France was the only vanquished country to sign an armistice with Germany. It was also the only one to preserve an “independent” government on its territory during the Nazi occupation. This new situation, the new and unexpected players on the national stage, placed the French administration—especially its police—in an ambiguous position. The new regime and the men who directed it were keen to exert full power and anxious to affirm the sovereignty of the French state. They were also possessed of an ideology—la Révolution nationale—that partly overlapped with that of the occupying forces, particularly with reference to anticommunism and anti-Semitism.

A dependable, numerous, modern, effective police force constituted an essential tool for building the new order and enforcing the repressive policy of exclusion that it implied. The police that the Vichy government inherited could hardly have satisfied it or inspired confidence. How could this government employ an institution that its members had denounced before the war as “a sinister Cheka in the service of freemasons”? How could it possibly put up with a police force faithful to the Republic, or with police officers who had previously pursued its supporters with determination and effectiveness when they were trying to overthrow a republic they call la gueuse (a girl who is easy to get)?

The Vichy State and the Police Force: Specific Needs

Democratic or authoritarian, for internal affairs the majority of regimes have recourse to the double arm of police and secret funds. Constans and Clemenceau did not shirk from using the police on a large scale—the necessity of a well-armed and well-equipped police force has never been contested by anyone. In reality, and
in contrast to what the former chief of the civil cabinet of Marshal Pétain wrote, Vichy needed the police more than any other political regime.

The police institution constitutes a traditional and invaluable tool in the paraphernalia of power. In 1940 it was seen as essential for the new state to assert its authority. This was especially the case for the men of the right, since the Dreyfus affair, in their radical opposition to the Republic had lived with an obsessive fear of police crime and secret capacities. It was “the active and murderous element of masonry” that they accused of having killed Syveton, Almeteyda, Philippe Daudet, Stavisky, and Prince. The police were the Praetorian guards who had saved the Republic on February 6, 1934, in the Place de la Concorde. It was the police that had exposed and ruined the plot of the OSAR (the secret organization of revolutionary action) known as the Cagoule. It was officers of the Sûreté nationale who had arrested or harassed a number of characters who now, if they did not occupy high ranking functions of Vichy bureaucracy, haunted the corridors and anterooms hoping for positions.

As the carrier of an ideological project founded on order and exclusion, the authoritarian and repressive Vichy state had to give the police an importance comparable with that of other strong states. Not only was the police essential for the maintenance of order, for limiting freedom, and enforcing the policy of exclusion, it was also seen by the new rulers as the privileged instrument of national restoration. Furthermore, the police was an executive arm of the government’s sovereignty, and thus in no small measure, of its reality. As the government of a country of which three-fifths was under occupation, and that was deprived of a credible and autonomous army and diplomatic staff, Vichy was always in search of legitimacy and recognition. It was avid for independence and autonomy, and above all for opportunities to assert its sovereignty. The Vichy state constantly sought to exert all of its prerogatives in the areas of policing and justice. It remained permanently anxious to assert its full sovereignty over the whole of France and to avoid the humiliation of seeing the occupier give orders, or worse, replace French administration. Vichy always claimed responsibility for exerting repression, thus running the risk of serving the interests of the occupier. At the same time, the government sought to show that France deserved a central place in the new Europe, which it believed would remain dominated by Germany.

The important role that the new government intended for the police has to be set against the total and absolute mistrust that the men who had come to power following the defeat felt for an institution that they considered to be not only rotten and corrupt but also badly organized and essentially in the hands of the municipalities. Worse still, they felt that they could not trust a Republican police force that appeared penetrated by freemasonry, radicalism, even socialism, a prey to the trade union “evil,” and in the hands of creatures of the Popular
Front. A note written in the spring of 1941 provides just one example of the opinion that the new men in power had of the police:

Given the importance of police to the state, the action of this organization has been a considerable evil.

Regarding the police in the streets:
For several years, and up until the arrival of the present government, the municipal police of Paris was in the hands of the Trade Union of the Gardiens de la Paix. This was the true master of the destiny of the Prefecture of Police. The union was consulted over the nominations of senior officers, over the recruitment of personnel, even over police activity. As a consequence the most important posts were put into the hands of left-wing militants who rapidly brought about the ruin of hierarchy and discipline.

Regarding politics:
The Special Branch was in the hands of the Jew Simon, a creature of Blum who never ceased to serve his master even during the ministries of Daladier and Reynaud. From the perspective of internal politics this service is of capital importance since the information that it collects frequently dictates government decisions. Under Simon it has become the model of a corrupt service.

Even greater than the mistrust directed toward the Paris police, was the mistrust—nourished by both fear and resentment—that was directed toward those who belonged to la Sûreté nationale and who were labeled by Action Française as the “bloody men” of a “criminal conspiracy.” The rest of the police bequeathed by the Third Republic worried them less, though they were not reassured by their apparent weakness. The law of 1884 had confirmed that policing powers in France were, with a few exceptions, municipal. The men of Vichy, whatever their origins and their careers, had only scorn for these “electoral police forces,” without bonds uniting them, in the hands of the mayors, and generally too few in number. They doubted that an instrument that was outside the control of the state and whose fragmented organization seemed prejudicial to effectiveness could ever discharge essential, innovating missions on behalf of the state. In addition they characterized police personnel as incompetent, often senile, and lacking in activity and temperance. They had no intention of preserving such a tool and such personnel. Confronted with constraining technical and political requirements, confronted with their logics, their priorities, their desires, and the requirements and interests of the Germans, the men in power devised a series of policies that were as significant for their paradoxes and contradictions, as for their extreme consequences.
The Need and the Urgency, July 1940–Spring 1941

Whatever their anxieties, the new men in power were conscious that, at least initially, they needed the professional competence of the existing police officers. Consequently, they had to compromise and put up with these men “who were opponents in the past” and “committed mistakes” but with whom they were prepared “to let bygones be bygones: today we have need of men of your character.” But this compromise could be only temporary. While the Vichy state waited for the installation of a police force in conformity with its ideas, its policy toward the existing police can be summed up in four words: threats, promises, competition, reform: “Policemen of the Third Republic, you have much need of forgiveness. Don’t forget that new times are coming, and a new order is about to be born. You owe it duty and obedience. I will be pitiless to those among you who are wrongheaded. Be aware that I am watching you!”

The threat could not have been more serious or made more clear. Beginning with the first days of its existence, the Law of July 17 gave the regime the ability to remove, without formality, any civil servant who did not give satisfaction. The first set of removals began in September. Their relative moderation is explained by the new state’s need of professionals. In spite of this moderation, and the subsequent rehabilitations that were forced by need, during the following winter juilletisation constituted a real threat. The threat, however, was accompanied by promises of reforms that were sufficient to mollify part of the police world. The promised reforms were nationalization, which police officers had been demanding since the beginning of the century and which would relieve them of the burden of municipal supervision, modernization, and substantial improvements in means, wages, and career prospects. Promises and threats alternated with the ceaseless reference to the legitimacy of the government, the explicit calls for obedience, and appeals to the professional culture of the police world, the duty, the discipline, and the necessary respect for a law that sometimes dated from the preceding government. Many of their appeals contributed, with the continuity of missions against the same old adversaries such as the Communists, to providing an illusion of continuity that misled a great many police officers, some of them until the end of the occupation.

Meanwhile, concerned that it could trust neither police officers nor the overall apparatus that it had to preserve for want of anything better, the new government outlined the premises of two longer-term policies. Peyrouton, the minister of the interior, outlined these in a letter to Marshal Pétain on December 17, 1940: “I have organized a national police because I have noted the deficiencies in the electoral police throughout France; more than a month ago I sent a proposal for the nationalization of the police to the occupying authorities.” Moreover, since the existing police inspired only relative trust, why not double it with a "paral-
police recruited from men who would mitigate their lack of professionalism by an unstinting fidelity to the new regime? As early as September 1940, a semi-official, partisan organization was created. The Centre d’information et d’enquête (CIE) of Colonel Groussard was backed with secret funds and included an information collecting service, the Service de renseignement (SR), and an executive arm, the Groupes de protection (GP), entrusted to two notorious cagoulards, Dr. Martin and Méténier. This organization constituted a semiofficial political police in the service of the government. It was charged with collecting information on the population, informing, and surveillance, none of which, it was felt, could be entrusted to the official police force. Collusion with the government was total, and this only served to spread disorder and confusion among professional police officers. Colonel Groussard was appointed Inspecteur général of the Sûreté nationale, while a circular of October 16 from the Ministry of the Interior to the prefects outlined the missions of this first parapolice of Vichy: “to inform on activities of any nature that by secretive or open means were likely to impede the activities of government” and “to participate in the maintenance of order and the repression of any trouble that might arise.”

The CIE, described by an officer of Sûreté nationale as a “band of adventurers,” and a “group of spies and cagoulards,” foreshadowed the polices d’occasion that became typical of the Vichy government. Entirely in the hands of cagoulards (Groussard, Méténier, Martin, Degans, Darnand) and members of the PPF (Detmar), the CIE included sections specialized in the conflict against “the Anti-France”: communists, freemasons, and Jews. These sections were directed by specialists who were always to be found in such conflicts (Detmar, Lécussan, Labat). However, both the CIE and the GP were short-lived. Both were dissolved at the request of the Germans, the former in February 1941, and the latter even earlier, in the preceding December.

Vichy’s main intention with regard to the police remained the construction of a modern, numerous police institution, adapted to the government’s new missions and comprised of “young men . . . healthy, upright, and without political ties.” Circulars from the Ministry of the Interior urged the prefects to direct such young men toward this corps d’élite, in order to “bring an active contribution to national regeneration.” The cornerstone of this ambitious reform, entrusted to Peyrouton, was the nationalization of the municipal police that he disparagingly called polices électorales. According to its designers, this nationalization (or rather “prefectoralization,” a more appropriate term) had four advantages: It would provide a more rational organization by means of unification and centralization, and this would be accompanied by a modernization of means and a substantial increase in the numbers of policemen that would lead to greater effectiveness; the state would now have direct control of the police; police officers themselves would be satisfied, and thus more likely to be loyal and honest; and finally, the organization of the new Polices régionales d’état and a massive increase in police
numbers would enable the elimination or dispersal of Republican and otherwise
doubtful or disobedient officers.

The Construction of an Adapted Instrument and the Time of
the “Auxiliary Police Forces,” Spring 1941–Spring 1942

The Vichy plan for the reorganization of the police was actually inspired by a
project drawn up by the trade union of police *commissaires* during the 1930s. It
was drafted by Marquet, the first, transitory minister of the interior of Vichy,
and Chavin, the director of the *Sûreté nationale*, completed by Peyrouton, and
ready by autumn 1940. But its implementation was delayed since the German
occupiers were reluctant to accept it, and the arrest of Laval on December 13
resulted in a change of government personnel, in particular, the departure of Peyrouton.
In addition, the rivalry between the prefectoral body and high ranking police
officials over the direction of the new police held the project up until well into
1941.16

The Third Republic had been unable to nationalize the municipal police forces
primarily for ideological and financial reasons. Nationalization constituted the
most spectacular step in Vichy’s reform. The law of April 23, 1941, that reor-
ganized the police had been recommended and expected by many police offi-
cers. It affected all towns with ten thousand or more inhabitants, removing their
police from control by the mayor. The regional prefects, established by the law
of April 19 and the decree of May 13, 1941, together with the *Intendants* of police
who were to assist them, were charged with setting up the police in the twenty
new regional districts. Other legislation provided for the creation of the *École
nationale supérieure de police* for the training of *commissaires*, of regional schools
for members of the new regionally based state police, and of a new civil force
for the maintenance of law and order set up by a decree of July 7—*les Groupes
Mobiles de Réserve* (GMR). The decree of June 1, 1941, established the
*Direction générale de la police nationale*. This replaced the *Direction de la Sûreté
nationale* but was a body of much greater significance since it directed the new
regional structure. Under the authority of the secretary general for police, three
departments shared the three main categories of policing duties: *la Police judi-
ciaire* (Criminal Investigation Department), which became *la Police de sûreté* in
October 1942; the *Renseignements généraux* (special branch); and the *Sécurité publique*,
which was responsible for police stations, the members of the nationalized munici-
pal police forces, and until they received their own management in 1943, the
*Groupes Mobiles de Réserve*.

This reorganization, in particular the nationalization of the municipal police
forces, required a massive increase in both policemen and finance. It was also
accompanied by material advantages for policemen in the shape of improved wages, allowances and various bonuses, the renovation of police buildings, and so forth, all aimed at attracting recruits of quality and at restoring the prestige of a police organization that the Vichy state intended to turn into a vanguard for the cleansing and renovating tasks that were its main goals for France. But while waiting for these reforms to bear fruit and give rise to the new corps d’élite that Vichy wished, and in order not to leave the monopoly of repression to the Germans, the idea was adopted of doubling the police force by means of deploying special agencies.

The Vichy government was particularly sensitive about the discreet installation of specialized services by the occupying Germans. These services were often composed of French police officers who, on request, had been placed at the Germans’ disposal by the French administration. A determination to demonstrate its sovereignty compelled the government to react. The example of the antimasonic police offers a good example of the mechanisms and competitions at work.

On April 1, 1941, following the request of Lieutenant Stüber, the Service spécial des associations dissoutes was created by the Prefecture of Police. Occupying the buildings of the old Theosophic Society, in Rapp Square, it functioned first with twenty, then forty police officers detached by the prefecture. They were placed, as specified in a German report dated February 25, 1942, addressed to Von Stulpnagel, under German responsibility and control. This was an unacceptable situation for the French authorities who had created their own antimasonic police in Vichy in May 1941. Installed at 11, rue Hubert Colombier, this organization was directly financed by the civil cabinet of Pétain and initially directed by a contrôleur général of Sûreté nationale. In August, “on account of the general absence of results,” it was entrusted to Lieutenant Commander Robert Labat, a former member of the CIE. The Service des sociétés secrètes (SSS), as this organization was known, was responsible for enforcing antimasonic legislation. It was mentioned by Pétain in his short broadcast speech of August 12, 1941: “I have created a special police whose task is to break the resistance that abuse of legal regulations, bureaucracy, or the activities of secret societies can mount to our national regeneration.” An attempt to extend the SSS to the whole of France revealed the high stakes and the competition that embroiled the Vichy government, the extremists of collaboration, French police officers, and the German forces of occupation in the field of policing. At the end of November 1941, German agreement was obtained to subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior those French police officers working under German control. Vichy tried to exploit this with the decree of December 15 creating a branch of the SSS in the Occupied Zone. The direction of this branch, to reassure the Germans, was entrusted to a notorious collaborator, Jean Marquès-Rivière. But the Germans were not to be deceived by the maneuver. They very clearly, and on several occasions, refused to recognize the existence of the SSS in the Occupied Zone. They considered it superfluous because of the
existence of the organization in Rapp Square.21

There was a similar competition with reference to the treatment of the Jews. After the adoption of the second Statut des juifs on June 2, 1941, the S.S. Chief Dannecker had secured the creation of a service made up of a dozen police officers detached from the Paris prefecture, directed by Commissaire Schweblin, a fanatical anti-Semite from Alsace. This French police agency worked in close collaboration with Service IV J installed at Avenue Foch and was completely independent of the Commissariat général aux questions juives (CGQJ) created by Vichy in March 1941. Xavier Vallat, the head of the CGQJ, tried constantly to get his own anti-Jewish police made responsible for researching infringements of the June statute. His efforts finally achieved success with a decree, which was not published in The Official Journal, of October 19, 1941; but because the article was not published and thus the Germans didn’t know about the existence of the law, it only served to generate permanent friction with German agencies and the official French police.

Pucheu, who was appointed minister of the interior in the autumn of 1941, was obsessed with not yielding any prerogative regarding the repression of the “common enemies”—Jews, communists, and freemasons. He was very close to the PPF and the Comité des forges, and he completely mistrusted former police personnel.22 The doctrine that he solemnly recalled in Paris at the beginning of 1942—at the height of the conflict with the Germans over the question of the extension into the northern zone of the antimasonic police of Labat—was clear: “the maintenance of public order, indispensable to national life, must be assured by French hands, French arms, and French heads.”23 But the ability to dispute systematically with the occupiers over the exercise of repression foundered on both the absence of autonomous French instruments adapted to this policy and the Germans’ skepticism.24

It was to make up for the incapacity of the official police25 to fulfill the special missions demanded by government26 that Vichy proceeded to the installation of a triptych of polices auxiliaires specialized in the fight against the Anti-France: the Service de police anticommuniste (SPAC), the Service de police des sociétés secrètes (SSS), and the Police aux questions juives (PQJ). Established in parallel with the new National Police, structured around a few dozen officers from the Sûreté nationale or the Prefecture of Police and primarily recruited from among the senior officers of the CIE, these auxiliary police differed from the official police by their determination in hunting for the “perpetual enemies.”27 But the creation of these special police was disliked and opposed by official police officers. As Colonel Groussard, the creator of the CIE, noted: “The traditional police don’t look kindly on the structure of the new organization and have even insisted that the GP should be put at the disposition of the police authorities.”28 The paramount preoccupation of an institution jealous of its prerogatives was to seek to eliminate competitors. As soon as the PQJ was created in October
1941, problems arose over its relationship with official police services. To meet with the concerns of the administration but also to seek to establish some control over this auxiliary service, Rivalland, the secrétaire général à la police, dispatched multiple circulars to the regional prefects and the intendants of police. In these circulars he took care to specify that the role of the agents of this auxiliary police, recruited directly by and responsible to the CGQJ, was limited to the investigation of infringements of the statute of June 2 and communicating such to the official police services. Similar circulars were issued with reference to the SSS and the SPAC. But attempts to bring the auxiliary police under the control of the Ministry of the Interior and the general secretariat of the police were successful only with the restoration of Laval to power.

The Policy of Administrative and National Reconquista and Its Consequences, May 1942–December 1943

In spring 1942 the situation changed dramatically with the return of Laval to power. His culture and his past as a statesman had left him prepared to use systems that he knew and appreciated. Furthermore, his temperament drove him to be wary of the partisan initiatives of his predecessors. He replaced “fanatical” admirals and amateurs and appointed in their places reliable civil servants. Bussière, the former director of the Sûreté nationale under Marx Dormoy, took over the Prefecture of Police, and René Bousquet who, in spite of his youth, had important administrative experience, took over as the General Secretariat of Police. Bousquet was as prepared as Pucheu to argue with the Germans about the exercise of repression, but equipped as he was with a different culture and with experience of the Sûreté nationale, he sought a double reconquest in the field of repression: a national reconquest, at the expense of the Germans, especially in the Occupied Zone where it was important to affirm the sovereignty of Vichy, and an administrative reconquest, reconsolidating the diffusion of power established with the parallel police structure set up in 1941. This policy, which was in keeping with his personal ambitions, was facilitated first by the fact that the reforms of April 1941 were finally beginning to bear fruit, and second by a change in tactics on the part of the Germans. The substitution of the Wehrmacht by the Sipo-Sd in the spring of 1942 for the exercise of policing powers in occupied France resulted in a change of policy. As SS General Oberg said at his trial: “it was in our interest that the French police should be united in one hand.” Under the joint pressure of the needs of the war in Russia and the “final solution,” Heydrich and his subordinates, Oberg and Knochen, decided to play the card of collaboration between police. This suited perfectly with French interests, while the Germans considered that they gained more than they lost.
From the German point of view, entrusting more autonomy and responsibility to the French police was not much of a risk, and it offered considerable advantages, such as the possibility of concealing themselves behind police teams more respectable than agencies like a French Gestapo. This collaboration had two significant outcomes: It compromised French police officers by requiring a more positive engagement from them, and it meant a considerable saving in German manpower with a corresponding increased effectiveness. On May 15, 1942, shortly after his conversations with Heydrich, Bousquet explained to the regional prefects of the Occupied Zone “that it is necessary to show that the French police is not failing and perhaps, in the future, the police will acquire more power.” There were serious consequences; under the pretext of French sovereignty, the French police were now required to serve German interests. In order to win the trust of the occupier and to reduce the profile of the auxiliary police, it was necessary to give pledges concerning the effectiveness and goodwill of French police officers and official departments. It meant that the official French police acquired the responsibility for the repressive tasks hitherto undertaken by the auxiliary police and the Germans. As Bousquet wrote Oberg on June 18, 1942: “You know the French police force well. It undoubtedly has its defects, but also its qualities. I am persuaded that once reorganized on new bases, and vigorously directed, it will prove extremely useful. Already in many cases, you have noted the effectiveness of its action. I am certain that it can do still better.”

The national and administrative reconquest desired by Bousquet and Laval was carried out at the cost of the proliferation in the number of specialized police services like that of the Jewish Affairs created at the direction of the Police judiciaire within the Prefecture of Police, or the Sections des affaires politiques of the Sûreté nationale created in the autumn of 1942. These were services in which material advantages and fast promotions fostered “effectiveness.” Suffering from a clear case of “Bridge on the River Kwai syndrome,” the secretary general of the police explained to the departmental prefects the necessity for the French police to achieve results.

It will not have escaped you that even if the note from General Oberg has given the French police the means of action that it did not have before (as much on the moral as the material plane), it is important that the police demonstrate their real worth, by even greater activity and the results they will achieve. It is up to you to give the vigorous impetus that, like me, you feel is essential in the present circumstances.

As Robert Paxton has noted, this policy of unceasing administrative presence fostered an anti-Jewish activism. The test of commitment was the arrest by French police officers and gendarmes, acting on their own, of several thousand foreign-born or stateless Jews in the occupied and nonoccupied zones during July and
August 1942. General Oberg’s good report of this operation was accompanied by gestures of goodwill such as the extension, in October 1942, of the reform of 1941 into the Occupied Zone. The Germans, for their part, found clear advantages: “If in France we could have fewer police [than in Belgium and Holland], it is because there was an established government and an official police force instead of an auxiliary police force as in the other countries.”

However, if this collaboration produced tangible results, it also fostered resistance, inertia, passivity, and sabotage by those French police officers less and less enthusiastic about the nature of their new missions and well aware of the military evolution of the war. Some continued to pursue those whom Buffet, their former colleague appointed director of Police de Sûreté, referred to in June 1944 as “criminals [who] attached a political or patriotic label to themselves, to mask their misdeeds.” But the police success looked increasingly poor measured against the zeal and the activism of the Milice with its ideological soundness. The upshot was that Bousquet was replaced by Darnand, not so much because the former had been a disappointment but because the latter was considered to be able to do still better.

Final Toughening, January–Summer 1944

The extremists of collaboration were largely in agreement with the report on the attitude of the police drawn up on All Saints’ Day 1943 by Admiral Charles Platon, chief of the SSS:

The forces of order are unreliable, impotent, mired in an incapacity to act by regulations made for happier times when it was enough to show force in order not to have to use it... the consequence is that the only notable security operations in France that have been effective up to now were carried out either by French irregular forces unknown to, or not recognized by, the French government, or by the German authorities.

The conclusion was clear: It was necessary to replace the French police, who “too often did nothing with information other than use it to let culprits flee,” with a reliable force that was devoted to the marshal and the national revolution and that would not be troubled by legal niceties.

The Milice française was created in January 1943. On April 29 Pétain affirmed that the Milice “must constitute the essential force for conducting the fight against hidden powers [and] be invested with the missions of a vanguard, in particular, those relating to the achievement of law and order... [and] to the fight against Communism.” The Milice seemed able to achieve the repressive tasks
that the police appeared more and more openly reluctant to undertake. It was
directed by the former cagoulard Joseph Darnand, now, perhaps, the most faith-
ful and committed of all to the Vichy regime. It competed more and more openly
with the police; friction and clashes between the two institutions became
numerous.39 At the end of 1943, Darnand was given responsibility for the main-
tenance of law and order, and thus it was that the Milice inherited the direction
of all the forces of repression. Vichy’s choice well suited the Nazis.

As early as May 1943, in spite of the strong impression that the secretary
general of police had made on Himmler,40 Oberg planned to replace Bousquet
and to entrust repression to “a movement showing major affinities with the SS
and able to give a new impulse to the French police.” Bousquet continued to
demonstrate honesty41 and loyalty to the regime,42 but, nevertheless, during the
summer he declared that “any militiaman who devotes himself to a police oper-
ation or an operation of provocation must be immediately stopped.” In
December Darnand replaced Bousquet and took over as head of what became the Secrétariat général au maintien de l’ordre. The decree of January 10, 1944,
specified that “by delegation of the chief of the government, the Minister of
the Interior, Joseph Darnand, Secrétaire général au maintien de l’ordre, has author-
ity over the whole of the police, personnel, and services, responsible for the pub-
lc safety and the interior safety of the state.” This nomination was to be the
final misfortune for the policing policies of a French state that was now no more
than a facade behind which the most extremist currents of collaboration clashed.

The legal barriers that Pétain and Platon had denounced in August 1942 and
November 1943 respectively and that constituted obstacles to repression were
now removed. Changes of methods and changes of men characterized the last
months of the occupation. The Milice condemned the weakness and the formal
legalism of the police as barriers to repressive action. It denounced the passiv-
ity, the two-timing, the wait-and-see policies, the sabotage, even treason of police
officers. Now it took repression in hand; there would be no more two-timing,
no more caution, complicity, or “legality.” Henceforth, all means available were
to be permitted in the struggle against bad Frenchmen, terrorists, and traitors.
New teams and new men, most of them coming from the Milice, but also from
formations like the PPF, and with a sprinkling of a few police officers zealous,
compromised, or blinded, took over the direction of new departments such as the Délégations régionales des Renseignements Généraux (the famous Poinso
brigades). This body was created in the spring of 1944 and, like the two Brigades Spéciales of the Direction des Renseignements Généraux of the Prefecture of Police,
it launched repressive missions based on the information accumulated in the RG
files.

The determination of the Secrétaire général au maintien de l’ordre to limit the
capacities of traditional administration—the creation of an Inspection générale au maintien de l’ordre, the reorganization of the central administration of the RG under Milice direction, the transformation of the Intendants de police into Intendants du maintien de l’ordre, the appointment of men from the Milice as intendants—demonstrated that the whole machinery of policing was directed to waging a pitiless war hand in hand with the German occupiers. Many police officers, rightly or wrongly suspected of double-dealing or resistance, were arrested, tortured, or sent to concentration camps. “Adapted” legislation, in particular a decree of April 1, 1944, authorized the creation of special courts to try treacherous police officers, while the dismissals of the unreliable elements or the partisans of a wait-and-see policy increased. At the same time, a special decision of the Secrétariat général au maintien de l’ordre meant that ordinary police officers who had demonstrated zeal and activity against terrorists and criminal, antinational elements were rewarded with exceptional promotion, while militiamen and the more effective elements of the parallel and auxiliary police organizations (the SEC, which succeeded the PQJ, and the SRMAN, which succeeded the SPAC) were integrated with the National Police. The takeover of the police and the occupation of strategic positions by fanatics and extremists of the collaboration and the proliferation of special departments (special brigades of the Milice, the Poinsot brigades) resulted in missions and practices drifting apart. In an atmosphere of civil war, nothing impeded these new police officers, and in certain regions, the Milice dream of a police state turned into a nightmare for others.

The Milice state that Vichy became at the last, and the crimes committed by auxiliary police in the service of the Gestapo, made it possible for members of the official police to assert after the war that the official police institution had never compromised with the requirements and the missions of the new political order. It also provided the opportunity for people in charge, such as Bousquet, to present themselves as successful impediments to an extremist drift until the changes of 1944. These arguments did not carry the same weight for all those who were asked for explanations.43

Nevertheless, whatever the interpretation given to the attitude of the police during the occupation, the period of Vichy did constitute a break in the history of the French police. The durable legislation of the spring of 1941 brought significant changes in organization, professional culture, and manpower, with a profound renewal that resulted from massive recruitment rather than purges. The drifting apart of missions and practices, the shipwreck of Republican principles, the recognition of the price of the zeal and the risks produced by professional values of policemen were all to have lasting effects as the Fourth Republic was to discover to its cost. Moreover, in terms of image, the police forces of Pétain contributed in no small measure to the unflattering perception that the French public still has of the French police.
Notes

1. On these problems, see Berlière, *Le monde des Polices*, 163 et seq.
4. “Ces gens-là sont sérieux,” Charles Maurras allegedly said, shortly after Syveton’s death. Action Française always regarded this as a police and Masonic crime. For this obsession, see the work of Léon Daudet, in particular *La police politique*, and compare with the book of one of those responsible for this “caverne de voleurs et d’assassins”—Louis Ducloux, *Du chantage à la trahison*.
5. Among these men were Raphaël Alibert, minister of justice; Gabriel Jeantet, *inspecteur général à la propagande*; Xavier Vallat, future *Commissaire aux questions juives*; Colonel Groussard, appointed *Inspecteur général de la Sûreté nationale* in September 1940; François Méténier, future chief of the *Groupes de protection du Centre d’information et d’enquête* (CIE); Captain Labat, in charge of the *Service des sociétés secrètes*; Doctor Martin, chief of the SR of the CIE; and Joseph Darmand, in charge of this same CIE in Nice before becoming the chief of the *Milice* and *Secrétaire général au maintien de l’ordre*. This does not include the cagoulards or the individuals linked with the *Cagoule* within the sphere of power from the first days of Vichy. In addition, a number of these men owed their release from prison to the defeat and collapse of the Republic.
6. “C’est à la police que l’Etat, ébranlé dans ses assises sociale et politique, aux deux tiers occupé, devra son redressement national” (note probably dating from the summer of 1940, Archives Nationales (AN), 2AG 520 CC 104 A).
8. Remarks made during the evening of July 10, 1940 in front of the Hotel du Parc by Doriot and Méténier with Jules Belin—one of the “aces” of the Sûreté who had pursued the men of the *Cagoule* and contributed to the arrest of the assassins of the Rosselli brothers (Belin, *Trente ans de Sûreté Nationale*, 322).
10. The removals primarily involved old police officers and concerned those accused of incompetence and professional misconduct rather than trade union or political affiliations. On police purges and the renewal of the personnel under the occupation, see Berlière, “III: République, Vichy, Occupation, Libération.”
11. Communists were pursued under the Daladier decree issued shortly after the Nazi-Soviet Pact on September 26, 1939.
12. AN 3W 310.
14. Quotations in Belin, 316.
15. The expression is in the letter of Peyrouton to Pétain, 17 December 1940, AN 3W 310.
17. Quoted by Sabah, 436.
18. “Aussi regrettable que soit cette constatation, il est de fait que la création du SSS est due à une pression des autorités allemandes qui seules jusque là avaient opéré contre la franc-maçonnerie” (report of Labat, chief of the SSS, summer of 1941, quoted by Sabah, 370 et seq.).
19. The talks were carried out with Dr. Best.
20. This decree was not published in the Journal Officiel but supplemented by a circular on December 19, 1941.
21. German report of 25 December 1941 quoted by Sabah, 434; and in Marquès-Rivière to Bousquet, May 1942 (AN F7 15345).
22. He endeavored to secure them by various measures such as an oath imposed on all the police officers and especially by a second wave of revocations, much more severe than that of the autumn of 1940, and aimed particularly at the police officers who were freemasons from the summer of 1941. Conversely, an attempt to reform the Préfecture de Police, and to bring it under more direct control, failed.
23. A short speech made at the time of the oath of service taken by the Parisian police officers, January 20, 1942, at the Palais de Chaillot (Bulletin hebdomadaire du ministère de l’Intérieur, no. 74, 27 January 1942).
24. “L’expérience qu’on a eue jusqu’ici avec la police juive française, montre amplement avec quelle indolence les milieux responsables français soutiennent la lutte contre les adversaires de toujours” (report quoted earlier concerning the antimasonic police, 25, December 1941). Similar reservations were expressed by Dannecker, for example that the French police “did not understand anything regarding the Jewish question.”
25. This was aggravated by a succession of difficulties and delays in implementing the reforms of the spring of 1941, not least because of persistent difficulties over recruitment and German reluctance: Nationalization and the reforms of spring 1941 were applied in the northern zone starting from the decree of October 27, 1942 only. For local examples of the difficulty of implementing the law of April 23, 1941, see Berlière and Peschanski, eds., La police, passim.
26. “La Sûreté nationale a montré depuis la loi du 13 août 1940 portant dissolution des sociétés secrètes qu’elle n’était pas en mesure, eu égard à l’état d’esprit général du personnel, de poursuivre l’application de cette loi dans le sens nettement précisé par le Maréchal” (from the Labat report quoted earlier, note 18). This problem is generally explained by the number of police officers belonging to the Freemasons: “pour qu’une action soit réellement efficace, il faut procéder à l’examen des dossiers en commençant par la police (quoted by Sabah, 479). One finds the same analysis from the pen of Moritz who directed the service in Rapp Square: “the various services of the police force in charge of the Masonic questions were for the most part made up of freemasons” (quoted by Sabah, 79, n. 133).
27. Moritz who “ne [s’]oppose pas à l’emploi de fonctionnaires français appartenant à l’ancien GP du capitaine Méténier (sic) a pu constater à plusieurs reprises que les anciens GP étaient les seuls éléments anti-maçonniques parmi les fonctionnaires français” (Ibid.).

29. “Est-ce ma faute si les gouvernants novices ou réactionnaires qui se sont succédé en France depuis que l’on m’a chassé, le 13 décembre 1940, ont pris quelque peu modèle sur les institutions totalitaires?” (quoted by Clermont, *L’homme qu’il fallait tuer*, 91).

30. Bousquet, linked with radicals and freemasons in the southwest, had held a number of administrative posts during the 1930s. He was the head of the *grand fichier central* of the Sûreté in 1936, during the ministries of Albert Sarraut and Roger Salengro.

31. Bousquet was thirty-four years old in 1943 and, in addition to the police, he was in charge of the *Gendarmerie nationale*, prison administration, the economic control service, and the protection of communication routes. He concentrated greater power in his hands than Fouché could have hoped for.

32. However, even at the best moments of police collaboration, this did not prevent mistrust, expressed in particular by the control exerted over all the sensitive nominations and promotions to the senior positions in the police hierarchy, the reluctance to arm heavily the GMR, and the persistent use of auxiliaries drawn from collaborationist movements and the criminal underworld in services completely escaping the French authority, such as the “French Gestapo,” in the rue Lauriston.

33. AN WIII-89, quoted in Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz*, 211.

34. On these special services and on the drift of the old “Brigades mobiles de police judiciaire,” the model for a Republican police according to Clemenceau, see Berlière, “La seule police,” 311–23.

35. Paxton, “La spécificité,” 605–19. During the preparation for his trial in the High Court in August 1948, Bousquet presented this policy as “un acte de sauvegarde et de défense des intérêts français.”

36. Oberg wrote on to Bousquet on July 23: “Je vous confirme bien volontiers que la police française a réalisé jusqu’ici une tâche digne d’éloge” (quoted in Klarsfeld, *Le calendrier*, 259).

37. Deposition of Knochen, September 1948 (file of the Bousquet case, quoted by Froment, *Rene Bousquet*, 221). In the autumn of 1941, the relevant German personnel in Occupied France numbered only twenty-nine hundred, fewer than in the Netherlands (Paxton, *Annales*, 615, n. 25).


39. *Commissaire* David, head of the *Brigade spéciale anticommuniste* of the Prefecture of Police, declared at his trial, without being contradicted, that he had told his men “d’abattre comme un chien tout milicien français qui gênerait leur action” (“to shoot down like a dog any French militia who would hamper their activities/investigations”).

40. “The Reichsführer was impressed by the personality of Bousquet. He manifestly shares the opinions expressed by Oberg: Namely that Bousquet is an invaluable collaborator for police work and that he would be a dangerous adversary if he were pushed into another camp” (AN, W III 89, quoted by Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz*, 54).

41. At a meeting in Vichy in April 1943, he ordered the *intendants* of police “to
eliminate without pity all incompetents and to intern those who lacked honesty.” Furthermore he outlined “the rules to apply . . . get rid of the incapable immediately, laziness can be dealt with in the long term, but the filth must be punished.”

42. In the autumn of 1943, while protesting the lack of autonomy and armament entrusted to the French police by the Germans, he informed Oberg of the creation of the secrétariat général au maintien de l’ordre and the installation of courts-martial and special courts to accelerate and deregulate the repression of the common enemies—Communists, terrorists, and saboteurs. Oberg responded in similar vein: “in the new Europe, the criminal and political criminal will not be able to disturb the work of regenerating the people.”

43. On this subject see Berlière, Les policiers français sous l’Occupation.