eclair-Journal!* Those Vichy and London bureaucrats fear the propaganda that Parisian filmmakers could make. . . . Monsieur Marion, you must launch an immediate and pitiless inquiry to determine who is responsible for the current state of affairs. Free the cinema industry from the yoke that is stifling it.”⁹² Marion never initiated an investigation, but the series did draw scrutiny from other upper-level Vichy administrators. In July and August 1941 Prime Minister Darlan and Minister of the Interior Pierre Pucheu discovered Brouillard’s unauthorized counterespionage unit and ordered that all anti-German activities, as well as contact with Gaullist forces and the Resistance, cease immediately. To prevent recurrence of such conduct, Darlan reorganized military intelligence into a single organism under his direct control, the Centre d’Information Gouvernemental.⁹³

During the same period civilian administrators in the National Defense Ministry questioned Brouillard about his links to the TR, production of unauthorized training films, and role in making the military episodes of *La France en Marche*, but Huntziger, Baril, and du Vigier managed to protect his cover.⁹⁴ Yet Darlan and Pucheu remained vigilant as time went on, and *La France en Marche* gradually lost its protectors in the Etat Major. In November 1941 General Huntziger died in a plane crash; a month later du Vigier was transferred from his post as operations division head to a cavalry division in Mascara (Algeria); in March 1942 Baril was reassigned to a regiment of *tirailleurs* in Koléa (Algeria).⁹⁵

As for Berr, he joined the Resistance in late 1942 after the German invasion of the southern zone, eventually becoming section head of the Sallanches district in Haute-Savoie. Between September 1943 and March 1944 he led successful missions rescuing wounded *maquisards* from the local hospital, destroying German supply trains, sabotaging an aluminum production plant, and assassinating two Gestapo agents.⁹⁶ In his statement at Verdet-Kléber’s postwar indictment hear-

⁹² “Le cinéma en attente,” *Au pilori*, May 29, 1941.

⁹³ Stead, *Second Bureau*, 61–62; Garder, *Guerre secrète*, 288–91.

⁹⁴ Affidavit from Brouillard to the CRIE on behalf of Verdet-Kléber, June 25, 1946. AN, F 42, 133.

⁹⁵ Both men subsequently facilitated the landing of Allied forces in November 1942 and commanded troops during the North African campaign. While Baril perished in a plane crash near Beirut in March 1943, du Vigier served in Normandy following D-Day and eventually participated in the liberation of Paris. On Baril, see Claude d’Abzac-Epezy, “Colonel Louis Baril,” in Cointet and Cointet, *Dictionnaire historique de l’Occupation*, 59; on du Vigier, see Dainville, *L’ORA*, 53–54.

⁹⁶ “Résumé des états signalétiques des services du chef d’escadron Jacques Berr,” undated French Army personnel report prepared for the CRIE. AN, F 41, 368.

ing on charges of collaboration, Berr reflected lucidly on the pro-Vichy brand of resistance articulated in *La France en Marche*:

It was I who produced all these films. As for “Images et paroles du Maréchal Pétain” and the other episodes on the National Revolution, one must recall the period in which these films were made. At that time I felt that I was working for the welfare of France, believing that it was good to celebrate the nation and trying to save what could be saved. Today I do not think that any of the ideas expressed in the film were harmful to the country. The film was simply a report. I admit having been mistaken and obviously today I no longer hold the same ideas. Of all the films I made, none of the topics were forced on me. I would like to add that I watched the film again a few weeks ago and that I was not shocked by its content. This film contains nothing harmful.⁹⁷

In his memoirs, written at about the same time, Brouillard also emphasized the value of *maréchalisme* as a tool for fomenting a collective mentality of resistance against the Germans:

It was necessary to promote the Marshal as long as we might possibly extract from him, by trickery, surprise, or force, the order that would reestablish national unity on the day of the insurrection. . . . He was always personal, dry, and skeptical. With age he took on a monstrous egotism of a physical, visceral nature. He became astonishingly insensitive and pessimistic. He had sudden outpourings of ideas, then extraordinary lapses of memory. But he could still rally the masses behind the military elite already fighting and recruit a main force to follow the avant-garde. What we needed was men in number. It was not our fault if many people still heeded the directives of the old man. We could do almost nothing about that, so we used it to our advantage.⁹⁸

Given that Pétain’s true intentions regarding collaboration remained inscrutable during the first two years of the war and that public faith in him remained consistently strong until the end of 1942, Brouillard and Berr acted pragmatically, appropriating the Marshal’s cult of personality to serve their own agenda. Like Henri Frenay and most other French soldiers who began their resistance activities early in the Occupation, Berr and Brouillard underwent an ideological evolution that comprised several stages: first, a sincere but ingenuous *maréchalisme* and commitment to pursuing resistance from within Vichy’s own infrastructure, then a gradual process of detachment leading to the realization that Vichy, Pétain, and the Germans constituted a unified adver-

⁹⁷ “Procès-verbal de la séance du 22 octobre 1946, affaire Verdet-Kléber.” Archives de Paris (hereafter AP), 901/64/1, 338.

⁹⁸ Nord, *Mes camarades sont morts*, 1:33.

sary that had to be fought as such.⁹⁹ Most resisters in this category, like the French population as a whole, did not reach the final phase of lucidity until late 1942 or early 1943.¹⁰⁰ After the war, most were also hesitant to acknowledge all but the final phase, minimizing or discounting altogether their initial loyalty to Vichy and the Marshal.

Paradoxically, the myth that Pétain was buying time and secretly preparing the liberation of France was also used by the Germans to manage public dissidence and to promote tacit acceptance of collaboration. The Propaganda Abteilung began importing segments of *FAPG* featuring Pétain into the *Actualités Mondiales* in early November 1940, shortly after the intensification of choral coughing, whistling, and sneezing in Parisian theaters. Four of the first seven *FAPG* reports incorporated into the *AM* focused on the Marshal and his visits to cities throughout the unoccupied zone. Unlike most other *FAPG* clips appropriated by the Germans, these were shown in their original form, with no modification of the images or voice-over commentary.¹⁰¹

Several of the reports were unusually long as well, significantly longer than any of the German-made stories with which they were mounted. Whereas virtually all the *AM* items from the period run between thirty seconds and two minutes, the film of Pétain's visit to Lyon (part of the December 11, 1940, edition) lasts three minutes, fourteen seconds, and his triumphal tour of Marseille, Arles, and Toulon (part of the December 25, 1940, edition) stretches to an extraordinary nine minutes, occupying nearly two-thirds of the newsreel's total duration for that week!¹⁰² Charles de Gaulle himself, who occasionally screened newsreels smuggled across the channel to London, noted the pacifying effect of such films on public resolve to engage in active resistance:

As for the Vichy government, those who challenged its authority were rare. The Marshal himself remained very popular. The newsreels of his visits to the main cities of central and southern France provided us obvious proof of that. At root the vast majority of people wanted to believe that Pétain was engaged in a ruse and that when the day came he would issue a call to arms. . . . During a visit to Marseille, we saw Pétain appear on the balcony of city hall before a crowd of soldiers and civilians brimming with patriotic fervor. We

⁹⁹ Veillon, "The Resistance and Vichy."

¹⁰⁰ Pierre Laborie, "1940–1944: Double-Think in France," in Fishman et al., *France at War*, 181–90. For a detailed description of the process of detachment, see Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, 248–326.

¹⁰¹ *AM* viewed on DVD at the Inathèque de France, *FAPG* on videocassette at Pathé Television Archives.

¹⁰² These clips originally appeared, respectively, in the Nov. 20 and Dec. 4, 1940, editions of *FAPG*. The Dec. 11 edition of the *AM* can be viewed at www.ina.fr/voir_revoir/guerre/videos.fr.html.

heard him, yielding to the immense suggestion rising up from this assembly, suddenly cry out: "Don't forget that you are all still on active duty [*mobilisés*]!" These words unleashed the enthusiasm of both civilians and soldiers, laughing and crying with emotion.¹⁰³

Though de Gaulle appears not to have screened any episodes of *La France en Marche*, his analysis applies to it as well. During the first two years of the war the image of a *Vichy résistante* cultivated by the series was powerfully compelling to spectators wherever it played. While the popularity of *FAPG* fell as the series took on a collaborationist tone during the last half of 1941, *La France en Marche* maintained its thematic focus and continued to expand its distribution network. In December 1941 a theater owner in Tunis reported that his lobby windows were smashed by a crowd of spectators denied admittance to a sold-out showing of "Bombardiers" (no. 27). He added indignantly that demand for the series was such that a system of ticket scalping was spreading through the city.¹⁰⁴

As demand for *La France en Marche* grew, so did the rental fees paid by theater owners, at a pace that outdistanced the rapidly increasing rate of inflation. Whereas the episodes released in late 1940 and early 1941 rented for between eight hundred and twelve hundred francs each, by May 1942 the price had risen to three thousand francs.¹⁰⁵ Logs from Pagnol's development laboratories suggest that the military episodes were among the most popular, averaging twenty-six copies each versus twenty-two for all others in the series. The biggest hits were "Vaisseau amiral" and "Images et paroles du Maréchal Pétain," with forty-six and thirty-seven copies printed, respectively.¹⁰⁶ By July 1942, a total of 44 episodes and 1,038 copies were in circulation. About 700 theaters had standing contracts to show the series, 530 in the unoccupied zone, 100 in the Maghreb, 30 in West Africa, 10 in Indochina, 10 in Equatorial Africa, and another 12 in Madagascar, Réunion, Djibouti, and New Caledonia. By virtue of its obligatory status and distribution in both standard 35-millimeter and "reduced" 17.5-millimeter formats (the latter having been denied to *La France en Marche*), *FAPG* was shown in roughly twice as many theaters, yet Vichy officials regarded its propaganda value as inferior. An SGI report explained:

A propaganda campaign executed by a private, commercial organization—the only source of revenue for *La France en Marche* being

¹⁰³ Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1954–59), 1:229.

¹⁰⁴ "Le marché noir imprévu," *Filmafric*, Dec. 1941, 5.

¹⁰⁵ ACMF, dossier titled "Encaissements étrangers, 1933–1951." Cited figures appear on shipping invoices dated Mar. 12, 1941, and May 30, 1942.

¹⁰⁶ "Liste des copies tirées," May 15, 1942. ACMF.

rental contracts with theaters—is infinitely more effective than the direct, heavy-handed propaganda of both our weekly newsreel [FAPG] and the films made directly by our government ministries (the former are forced on theater owners, the latter provided free of charge). Indeed, one can clearly see that both obligatory films, on the one hand, and free films, on the other, create a mentality of distrust among French spectators, which in most cases renders the impact of propaganda virtually nonexistent. A film must indirectly suggest the desired idea and must be distributed through normal commercial channels. Using this approach the dual goal of effective propaganda and financial stability can be met. The productions of *La France en Marche*, despite having encountered governmental obstacles and opposition, have largely achieved this dual goal.¹⁰⁷

Given the continuing shift in French public opinion against collaboration and the Germans between mid-1941 and mid-1942, it seems that the influence of *La France en Marche* had surpassed that of all other filmed news series.

***La France en Marche* in Jeopardy, 1942–1944**

In the spring of 1942 the series' survival was threatened by several logistical difficulties: the death of Huntziger and successive transfers of Baril and du Vigier from the Etat Major, an increasingly serious shortage of film stock, to which FAPG had preferential access, and the sale of Pagnol's studios and development labs to Gaumont in May as a prelude to the new interzone newsreel produced jointly by Vichy and the Germans.¹⁰⁸ Verdet-Kléber and Brouillard continued making films, but at a slower pace because film stock was increasingly scarce. Military episodes stopped appearing temporarily as a precaution following Pierre Laval's return to power as prime minister in April 1942 and his reorganization of the SGI to serve Franco-German collaboration.¹⁰⁹ However, in July and August two army films appeared back-to-back, "Dick, l'ami des soldats" (no. 43), about a trained army dog who had located and saved twenty-two wounded French soldiers during the 1940 campaign, and "Premier envol" (no. 44), showing the step-by-step assembly and testing of a light French bomber. These films coincided with the release of the new Franco-German series, called *France-Actualités*, which supplanted both FAPG in the South and the *Actualités Mondiales* in the North.

Originally negotiated during the first half of 1941, *France-Actualités*

¹⁰⁷ "Situation actuelle de *La France en Marche*," July 27, 1942. AN, F 41, 368.

¹⁰⁸ The details of the sale and its implications for the production of propaganda films in the unoccupied zone are discussed in the weekly report of the film section of the Propaganda Abteilung, May 9, 1942. United States National Archives (hereafter USNA), microfilm T 142, frame 638.

¹⁰⁹ For details see Peschanski, *Vichy, 1940–1944*, 49–53.

marked the end of Vichy's increasingly limited independence in the domain of filmed propaganda. From the outset *France-Actualités* was badly received by audiences in both zones because of its bluntly Germanophile, collaborationist tone. Rather than celebrate the French Empire and the National Revolution, *France-Actualités* promoted obedience to Vichy by cultivating fear and denouncing Communism, the Allies, and the Resistance, which was engaged in an escalating war with the German army and French police forces.

Public dissent plagued the series throughout its two-year career, during which its persuasive value declined steadily despite the incorporation of numerous clips devoted to Pétain and specifically French cultural topics. For spectators in the South, the new series was a clear and unwelcome violation of Vichy's waning autonomy; for those in the North, it was a transparent repackaging and continuation of the hated *Actualités Mondiales*. As early as October 1942, *France-Actualités* was being shown under police surveillance in half-lit theaters to curtail the "whistles, talking, and mass exodus to the lobby" that greeted the newsreels each week.¹¹⁰ A year later, Paris police reported that spectators had progressed to insulting collaborationist politicians such as Pierre Laval, Marcel Déat, and Philippe Henriot with cries of "Sell out!," "Traitor!," and "Death!" whenever they appeared on screen. At about the same time, footage showing the destruction of Berlin by Allied bombs drew "widespread applause and cheers" in cinemas throughout the capital.¹¹¹

Taking advantage of the public's increasingly anticollaborationist mood, *La France en Marche* resumed its production strategy in the fall of 1942, mixing films on ideologically anodyne cultural topics ("La vallée du Laga," no. 46; "Le passé vivant," no. 49) with suggestively nationalistic military episodes ("Paré à plonger," no. 48, a short history of French submarine technology; "Marches et batteries de l'empire," no. 50, a musical homage to Napoléon's victories). Verdet-Kléber reinforced the subversive message of the series by devoting four episodes to French youth organizations ("Groupement 13," no. 47; "Jeunesse et montagne," no. 51; "En cordée," no. 55; "A bloc," no. 61), many of which had become fruitful recruiting sources for the Resistance.¹¹² The influ-

¹¹⁰ Letter from *France-Actualités* director Henri Clerc to Prime Minister Pierre Laval, Oct. 23, 1942. AN, F 42, 119.

¹¹¹ "Note sur la surveillance des salles de cinéma," Dec. 26 and 28, 1943. APP, Fonds "Situation de Paris."

¹¹² A related institution was the Ecole des Cadres at Uriage, a center for training promising young civil servants in the patriotic-nationalist spirit of the National Revolution. Though the school supported Pétain and the Vichy regime strongly until the spring of 1943, a number of its members also worked closely with Frenay's Combat movement and eventually defected to the Resistance during the last year of the war. For details, see Bernard Comte, *Une utopie combattante*:

ence of *La France en Marche* as a catalyst of recruitment or public opinion cannot be measured specifically, but its message clearly complemented and reinforced the impact of contextual factors—such as increasingly severe food and fuel rationing, the inauguration of the Obligatory Labor Service requiring young Frenchmen to work in Germany, and the invasion of the unoccupied zone—that were turning public opinion definitively against Vichy and its collaborationist policies.

“Jeunesse et montagne,” released in November 1942 just before the German invasion of the unoccupied zone, and “A bloc,” distributed in March 1943, focused on the Groupements de Jeunesse et Montagne, an alpine youth movement directed by Air Force officers. Since late 1941 several Jeunesse et Montagne sections had secretly been collecting and relaying intelligence on German troop and airplane deployments to the French maquis and to London via North Africa. When Vichy disbanded the Jeunesse et Montagne program in summer 1943 under German pressure, virtually all its leaders and members defected to the Organisation de Résistance de l’Armée (ORA).¹¹³

As an antagonistic, highly effective competitor to *France-Actualités*, *La France en Marche* soon became a target for repression. Immediately after entering the unoccupied zone, Gestapo agents attempted to arrest Berr and Brouillard, both of whom had gone into hiding. Brouillard contacted Verdet-Kléber and asked him to conceal evidence of the SCA and *La France en Marche*’s pro-Resistance activities, including camera equipment, unauthorized films used to train the Armistice Army in guerrilla warfare, footage of the French Navy’s victory over German forces at the battle of Narvik (Norway) in May 1940, and the negatives of the *Journal de Guerre*, an army-produced newsreel series distributed during the “phony war” from September 1939 to May 1940.

Verdet-Kléber carried out his mission on the night of November 15, 1942, leading a convoy of eight trucks to the Mas de Panis between Tarascon and Arles. A German patrol stopped them along the way, but Verdet-Kléber avoided being searched by presenting his SGI-issued credentials and claiming he was on the way to a shooting location.¹¹⁴ Shortly thereafter Verdet-Kléber helped Berr escape from Marseille and join the Resistance in Haute-Savoie using contacts made through a Vichy accountant named René Thuillier, who several months

L’Ecole des cadres d’Uriage, 1940–1942 (Paris, 1991); and John Hellman, *The Knight-Monks of Vichy France: Uriage, 1940–1945* (Montreal, 1993), esp. 194–222.

¹¹³ Dainville, *L’ORA*, 58–59; Letter from sous-secrétariat d’Etat à la présidence du conseil to Verdet-Kléber, Oct. 10, 1946. AN, F 42, 133.

¹¹⁴ Affidavit from Brouillard to the CRIE on behalf of Verdet-Kléber, June 25, 1946. AN, F 42, 133. See also Nord, *Mes camarades sont morts*, 1:46–50.

earlier had audited *La France en Marche's* financial records.¹¹⁵ Brouillard also remained in France, playing a prominent role in directing Eleuthère, an intelligence network that worked with Libération-Nord to supply Anglo-Gaullist forces in London with tactical information about the Germans.¹¹⁶

Verdet-Kléber managed to keep the series alive in the absence of Berr and Brouillard, but faced increasingly stringent material restrictions and political pressure from French and German authorities to bring the ideological tone of *La France en Marche* into line with that of *France-Actualités*. When in March 1943 Verdet-Kléber refused to make films promoting the Milice (Vichy's paramilitary police created to crush the Resistance) and the Légion des Volontaires Français contre le Bolchévisme (LVF, units of French volunteers sent to fight with the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front), the SGI responded by withholding reimbursement for outstanding production expenses and by drastically reducing his film stock ration, which was diverted to *France-Actualités* and other production companies amenable to collaboration.¹¹⁷

At the same time German military censors began to forbid distribution of *La France en Marche*, whose nationalistic content had long been suspect. The dissolution of the Armistice Army and widespread defection of its members to the maquis and Free French units in North Africa during late 1942 and early 1943 clarified the previously ambiguous ideology of *La France en Marche*, whose military episodes now functioned as overt propaganda in favor of the Resistance. By the end of May 1943 the Germans had banned all twelve films on the Armistice Army, including "Régiments modernes," "Vaisseau amiral," "Missions aériennes," "Bombardiers," and "Les chasseurs du ciel." In addition, four other nonmilitary episodes were carefully censored to remove references to the First World War, the 1940 campaign, and Vichy youth organizations integrated into the Resistance.¹¹⁸

However, the Germans did not object to the series' continued promotion of *maréchalisme*, which since late 1940 had proved useful for promoting tacit public acceptance of collaboration. In mid-1943 Pétain's cult of personality was more valuable and more desperately needed than ever to quell public outrage over the despised Obligatory Labor

¹¹⁵ CRIE, "Procès-verbal de la séance du 22 octobre 1946, affaire Verdet-Kléber." AP 901/64/1, 338.

¹¹⁶ Affidavit from Brouillard to the CRIE on behalf of Verdet-Kléber, June 25, 1946. AN, F 42, 133. For a more detailed account, see Nord, *Mes camarades sont morts*, 1:66–70.

¹¹⁷ "Note sur *La France en Marche*," memo from Verdet-Kléber to the SGI, Mar. 11, 1943. AN, F 41, 368.

¹¹⁸ Weekly reports of the Propaganda Abteilung's film section, Mar. 13, 1943; Mar. 20, 1943; Apr. 3, 1943; May 29, 1943. USNA, T 142, frames 1074, 1079, 1092, 1121. See Appendix 2 for a complete list of titles banned by German censors.

Service. Acting at the request of German authorities, in April 1943 the SGI requisitioned and modified all copies of “Images et paroles du Maréchal Pétain” for screening at the Premier Congrès du Film Documentaire in Paris. Pétain’s exploits during the First World War, numerous allusions to him as “le Vainqueur/le Sauveur de Verdun” (the Victor/the Savior of Verdun), and his review of Armistice Army troops in November 1940 were all cut, thereby purging the original montage’s *maréchalisme* of its subversive military and nationalistic connotations. The SGI subsequently pressured Verdet-Kléber to redistribute the edited version in southern France and the empire, but he refused and the film dropped definitively out of circulation.¹¹⁹

By mid-1943 Verdet-Kléber’s increasingly adversarial relationship with Vichy and diminishing material resources seriously jeopardized the survival of *La France en Marche*, which had ceased distribution to the colonies¹²⁰ and lost a large number of contracts with theaters in metropolitan France.¹²¹ Eleven new episodes (nos. 53–63) appeared between December 1942 and September 1943, all of which were produced without the customary input from ministries within the Vichy government. While pressing ahead on his own, Verdet-Kléber protested vociferously against his deteriorating working conditions and growing budgetary deficit,¹²² eventually negotiating a new contract with the SGI to produce eight films over the course of the following year.¹²³

Although topics for the films were tentatively chosen, the government made no effort to supply the material support necessary to carry out production. Verdet-Kléber finished only two of the eight films before the Liberation (“L’enquête du 58,” about a group of railroad workers who had rescued civilians hurt in an accident, and “Produits de remplacement,” about makeshift substitutes for everyday necessities no longer available). He began work on three others as well (“Madri,” on cattle farming, “Education physique,” on youth physical fitness programs, and “D’un dimanche à l’autre,” on daily life in a traditional village), but they were never completed.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ CRIE, “Procès-verbal de la séance du 22 octobre 1946, affaire Verdet-Kléber.” AP 901/64/1, 338.

¹²⁰ “Note sur *La France en Marche*,” memo from Verdet-Kléber to the SGI, Mar. 11, 1943. AN, F 41, 368.

¹²¹ In late May 1943 Verdet-Kléber compiled a list of 149 contracts worth 445,390 francs. “Liste des contrats restant à exécuter,” May 28, 1943. AN, F 41, 368.

¹²² Dossier of letters from Verdet-Kléber to the SGI and various other Vichy ministries. AN, F 41, 368.

¹²³ “Convention entre le ministre de l’Information et *La France en Marche*,” Sept. 2, 1943. AN, F 41, 368.

¹²⁴ “Note à monsieur l’inspecteur des Finances,” memo from René Thuillier, May 2, 1944. AN, F 41, 92.

La France en Marche on Trial, 1944–1946

As the war drew to a close, Gaullist officials grappled with the issue of whether to allow continued distribution of *La France en Marche*, whose ideological ambiguity made it difficult to classify as either pro-Resistance or pro-Vichy. In June 1944 the provisional French government in Algiers banned the series throughout French North Africa as collaborationist propaganda, yet the films continued to circulate in metropolitan France until early October. To complicate matters further, the final installment of the series, “Montmartre 44,” openly celebrated the Resistance by showing Forces Françaises de l’Intérieur (FFI) troops in action and the arrival of American Jeeps at the Sacré-Coeur amid a throng of joyous civilians.¹²⁵

After extensive screening sessions in February and March 1945, French military censors approved forty-five of the series’ sixty-six episodes unaltered, four of which (“Parfums,” “Histoire merveilleuse de vieux chiffons,” “Marches et batteries de l’empire,” and “Sillons d’Afrique”) were subsequently chosen as entertainment for French troops stationed in Berlin after the armistice. Seven other films were reauthorized for general distribution after excising allusions to Pétain, the Vichy government, and state-sponsored organizations.¹²⁶ Several military episodes fell into this category, including the hits “Vaisseau amiral,” and “Bombardiers.” Once purged, these titles were incorporated into a new body of films by the Service Cinématographique de l’Armée celebrating the valor of French armed forces and the imminent Allied victory.¹²⁷

Fourteen additional episodes too thoroughly infused with *maréchalisme* to be salvaged were banned entirely. Ironically, several were titles previously blacklisted or edited by the Germans because of their ostensibly subversive, pro-Resistance content: “Images et paroles du Maréchal Pétain,” “La cité du muscle,” “Régiments modernes,” and “Cadre noir.” This unlikely overlap underscores the profoundly heterodox, ideologically unstable nature of the *La France en Marche* and the myth of a *Vichy résistante* that it cultivated so effectively.

Suspicion continued to hang over the series during the postwar purge, prompting investigation of Verdet-Kléber and Pagnol by the cinema section of the Comité Régional Interprofessionnel d’Épuration (CRIE). The CRIE identified three categories of films as suspect: pro-

¹²⁵ Undated, anonymous report titled “Verdet-Kléber et son magazine *La France en Marche*.” AN, F 41, 368.

¹²⁶ See Appendix 3 for a complete list of titles banned by French censors.

¹²⁷ “Catalogue du Service cinématographique de l’armée (1944–1947).” AN, F 60, 1001.

Vichy works promoting Pétainism or the National Revolution; pro-German propaganda featuring battle footage from the Eastern Front, anti-Semitism, and the LVF; and anti-Allied films denouncing Anglo-American and Gaullist efforts to liberate France and the colonies. Whereas *France-Actualités Pathé-Gaumont* and *France-Actualités* fell under all three criteria, only the first applied to *La France en Marche*.¹²⁸

Verdet-Kléber appeared before the CRIE tribunal on October 22, 1946, officially charged with having “made Vichy propaganda films, notably ‘Images et paroles du Maréchal Pétain.’” After a short hearing he was cleared of all charges on the strength of testimony from Jacques Berr, André Brouillard, and René Thuillier establishing his links to the Resistance.¹²⁹ A year later Pagnol was also acquitted of any wrongdoing for his role in making and distributing the series, thanks in large part to the sale of his studios in May 1942 and his refusal to work with either Vichy or the Germans after the invasion of the unoccupied zone.¹³⁰ In 1945, with his indictment still pending, Pagnol returned to making fiction films and became president of the Society of Dramatic Authors and Composers—a position that ironically required him to judge cases of professional misconduct during the Occupation.¹³¹

As for Verdet-Kléber, in December 1946 he sold *La France en Marche*'s entire inventory to the Fourth Republic's Ministry of Information for the sum of two million francs and successfully lobbied the government to buy out the unexecuted contract he had signed with Vichy in 1943, thereby collecting another half a million francs.¹³² Verdet-Kléber retired in the wake of this windfall, and *La France en Marche* disappeared from public view into the archives.

Cinema, Myth, and the Psychology of *Attentisme*

In the broadest methodological sense, the history of filmed news during the Occupation underscores the need to move beyond the tradi-

¹²⁸ “Information contre les producteurs ayant produit des films de propagande ennemie,” undated seventeen-page report prepared by the CRIE to establish criteria for investigation and indictment. AN, F 42, 133. For further details on the purge of the cinema industry, see Bertin-Maghit, *Le cinéma sous l'Occupation*, 240–58.

¹²⁹ CRIE, “Procès-verbal de la séance du 22 octobre 1946, affaire Verdet-Kléber.” AP 901/64/1, 338.

¹³⁰ CRIE, “Procès-verbal de la séance du 27 novembre 1946, affaire Marcel Pagnol.” AP 901/64/1, 338.

¹³¹ See Pagnol's brief but revealing essay on the subject: “Collaboration: Questions délicates,” in *Marcel Pagnol: Inédits*, ed. Jacqueline Pagnol and Frédéric Pagnol (Monte Carlo, 1992), 98–100.

¹³² Receipt from the Ministry of Information to Verdet-Kléber itemizing the transactions, Dec. 14, 1946. AN, F 42, 125. See also the letter to Verdet-Kléber from monsieur Mourre, directeur de l'Administration générale du ministère de l'Information, to Verdet-Kléber, Jan. 1, 1947. AN, F 41, 368.

tional model casting the Resistance against Vichy and to build on existing studies devoted to the multiple, often contradictory combinations of thought and conduct that linked one side with the other, particularly from 1940 until mid-1942.¹³³ As *La France en Marche* demonstrates, faith in Pétain and the values of the National Revolution were integral to an important segment of early Resistance mentalities, which resonated strongly with cinema audiences throughout the southern zone and the colonies.

Perhaps most important, public response to *La France en Marche* and its three peer newsreel series has important implications for understanding the substance and evolution of French collective mentalities regarding Vichy. Whereas the collaborationist *Actualités Mondiales* and *France-Actualités* were consistently unpopular with spectators and the success of *France-Actualités Pathé-Gaumont* diminished noticeably as its ideological line hardened beginning in mid-1941, *La France en Marche* enjoyed continued success because it articulated the public's desire for armed resistance against the Germans within a framework of quintessential French cultural identity and nationalism. In so doing, however, the series simultaneously encouraged spectators to suspend disbelief in the realities of Franco-German state collaboration and to wait passively for liberation while they accepted Vichy's increasingly craven policies.

The issue of what to make of the silent majority of French citizens who engaged in neither active collaboration nor active resistance has long been a point of contention among historians of the Occupation. While Robert Paxton has argued that they should be considered "functional collaborators [who] provided the broad public climate of acceptance within which active participation in the Vichy regime was made legitimate," John Sweets contends that they served as "functional resisters [whose] apathy and public lethargy marked their sullen disapproval of a regime for which they had no respect."¹³⁴ More recent scholarship has reframed the debate by mapping the complex, intermediate gray zone of actions and attitudes between the two poles, but the fundamental question remains unresolved.¹³⁵

¹³³ See especially Hellman, *Knight-Monks of Vichy France*; Comte, *Utopie combattante*; Douzou and Peschanski, "La Résistance française face à l'hypothèque Vichy"; Olivier Wiewiorka, *Une certaine idée de la Résistance: Défense de la France, 1940-1949* (Paris, 1995); Laurent Douzou, *La désobéissance, histoire d'un mouvement et d'un journal clandestins: "Libération-Sud," 1940-1943* (Paris, 1995); Veillon, "The Resistance and Vichy."

¹³⁴ Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (New York, 1972), 235; John Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: The French under Nazi Occupation* (New York, 1986), 169.

¹³⁵ See especially Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*; Jacqueline Sainclivier and Christian Bougeard, eds., *La Résistance et les Français: Enjeux stratégiques et environnement social* (Rennes, 1995); Laurent Douzou et al., eds., *La Résistance et les Français: Villes, centres et logiques de décision* (Cachan, 1995); François Marcot, ed., *La Résistance et les Français: Lutte armée et maquis* (Besançon, 1996).

The image of a *Vichy résistante* contained in *La France en Marche* suggests that the *attentisme* prevalent during the first two years of the Occupation should not be interpreted primarily as evidence of calculated, self-serving complacency but as the result of a seductive, collective myth amplified and disseminated by cinema. As such, France's silent wartime majority cannot be judged categorically as either functionally collaborating or functionally resisting. The public played both roles simultaneously, its desire for an Allied victory paradoxically feeding its misplaced faith in the virtue of its government. If those French who neither actively collaborated nor resisted can be considered guilty of anything, it was of willingly suspending disbelief in the virtual reality of the movie theater and letting themselves be convinced that tacit acceptance of Vichy, rather than proactive dissent, would somehow miraculously lead to liberation.

Appendix 1 Catalog of *La France en Marche* (in chronological order)

1. "Dakar" (CNC, ECPAD)
2. "Le Ramadan en Tunisie" (CNC)
3. "Images et paroles du Maréchal Pétain" (CNC)
4. "Le moulin enchanté" (CNC, ECPAD)
5. "Du cinématographe au cinéma, 1895–1941"
6. "La cité du muscle" (ECPAD)
7. "Camp 1088" (CNC)
8. "Mains françaises"
9. "Cale sèche" (ECPAD)
10. "Pour demain" (CNC)
11. "Voyage de l'Amiral Darlan à Toulon," "Le Transsaharien,"
"Crinières au vent" (CNC)
12. "Phares de France" (CNC)
13. "Jeunes Françaises aujourd'hui"
14. "Régiments modernes" (CNC, ECPAD)
15. "Vaisseau amiral" (CNC, ECPAD)
16. "Les postillons du Limousin" (CNC)
17. "Route nationale 7," "Chiens policiers"
18. "L'aéroport de Marignane," "Nouste Henric" (CNC)
19. "Cadre noir" (CNC, ECPAD)
20. "Le miracle de l'eau"
21. "Jeunesse de la mer" (ECPAD)
22. "Moissons 1941"
23. "Missions aériennes" (CNC, ECPAD)
24. "Parfums" (CNC)
25. "Du sous-marin au submersible" (CNC, ECPAD)
26. "Rhapsodie arlésienne" (CNC)
27. "Bombardiers" (CNC, ECPAD)
28. "Burnous et chéchias" (CNC, ECPAD)

Appendix 1 Continued

29. "Les sources de la ville"
30. "Aux portes du désert" (CNC, ECPAD)
31. "Le glacier asservi"
32. "Chasseurs du ciel" (CNC, ECPAD)
33. "Naissance d'un port" (CNC)
34. "Les hommes de la neige" (ECPAD)
35. "Terres fidèles" (CNC)
36. "Le navire blanc" (ECPAD)
37. "Histoire merveilleuse de vieux chiffons"
38. "Marégraphe, lapins, bicyclette" (CNC, ECPAD)
39. "Trotteurs" (CNC)
40. "Le jardin des étoiles"
41. "La forêt au service de la mer"
42. "Taureaux de combat" (CNC)
43. "Dick, l'ami des soldats" (CNC, ECPAD)
44. "Premier envol" (ECPAD)
45. "Le sport à l'école"
46. "La vallée du Laga," "L'élevage des huîtres,"
"L'école militaire de Tulle" (CNC)
47. "Groupement 13" (CNC)
48. "Paré à plonger" (CNC)
49. "Le passé vivant" (CNC)
50. "Marches et batteries de l'empire" (CNC, ECPAD)
51. "Jeunesse et montagne" (CNC)
52. "Les chasseurs du sommeil" (CNC)
53. "Depuis Babel"
54. "Avant-garde blanche" (CNC)
55. "En cordée" (CNC, ECPAD)
56. "Autour d'un clocher" (CNC)
57. "Basse côte"
58. "Fils de terres lointaines" (CNC, ECPAD)
59. "La magie du fil" (CNC)
60. "Cité fantôme" (CNC)
61. "A bloc"
62. "Paysan noir" (CNC)
63. "Sillons d'Afrique"
64. "L'enquête du 58"
65. "Produits de remplacement"
66. "Montmartre 44" (CNC)

CNC = Films held by the Centre National de la Cinématographie, Bois d'Arcy

ECPAD = Films held by the Etablissement de Communication et de Production de la Défense

Appendix 2 German censorship of *La France en Marche*

2. "Le Ramadan en Tunisie"* (3/13/43)
3. "Images et paroles du Maréchal Pétain"* (4/3/43)
6. "La cité du muscle"* (5/29/43)
9. "Cale sèche"*** (3/13/43)
14. "Régiments modernes"*** (3/13/43)
15. "Vaisseau amiral"*** (3/20/43)
19. "Cadre noir"*** (5/29/43)
23. "Missions aériennes"*** (3/13/43)
25. "Du sous-marin au submersible"*** (3/13/43)
27. "Bombardiers"*** (3/13/43)
30. "Aux portes du désert"*** (3/13/43)
32. "Chasseurs du ciel"*** (5/29/43)
34. "Les hommes de la neige"* (5/29/43)
43. "Dick, l'ami des soldats"*** (5/29/43)
48. "Paré à plonger"*** (3/13/43)
50. "Marches et batteries de l'empire"*** (5/29/43)

* = Films approved by German military censors with cuts (date of approval in parentheses)

*** = Films banned by German military censors (date of interdiction in parentheses)

Appendix 3 French censorship of *La France en Marche*

1. "Dakar"*** (2/5/45)
2. "Le Ramadan en Tunisie"* (7/5/45)
3. "Images et paroles du Maréchal Pétain"*** (2/5/45)
6. "La cité du muscle"*** (3/15/45)
7. "Camp 1088"*** (3/15/45)
9. "Cale sèche"* (2/5/45)
10. "Pour demain"*** (3/15/45)
13. "Jeunes Françaises aujourd'hui"* (2/22/45)
14. "Régiments modernes"*** (2/5/45)
15. "Vaisseau amiral"* (2/5/45)
16. "Les postillons du Limousin"*** (3/15/45)
18. "L'aéroport de Marignane," "Nouste Henric"*** (3/15/45)
19. "Cadre noir"*** (3/15/45)
21. "Jeunesse de la mer"*** (3/15/45)
22. "Moissons 1941"*** (3/29/45)
27. "Bombardiers"* (3/21/45)
35. "Terres fidèles"*** (3/29/45)
51. "Jeunesse et montagne"*** (2/14/45)
55. "En cordée"* (2/14/45)
58. "Fils de terres lointaines"* (3/29/45)
61. "A bloc"*** (3/15/45)

* = Films approved by French military censors with cuts (date of approval in parentheses)

*** = Films banned by French military officials (date of interdiction in parentheses)