FROM THE POPULAR FRONT TO THE EASTERN FRONT: YOUTH MOVEMENTS, TRAVEL, AND FASCISM IN FRANCE (1930-1945)

by

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A ma mère, qui m'a toujours soutenu

A mon père, qui m'a donné le goût de l'histoire

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures

Introduction

> "We judge revolutions to be admirable or hateful according as their principles are or are not our own. All of them, however, have one supreme virtue that is inseparable from the vigor out of which they grow: they do trust the young into positions of prominence. I detest Nazism, but, like the French Revolution, with which one should blush to compare it, it did put at the head, both of its armed forces and of its Government, men who, because their brains were fresh and had not been formed in the routine of the schools, were capable of understanding *the surprising and the new*. All we had to set against them was a set of bald-pates and youngish dotards."

Marc Bloch[1]

There is no straight line leading from the French Popular Front to the Eastern Front and Hitler's armies. Yet, quite a few Frenchmen followed such a crooked path that led them from one the 20th century's great democratic movements to its most exclusionary and destructive ideology. Seeking to uncover the apparent contradictions that frame this political itinerary, my dissertation looks at the interwar youth hostel movement, a pacifist and left-leaning organization and the drift of some of its members towards Europeanist fascism during the Second World War. Modeled after a Catholic youth movement that emerged from Germany in the aftermath of the Great War,[2] the French youth hostel first appeared in the country in 1929 as a Catholic organization, but found its most successful expression in the CLAJ (Secular Youth Hostel Center), a left-wing and secular organization created in 1933 under the patronage of a number of left-

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[1] Marc Bloch. *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940*. New York, 1968 (1946)
[2] Graham Heath. *Richard Schirrman: The First Youth Hosteller*. Detmold, 1965

wing organizations and political parties.[3] The rise to power of the Popular Front

government,[4] which originated in a grassroots left-wing movement against the so-called

fascist leagues,[5] led to the promulgation of a set of labor and leisure reforms meant to

ease the conditions of life of the working class.[6] This ambitious and novel part of the

Popular Front program, which was intended as a democratic response to the Nazi *Kraft*

Durch Freude and Fascist *Dopolavoro* mass leisure organizations,[7] was put in the hands

of Léo Lagrange, a young and popular personality within the Socialist Party (SFIO).[8]

    Seeking to bypass its lack of funds, Lagrange's ministry of sports and leisure

relied heavily on friendly, pre-existing organizations, and found in the youth hostel

movement an unswerving ally. By the beginning of 1938, benefitting from Lagrange's

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[3] The CLAJ was founded in 1933 by a number of local and national organizations including the Socialist (SFIO) and Communist (PCF) parties, the league of schoolteachers, and the associations of city councils. See Lucette Heller-Goldenberg. *Histoire des Auberges de Jeunesse des Origines a nos Jours*. Nice, 1985

[4] For an account of the Popular Front's rise to power within a larger history of the European left see: Geoff Eley. *Forging Democracy: A History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000*. Oxford, 2002, pp. 261-278; For a study on the French Popular Front see Julian Jackson. *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy, 1934-1938*. Cambridge, 1988.

[5] On the Fascist leagues see Robert Soucy. *French Fascism: The Second Wave: 1933-1939*. New Haven, 1995; Serge Berstein. *Le 6 Février 1934 a Paris*. Paris, 1975; Pierre Pélissier. *6 Février 1934: La Répbulique en France*. Paris, 2000; On Fascism in interwar France see Michel Dobry (ed.). *Le Mythe de l'Alergie Francaise au Fascisme*. Paris, 2003; Kevin Passmore. "The Historiography of 'Fascism' in France," *French Historical Studies* 37 (2014): 469-499 and Kevin Passmore. *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy*. Oxford, 2013

[6] The "Matignon Agreements" between the trade unions, the governments, and representatives of the industrial bourgeoisie (le patronat) are signed on the night of June 7 1936. They are voted into laws in the weeks that follow, granting the working class a new set of work rights: 40 hours week (as opposed to 48 hours previously), the paid holidays, and the law on collective conventions to be signed locally between workers and employers. See Jean Vigreux. *Le Front Populaire*. Paris, 2011, pp. 63-64

[7] On the Nazi KDF see Shelley Baranowski. *Strength Through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich*. Cambridge, 2007; On the Italian Dopolavoro see Victoria de Grazia. *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy*. Cambridge, 2002

[8] A few weeks after the Blum government's election, on June 10 1936, Lagrange gave a speech on the national radio in which he presented the Popular Front's leisure policy as a response to those who argued that the Third Republic was incapable to put together a leisure policy comparable to that of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy: "We too often heard that a democratic country was, in essence, incapable to create a large leisure and sports organization. Our ambition is to show that this conception is flawed. Our goal, simple and human, is to allow the masses of the French youth to find, in the practice of sports, joy and health, and to build a leisure organization that allows workers to relax as a reward for their hard work." Cited in Jean-Louis Chappat. *Léo Lagrange ou les Chemins de l'Espoir*. Paris, 1983, 171-172; Pierre Mauroy. *Léo Lagrange*. Paris, 1997; For a collection of notable speeches see Yann Lasnier. *Léo Lagrange: L'Artisan du Temps Libre*. Paris, 2007

dynamism and the leisure laws he had implemented, the CLAJ was the largest and most

ubiquitous non-confessional youth formation in France with over 60 000 members.[9]

Despite its close ties with the Popular Front, the CLAJ intended to protect its

independence and the power structure progressively shifted from the steering committee

that helped establish it in 1933 to the users themselves, through the creation of numerous

user's clubs that often had direct control over hostels in their area. In the early days the

hostel intellectual platform borrowed loosely from pre-war German youth movements

such as the Wandervogel[10] as well as pacifist and equalitarian discourses cultivated in the

socialist and communist youth sections.[11] As the movement grew and the network of

hostels expanded to the point where it virtually covered the entire French territory, the

CLAJ users re-shaped their ideological canon *on the go*. The practices of travel and

communal life in the hostels played a central role in what they envisioned as a new way

of life for the generation that had come of age in the wake of the Great War. This

powerful generational sentiment cultivated away from the elder's watch, in the

protective, sheltered space of the hostels, gave birth to a remarkably original spatial and

historical imaginary expressed in the creed of the "Republic of Youth."[12] Through their

travels and the wide range of activities practiced in and between the hostels, including

ethnographic explorations of regional traditions, arts (music, painting, dancing, etc.), and

sports, the hostels' users who called themselves *Ajistes* (those of the AJ – Hostels) sought

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[9] The enrollment numbers in the CLAJ in the interwar French youth hostel movement can be found in Lucette Heller-Goldenberg. *Histoire des Auberges de Jeunesse*. Op. Cit.

[10] On the Wandervogel and hiking youth movements in Germany see John Williams. *Turning to Nature in Germany: Hiking, Nudism, and Conservation, 1900-1940*. Stanford, 2007

[11] See Whitney. *Mobilizing Youth*. Op. Cit.

[12] On the idea of the hostels as shelters, my analysis argument is largely based on Gaston Bachelard's theory on the relationship between space and poetic imagination. See Gaston Bachelard. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston, 1994 (1958)

to lay the foundations for a new, pacific world, challenging inequality, gender divisions, and national belonging.

The formidable success of the Popular Front's leisure policy, which in 1936 resulted in what contemporary observers called a "summer exodus", opened up the hostels to new demographic groups. The influx of new users, many of whom came from the working class districts of the large urban centers, turned the movement into a cultural icon of the period, but it also resulted in a crisis of growth and identity. In its first few years (1933-1936), the CLAJ was the realm of a few motivated idealists who wholeheartedly embraced the youth hostels as the cornerstone to build a new society. Their social and political platform, based on pacifism, equality and internationalism, was reminiscent of the utopian socialists of the first part of the 19th century.[13] As the French youth hostels transformed into a mass movement a gap progressively emerged between the small avant-garde and the mass of new users who often considered the hostels as an affordable retreat rather than a world altering social movement.

The fall of the last Popular Front government in the spring of 1938[14] all but signified that the attempt to bring about a radically changed social world had failed. Patched onto the youth hostels' crisis of growth, the disappearance of a friendly

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[13] The socialist utopians, most importantly Henri Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Charles Fourier (1772-1837), and Robert Owen (1771-1858), sought to reorganize society along more egalitarian lines. As men who came of age during or in the direct aftermath of the French revolution, their works shared a generational impetus. On the socialist utopians see Barbara Goodwin & Keith Taylor. *The Politics of Utopia: A Study in Theory and Practice*. London, 1982; on the dynamics between socialist utopians and Marxism see Vincent Geoghean. *Utopianism and Marxism*. London, 1987; Shlomo Barer. *The Doctors of Revolution: 19th Century Thinkers Who Changed the World*. London, 2000; on socialism, democracy, and political culture after the 1848 revolutions see Geoff Eley. *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe*, 1850-2000. Oxford, 2002.

[14] The first Popular Front government, its most progressive iteration, lasted until the summer of 1937 when radical party leader Camille Chautemps replaced socialist Léon Blum as the President of the Council (Prime Minister). The Chautemps government stepped down in April 1938 and was replaced by right wing radical Edouard Dalladier who rescinded some of the labor laws voted in 1936. See Julian Jackson. *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy*. Cambridge, 1988; Jean Vigreux. *Le Front Populaire*. Paris, 2011; Jacques Kergoat. *La France du Front Populaire*. Paris, 1986.

administration led to the emergence of an elitist minority gathered around Marc Augier, the editor in chief of *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse*, the CLAJ magazine. A journalist and adventurer, Augier had been active throughout the 1930s in motorcycling and mountaineering circles as well as in political groups affiliated with the SFIO and the Popular Front.[15] By 1938, he progressively distanced himself from the ideals of the left and instead started to advocate a vision of the youth hostel movement based on effort, conquest and individual transcendence. This new direction found its expression in expeditions to conquer the furthest reaches of the European continent: camping in the Jungfrau Mountains of Switzerland, motorcycle raids across Europe, and backcountry expeditions in the Finnish Lapland. Augier's departure from the inclusive youth hostels ideal came as a consequence of what he understood as the failure of the Popular Front when compared to Germany's supposed rebirth in the hands of the Nazis. This line of thought, expressed by popular writers such as Alphonse de Chateaubriant and Pierre Drieu La Rochelle had been gaining steam in the 1930s, as the Popular Front's energy appeared to vanish.[16]

The general mobilization that followed Hitler's invasion of Poland in September 1939 put an end to the youth hostel movement's attempts to promote peace. The travel restrictions and conscription of young men made the CLAJ an empty shell. By that time, Augier and his small but active group of followers had swapped their former political

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[15] During the years 1933-1939 Augier, a personal *protégé* of Cécile Grunebaum-Ballin, worked in Lagrange's Secretary of Sports and Leisure, and served as an unofficial SFIO liaison in the CLAJ. For an intellectual biography of Augier see Jerome Moreau. *Sous le Signe de la Roue Solaire: Itinéraire Politique de Saint-Loup*. Paris, 2002

[16] On the rise of literary fascism in the late 1930s see David Carroll. *French Literary Fascism*. Princeton, 1998; See also Mark Antliff. *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art, and Culture in France, 1909-1939*. Durham, 2007; Gisele Shapiro. *The French Writer's War, 1940-1953*. Durham, 2014; Sandrine Sanos. *The Aesthetics of Hate: Far Right Intellectuals, Antisemitism, and Gender in 1930s France*. Stanford, 2012.

allegiance to the Popular Front in favor of a growing fascination for Nazi Germany's supposed efficiency and order. For them, the demise of the Popular Front signified the inability of parliamentary democracy to put forth significant political reforms, it seemed as if dictatorial regimes, and Nazi Germany in particular were the only ones capable of enacting radically transformative social and political programs.

The collapse of the French army in the spring of 1940 brought about a profound redrawing of the political landscape that was most clearly expressed in the division of the country in two distinct zones. In the southern zone the anti-democratic government headed by field Marshall Pétain was established in Vichy and immediately cracked down on political opponents and Jews while kick starting the reactionary "national revolution program."[17] In the northern zone, the German military administration actively supported a number of heterogeneous political groups and parties that shared the same willingness to collaborate with Nazi Germany, towards the inclusion of France within Hitler's continental empire in the making. Supported financially by the German embassy in Paris and led by conservative writer Alphonse de Chateaubriant, the *Collaboration Group* sought to regroup the different collaborationist trends.[18] Its youth group, called the *New European Youth* (JEN – Jeunes de l'Europe Nouvelle), was founded in the spring of 1941 with Marc Augier at its head and a nucleus of former *Ajistes* around him.

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[17] Historical literature on Vichy France is now staggeringly vast. The best introduction and most comprehensive monograph on the Vichy state remains Robert O. Paxton. *Vichy France: Old Guard New Order*. New York, 1972; See also Philippe Burrin. *La France a l'Heure Allemande*. Paris, 1998; Jean-Pierre Azéma & Olivier Wieviorka. *Vichy: 1940-1944*. Paris, 2004; Henry Rousso. *Le Régime de Vichy*. Paris, 2012. On the question of public opinion under in Vichy France see Pierre Laborie. *L'Opinion Publique sous Vichy*. Paris, 2001; On historical memory and remembrance see Henry Rousso. *The Vichy Syndrome*. Paris, 1990.

[18] On the collaboration see Pascal Ory. *Les Collaborateurs*. Paris, 1978; Dominique Venner. *Histoire de la Collaboration*. Paris, 2002; Denis Peschanski & Thomas Fontaine. *La Collaboration: 1940-1945 Vichy-Paris-Berlin*. Paris, 2014; Francois Broche. *Dictionnaire de la Collaboration*. Paris, 2014

Stemming from an original trend within French collaborationist circles, the JEN advocated the foundation of a continental union under German aegis.[19] This idea, which served as the ideological platform of many pro-Nazi parties throughout occupied Europe, was based on the belief that the nation-state political form had been superseded by larger entities such as the United States and the USSR, and that continental unification was necessary to preserve European culture and civilization. In May 1941, the *Collaboration Group* and the German embassy in Paris put together an exhibition on the role France was to play in Hitler's new continental order. In the fall of the same year, Augier and French fascist leader Jacques Doriot took part in the first contingent of the French Voluntaries Legion (LVF) against Bolshevism, which took them to the USSR in the German army's bandwagon.[20]

As the tide of the war decidedly turned against Nazi Germany and its allies, the idea of fascist Europe, from an economic and cultural community, morphed into that of a defensive bulwark against the military advance of the allies. While Augier spent extended periods of time on the Eastern front, the JEN remained extremely active on the propaganda front, producing a significant body of work on fascist Europe. What set this Europeanist trend apart from the rest of the French collaborationist forces was its willingness to think beyond the confines of the national idea. For the JEN, Augier, and all those who gravitated in the pro-European fascist orbit, the aftermath of the Great War had come with a geo-political paradigm shift, and they believed France and its culture

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[19] In his book on French literary fascism, David Carroll has devoted an entire chapter to the Pierre Drieu la Rochelle and the idea of a transnational, European fascism. See David Carroll. *French Literary Fascism: Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, and the Ideology of Culture*. Princeton, 1998, pp. 125-145

[20] On the LVF see Pierre Giolitto. *Volontaires Francais sous l'Uniforme Allemand*. Paris, 2007; On Doriot see Philippe Burrin. *La Dérive Fasciste: Doriot, Déat, Bergery 1933-1945*. Paris, 2003; Jean-Paul Brunet. *Jacques Doriot*: *Du Communisme au Fascisme*. Paris, 1996; Laurent Kestel. *La Conversion Politique: Doriot, le PPF, et la Question du Fascisme Francais*. Paris, 2012

could only be preserved through the formation of a cohesive multi-national military, economic, and political entity. In doing so they, much like the Nazis they tried to emulate, sought to halt the coming of a globalized capitalist world in which local identities and group belonging would supposedly be drowned under an endless flow of consumer goods.

Much like the youth hostel movement in the 1930s, the European French fascist trend that emerged in the early 1940s sought to build a new world in response to the perceived evolution of society towards individualism, rootlessness, and consumerism. It was the fear of the dissolution of society, culture, and human bonds that drove French fascists such as Augier or Doriot against the three facets of the same supposed foundation-less threat, Judaism, Communism (the USSR), and Capitalism (the USA). In the mid-30s, the youth hostels had advocated a return to the land and local traditions through a number of activities, from the collection and performance of popular folksongs to failed attempts to reclaim abandoned mountain villages. The youth hostel lifestyle was based on a kind of ascetic behavior reaching for the purity of the body and the mind. Physical activity remained a cardinal value of the organization throughout the interwar period but internal debates on questions such as food, especially vegetarianism, and dress not only suggest an acute awareness to the potential polluting power of the outside world through processed foods and consumer trends.

The practice of travel within the hostels, in which hiking reigned supreme, was also symbolically charged: it represented a slower and traditional counter-narrative to the development of high-speed transportation technology and an attempt to re-humanize the experience of movement. This re-appraisal of time through slow motion was based on a

complex dialogue between the local and the trans-national through which the youth

hostels, a thoroughly internationalist and pacifist movement, grounded its action in the

French countryside and the recovery of regional traditions and cultural forms.

Through these attempts to create a youth "subculture"[21] based on their evolving

idea of authenticity and purity, the CLAJ users reproduced some of the tropes developed

in the German hiking and Volkisch youth movements of the late 19th century. Yet, the

French youth hostel ideology also drew heavily on the Universalist republican ideal as

well as on the egalitarian model of the French socialists. A profoundly utopian

movement, the CLAJ thrived as long as it benefitted from the protection of the Popular

Front and the Republic, but with the specter of war looming large over Europe, the dual

nature of its ideological inheritance became untenable. As the dynamic of the Popular

Front years weakened so did the gap between those who stood for a democratic and an

elitist interpretation of the youth hostel movement. The disappearance of the socially

revolutionary potential in the French democratic left, which became effective as early as

1937 when the first Blum government stepped down, led Augier and his comrades, those

who conceived of the youth hostels as the vehicle for individual and group transcendence,

to turn to fascism as the only political form capable of delivering an alternative future.

The point is not to uncover a kind of historical determinism at play here, since

only a minority of the interwar youth hostel users switched their political allegiance from

the left to fascism, but instead to look at the 1930s as a period of intense social and

political instability and creativity. In his book on Weimar Germany, Detlev Peukert has

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[21] Although the use of the notion of "subculture" would appear to be somewhat anachronistic here, the
French youth movement's reliance on a precise generational and stylistic canon suggests it is applicable.
For a closer look at the idea of subculture see Dick Hebdige. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London,
1979

argued that the interwar period represented the "crisis of classical modernity,"[22] a moment of historical uncertainty when the social foundations of industrial society were profoundly shaken by technological progress, the development of consumerism, and a crisis of political representation.[23] As Peukert suggests the interwar period is characterized by a remarkable development of ideas advocating profound and often radical social and political change. Despite its concern for social change, the French Popular Front stood at the moderate end of the ideologically reformist range insofar as it sought to abide to the rules of parliamentary democracy. National Socialism, Italian Fascism or Soviet Communism on the other end attempted, with strikingly different means, goals and results, to profoundly alter the social through the imposition of a dictatorial rule.[24]

Using Peukert's theory of the "crisis of classical modernity" as a starting point, this work seeks to understand the transition from the left-wing youth hostels to wartime fascism in terms of continuity rather than disruption. Looking at the youth hostel movement as containing the seeds for fascism, as one of its potential outcomes, brings to light its revolutionary tendency and search for an alternate modernity.[25] It helps situate the movement historically as an attempt to solve the problem of political representation

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[22] Detlev Peukert. *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*. New York, 1993

[23] On this particular topic see Geoff Eley. "What Produces Fascism: Preindustrial Traditions or a Crisis of a Capitalist State." In *Politics and Society*, No 12, September 1983, pp. 53-82

[24] The breadth of work on each of these three regimes is immense. Of the comparative approaches between Fascism and Soviet Communism see Sheila Fitzpatrick & Michael Geyer (eds.). *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*. Chicago, 2008; Ian Kershaw & Moshe Lewin (eds.). *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comprarison*. Cambridge, 1997; On the question of historical memory see Henry Rousso & Richard Goslan (eds.). *Stalinism and Nazism: History and Memory Compared*. Lincoln, 2001; A more conservative approach can be found in Francois Furet & Ernest Nolte (eds.). *Fascism and Communism*. Lincoln, 2001

[25] On the question of modernity see Marshall Berman. *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York, 1982; David Harvey. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. London, 1990.

and identity formation in the crisis that shook the modern European model in the aftermath of the Great War. Framing the youth hostel movement as such also allows us to think of wartime French fascism with a different perspective. Those within the *Ajiste* community that followed Augier on the road to Eastern Front embraced a form of fascism the spatial imaginary of which had already been profoundly reworked by the German conquests of the years 1939-1941.[26] In order to fit within the reworked geopolitical framework of Hitler's Europe they did away with the idea of the nation-state in favor of a concept of fascist Europe in which a defeated France would be able to find its place. This move, far from being simply motivated by the vile political opportunism French historians have often used as an explanatory shortcut,[27] stemmed from a deep seated anxiety of social dilution and a rootless world.

As the later part of this work suggests wartime fascism, with the successive periods of expansion and contraction of the Nazi controlled territory showcases the importance of space as a key to understand the nature of fascist ideology. The concepts of *Lebensraum* and *Großraum*, as expressed in the works of Alfred Rosenberg[28] and Carl Schmitt,[29] are indicative of the prevalence of space in the Nazi worldview. The extent of "Hitler's empire" and the retreat of the German armies after Stalingrad brought about a realignment of Nazi ideology from hyper-nationalism to a form a supra-nationalism that emphasized the idea of Europe, its culture and peoples, in the struggle against American

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[26] On the German conquests during WW2 see Mark Mazower. *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe*. New York, 2008

[27] For this kind of interpretation see Pascal Ory. *Les Colloaborateurs*. Paris, 1978; Bernard Bruneteau has formulated a compelling critique of Ory's thesis in his book on French intellectuals and the idea of Fascist Europe see Bernard Bruneteau. *L'Europe Nouvelle de Hitler: Une Illusion des Intellectuels de la France de Vichy*. Monaco, 2003

[28] Alfred Rosenberg. *The Myth of the 20th Century*. London, 1930

[29] Carl Schmitt. *The Nomos of the Earth*. New York, 2006 (1952)

capitalism and Soviet communism. As such the idea of Europe served as the spatial boundary for the alternate modernity that lay at the heart of Nazi ideology.

The idea of "fortress Europe" which gained steam in the last two or three years of the war as a protective space against the threat of cultural dissolution and military annihilation, appealed to Augier and his comrades insofar as it echoed the model of the youth hostel as shelters, albeit on a vastly different scale. As my dissertation shows, spatial imaginary was as central an element in the French youth hostel ideology as it was in Fascism: the *Ajistes* sought to preserve local traditions and camaraderie from the meddling hand of a unifying consumer culture in their peacetime travels, so did Augier and his fascist comrades at the JEN in their attempt to participate in the establishment of a closed, German dominated continental entity.

Understanding the significance and political trajectory of the French youth hostel movement requires us to take into consideration the coeval existence of multiple possible futures in the interwar period. In fact, as my work argues, the CLAJ developed, despite its close affiliation with the Popular Front, its own conception of a utopian future, a new society that would be realized over time by those who had come of age in the wake of the Great War. By making the French youth hostel movement subservient to the interests, struggles and historical trajectory of the Popular Front, historians of the period have failed to account for its specificities and political potential. It is particularly the case of Pascal Ory who, in his large opus on cultural life under the Popular Front,[30] only considers the youth hostel movement through its relation with Lagrange's ministry of

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[30] Pascal Ory. *La Belle Illusion: Culture et Politique sous le Signe du Front Populaire, 1935-1938.* Paris, 1994

sports and leisure. Similarly, in an earlier book on French collaborators[31] Ory saw in the

Europeanist trend within wartime French fascism the mere expression of political

opportunism. There is certainly a pattern at play here, which not only obscures the

original nature of the youth hostels but also belittles the meaning of the Europe within the

framework of wartime fascist ideology. In the last instance it makes difficult to perceive

any kind of continuity between the CLAJ and the JEN.[32]

The historiography of fascism in France has been largely the preserve of

intellectual history. This situation is for a large part the result of a long, and at times

sterile, double-headed debate on the nature of French fascism,[33] opposing two

antagonistic views of French history. The conservative faction grouped around René

Rémond and later Michel Winock[34] based its interpretation on Rémond's 1970s

classification of the French right in three historical branches excluding fascism as a minor

and "imported phenomenon."[35] This understanding proved problematic insofar as it

considered the Vichy and collabortation periods as accidental rather than the proof of a

deep-seated fascist tradition in France. The hegemonic position of this school of thought

within the French historiography was shaken by foreign historians in the 1970s with the

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[31] Pascal Ory. *Les Collaborateurs*. Paris, 1978

[32] In the only monograph on the French youth hostel movement, a doctoral dissertation published by historian Lucette Heller-Goldenberg in the 1980s, the drift towards fascism operated by Marc Augier and his followers is seen as a betrayal of the youth hostel ideals.

[33] For a pertinent overview of the field of Fascist studies in France see Kevin Passmore. "L'Historiographie du Fascisme en France." *French Historical Studies*. No 3, (September 2014), pp. 469-499

[34] Michel Winock. "Retour sur le Fascisme Francais." *Vingtieme Siecle*, No 90 (2006), pp. 3-28

[35] Rémond's thesis is expressed most clearly in René Rémond. *Les Droites en France*. Paris, 1982. As Kevin Passmore argues, René Rémond's (1918-2007) theses and intellectual involvement in the debate on French fascism can be better understood in the light of his personal itinerary: dring the 1930s he was a member of the Catholic JEC (Christian Student's Youth) and had intellectual affinities with some of the movement, like the Croix de Feu, that participated in the February 1934 riots. Although he later moved towards Republican conservatism, Rémond was hard pressed to shove aside any affinities between traditional conservatism and fascism. See Passmore. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 486-487

publication of Robert Paxton's *Vichy France*[36] and Zeev Sternhell's *Neither Right Nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France*.[37] The latter was the subject of long and heated debates between supporters of the Remondian orthodoxy and those who, following Sternhell, argued for a reconsideration of the place of fascism in French history and the role of France in the genesis and development of fascism. The most vocal proponent of that thesis is now Michel Dobry, whose historical sociology insists on the permability of ideological borders on the right.[38] Although Dobry's attempt to reassess the links between conservatism and fascism opens up powerful lines of inquiry it also tends to obscure the significance of the links between the French left and fascism. Furthermore, the almost exclusive focus of the debate on ideological genealogies and intellectual history has resulted in the creation of a historiographical vacuum to the detriment of histories that account for social and everyday experiences. A good example of that development is Robert Soucy's two books on French fascism that, despite their elaborate exposure of the fascism phenomenon in French political life in the interwar, fail to link intellectual life to the cultural and social context of the period.[39]

Starting from this assessement, my research seeks to consider the development of an original, pan-European French fascism by tracing a genealogy between the interwar youth hostels and wartime fascist youth movements. One of the difficulties was to account for the unique nature and socially transformative power of the French youth hostel movement in the interwar period, and particulary the movement's positioning

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[36] Robert Paxton. *Vichy France: Old Guard, New Order*. New York, 1972

[37] The book was first published in France in 1983: Zeev Sternhell. *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France*. Paris, 1983

[38] Michel Dobry (ed.). *Le Mythe de l'Allergie Francaise au Fascisme*. Paris, 2003

[39] Robert Soucy. *French Fascism: The First Wave (1924-1933)*. New Haven, 1995; *The Scond Wave (1933-1939)*. New Haven, 1995

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towards the body politic; the CLAJ played a role as part of the Popular Front project (as the only left-wing youth movement with a significant audience and no direct relationship to any political parties) and jealously sought to preserve its independence. In doing so, it cultivated an ambiguous stance, a sort of neither nor, in the interstices of the French social and political worlds that allowed its members to both participate in the political life of the country (as part of the grassroots Popular Front manifestations) and at the same time devise an ambitious, quasi-revolutionary, conception of a "new world."

As I argue in chapter 2, this inside-outside dialectic took on a physical reality through the travels that formed the basis of the youth hostel practice. The *Ajistes*, far from conceiving of their journeys as a simple leisure activity, sought to draw an alternate map, replacing cities and roads with hostels and trails, charting a new spatial environment.[40] Understanding the youth hostels requires moving away from traditional left/right dichotomy in favor of a more complex interpretive scheme that accounts for the significance of travel and mobility, generational feeling, and spatial imaginaries. The youth hostel creed was not structured by a rigid ideological canon; it was instead made up of a rather loose set of guidelines, malleable ideas that were constantly reworked through communal life and encounter. It was, so to say, politics removed from traditional political life. As writings from its members suggest, it is the nomadic lifestyle practiced at the hostels that came to define and set the movement apart.

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[40] The idea of an alternate, imaginary social world "in the shadows" has been exposed in anthropologist Harry West's work on Mozambique see Harry West. *Kupilikula: Governance and the Invisible Realm in Mozambique*. Chicago, 2005; On the topic of materiality and space see Yael Navaro-Yashin. *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Post War Polity*. Durham, 2012; On the question of space, consumerism and the built environment see Krisztina Fehervary. *Politics in Color and Concrete: Socialist* Materialities *and the Middle Class in Hungary*. Bloomington, 2013

In *Mille Plateaux*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari develop a conceptual opposition between the *Sedentary* and the *Nomadic* as defined by a relationship of *Interiority* or *Exteriority* to the state.[41] As the French philosophers argue, the state proceeds through *Territorialization*, charting and regimenting space and human activity as a means of control. Yet, some groups find themselves out of its reach or try to escape its inclusive impetus by evolving and moving within the interstices, or the uncharted territories, emulating both through their physical movements and outsider spirit, the socially transformative potential of the pre-modern nomadic tribes and itinerant corporations.[42] Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, my dissertation shows that the practice of travel served as a structuring element for the youth hostels, a movement whose revolutionary potential emerged from its literal and imaginary embrace of the idea of *Nomadism*. As the youth hostel network expanded and reached its maximum extent in 1938, with as many as 400 hostels spread over the French mainland and the North African colonies, the CLAJ published numerous maps and guides charting hiking itineraries between hostels. It represented an alternative geographic and social reality that was meant to serve as the foundation for the creation of a new world. The power of the French youth hostel movement never fully resided in its worldly achievements, as spectacular as they may have been, rather its socially transformative might sprung out of its ability to generate <u>new spatial and historical imaginaries</u>.

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[41] In *Mille Plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari adopt a broad conception of the state based on its ability to map and appropriate spaces and populations within its reach. In this sense the state is not only that which has the monopoly of violence but also all the institution and constituencies to foster the control of the eastablished order on the land. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari. *Mille Plateaux*. Paris, 1980

[42] Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari. *Mille Plateaux*. Paris, 1980. On the opposition between Sedentary and Nomadic see chapter 12: 1227 – Traité de Nomadologie: La Machine de Guerre, pp. 434-527

The social and political potential of micro-political, nomadic movements such as the youth hostels lies in their self-organizing, auto-poetic dimension that translates in an uncanny ability to generate social imaginaries. Deleuze and Guattari rightly emphasize the importance of the notion of historical becoming as a number of *lines of flight*, or a number of possible futures, in the emergence of such imaginaries. Fascist ideology put a special emphasis on the promise of a better future, through what Roger Griffin calls its *mythopoetic* dimension, expressed in the idea of rebirth and that of the fascist man.[43] In *The Imaginary Institution of Society*[44], Cornelius Castoriadis points to the idea of the imaginary as the site, the mental landscape, where conceptions of society are constantly reworked, where the world is re-imagined, a crucible from which transformative social conceptions emerge. Drawing on Castoriadis' *Imaginary Institution* and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*[45], Charles Taylor relies on the concept of imaginary as a means to explain the historical evolution of western society from its pre-modern religious and hierarchical roots to its modern secular and democratic incarnation.[46] Taylor's model provides a useful conceptualization of the modernization of the collective mind in the *longue-durée*, a civilizing curve towards a moral higher ground represented by the modern democratic polity. Yet, in doing so it also fails to account for times of crisis such as the interwar era during which overlapping and competing imaginaries challenge the established order in diametrically opposed ways.

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[43] On the significance of myth in fascist ideology see Claudio Fogu. *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy*. Toronto, 2003; on the idea of the fascist man and the mythopoetic dimension of fascist ideology see Roger Griffin. *Modernism and Fascism and the Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*. London, 2007

[44] Cornelius Castoriadis. *L'Institution Imaginaire de la Société*. Paris. 1975

[45] Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Society*. London. 1983

[46] Charles Taylor. *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham, 2003; see also *A Secular Age*. Cambridge (MA), 2007

Radical imaginaries emerge when the gap between society and the institutions by which it is governed appear unbridgeable. This development can be prompted by an acceleration of technological progress resulting in a discrepancy between the social world and the social categories through which it is understood. The rapid technical evolution in the early 20th century, especially in the domains of transportation and information, played a significant role in the emergence of new spatial and social imaginaries.[47] The Popular Front's revolutionary leisure policy would have been impossible to imagine, much less to put into place, without the remarkable democratization of the railroad, cycling, and the automobile in the decades that preceded it. The youth hostel movement's attitude towards technological progress remained always ambiguous: while it embraced some of its aspects, particularly in the domain of the arts, where the potential of photography was often recognized and its practice encouraged, processed foods and the use of individual automobiles were looked upon with the utmost suspicion.

A similar attitude was adopted towards consumer practices and the "invention" of a youth hostel style: as an ideal, utopian way of life, the youth hostel movement engaged in an aesthetic research that far exceeded the simple depiction of picturesque landscapes. Instead a lot of thought was put into dress as a sign of group belonging and a way to express the movement's values. The hostels "uniform" was made of hiking boots and shorts, flannel shirts, and a large hiking backpack, a dress code that sought to do away with gender and wealth differences. Like the youth subcultures that blossomed in the wake of the Second World War, the French youth hostel movement used a strict dress code as a sign of member recognition. Discussions within the movement on questions of

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[47] On this particular point see Paul Virilio. *Vitesse et Politique: Essai de Dromologie*. Paris, 1977

dress increased as the youth hostels started to attract numerous new members: to the occasional hostel goer, the bandwagon jumper who often drove to the youth hostels with a suitcase full of clothes and supplies, was opposed the ascetic walker whose backpack only contained the bare necessities. Embracing the hostels and their accepted dress code also meant a tacit rejection of indiscriminate consumption and changing fashion trends.

The French youth hostel movement, and the conversion to some of its most active members to fascism in the late 1930s can only be understood against the backdrop of the evolution of French political and social life in the interwar period. The brand of fascism Marc Augier and his followers adopted was strongly indebted to the youth hostel experience in that it reproduced a similar inside/outside dichotomy *vis-a-vis* the Vichy state. The perspective of a German continental rule as the foundation for a new social and political realm necessitated the transposition of the spatial imaginary of the hostels from the national to the European level. As Deleuze and Guattari but also Castoriadis show, spatial/social imaginaries and historical becoming are always more about potentialities and lines of flight than actual, real world developments. The fading of the pacifist and democratic political horizon that had served as the foundation for the French youth hostel movement signified that the momentum was now clearly on the side fascism, a trend that was all but confirmed by the sweeping German military victory of 1940. While the majority of hostel users chose to cling to their democratic ideals in a myriad of ways, often participating in the resistance,[48] those who turned to fascism chose this path mainly because it represented the only remaining radical political horizon. In doing so they turned their baock on the egalitarian and democratic ideal of the hostels in favor

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[48] On this particular point see Heller-Goldenberg's *Histoire des Auberges de Jeunesse.* According to her, most of the former youth hostel users who actively participated in the resistance previously belonged to the catholic wing of the hostels.

hierarchical model of fascism. Despite this seemingly unbridgeable difference, both movements shared a powerful sense of community (albeit based on different notions of generational belonging and national community), a common rejection of consumerism and capitalism, and a historical vision that posited a radical transformation of the social.

From the Popular Front to Hitler's Europe, this work deals with the evolution of the left and secular wing of the French youth hostel movement towards Europeanist fascism. The dissertation is structured in order to account for the progressive development of new political and spatial imaginaries in the response to social and technical change in the 1930s. It argues that this social-political mapping, a strong generational sentiment, and the practice of travel made possible a transition that would have otherwise been unthinkable. The first chapter looks at the "heroic period" of the French youth hostel movement, from the foundation of the first youth hostel in 1929 to the election of the Blum government in the spring of 1936. It focuses on three fundamental aspects of the movement: the significance of the German roots in the early days of the French youth hostels, the role played by the hostels as shelters and protective spaces for the emergence of a new lifestyle, and the development and progressive takeover of the left-wing, secular branch after the creation of the CLAJ in 1932. These early years, which comprise the pre-government period of the Popular Front are particularly interesting in that they show the hostel users' willingness to devise a new social model outside of the traditional French extra-curricular canon.[49] The youth hostels'

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[49] On extra-curricular education in France during the Third Republic (1870-1940) see Laura Lee Downs. *Childhood in the Promised Land: Working Class Movements and the Colonies de Vacances in France, 1880-1960.* Durham, 2002; Judith Surkis. *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920.* Ithaca, 2006; Pierre Giolitto. *Histoire de la Jeunesse sous Vichy.* Paris, 1991;

foreign origin and their peripheral geographic location played a central role in their early success.[50]

Chapter 2 deals with the secular branch of the youth hostel movement, the CLAJ, from the summer of 1936 to the beginning of the Second World War. The first part of the chapter shows the ways in which the Popular Front's State Secretary of Sports and Leisure and the youth hostels worked together to ensure the success of the Blum government's leisure policy despite the dearth of financial means at their disposal. Although the youth hostels greatly benefitted from the social and political dynamic of the left-wing coalition, I argue against the enduring idea that conceives of the hostels as a product of the Popular Front. In the second part of the chapter I focus on the late 1937-1939 period during which the CLAJ and its members sought to distance themselves from political parties in favor of the utopian idea of a "new world" based on generational lines as well pacifist and Universalist sentiments. The demise of the Popular Front government and the exacerbation of tensions of the European stage resulted in an isolation of the CLAJ on the domestic scene and a progressive schism within the movement between a moderate inclusive faction and an elitist one headed by Marc Augier. The later part of the chapter deals with the radicalization of Augier's group and its drift towards fascism in the dawn of the Second World War.

Momentarily moving away from the French youth hostel movement, chapter 3 focuses on the intellectual roots of the European idea in French right wing circles. Starting with Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, I show that the concept of Europe as an anti-capitalist and anti-communist political entity started gaining steam among modernist right

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[50] On the German origins of the youth hostels see Jurgen Reulecke & Barbara Stambolis (eds.). *100 Jahre Jugendherbergen: Anfange, Wandlugen, Ruck und Ausblicke, 1909-2009*. Essen, 2009.

wing intellectuals in the early 1920s.[51] This idea was later taken up a larger, pro-fascist

and Germanophile trend headlined by conservative novelist and essayist Alphone de

Chateaubriant. His 1937 essay *La Gerbe des Forces*[52], a millenarian apology of Nazi

Germany, was instrumental in the conversion of Marc Augier and his group to an

indigenous brand of national socialism advocating the inclusion of France in a German

dominated continental entity, as the only way to cure the ailing "national soul." After the

military defeat of 1940, Chateaubriant served as the director of the Franco-German

collaboration group under the tutelage of the Nazi occupation authorities that, in the

spring of 1941, was responsible for putting together an exhibition on the role of France in

the new fascist Europe in the making.[53] Historians of wartime France have often

dismissed the wartime fascist Europeanism of the collaborators as the expression of their

political opportunism.[54] Working against this interpretation, the last part of the chapter

instead exposes its significance as part of a commitment from a fraction of the national

right and the ruling classes to a new conception of continental politics and power

balance.[55]

Following this thread, chapter 4 is concerned with the emergence of a Europeanist

faction within the French fascist youth during the Second World War. Looking at the

process of conversion to fascism through the literary production of Marc Augier during

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[51] See David Carroll. *French Literary Fascism: Nationalism, Antisemitism, and the Ideology of Culture*. Princeton, 1998.

[52] Alphonse de Chateaubriant. *La Gerbe des Forces*. Paris, 1937

[53] Julien Prévotaux. *Un Européisme Nazi: Le Groupe Collaboration et l'Idéologie Européenne dans la Second Guerre Mondiale*. Paris, 2010

[54] On this particular point see Pascal Ory. *Les Collaborateurs*. Op. Cit., 146-167; for a more elaborate development of a similar argument see Bernard Bruneteau. *L'Europe Nouvelle de Hitler: Une Illusion des Intellectuels de la France de Vichy*. Monaco, 2003

[55] The links between economic collaboration, French fascism and leading industrialists before and during the Second World War have been convincingly exposed by French historian Annie Lacroix-Riz in *Le Choix de la Défaite: Les Elites Francaises dans les Années 30*. Paris, 2010 and *Aux Origines du Carcan Européen (1900-1960): La France sous Influence Allemande et Américaine*. Paris, 2014

the years 1940-1944, both as a journalist and a novelist, I argue that it reproduced many of the narrative tropes that constituted the basis of the youth hostel discourse in the interwar era. The second part of the chapter focuses of the JEN, a fascist youth movement founded by Augier in 1941 that advocated total collaboration with Nazi Germany and the inclusion of France in a European bulwark against communism and capitalism. I argue that, by that time, the former youth hostel members who formed the core of the JEN had ascribed to a new spatial and political imaginary in which the notion of Europe, as a closed space meant to defend European culture and civilization, had taken the place of the "new world" that had formed the historical horizon of the interwar youth hostels.

Moving away from the French context, chapter 5 considers the meaning of the notion of Europe within the confines of the spatial imaginary of Nazism. The point here is to reassess the historical significance of Europe in the framework of the short-lived continental empire carved by the Wehrmacht in the years 1939-1941. I argue that the idea of "Hitler's Europe", which is commonly used by historians to refer to the areas under Nazi domination during the Second World War,[56] should instead be understood as an essential dimension of the spatial imaginary of Nazism.[57] The first part of the chapter focuses on the relationship between Carl Schmitt's work on land apportioning and international right, as expressed in his concept of *Großraum*, and the emergence of the idea of a protective European space in Nazi ideology in the years 1942-1943.[58] It shows that the conception of space defended by Schmitt, in which the rapid evolution of communication, military, and transportation technologies had rendered the nation-state

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[56] See Mark Mazower. *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe*. New York, 2009

[57] Geoff Eley. "Empire, Ideology, and the East: Thoughts on Nazism's Spatial Imaginary" In *Nazism as Fascism: Violence, Ideology, and the Ground of Consent in Germany, 1930-1945*. London, 2013, 131-154

[58] Carl Schmitt. *The Nomos of the Earth*. New York, 2006

form irrelevant in favor of larger continental formations such as the USSR or the United

States, became central to wartime ideology of Nazism in the later part of WWII. Building

upon this understanding of the centrality of Europe in the evolution of wartime fascist

ideology, the chapter's second part focuses on the Atlantic Wall that was built by the

Nazis along the coast of occupied Europe between 1942 and 1944. Following theoretical

insights from Paul Virilio's *Bunker Archaeology*[59] I argue that the symbolic function of

bunkers laid on the oceanic shores by far exceeded their strategic value and that they

represent a remarkable source to understand the complex and dynamic spatial conception

of the Third Reich.

In the last instance, my work suggests a strong, albeit indirect connection between

the youth hostels of the interwar and the Atlantic coast as shelters against two expressions

of a similar threat: the takeover of a powerful global cultural and political force based on

technological progress and consumerism. As such, both the left-wing *Ajiste* movement of

the 1930s and the Europeanist Nazi supporters of the 1940s sought to bring to fruition a

vision of society based on the projection of an idealized past into the future. The

transition made by Augier and his followers made sense only because they were willing

to sacrifice the moral dimension of the youth hostels in favor of the possible realization

of a utopian realm whatever the consequences may be.

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[59] Paul Virilio, *Bunker Archaeology*. Princeton, 1997.

Chapter One

Looking Across the Rhine: The French Youth Hostel Movement's Early Years (1929-1936)

> "I was told so many times about these *youth hostels*
> *of Germany that one day I felt like settling there.*
> *One day in the summer of 1932 I decided to go there*
> *on its roads and in its homes, the youth of Germany*
> *this youth profoundly struck by the economic crisis about*
> *which people here tell so many bad things, this youth that holds*
> *the key to the future of a great country, and maybe the world."*

> Daniel Guerin[1]

In the wake of the Great War, Western and Central European societies were

shaken to their core by the extent of the human and material destructions.[2] While in

France the Third Republic had remained in place, anchored as it was by its triumphant

national army, the collapse of the Hohenzollern monarchy in the wake of the German

military defeat opened the door for a period of political experimentation. The generation

that came of age in the aftermath of the Great War, the men and women born in the first

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[1] Guérin, Daniel. "Sur les Routes avec la Jeunesse Alllemande." *Vu*, No 247. December 7, 1933

[2] On the impact of WWI on European societies, especially the issues of violence, trauma, mourning, and collective memory see Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau & Annette Becker. *14-18: Understanding the Great War*. New York, 2003; Jay Winter. *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*. Cambridge, 1995; On political violence after the Great War see John Horne & Robert Gerwarth (eds.). *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe After the Great War*. London, 2013; see also George Mosse's interpretation based on the idea of the "brutalization" of societies George L. Mosse. *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the Great Wars*. Oxford, 1991; On war veterans and their families in France see Annette Becker. *Le Poids de la Guerre: Les Poilus et Leur Famille Apres 1918*. Rennes, 2013; Bruno Cabanes. *La Victoire Endeuillée: La Sortie de Guerre des Soldats Francais*. Paris, 2004; On the significance of Veterans' organizations in interwar political life see Antoine Prost. *Les Anciens Combattants et la Société Francaise*. Paris, 1977.

decade of the 20th century, found themselves burdened with the herculean task to rethink

the social. In Germany, the tight network of extra-curricular youth organizations, with a

strong focus on mountaineering, hiking, and nature-related activities, served as a basis for

reshaping of the German polity along generational lines.[3] Among these organizations, the

Youth Hostel movement,[4] founded in 1909 by Catholic schoolteacher Richard

Schirrmann[5] in the West German town of Altena, rapidly spread to the rest of Europe and

beyond. In France, the Youth Hostel experiment begun in 1929 under the auspices of

catholic reformist intellectual Marc Sangnier,[6] with the foundation of the French Youth

Hostel League (LFAJ).[7] The relative success of the LFAJ and the movement's potential

as a new form of co-educational practice drew the attention of left wing secular

organizations that founded the French Secular Youth Hostel Center that (CLAJ – Centre

Laïque des Auberges de Jeunesse) in 1933.[8]

     This chapter deals with the creation and the emergence of CLAJ, which, in the

span of four years (1934-1936), became one of the most important youth movements in

interwar France.[9] Its political leanings were clear from the outset, as it received early

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[3] On youth hiking organizations in Germany see John Williams. *Turning to Nature in Germany: Hiking, Nudism and Conservation, 1900-1940.* Stanford, 2007

[4] On the creation and history of the youth hostel movement in Germany see Jurgen Reulecke & Barbara Stambolis (eds.). *100 Jahre Jugendherbergen: 1909-2009.* Essen, 2009

[5] For a biography a Richard Schirrmann in English see Graham Heath. *Richard Schirrmann: The First Youth Hosteller.* Copenhagen, 1962

[6] Marc Sangnier was a central figure among reformist catholic circle and played an important role in the Popular Education movement. See Madeleine Barthélémy-Madaule. *Marc Sangnier, 1873-1950.* Paris, 1973; Denis Lefevre. *Marc Sangnier: L'Aventure du Catholicisme Social.* Paris, 2008, Jean-Jacques Greteau. *Marc Sangnier: Le Semeur d'Espérance.* Paris, 2009

[7] On Schirrmann's influence on Sangnier and the foundation of the LFAJ see Barbara Stambolis. "Jugendherbeergen als Jugendbegegnungsstatten: grenzuberschreitend." In Reulecke & Stambolis. *Op. Cit.,* pp. 159-167

[8] See Lucette Heller-Goldenberg. *Histoire des Auberges de Jeunesse.* Nice, 1985, p. 74-80

[9] See Pascal Ory. *La Belle Illusion: Culture et Politique sous le Signe du Front Populaire.* Paris, 1994; Lucette Heller-Goldenberg. *Histoire des Auberges de Jeunesse des Origines a la Fin de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale.* Nice, 1985; Julian Jackson. "Le Temps des Loisirs: Popular Tourism and Mass Leisure in the

support from worker's unions, the teacher's league and other socialist affiliated workers' unions and associations.[10] Yet, the CLAJ stood out in the political landscape of the 1930s precisely because it did not function as a division of a larger political or institutional formation but instead relied heavily on its members for its expansion and decision-making.[11] The rejection of hierarchical structure in favor of a greater reliance on grassroots organization and constant debate represented a radical breach with a French political tradition that was largely framed by centralization and the power of the state.[12]

In the first part of the chapter I underline the German origins of the movement and argue that its structures and practices, inherited as they were from a foreign social-political tradition, made it possible for the young men and women who took part in its activities to reconsider and challenge the institutions of the French Third Republic. I briefly discuss the historical development of the German movement before looking in depth at a reportage on the youth hostel organization written by the French historian and left wing intellectual Daniel Guérin.[13] In the chapter's second part I look at the CLAJ's main publication, a monthly cooperative magazine named *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse* (1934-1940), and show how the movement's ideological platform was

Vision of the Popular Front." In Martin Alexander & Helen Graham (eds.). *The French and Spanish Popular Front: Comparative Perspectives*. Cambridge, 1989, pp. 226-239

[10] Among the organizations that took part in the foundation of the CLAJ were the French Communist Party affiliated Worker's Union (CGT), the National Federation for Education (FGE), the French Education League (LFE), the National Federation of Socialist Municipalities (FNMS), the National Schoolteacher's Union (SNI), The Union of French Cities and Communes (UVCF). See CLAJ. *Guide du Centre Laïque des Auberges de Jeunesse*. Paris, 1938

[11] On political life in 1930s France see Olivier Dard. *Les Années 30*. Paris, 1999; Dominique Borne & Henri Dubief. *La Crise des Années 30: 1929-1938*. Paris, 1989; Serge Berstein. *La France des Années 30*. Paris, 2011; Eugen Weber. *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s*. New York, 1996

[12] For an overview of French political life and centralization see René Remond. *La Vie Politique en France: La République Souveraine*. Paris, 2003; Michel Winock. *La France Politique: XIXeme/XXeme siècle*. Paris, 2003; Arnaud-Dominique Houte. *Le Triomphe de la République*. Paris, 2014

[13] On Daniel Guérin see and autobiographical account Daniel Guérin. *Autobiographie de Jeunesse: D'Une Dissidence Sexuelle au Socialisme*. Paris, 1972; Paul Melchior. *Daniel Guérin: Les Garcons et la Liberté*. Paris, 1989; Robert Graham. *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas*. Montreal, 2009

constantly reworked in practice in reaction to the social-political developments in the world at large.

Although the secular youth hostel center had an elected central committee, it functioned as the aggregation of numerous local clubs, which controlled a certain number of hostels and sent delegates to an annual convention.[14] As such it represented an (imperfect) experiment in democratic micro-politics, the ultimate goal of which was to institute a "Republic of the Youth." Despite their relative scarcity, the sources at hand give a clear idea of how this vision developed over the seven-year period the movement lasted. *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse* is an exceptional document in large part because the movement's members used it as a forum and a free space for countless debates on issues such as politics, dress, food-habits, literature, and gender.[15] Part sub-cultural revolt and part polymorphous political formation, the secular youth hostel center stemmed first and foremost from a generational impetus that found its origins in the supposed inertia of French society.[16] For these youths, traveling meant quite literally parting ways with the social status-quo and suggested that physical movement and communal living could cure some of the "illnesses" of the modern world: stagnation and individualism.

As the magazine and the guides published by the youth hostel center tend to show, the hostel buildings played a central role as the sites where the movement's activities took place, but at a metaphorical level they also served as shelters within which the small groups of young men and women could act in relative isolation from the rest of

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[14] Lucette Heller-Goldenberg. *Histoire des Auberges de Jeunesse*. Op. Cit., pp. 139-144

[15] The most complete collection of the *Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse* is preserved at the BDIC and Nanterre and available both at the BDIC and the National Library in Paris.

[16] On youth movements in France during the interwar period see Susan Whitney. *Mobilizing Youth: Communists and Catholics in Interwar France*. Durham, 2009; on the question of youth and gender in the aftermath of the Great War see Mary Louise Roberts. *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France*. Chicago, 1994

society. Furthermore, as an ever-growing network of such protective structures, they participated in a symbolic re-mapping of the French territory, a sort of re-appropriation of the land by this self-designated, up-coming generation. This tendency culminated in an attempt to re-discover and preserve local cultures through folklore and songs from the regions in which the hostels were located.[17] It was understood at the time as a grassroots anthropological movement which mimicked some of the scientific practices of the *Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires* that had recently been established in Paris under the direction of Georges Henri Riviere[18]. This issue, which was already one of the hottest topic within the movement by 1937, brought to the fore one of the most important dimensions of the French youth hostel movement: the search for cultural authenticity. This quest concerned issues which were internal (dress, food habits, social difference, conduct code) as well as external (attitude towards the rest of society) to the movement in a constant attempt to draw the boundaries of a movement that was loosely defined by design. Towards the end of the decade, the electoral defeat of the Popular Front, the Spanish civil war, and the military mobilization of September 1939 had drained the movement of most of its positive energy. For some, this turn of events was a clear sign of the movement's failure and of the impossibility to change the world for the better, they set out to look for other means of action. The short-lived experiment of secular youth hostel center proposed a radical reconsideration of the social and political imaginary that questioned the validity of some foundational categories of modern society such as social hierarchy, the primacy of the elders, gender division, and the national boundaries. Its

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[17] On the location of youth hostels see *Le Chemin de la Joie: Guide du Centre Laique des Auberges de Jeunesse, 1938*. Paris, 1938

[18] *See* James Clifford. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge (MA), 1988; also Herman Lebovics. *True France: The Wars Over Cultural Identity, 1900-1940*. Ithaca, 1992

significance lies in what it can tell us about the evolution of French and European society during the interwar period.[19] This chapter focuses on the youth hostel movement from its inception until the rise to power of the Popular Front in the spring of 1936.

Youth Movements in Modern France: A Short Bibliographical Review

In her recent book about the relationship between communist and catholic youth movements in interwar France, historian Susan Whitney writes that "by the time of the (Paris) World's fair in 1937, youth occupied a place in French public life very different from that which it had occupied two decades earlier."[20] As true as her assessment may be, few historians have tackled the question of youth in interwar France. It stems in part from the lack of historical evidence, since most of the archival records have been lost.[21] A good example of that is the complete absence of records for Léo Lagrange's (minister) under-secretariat of leisure and sports at the National Archives in Paris. Although it is possible to retrieve some significant information in the local archives, it is a painstaking work that only brings mixed results. As a consequence the story of youth, sports, and leisure during the Popular Front is often told as part of general histories of the two-year period the left wing coalition lasted. This is for instance the case of Pascal Ory's mammoth opus on the cultural life under the Popular Front (1936-1938)[22] who mostly

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[19] On the role of the youth hostel movement during the Popular Front period see Pascal Ory. *La Belle Illusion*. Op. Cit; Julian Jackson. *Defending Democracy*. Op. Cit.

[20] Susan Whitney. *Mobilizing Youth: Catholics and Communists in Interwar France.* Durham, 2009, p. 243

[21] Most of the official records pertaining to the question of youth have been lost after being seized by German authorities and moved to Berlin in the summer of 1940. Some of these documents that were retrieved by the Red Army in the aftermath of WWII have been returned to France and are now preserved at the National Archives in Fontaineblau.

[22] Pascal Ory. *La Belle Illusion: Culture et Politique Sous le Signe du Front Populaire.* Paris, 1994

used the French state's legal publication (*journal official*) and periodical for his lengthy section on youth.

If we consider a longer period of time, two recent studies on different aspects of the question of youth in France by American historians have had a significant impact in the field: Judith Surkis' *Sexing the Citizen* which shows how modern masculinity and citizenship were shaped by the social scientific discourses and the action of the state during the Third Republic[23] while in her book *Childhood in the Promised Land*, Laura Lee Downs focused on the *Colonies de Vacances*, an extremely successful extracurricular institution which sought to educate (mostly) working class schoolchildren through summer camps.[24] Although these books come out of different epistemological traditions, Surkis' work being inscribed within the sub-field of intellectual history while Downs is more naturally drawn towards social and cultural history, both underline the connections between the French state and its agents, be it social scientists, schoolteachers, or local administration, and the education of the young French citizens during the period of construction of a national and democratic polity that the Third Republic represented.[25] Beyond the simple lack of archival evidence, the question of youth in interwar France has been problematic for historians because of the absence of any "hegemonic" or large movement throughout the period. While historians of Germany[26] or Italy[27] can write

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[23] Judith Surkis. *Sexing the Citizen: Masculinity and Morality in France, 1870-1920*. Ithaca, 2006

[24] Laura Lee Downs. *Childhood in the Promised Land: Working Class Movements and the Colonies de Vacances in France, 1880-1960*. Durham, 2002.

[25] On the construction of French national identity in the Third Republic see Eugen Weber. *Peasants into Frenchmen*. Stanford, 1976; James Lehning. *French and Peasant: Cultural Contact in Rural France During the 19th Century*. Cambridge, 1995

[26] Michael Kater. *Hitler Youth*. Cambridge (MA), 2004 and Detlev Peukert. *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*. New Haven, 1987

[27] Tracy Koon. *Believe, Obey, Fight: Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943*. Chapel Hill, 1985

about the Hitler youth or the Balilla, writing about France requires that historians shape a

historical narrative out of scattered elements.[28]

In a somewhat dated but informative article, historian Aline Coutrot evaluates the

number of young French people who were part of a youth movement in the middle of the

1930s: "From 1935, that is before the sudden increase in membership of 1936-8 which

was typical of all French organizations, about half a million young people belonged to a

movement or another: the specialized Catholic action movements (JOC, JAC, JEC) had

about 200 000 thousand members, scouting at least 80 000, the Protestant organizations,

Christian Unions, and the Federation of Student Christian Associations probably about

20-25 000.[29] Of the political organizations, the young communists, after a period of

decline, went up to 25 000 in 1935, and the young socialists to about 10 000. The number

of members in the right-wing leagues is particularly difficult to estimate and was subject

to wide fluctuations, but it is not likely that any of them had more than a few thousand

members."[30] What emerges from this outline, is first, the lack of politicization and

organization of the French youth, second, the remarkable "share" of the Catholics among

those who were part of a youth movement, third, the striking numerical weakness of the

communists (PCF) and socialists (SFIO). Moreover, as the author suggests, the year

1936, which consecrated the rise to power of the Popular Front and the demise of the

fascist leagues, represented a threshold in French political life as the enrollment in

political organizations soared during the years leading to the war. This story has been told

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[28] Susan Whitney's work on the Communist and Catholic youths is a good example of this trend. Susan
Whitney. *Mobilizing Youth*. Op. Cit.

[29] On the JOC and affiliated organizations see Whitney. *Mobilizing Youth*. Op. Cit. pp. 80-136

[30] Aline Coutrot. "Youth Movements in France in the 1930s." *Journal of Contemporary History*. No 1,
Volume 5. 1970, p. 29

by historians of the Popular Front period[31], and, for the political right, by historians of fascism in France.[32] Suzan Whitney's book, which deals with the impossible reconciliation between catholic and communist youth movements, often tends to reduce the youth question in interwar France to that binary opposition, an epistemological stance which somehow reduces her ability to document the radical transformations which occurred in French social and political life in the 1930s, chief among them, the relationship between mass culture and society.

General studies on the Popular Front period usually acknowledge the historical significance, singularity, and potential for social transformation of the youth hostel movement in the mid-1930s. But they also tend to categorize it as an outgrowth of the left wing coalition, and in doing so tend to obliterate its autonomous, homegrown impetus. It is most notably the case of Pascal Ory's *La Belle Illusion*[33], which includes a sizable section on the topic (and the cover photography of which depicts a youth hostel girl with a movement's flag). Yet, there is only one historical study on the movement, an unpublished doctoral dissertation written by Lucette Heller-Goldenberg in the early 1980s.[34] Her dissertation is based on interviews she conducted in the 1970s with veterans of youth hostel movement and an extensive archival research.[35] Although the breadth of

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[31] Pascal Ory. *Op. Cit.*; Jackson, Julian. *The popular Front in France: Defending Democracy*. Cambridge, 1988; Jean Touchard & Louis Bodin. *Le Front Populaire*. Paris, 1972; Jacques Kergoat. *La France du Front Populaire*. Paris, 2006; Jean Vigreux. *Le Front Populaire*. Paris, 2011

[32] Robert Soucy. *French Fascism: The Second Wave, 1933-1939*. Robert Paxton. *French Peasant Fascism: Henry Dorgeres Green Shirts and the Crisis of French Agriculture*. New York, 1997

[33] Pascal Ory. *Op. Cit.* pp.

[34] Lucette Heller-Goldenberg. *Histoire des Auberges de Jeunesse en France des Origines a la Liberation: 1929-1945*. Nice, 1985

[35] Besides the numerous interviews she conducted in the 1970s and 1980s with veterans of the Youth Hostel movement, Heller-Goldenberg did archival work in Paris (National Library and National Archives, Central Police Archives), Nanterre (BDIC), Créteil (Bibliothèque Départementale du Val-de-Marne) as well as local archives in the province. Over the years, she gathered a remarkable documentary collection

her research is in many ways remarkable, her work at times resembles more a hagiography than a critical work of history. She often seems eager to reproduce some of the narratives tropes of her subjects and likely discards the aspects of the history of the youth hostels that do not fit within the positive and progressive discourse of the movement. As the only full-length study on the subject, Heller-Goldenberg's dissertation has to be considered diligently. Not only does it represent a treasure trove of historical information but it can also be used as a secondary historical source containing precious detail about the *a posteriori* perception, the "historical legacy" of the youth hostel movement. Reading Heller-Goldenberg's work against the backdrop of the youth hostel movement's historical sources reveals the acute historical awareness of the movement's members, their perception of the historical importance of the "moment" they were living, and of the place of their own movement in this particular "moment". Of this "pre-fabricated" history, the radical historicization of the group's narrative, Heller-Goldenberg says virtually nothing. Moving a step further in the interpretation of its historical significance, I am interested in showing how the French secular youth hostel center, through its micro-political practices and generational discourse sought no less than a radical re-foundation of the social. In this sense, and despite its being understood (now and then) as a vacation and hiking movement, it has much more to do with other radical ideological formations of the interwar period than with the boy scouts or the JOC. In order to capture and analyze the ideological development of the youth hostel movement, namely the creation of a powerful historicist narrative, I will look into the interplay between everyday practices and poetic imagination. The idea of social imaginary, which

pertaining to the youth hostels, including magazines and pamphlet that is now preserved at the departmental archives in Créteil.

is framed by spatial and historical dimensions, coined by Cornelius Castoriadis but used here in a slightly reworked way will frames the theoretical contribution of this chapter.[36]

The German Roots: Looking Across the Rhine

The period of the Kaiserreich[37] (1871-1918) had witnessed the rise of youth movements of diverse political and religious obedience as an outgrowth of the Romantic movement, a tendency that gained steam with the liberalization of political life during the Weimar period[38]. While in 1920s France the boy-scouts[39] and colonies de vacances[40] represented the most popular youth organizations, Germany counted a remarkable number and variety of such movements structured as political, confessional, or simple leisure organizations.

The German youth hostel movement was, in many ways, representative of this historical evolution. Its activities began in 1909 when Richard Schirmann, a catholic

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[36] Cornelius Castoriadis. *The Imaginary Institution of Society.* Paris, 1975

[37] On the Kaiserreich period see David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley. *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in 19th Century Germany*. Oxford, 1984; David Blackbourn. *The Long 19th Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918*. Cambridge, 1998; Matthew Jeffries. *Contesting the German Empire: 1871-1918*. Oxford, 2008

[38] See Walter Laqueur. *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth* Movement. New Brunswick, 1984; Peter Gay. *Weimar Culture*. New York, 1968; Detlev Peukert. *The Weimar Republic*. New York, 1995. In German see Barbara Stambolis. *Die Jugendbewegung und Ihre Wirkungen*. Gottingen, 2014; Christian Niemayer. *Die Dunkeln Seiten der Jugendbewegung: Vom Wandervogel zur Hitlerjugend*. Bern, 2013; For a large panorama on autobiographical writing from prominent participants in the German youth movements see Barbara Stambolis (ed.). *Jugendbewegt Geprägt: Essays zu Autobiographischen Texten von Werner Heisenberg, Robert Jungk und Vielen Anderen*. Gottingen, 2013; On bibliography and sources on the German Youth movement see Susanne Rappe Weber. *Bibbliographie zur Geschichte der Jugendbewegung: Quellen und Darstellungen*. Schwalbach am Taunus, 2009

[39] For the boy-scout movement in France see: Christian Guérin. *L'Utopie Scouts de France. Histoire d'une Identité Collective, Catholique et Sociale, 1920-1995*. Paris, 1997; Arnaud Baubéraut and Nathalie Duval (eds.). *Le Scoutisme entre Guerre et Paix au XXeme siècle*. Paris, 2006.

[40] On the colonies de vacances see Laura Lee Downs. *Childhood in the Promised Land: Working Class Movements and the Colonies de Vacances in France, 1880-1960*. Durham, 2002.

schoolteacher, opened the first youth hostel in the town of Altena on the Lenne river valley in Western Germany.[41] Its purpose was to provide young men and women (between 16 and 30 years of age) with cheap accommodation as a means to discover different parts of the country and practice physical activity in a rural setting. Although Schirmann's vision in many ways fell within the romantic ideological articulation of youth, nature, and physical education, he put a crucial emphasis on pacifism and trans-national collaboration.[42] His work had two primary goals: to foster international peace, and to drag the youth out of the polluting (both morally and physically) environment of the industrial cities. He exposed his ideas clearly in a speech given in Paris in 1934: "Our creation of the youth hostels is not only meant to serve the Nation, but is also supposed to pave the way for a mutual understanding and reconciliation through international collaboration." He went on, reminiscing over his own experience in the German school system: "In the beginning of the century (1901-1903), I got to know, through my position of schoolteacher in industrial Westphalia, the misery of the big cities, the misery of the working class and the children… Just like plants, human beings also need plenty of sunlight and clean air to grow… But the urban dwellers live in stone barracks in which very little air and light penetrate… The big city is the worst enemy of youth… Always in conflict with the doorman who has to keep the building quiet or the policeman."[43] Despite

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[41] Ruckele & Stambolis, *100 Jahre Jugendherbergen 1909-2009: Anfange, Wandlungen, Ruck, und Ausblicke*. Essen, 2009.

[42] For a broader timeframe on the German youth movement see Christoph Klotter. *Romantik und Gewalt: Jugendbewegung im 19, 20 und 21 Jahrhundert*. Viesbaden, 2012

[43] Richard Schirrmann. *Discours de Richard Schirmann: Paris le 17 Mars 1934*. Paris, 1934. In Heller-Goldenberg. *Op. Cit.*, p. 15. Although I do not possess the original text of Schirmann's speech in German, I believe the repeated presence of the word "children" (enfants) in the French text comes from a slightly inaccurate translation of the German word "jugend."

his seeing the industrial city as a largely unhealthy environment, Schirmann's creation of

the youth hostel movement did not stem from his wholesale rejection of the modern

world but rather from his attempt to make it a better, more livable place. As this speech

shows, Schirmann's criticism of the urban and industrial world was twofold. On the one

hand he criticized the poor hygienic conditions of the industrial city characterized by the

life conditions of the urban working class and its youth. On the other, and perhaps more

surprisingly so, he argued that the big city was too repressive an environment with its

"doormen and policemen". In doing so he suggested that the urban youth should be taken

away from the adults' watch and the direct control of their institutions and instead be

given license to experience the world in its own terms[44]. Schirmann's vision pitted a

corrupt adult world (that of the industrial cities) against a natural state (the countryside)

the rediscovery of which would orient youth, and with it the rest of society, towards a

more harmonious future. He believed the youth hostel movement represented an ideal

model to reach this goal in no small part because it metaphorically handed the house keys

to the hostel users.

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[44] See Judith Surkis. *Sexing the Citizen*. Ithaca, 2005; Herzog, Dagmar. *Sexuality in Europe*. Cambridge, 2011.

Figure 1 Richard Schirrmann on a field trip near Altena, 1911

Literally from the day of its creation, Schirmann's German youth hostel

association (Deutsche Jungenherbergs Verband) grew at a remarkable pace.[45] According

to a chart published in the 1934 annual youth hostel guide, there were 17 hostels in 1911

which totaled 3 000 overnight stays (there is no member count for the years 1911 to

1919).[46] Ten years later, in 1921, there were 1 300 hostels in which were recorded 506

000 guests. At that time Germany had 83 local youth hostel groups (Orstgruppen) and 11

000 members (Mitglieder). There were 2 000 hostels by 1924, a number which ceased to

increase significantly in the following years, suggesting that the youth hostel grid was

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[45] See Reulecke & Stambolis. *100 Jahre Jugendherbergen*. Op. Cit.

[46] *Reichs Herbergs-Verzeichnis 1934*. Bielefeld, 1933, p. VII. It is important to note that, by the end of the year 1933 when this guide was published, the integration of the German youth hostel movement in the Hitler youth organization was well under way. The chart's preceding page was devoted to an article justifying the necessity for the 100 000 youth hostel association to work "hand in hand" with the Hitler Youth (HJ). Calling on the HJ, the BDM (women's branch of the HJ) and the Jungvolk (boys' Nazi organization) it proclaimed: "the youth hostels are here for you. Wander around your sublime fatherland; learn to know the land and the people. (…) Wander once in the German border areas (Grenzgebieten), get to know your brothers and sisters in the rural areas, this way we will make the proper communion between the people as the fuhrer wants." *Reichs Herbergs-Verzeichnis. Op. Cit*, p. VI

tight enough to efficiently serve the needs of the traveling German youth. At the end of

the year 1932, a month before the Nazis came to power, there were 2 124 hostels in

Germany which accounted for 4 278 595 overnight stays.[47] The youth hostels association

had 128 199 members spread among 1 117 local groups. Breaking down these numbers

shows that once the hostels' network was large enough to offer accommodation in most

of Germany, the average yearly overnight stay per hostel settled between 330 and 380

throughout the 1920s and the 1930s.[48] Although the ultra-modern flagship hostel of

Frankfurt on the Main could provide over three hundred young men and women with

accommodation,[49] most hostels in the countryside had a few beds, were often open during

school holidays only, and cared for by the local schoolteacher.

<p style="text-align:center">Figure 2 Frankfurt am Main Youth Hostel Postcard early, 1930s</p>

As the hostel attendance numbers suggest, the end of the First World War

represented a formidable opportunity for the German youth hostel movement to grow.[50]

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[47] *Ibid.* p. VIII

[48] The volume of the international use of hostels remains one of the major unknowns of the period. I have yet to find, in the German or French sources, a precise figure.

[49] The Frankfurt hostel at 150 Hansaallee was built in 1930 as the first ultra-modern building of that kind. Its design was largely influenced by functionalist architecture and the Bauhaus school. See Reulecke & Stambolis. *Op. Cit.* In an unlikely turn of events the building has been repurposed as a retirement home.

[50] See Reulecke & Stambolis. *Op. Cit.*

The development of the association depended mostly on local goodwill, the personal

involvement or local personalities such as schoolteachers, pastors, students or mayors,

than on the activities of a centralized institution. This "organic" model of growth was

relatively easy to emulate and the trend set by Schirmann and his disciples was followed

in numerous European countries and in North America. In 1932 in Amsterdam,

representatives from youth hostel associations from 11 countries founded the

International Youth Hostel Federation (IYHF), which testifies of the overseas

development of the movement and the universal appeal of Schirmann's vision.[51]

The First Take: Marc Sagnier and the Youth Hostel League

In France the youth hostel movement emerged as a creation of the progressive

Catholics who greatly benefitted from the local influence of the church. In 1888 the

French Youth Catholic Association (ACJF) was created as a response to the formation of

a French division of the YMCA the year before. Yet, nation-wide catholic youth

movements did not appear until the middle of the 1920s. The most significant and

successful of them, the Christian Workers' Youth (JOC – *Jeunesse Ouvriere Chrétienne*),

which sought to counter the influence of the communist youth federation (created in

1920, one year after the communist youth international) by specifically targeting catholic

workers, was founded in 1926. Following the model of a similar Belgian movement, the

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[51] On the foundation of the International Youth Hostel Federation see Heller-Goldenberg. *Op. Cit.*; Sinika Stubbe. "Die Internationale Arbeit des Jugenherbergswerks in der Fruhen Nachkriegszeit." In Reulecke & Stambolis. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 241-253

JOC's was exclusively composed of workers, including its chiefs.[52] In 1928, the JOCF, a

female branch was created, and in 1929 a farmers' division (JAC – *Jeunesse Agricole*

Chrétienne) meant to aggregate local chapters of the farmer's union movement.

Following a similar model, Catholic students tried to regroup within a number of

associations, targeting the upper class youth: the Christian students in 1929 (JEC –

Jeunesse Etudiante Chrétienne), the Christian female students in 1930 (JECF – *Jeunesse*

Etudiante Chrétienne Féminine)[53].

The French youth hostel movement came out of this ferment and owes much to

the action of its founding father, Marc Sangnier[54], a catholic intellectual, who opened the

first Youth Hostel on his personal domain in Boissy-la-Riviere, fifty kilometers south of

Paris, in 1929. A product of the social and political turmoil of the Third Republic,

Sangnier was born in 1874 in a bourgeois Catholic family. As a student, he collaborated

to the journal *Le Sillon* (the furrow), which sought to spread the idea of a social,

democratic, and republican Catholicism. By 1899, *Le Sillon* had become the semi-official

newspaper of the *Education Populaire* movement which intended to transcend class

divisions and reconcile the catholic church with the republic through physical activity and

intellectual training.[55] In 1901, with the support of the Catholic Church, Sagnier created

the *Instituts Populaires* that dispensed free education in an attempt to strengthen the idea

of a social and republican Catholicism among the masses. In 1905, the adoption of the

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[52] On the emergence of the JOC see Susan Whitney. *Mobilizing Youth*. Op. Cit. pp. 80-85
[53] Coutrot, Aline. *Op. Cit.*
[54] On Marc Sangnier *see* Lefevre, Denis. *Marc Sangnier: l'Aventure du Catholicisme Social*. Paris, 2008;
See Madeleine Barthélémy-Madaule. *Marc Sangnier, 1873-1950*. Paris, 1973; Paris, 2008, Jean-Jacques
Greteau. *Marc Sangnier: Le Semeur d'Espérance*. Paris, 2009
[55] More information on the é*ducation populaire*: Christian Maurel. *Education Populaire et Puissance
d'Agir: Les Processus Culturels de l' Emancipation*. Paris, 2010; Jean-Marie Mignon. *Une Histoire de
l'Education Populaire*. Paris, 2007

law on the separation of the Church and the state rendered such conciliation efforts

obsolete and instead created the political conditions for a radical confrontation between

Catholics and secular Republicans.[56] In the aftermath of the First World War, Sagnier

was elected deputy to the national assembly and took part in the *bleu horizon* center right

coalition.[57] His movement, *Jeune République*, advocated a pacifist conception of

international politics through Franco-German reconciliation.

Figure 3 Congress of the Democratic International in Bierville 1926 © Fonds Marc Sangnier

[56] Jean-Pierre Scot. *Comprendre la Loi de 1905 sur la Séparation de l'Eglise et de l'Etat*. Paris, 2005; Ducomte, M. *La Loi de 1905: Quand l'Etat se Séparait des Eglises*. Toulouse, 2005; Jerome Baubérot. *Laicité 1905-2005*. Paris, 2004.
[57] See Philippe Bernard & Henri Dubief. *The Decline of the French Third Republic: 1914-1938*. Cambrdige, 1988; Michel Winock. *La Droite, Hier et Aujourd'hui*. Paris, 2012

In 1926, Sangnier hosted the 6th congress of the democratic international in
Bierville, welcoming representatives from 33 countries.[58] Sangnier's pacifist and
internationalist positioning did not prove very popular and he failed in his attempt to get
re-elected to the French assembly in 1929. Inspired by Schirmann's ideas after meeting
with the German schoolteacher in numerous occasions, Sangnier decided to move away
from a direct form of political involvement and instead try to spread his pacifist ideals by
setting up a French branch of the Youth Hostel movement.[59]

In a sense, Sangnier had come full circle by returning to a form of indirect (but no
less potent) political action based on the precepts of popular education and Catholicism.
The *éducation populaire* which he had promoted at the turn of the century was framed by
learning practices which were part of the traditional scholastic corpus of the Third
republic such as the classroom setting and the study of books, a tradition which, as Laura
Lee Downs recalls, had been inherited from the beginning of the 19th century: "The
Napoleonic reforms had driven the Rousseauan current of open air education
underground, suppressing it under a blanket of traditional educational practice: rote
memorization, respect for the teacher, and rigorous containment of youthful energies
within the four walls of the school.[60]" The idea of "containment of youthful energies" was

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[58] The summary of the international democratic congress for peace was published in 1926 under the title *La
Paix par la Jeunesse. VIeme Congres Démocratique International pour la Paix, 17-22 Aout 1926*. Paris,
1926
[59] On Sagnier and the pacifist trend within French reformist Catholicism see Gearoid Barry. *The
Disarmament of Hatred: Marc Sangnier, French Catholicism and the Legacy of the First World War,
1914-1945*. London, 2012
[60] Laura Lee Downs. *Childhood in the Promised Land: Working Class Movements and the Colonies de
Vacances in France, 1880-1960*. Durham, 2002, p. 15. In the same chaptshows how the popular colonies de
vacances emerged in France as Swiss inspired, protestant-evangelical philanthropic enterprise in the early
1880s. Left-wing municipalities in the Paris suburbs and throughout France later adopted this "hygienic"
model.

precisely what was supposed to be challenged by the practical nature of the extra-curricular education offered by the youth hostel movement. It borrowed from the German romantics and emphasized physical education and the (re)-discovery of nature. Sangnier's desire to reach for a foreign born model of extra-curricular education reflected a growing disenchantment with the traditional model of the French "citizen-soldier" and the need to rethink youth movements as fostering a sense of individual and group responsibility, by pushing for a direct involvement of their members in the decision making processes.[61] In her book *Sexing the Citizen,* Judith Surkis makes a compelling argument for the need to reassess the French Third Republic's educational policies through the continuous attempts by the state, the action of educators and social scientists, to frame an idea of "acceptable" male sexuality and create a generation of healthy, abiding, and nationally conscious male citizens. Her brand of intellectual history draws heavily on a pre-existing sub-field of French social and gender history with a pronounced Foucauldian tinge.[62] Although her work focuses almost exclusively on the complex and dynamic relationship between male sexuality and citizenship, it also suggests a broader critique of the educational policies under the Third Republic. Instead of fostering individuality and creativity, the French liberal republic based it's school system on a unifying model, which found its expression

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[61] See Gearoid Barry. *The Disarmament of Hatred*. Op. Cit., p. 160. In her book *Sexing the Citizen,* Judith Surkis makes a compelling argument for the need to reassess the French Third Republic's educational policies through the continuous attempts by the state, the action of educators and social scientists, to frame an idea of "acceptable" male sexuality and create a generation of healthy, abiding, and nationally conscious male citizens. Her brand of intellectual history draws heavily on a pre-existing sub-field of French social and gender history with a pronounced Foucauldian tinge. Although her work focuses almost exclusively on the complex and dynamic relationship between male sexuality and citizenship, it also suggests a broader critique of the educational policies under the Third Republic. See Judith Surkis. *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920*. Ithaca, 2006.

[62] Joshua Cole. *The Power of Large Numbers: Population, Politics, and Gender in Nineteenth Century France*. Ithaca, 2000; Caroline Ford. *Divided Houses: Religion and Gender in Modern France.* Ithaca, 2005; Sylvia Schafer. *Children in Moral Danger and the Problem of Government in Third Republic France.* Princeton, 1997.

in the attempt to define and confine male sexual norms described by Surkis, or in the attempt to foster a sense of national belonging as described by Eugen Weber.[63] For many, the First World War represented the apex of the French republican model and the victory of the unified nation and its male citizen-soldiers. But for a minority it exposed the limits of these two conceptions, which had indirectly led to the deaths of millions on the European battlefields. The youth hostel movement's ideology ostensibly rejected nationalistic and militaristic impulses in favor of international cooperation and pacifism. Its conception of youth did not rely on a strict gender division but instead offered a safe place for young men and women to develop a common experience away from the adults' watch. Dormitories were split along gender lines in the youth hostels, anything else would have been unacceptable, but that was the extent of gender division within the movement.[64]

The youth hostel movement seemed to offer unlimited potential for in Sagnier's mind, and considering his understanding of the deficiencies of the official school system, the direct and pacific European democracy of tomorrow could only be instituted through the extra-curricular training of the young people and trans-national cooperation. From its very beginning in 1929, the French Youth hostel movement was to be framed by a double identity, as a sort of political and cultural syncretism between French and German traditions, structured by the concepts of youth, travel, and pacifism. In his book *Turning*

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[63] Eugen Weber. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization or Rural France*, 1870-1914. Stanford, 1976

[64] Here see Heller Goldenberg's argument on Sangnier and the foundation of the French Youth hostel movement

to Nature in Germany[65] Michael A. Williams links the emergence of the Youth Hostel

movement in the years preceding the Great War with the development of youth hiking

groups among the middle-class of the industrialized cities of Western Germany. For him,

the Youth Hostels were created as an offspring of the *Wandervogel* movement and an

outlet for "educated adolescents and young adults in the Rambler movement seeking

liberation from the institutions of social control through group hiking."[66] But as Williams

notes, the Wandervogel's desire to free themselves from social pressures and control met

with forceful opposition from the adult "youth cultivators", a "growing group of educators

and professional youth specialists, who aimed to guide Germany's teenagers along the

path toward rational and self-disciplined citizenship."[67] Understanding the German

origins of the youth hostel movement and its "import" in France in the late 1920s is

essential to comprehend its later development. Read against the back drop of the social-

scientific movement described by Surkis, the emergence of alternative youth movements

based on the German model can be seen as an attempt, by the political left as well as the

Catholics, to bypass the unifying model of the Third Republic. Understanding the French

Third Republic as based on a bourgeois rational imagery inherited from the

enlightenment and the political experience of the French revolution, allows us to imagine

the need for reforming intellectuals to tap into different intellectual traditions. In order to

bypass the rigid educational model described by Surkis, the German youth movements

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[65] John Williams. *Turning to Nature in Germany: Hiking, Nudism, and Conservation, 1900-1940.* Stanford, 2007; Peter Gay. *Op. Cit.*
[66] Williams. *Op. Cit.*, p. 18
[67] Williams. *Op. Cit.*, p. 18

with a romantic influence were seen by many as an example to follow in order to provide the French youth with a complete physical and intellectual training.

From the late 1920s to the beginning of the Second World War, French intellectuals and educators started looking across the Rhine River for new ways to train the national youth. The challenge was not only to produce soldiers and citizens loyal to the Third Republic (as Surkis has shown) but also to cope with the rapid social changes of the interwar period. For many observers on the left, the nationalistic and hygienist ideal of the prewar times and the strict national educational frame of reference amounted to a dangerous form of political and didactical anachronism.[68] The development of new forms of communication and political mobilization seemed to require a radical reconsideration of the place of youth in society. In terms of youth politics, Germany seemed to be numerous steps ahead of France, possessing a wide array of youth formations with an exceptionally large audience. This situation resulted from the less centralized nature of the German state, the strength of regional traditions and political allegiances, the earlier (and broader) development of extra-curricular education, as well as the ideological openness (permeability) of the immediate post-war years and the Weimar period.

Looking towards Germany gave the impression, on both sides of the political spectrum, that the French youth was static and lacked the intellectual and physical drive to compete with that of its great and threatening neighbor. In this sense, looking beyond the French national borders for a more efficient set of youth policies and practices amounted to an implicit criticism of the action of the government and its affiliates. In the

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[68] On this particular point see the argument developed by Susan Whitney on the Communist Youth. In Susan Whitney. *Mobilizing Youth*. Op. Cit., pp. 16-50

following section we will look the travels Daniel Guérin, a young French intellectual, and the ways in which the time he spent in the youth hostels in Germany helped him frame a critique of the condition of youth in France in the early 1930s. What was Guérin looking for in the Germanyouth hostels that could no be found in the French education system?

Revolution in a Nutshell: Daniel Guérin's experience in the German youth hostels

In 1933, Daniel Guerin, a left-wing activist and journalist who later became a prominent historian of the anarchist movement[69], travelled to Germany to report on the German youth hostel movement. His article entitled *On the Road with the German Youth* was published in the illustrated magazine *Vu* in December 1933.[70]

In the first paragraphs, Guerin pointed to the national characteristic that made the German youth unique: its lust for travel: "For as a long as man remembers, as soon as the young German has a few free days, he kisses father, mother, and little sister goodbye and walks away. A habit so old and particular that a word is devoted to it for which our language has no equivalent: *Wandern*. Traveling is not a correct translation. The *wanderer* is a kind of traveller that does not exist here. A restless *globe-trotter*, who goes around, most often on foot."[71] This understanding of the German youth, or rather its

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[69] In the beginning of his career, Guerin worked as a freelance reporter, traveling and writing on French Indochina and the Lebanon (1927-1930). In the 1930s, his political allegiance progressively moved from the social democrats (SFIO) to the Trotskyist *Workers and Peasants' Socialist Party*. After returning from Germany during the summer of 1932, Guerin helped create the *Secular Youth Hostel League* (CLAJ) which he left in 1934 after a dispute about the political strategy and organization model for the association.

[70] Guérin published a number of books on youth and socialism: Daniel Guérin. *Jeunesse du Socialisme Libertaire*. Paris, 1959; Daniel Guérin. *Autobiographie de Jeunesse*. Paris, 1972 as well as a relefction on the Popular Front: Daniel Guérin. *Front Populaire: Révolution Manquée?* Paris, 1963

[71] Daniel Guérin. "Sur les Routes avec la Jeunesse Allemande." *Vu*, No 247. December 7, p. 1933. The German concept of *Wandern* will of course be easier to grasp for readers of English, the word *Wanderer*

practice of the particular form of travel: *wander*, is filled with heavy romantic undertones and admiration. It is conceived as a form of organic and magical return to nature born from the need to step away from urban society and its repetitive rhythm. But it also suggests, from the outset, an almost irreconcilable cultural difference between here (France) and there (Germany). This difference is expressed in the existence of an entirely foreign semantic field pertaining to travel and, through it, a certain idea of society, freedom, and the construction of individual subjectivities.

In rather uninspired fashion, Guérin chose to develop his argument by implicitly opposing an idealized romantic German national character to its static French other: "The German has remained sentimental and never gave away his tender love for nature. For him, wandering is a means to step back into greenery and the blue sky, live freely a simple and needless life. His country industrialized at a maddening pace, capitalist civilization befell him. His modernized cities, set like clockwork, do not leave any room for dreams. But he keeps aside this wonderful way out: the road."[72] For Guérin, the tight German youth hostel network helped preserve the traditional and wild wanderer spirit by civilizing it, effectively replacing carriage relays of the old times in favor of the "palaces, villas, and shelters of the traveling youth."[73] He concluded his introduction by opposing the French ways to that of the Germans (emphasis on the national character expressed in individual citizens): "Unlike in our country, progress did not kill the old traditions of the

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having a similar signification. For Guérin, this semantic lapse served as a reminder of the cultural differences between a "Anglo-Saxon" world and its "Latin" counterpart.

[72]Guérin. *Op. Cit.* p. 1933

[73] By "palaces, villas, and shelters of traveling youth" Guérin referred somewhat ambiguously to the wide range of buildings that housed youth hostels in Germany. From the most magnificent medieval and renaissance castles, to the bourgeois houses, and the decrepit barns, the 2 000 youth hostels which were in operation in Germany during the reporter's stay took multiple forms, adding substance to the movement as reclaiming and preserving local monuments or simple country houses.

road, it helped them rise again." The idea of movement, travel, and the road (of which

wandern is the German expression) had here a double meaning. On the one hand it

literally meant physical movement: the act of traveling, and the positive values associated

with it such as physical education and cultural discovery. On the other, and perhaps more

importantly, *movement* meant political and social dynamism, restlessness, and a sort of

perpetual evolution supposed to benefit all of society. Traveling meant the active refusal

to dwell on the present state of the world, and a desire to constantly keep things in

motion. Both dimensions of the question appeared mutually reinforcing. But for the

German *wandern* the act of traveling was rooted in a profound tradition, a national

character, effectively taming the supposedly alienating dimension of capitalist

modernity.[74] In this framework traveling meant, first and foremost, an attempt to preserve

cultural authenticity in a rapidly changing world. As a pioneer of the French youth hostel

movement, Guérin formulated a fairly typical understanding of industrial modernity. He

did not appear to criticize modernity as such, but rather what was perceived as its

excesses, or its tendency to entrap individuals, an understanding of modernity's

rationalizing impulses reminiscent of Max Weber's concept of the iron cage.[75] The

German youth hostels were praised here not because of their anti-modern nature, but

rather because they represented a way to counterbalance the effects of urban and

industrialized modernity on individuals and society. Rejoining Guérin's understanding of

the social function of travel, the idea of *progress* had a definitely positive connotation,

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[74] On Daniel Guérin's travels in Germany both before and after WWII see Alexandre Saintain. "L'Intellectuel Socialiste Révolutionnaire Daniel Guérin en Allemagne avant et après la Catastrophe." In *Vingtieme Siecle*. No 119: (Fall 2013), pp. 15-28
[75] Max Weber. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York, 2002

while *capitalist civilization* was seen as a threatening force *brutally befalling* the German youths.[76]

This opposition between a good form of modernity, with strong ties to an imagined past it enhances and another disruptive and threatening one, is of particular interest here as potentially transcending political divisions and a structuring element of the youth hostel movement's discourse.[77] To the positive couple of movement and progress the author opposed inertia and impotence. Guérin, as most of his contemporary left-wing fellows, considered the period of "high-modernity" in which they found themselves as containing a remarkable potential for social upheaval.[78] Making good use of this potential, which signified not falling into the fascist or Stalinist trap, required to devise new forms of social and political organization. It is clear, from his reportage, that he had great confidence in the ability of the youth hostels to foster a new form of social imaginary among the German youths, laying the foundations for a bright future based on solid historical traditions. Another central element of Guérin's discourse, and a consequence of his conception of modernity, politics, and movement, lay in the superposition of two coeval but different national French and German forms of modernity. Furthermore, he imagined the solution to global problems in an "organic" fusion between tradition, understood here as wandering and the return to nature one the

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[76] On this particular point see Guérin's work on the relationship between fascism and capitalism: Daniel Guérin. *Fascisme et Grand Capital*. Paris, 1965

[77] One the question of modernity see James Scott. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, 1998; Marshall Berman. *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York, 1982; David Harvey. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change.* Oxford, 1989; Raymond Williams. *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Comformists*. London, 1989; On fascism and modernism see Roger Griffin. *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*. London, 2007

[78] On the idea of "high" or "classical modernity" see Detlev Peukert. *Weimar Germany*. Op. Cit.

one hand, and industrial society on the other. Guérin's praise for the German hostels has to be understood specifically as a counterpoint to the French situation, he came to understand what could be done in terms of youth policy during his travels in the German countryside.

The Everyday Experience at the German Hostels

The critique of French society in the young reporter's piece was completed by his close focus on the youth hostel experience and his understanding of communal practices as a potential remedy for the most problematic aspects of modern society.[79] Like most other outdoor youth organizations such as the wandervogel or the scouts, the youth hostel movement relied heavily on everyday practices to foster a sense of community. The "lessons" dispensed by the organization were not to be taught but rather "lived" by the young men and women who participated in its activities.[80] These activities could be split into two categories which mirrored the youth hostel experience as a whole: one the one hand life in the outdoors and on the road, and on the other life in the hostels which were made up of a myriad of activities and tasks. Outdoor practice was a rather organized one. Although some travelers might have chosen to travel on their own, most took part in local clubs which put together excursions and hikes, during weekends and school holidays, and often published a news sheet. The number of these clubs rapidly increased from 83 in

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[79] On everyday practices see Michel De Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, 2011; Henri Lefebvre. *Critique of Everyday Life*. London, 2014; Pierre Bourdieu. *Le Sens Pratique*. Paris, 1980.
[80] "Wandern als Leibesübung." *Die Jungenherberge: Zeitschrift für Jugendherbergen und Jugendwandern*. No. 1, Vol. 11, January 1930, p. 7

1921 to 1 182 in 1933.[81] The clubs represented a means of socialization in the home cities[82] but the movement found its reason of being in the outdoors. Young men and women traveled together, usually in small groups and following an itinerary that had previously been established. Depending on the destination, different activities could be practiced.

As the number of hostels soared in the 1920s, locations became more varied and the range of activities expanded.[83] By the 1930s, the hostels network's users were offered the possibility to sail boats in the summer, ski in the winter, and ride bicycles which were often put at their disposal anytime and anywhere. Although the scale and variety of operations expanded, the small group still served as the basic social unit and the movement's philosophy remained virtually unchanged. The youth hostels originality as a communal organization depended on the fact that the spirit of the local clubs was carried-away on the road. Although traveling (*wandern*) was the activity at the center of the very idea of the movement, life in the hostels was equally important. The buildings of various shapes and size, where the youths from different parts of the country and social origins share lived experiences, were at the heart of the movement's ideology.[84]

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[81] *Reichs Herbergs-Verzeichnis 1935*. Bielefeld, 1934, p. VII

[82] The enrollment in youth hostel clubs in some of the largest German cities was quite extraordinary: at the end of 1929, Hamburg had the largest such club which counted 4 461 members (3,9% of the city's population), in Leipzig there were 2 993 members (4,4%), and 2 171 (4%) in Dortmund. In the industrial city of Wuppertal, near Dortmund, almost 10% of the population was enrolled in the local club. The Berlin area, which comprised several such clubs, had a total of 9 031 club members (2,2%). *Die Jungenherberge*. No 6, Vol. 11, June 1930, p. 10

[83] On the early development of the German Youth hostels see Stefanie Hanke. "Reorganisation und Ausbau der Jugendherbergen nach 1918." In Reulecke & Stambolis. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 99-110

[84] Although the *Jugenherberge* magazine featured a large number of hostels' pictures, the most comprehensive display of the German youth hostel movement's undertaking in terms of housing came in the form of a bi-annual insert called *Bau Blätter*. The publication focused on hostel buildings and offered floor plans, detailed pictures and think pieces on how to improve everyday life at the hostels through reflection and works on the hostels' buildings.

Richard Schirmann's message invited young men and women to meet and engage with their peers in the hostels and on the road. The belief in communal work and experience, in the bonding potential of meals taken together at a large table, cooked for everyone in the simple kitchen of a reclaimed country house had clear Christian undertones. Yet, its outreach transcended the Christian circles and appeared to those who sought a remedy to the supposed shortcomings of the modern world.[85]
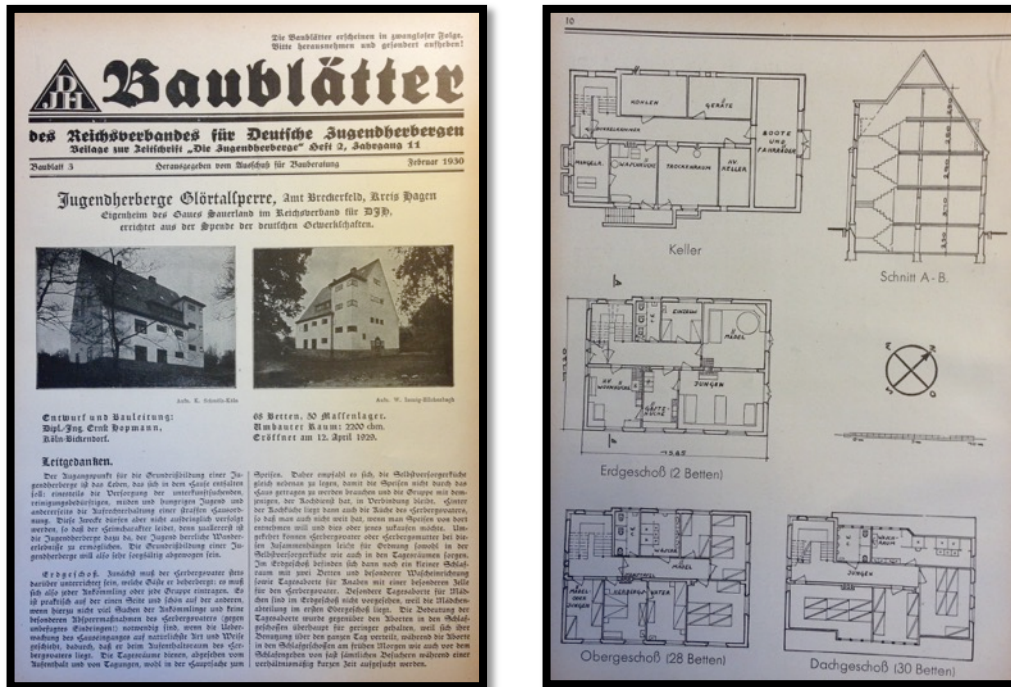
Figure 4 Bau Blatter Magazine Insert February 1930

The German youth hostel organization took the question of housing extremely seriously and published a bi-annual supplement to *Die Jugendherberge* (its newsletter) entirely devoted to the construction and refurbishing of new hostels. Part construction

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[85] See Barbara Stambolis. "Jugendherbergen: Wie Sie Aussahen und Aussehen Sollten." In Reulecke & Stambolis. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 111-124

manual and part commercial communication, the *Bau Blätter* ("construction pages")

underlined the importance of the hostel buildings for the movement. The front page of the

February 1930 issue displayed two pictures of a newly renovated youth hostel in

Breckerfeld (Northern Sauerland in Westphalia) followed by an article on "The guiding

principles" of life in the hostels.[86] The purpose of the piece was to reassert the irreducible

relationship between the hostel building and the hostel life, which formed the material

foundation of the movement's ideology: "The main objective for the building plan of a

youth hostel is the life that has to unfold, discover itself (entfallen) within the walls and

beyond. It must provide the restless and hungry youths with accommodation and a

healthy environment and, on the other hand (andererseits) the preservation

(aufrechterhaltung) of proper housing rules. These two aspects should not appear

oppressive or obtrusive, so that the home character remains and the youth hostel is so that

the authentic wanderer experience is made possible. It is therefore very important to

consider the floor plans of the youth hostel with the utmost care. For that reason, the

Herbergsvater has to remind these rules to the guests he hosts, but he should also be

welcoming to every group that comes in. It must be practical on one side and nice on the

other, yet very little research has been on the negative role the *Herbergsvater's*

personality can have on the welcoming nature of the hostel. For that matter it is important

to think the hostel as having separate entrances for the *Herbergsvater* not to be standing

around in the common areas."

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[86] "Leitgedanken." *Baublatter*. No3, February 1930, p. 1

The concern shown here for the building and inner structure of a "model" youth hostel mirrored in many aspects the ideal image of self developed within the organization.[87] The youths engaged in the hostels activities had to be given as much independence as possible and significant efforts should be made to render the presence of adults inconspicuous. From a moral point of view, the *Herbergsvater* served as a guarantor in the eyes of the rest of society, but his presence suggests that even within the organization there was a diffuse belief that adults would have a reassuring presence among the flock of young wanderers. In many instances, the *Herbersgvater*, who often happened to be the local schoolteacher, was not much older than his guests. The main room was designed as the site where young travelers would interact: "The day-rooms (Tagesräume), were the places where guests were supposed to spend most of their in-residence time, and eat their dinner. We recommend the self-service kitchen to be placed next door, in order to avoid food transport throughout the house, and for the smaller group to remain connected with the rest. Behind the main kitchen (Hochküche) is that of the *Herbergsvater*, so those who might not want to wait, and would rather like to purchase a meal, can ask their host too cook dinner for them. This will also help the tenants devote less energy to maintain the kitchen in the main room tidy. On the ground floor one can find a small bedroom with two beds, a washroom, and a dayroom for the *Herbergsvater*. The general washrooms for women are not planned for the ground floor because the women's section is found in the first floor. The importance of the day washrooms is underlined by the fact that the ones adjacent to the bedrooms can only be

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[87] On the importance of the image and self-image in the interwar German youth hostels see Barbara Stambolis. "Jugendherbergen: Wie sie Aussahen und Aussehen Sollten." In Reulecke & Stambolis. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 111-124

used in the morning and the evening, but also because they can be used when the hostels functions at full capacity and there is a need for extra washing space. (…) The Second floor is reserved for the young men (…) There are washrooms on each of the floors with foot-washing sinks. (…) In the cellar there is a washing machine, a boots room. (…) The dormitories and common rooms are distant from each other and well isolated which should ensure an excellent quality of sleep. (…) The painting of the room should be done with colorful shades suggesting a connection to the local landscape. Images and poster should be placated on the wall of every room. (…) The hostel has an autonomous plumbing system with central electric heating including separate thermostats for the *Herbergsvater's* section and the common areas. "[88]

Such elaborate discussions on the proper way to build a hostel suitable for the attainment of the movement's goals attest of an organization that had attained a certain maturity and was eager to showcase it for itself and for others to see. The youth hostel ideology was embedded in the walls of this ideal hostel that was supposed to provide youths with a careful balance between freedom and hygiene, foster adventurous and creative behaviors in a modern and controlled environment. As such every new hostel that was built or opened out of the re-purposing of a pre-existing building was understood by the organization as a new settlement in unchartered territory. This rhetorical component allowed for the creation of a heroic discourse that transcended the relatively mundane activity of the hostels that put on the clothes of a radical social experiment.

[88] "Leitgedanken." *Baublatter*. No 3, February 1930, p. 1

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The hostels showcased in the *Bau Blätter* represented an ideal model which was rarely attained. Relatively few hostels were equipped with kitchens capable of providing their guests with complete meals. In most cases travelers were responsible for their own food, which posed obvious logistical problems but helped foster sentiments of solidarity. Interactions between individuals and groups occurred mainly in the evening, from 5 to 10pm, while in the kitchen, or sitting in the adjacent dayroom at the large communal tables, or after dinner when most young people socialized in the common room, playing music, games, or simply engaging in petty conversations. The youth hostel movement was unique in that it provided young men and women, between 16 and 30 years of age, with the possibility to interact away from the adults' watch. Although there was always a *Herbergsvater* (and quite often a *Herbegsmutter* too), this benevolent adult figure, the hostel users' activities remained virtually unchecked, as long as they complied with the hours of operation and the simple hygienic rules. Seemingly benign everyday deeds in the hostels such as cooking, cleaning, and singing, were part of what gave the movement its substance and meaning. Of course, outdoor activities and hiking remained the youth hostels' *raison d'être* but it would be misleading to simply consider the buildings operated by the association as cheap housing for the wandering youth.
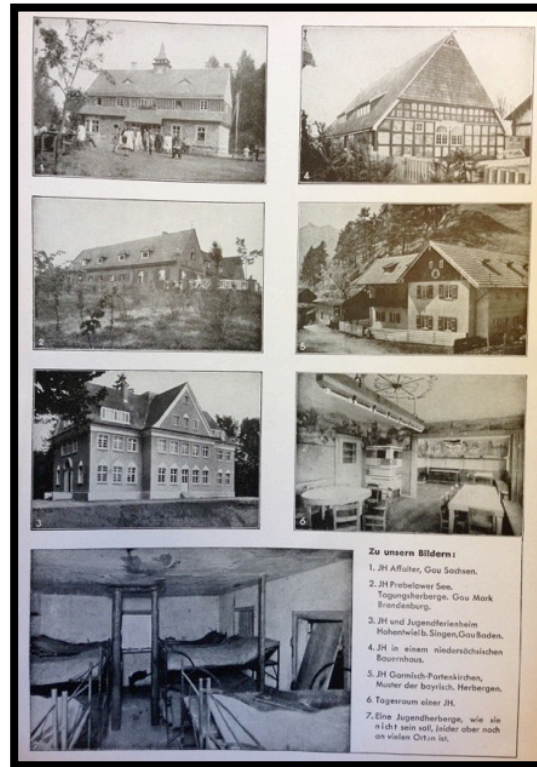
Figure 5 Types of Youth Hostels in "Die Jugenherberge" September 1930

Healthy German Bodies and French Self-Image

In his reportage, Guérin clearly rejoiced over the lack of "centralism" in the organization, a loaded word in the French political vocabulary, designating the ever present state agencies and their norms: "there is no centralism in the large (youth hostel) association, no imposed housing scheme, no "standards": every locality constructs the youth house according to its desires and resources. They can be large or small, luxurious or rustic. They all have a unique style and atmosphere."[89] Guérin described the youth

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[89] Guérin. *Op. Cit.* p. 1934

hostel as a space free of adults. As in the *Bau Blätter*, the *Herbergsvater* brought the new guests to the threshold of the living room but refrained form entering in it. The "purity" of the youth experience, in isolation from the morally wrought world of adults was to be remained untainted. The "day room" (living room) was at the heart of the hostel, filled with benches and tables. Since the dormitories only opened at night, this is where the hostel users spent most of their time together. Guérin described an exclusively masculine world[90], with a peculiar sense of fashion and a dynamic physical appearance: "The day room is already filled: young men between 15 and 20 years of age, looking exactly alike, blonde hair, manly voices, sharp faces. The folded up sleeves of their green or khaki sports shirts let the sun-tanned arms show. Their knees emerge from a corduroy or suede pair of shorts harnessed to their waist by a large belt, often completed by Tyrolean suspenders the leather straps of which attach at the chest to a square patch. The legs are bare, muscles tight and hard. The *wanderer* rarely wears a hat unless he adorns his blonde hair with a small bishop's hat cut out from an old hat. The toughness of times has not hardened this beautiful and healthy youth. There is nothing military in his dress or his look. The *wanderer* is more bohemian than our French boy scout. The hostel is neither a camp nor a military barrack. One sometimes falls asleep at the sweet sound of a guitar but never wakes up at the sound of a clarion."[91]

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[90] It is important to note her that Guérin never made much mystery of his homosexuality. It is difficult to assess whether his description of the German youth hostels as an exclusively masculine world came as an expression of his gender preference or if he happened to spend time in hostels which had an overwhelming proportion of male guests. Although women represented a minority among hostel users they did play a very significant role in the movement, the co-educational dimension of which proved to be one of its most distinctive characteristics. On Guérin and the question of gender see Daniel Guérin. *Autobiographie de Jeunesse: d'Une Dissidence Sexuelle au Socialisme*. Paris, 1972 and Daniel Guérin. *Homosexualité et Révolution*. Paris, 1982

[91] Guérin. *Op. Cit.* p. 1934

Physical toughness appears as a remedy against the difficulties of the time, the fit body serving as a shell against the aggressive nature of the outside world. The meaning of this inside/outside dialectical relationship is not to be overlooked, as its significance was to grow progressively over the course of the 1930s and 1940s.[92] Guérin showed a sort of fascination with the German youth hostel users, their body types, dress code and uniform style and their ability to remain organized without falling into a militaristic trap. He perceived an especially virile world, writing about the young men's body in a classical way reminiscent of 19th century depictions of Greek sculptures, a conception in line with the romantic conceptions of masculinity described by George Mosse in his book *The Image of Man*[93], making the individual young man's body an allegory for a healthier German society.[94]

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[92] See Klaus Theweleit. *Male Fantasies: Vol. 1*. Minneapolis, 1987

[93] George L. Mosse. *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. New York, 1996.

[94] For an interesting take on the significance of the bodily aesthetics of the German Romantic period in the Nazi era see Michael Mackenzie. "From Athens to Berlin: The 1936 Olympics and Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*. *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 29, No. 2 (Winter 2003), pp. 302-336
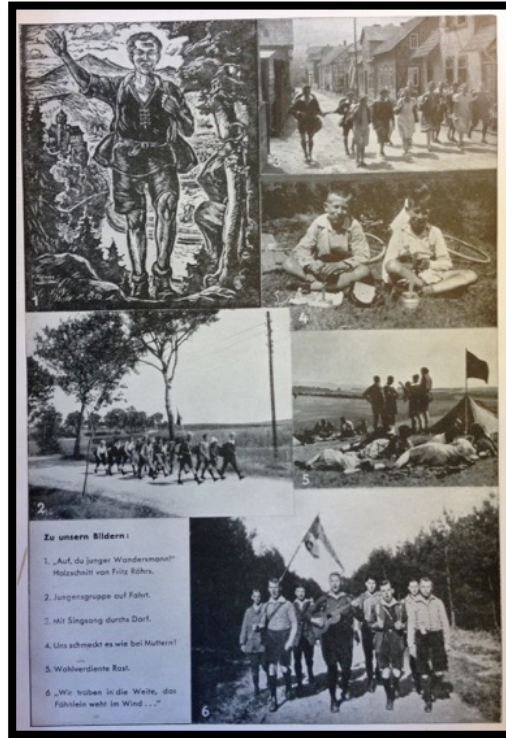
The successful dissemination of such discourses on the German body and its aesthetic dimension, created a sort of internalized inferiority complex on the part of the French that must be seen as an important impulse for social modernizing. The military defeat of 1870, which consecrated Germany as the main military power on the continent in many ways confirmed the asymmetrical relationship from which this set of perceptions originated.[95] Guérin wrote about the youth hostels as a space meant to foster creativity, exchange and experimentation. For him, the cultivation of fitness and allure on the part of

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[95] In *Sexing the Citizen*, Judith Surkis convincingly shows how the creation of the modern male masculinity came from a concerted effort in the part of the state and the most prominent social scientists of the period. Yet, she probably underestimates the role played by the defeat and the popular image of Germany in the social and political developments of the period. On the issue of the "citizen-soldier", physical education, and the state see Joan Tumblety. *Remaking the Male Body: Masculinity and the Uses of Physical Culture in Interwar France*. Oxford, 2012

the German youth was only meaningful insofar as the young men and women[96] were

allowed to experience new, independent forms of social organization on their own.

Conventional aesthetic forms of fitness, masculinity (virility?), and order, merged with a

new form of autonomous social organization promised to offer a radical middle position[97]

between the perceived danger of absolute state control and revolutionary chaos. In the

German youth hostels, Guérin saw the possibility for a radical social reconfiguration,

from the bottom up (at least in generational terms), based on the concept of collective

agency. In this article, the journalist and historian sketched out a new semantic field of

reference for the French youth hostel organization in the making: "freedom",

"organization", "initiative", "collective games", "building a new world", etc…

Although the idea of building a new world was all but new in the interwar period,

Guérin deftly suggested that the youth hostel approach could have groundbreaking

results. For him, like many other advocates of the movement, everyday practice, travels,

and communal life at the hostels were to serve as an ideological foundation for the new

generation. In that sense, it was conceived as a move away from traditional youth

movements in which practice was subjected to a strong ideological corpus of a religious

or political nature.[98] Life at the German hostels proceeded according to a ritual-like

division of time punctuated by the immutable 10pm extinction of lights. Guérin devoted a

particular attention to dinner as the privileged time for hostel users' interactions: "We

walk down to the village. Like many others, we buy a pound of potatoes, peel them off,

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[96] Although Guérin did not acknowledge the presence of women in the youth hostels he visited we should not assume that there was no female users in the hostels he visited.

[97] This fitting concept was coined and suggested to me by Ron Suny.

[98] Here, see Susan Whitney's discussion on the relationship between youth and politics on interwar France. Susan Whitney. *Mobilizing Youth*. Op. Cit., pp. 1-5

and finally boil them. A few fruits and a slice of wheat bread complete our meal. The least affluent ones are content with a slice of bread and cucumber. (…) Saucepans are cleaned, bread croutons and margarine box stuck back in the rucksack - dinner did not even last fifteen minutes - the young fellas can now relax until 10pm. When there are groups around and the sky is clear at night, collective games are organized outdoors, or choral songs with an almost religious fervor can be heard in the living room."[99] For the reporter, the evening was also the time when one could inquire into individual political affinities: "During my first night at the hostel I got to realize that German youths have a passion for politics. (…) This mighty passion is actually quite recent. When I mention the indifferent and ignorant French youth, the spirit of which is weakened by the sports press, people answer that a few years ago young Germans cared more about athletes and movie stars than Hitler or Thalmann. In the meantime, unemployment and misery came… Who remains untouched by the current tragedy? (…) Once, in a small hostel, I found myself with three boys brought together by chance: a catholic, a communist sympathizer, and a Nazi. While the catholic cooked his meal, the Nazi explained to me how Hitler, once in power would proceed to get rid of unemployment, and the communist enthusiastically talked to me about Barbusse's pacifist congress.[100] Then they ate together, laughing and telling travel stories."[101] This paragraph suggests that the communal everyday practice at the hostels could be seen as an alternative to, and a means to overcome, seemingly

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[99] Guérin. *Op. Cit.* p. 1935

[100] Philippe Baudorre. *Barbusse, Le Pourfendeur de la Grande Guerre.* Paris, 1995. About the reception of Barbusse in Germany: Horst Muller. *Henri Barbusse: 1873-1935; Bio-Bibliographie. Die Werke von und über Barbusse mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Rezeption in Deutschland.* Weimar, 2003

[101] Guérin. *Op. Cit.* p. 1936

unbridgeable political differences. Yet, in another paragraph, Guérin told the story of

another hostel where antagonistic Nazi and Communist groups spent the evening sitting

across the dinner room without addressing one another. Guérin did not seem to perceive

this political antagonism as irreducible, and without failing to note the cleanliness of the

bathrooms, he recalled a discussion he had that same night with his roommates before the

10pm curfew:

-"You say this is a worldwide crisis and you want to solve it with nationalistic
solutions!
-For the last ten years we have tried internationalism… We did not get much of a
reward. What did we gain from all these international conferences?... When on strike, our
workers waited in vain for foreign workers' solidarity. Today we want to save
ourselves…
-While at the same time saving the capitalist regime!
-By overthrowing the capitalist regime, that nobody wants today… You see, we
are forced to face each others, workers against workers. Passions are pushed to such an
extreme that, sometimes, we kill each other, *but we actually all want the same thing*…
-Do you really think so?
-Yes, *the same thing*, a new world, entirely different from the present one, a world
in which coffee and wheat are not destroyed while millions starve, a *new system*. One
thinks that Hitler will give it to him, the other one Stalin… There lies the only difference
between us."[102]

After remembering the passionate political debates at the hostels, Guérin also

noted another kind of *Wanderer* called *Walzen*: "the jobless youths who leave the

household out of boredom and try their luck on the roads, rolling around and leaving a

precarious homeless life." The parallel between the hostel users and the homeless *Walzen*

participated in Guerin's general critique of capitalist society: according to him, the de-

structuring effects of the market economy and its crises forced youths to seek individual

and collective salvation in the experience of travel and up rootedness. Although his

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[102] Guérin. *Op. Cit.* p. 1936

critique seemed to be framed by an anti-modernist discourse, Guerin did not see in the

practice of traveling or the youth hostel movement a means to return to an idealized past

but rather to find a way out of the loophole created by the capitalist society in crisis.[103]

For him, all the German youths he met on the road were revolutionaries who simply did

not agree on how to change the world; he saw the practice of travel as a powerful

laboratory for social and political experimentation, relatively sheltered from the pressure

of political parties, the state, and other organizations. In this sense, he considered the

youth hostel movement as an attempt to recover an authentic social organization through

the practice and experience of travel and communal living. Guérin's is significant insofar

as it shows how much promise a left wing intellectual such as Guerin could see in the

German youth hostel movement. For him it was not only a recreational organization but,

more importantly, a template for a potential new world in the making, a revolution in a

nutshell, which would challenge existing forms of youth mobilization by directly

empowering the young German workers.

Building The C.L.A.J

By the time Guérin's article was published, the creation of a French youth hostel

movement was already well under way. Marc Sangnier's *French Youth Hostel League*

(LFAJ) had taken the form of a small network of a dozen houses and shelters, with strong

ties to the powerful German youth hostel association through personal connections with

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[103] See Geoff Eley. "What Produces Fascism: Pre-industrial traditions or a crisis of a Capitalist State." *Politics and Society*, Sept. 1983: pp. 53-82

Schirrmann and the creation of the International Federation.[104] Although the success was

modest, it nonetheless drew the attention of the secular left which sought to mobilize

young men and women against the growing threat posed by fascism, both domestically

and on the international stage. Daniel Guérin was among the small number of progressive

intellectuals who participated in the foundation of the *Centre Laique des Auberges de

Jeunesse* (C.L.A.J - Secular Youth Hostel Center) in 1933.[105] As his reportage suggests,

Germany was perceived as a fertile ground for experimenting new forms of youth

political movements across the French political spectrum because of the polarized nature

of its political life and the relatively limited outreach of the Weimar state. In 1932, a

French version of the Austrian and German Red Falcons was created in France as a semi-

official youth movement of the social-democratic SFIO.[106]

During the summer of 1932, Marc Sangnier and the members of the LFAJ

organized a small exhibition called *The Days of Hope* which toured a number of French

cities. At one of these events, the idea of the Youth hostels promoted by Sangnier and his

collaborators caught the attention of Paul Grunebaum-Ballin,[107] the then director of the

working class housing administration for the Paris region, and a close collaborator of

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[104] See Heller-Goldenberg. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 6-13

[105] See Heller-Goldenberg. *Op. Cit.*,

[106] On the SFIO see Geoff Eley. *Forging Democracy*. Op. Cit.; Jacques Kergoat. *Histoire du Parti Socialiste*. Paris, 1997; Christiane Hurtig. *De la SFIO au Nouveau Parti Socialiste*. Paris, 1970;

[107] The individual trajectory of Paul Grunebaum-Ballin is in many ways representative of the group of French Republican administrators who came of age at the very end of the 19th century and played a significant role in the political course taken by the country in the first part of the 20th century. Born in 1871, in the aftermath of the French military defeat against Prussia, he entered the national administration as a mid-level functionary in the Council of State in 1894 and went on to play a significant role as a political advisor for two French prime ministers: Aristide-Briand in 1904 and Léon Blum in 1936. In the meantime he was appointed Director of the Seine department prefect council from 1911 to 1933, and as such worked as the president of the HLM (Low Income Housing) office for the Paris region from 1926 on. In 1933 he was appointed as the Vice-President of the Council of State and played a prominent role in the creation of the Popular Front social laws in the summer of 1936. See Bergmann, Brigitte. *Paul Grunebaum-Ballin, 1871-1969: Un Siecle au Service de la République*. Paris, 1988

future Popular Front prime minister Léon Blum. Paul Grunebaum-Ballin and his wife Cécile found the concept of the youth hostels seducing. They latter got in touch with Marc Sagnier and discussed the possibility to join forces in order to promote the recently formed youth organization but they failed to reach an agreement on the place of religion in the movement and the attempt fell through. To propose an alternative to Sagnier's relatively well-established LFAJ, Cécile Grunebaum-Ballin founded the *Centre Laique des Auberges de Jeunesse* (CLAJ, Secular Youth Hostel Center) in June 1933. Her husband's political connections were crucial to secure the participation of powerful left-leaning secular organizations in the educational sphere such as the School Teacher's Union (SNI – *Syndicat National des Instituteurs*), the Schooling League (*Ligue de l'Enseignement*), The General Worker's Confederation (CGT – The main communist worker's union), and the National Federation of Socialist Municipalities.[108] A month after the creation of the organization, two hostels had opened in Perreux-sur-Marne, a sub-urban area East of Paris, on July 22nd and in Le-Plessis-Robinson on July 23rd.

Figure 7 CLAJ sign and Youth Hostellers circa 1936 © Pierre Jamet

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[108] *Guide des Archives sur les Auberges de la Jeunesse*. Créteil, 2012, p. 22

By the end of 1934, over 40 hostels had been established throughout the French territory. From its creation until its dismantling in 1940, the CLAJ was effectively directed by Cécile Grunebaum-Ballin who served as the general-secretary of a steering committee made up of representatives of the aforementioned organizations. Upon his return from Germany, Daniel Guérin had been one of the most forceful advocates for the creation of a secular French youth hostel movement. As a founding member of the CLAJ, he played an important role in the creation of the organization but resigned form the steering committee in 1933, arguing that the communist party had gained an overwhelming influence in the movement through the participation of CGT delegates.[109] More importantly perhaps, Guérin's resignation showed the gap that existed between the ideal model of youth organization he believed he had observed in Germany, and the top down organization of the French CLAJ in which workers' unions and political parties had a considerable influence. In *Vu*, Guérin had called for the creation of an organization that would be administered and controlled by its users, a republic of the traveling youth to which adults would, at best, give a helping hand. By the time Guérin left the CLAJ to focus on his own political writing and activities, the youth hostel users had already begun to organize, forming a sort of intellectual vanguard of wandering youths. Following a practice elaborated in Sangnier's organization, the holders of the CLAJ membership card, which granted entrance to the hostels were referred to as *users*, a term which suggested a more profound personal involvement, than the *members* of a sports or youth club. A handful of Parisian youth hostel users founded the first users' club in 1935. As many such

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[109] On this point see Heller-Goldenberg. *Op. Cit.*, p. 103-105; also Susan Whitney. *Mobilizing Youth*. Op. Cit., pp. 65-70

clubs appeared, a Union of the CLAJ clubs of the Greater Paris appeared in April 1936 to help federate decision-making at the grass-roots level. By the end of 1937, there were over a hundred CLAJ clubs in France, some of them comprising only a handful of local youths. These spontaneous groupings and forms of organization came as the expression of a self-structuring impulse on the part of the hostel users, but it also came as a consequence of the diverging interests between the users' clubs and the CLAJ steering committee whose members proved to be more moderate in their understanding of the hostels' social function and also more reliant on the workers unions' or political parties (SFIO and Radical-Socialists) to which their allegiances belonged.[110]

From its inception, the question of the political allegiance of the CLAJ played a significant role in the debates within the organization. Among the major political parties, the SFIO had certainly the most important presence, would it be only through the personal involvement of two of its members in the secular youth hostel movement: Cécile Grunebaum-Ballin and Léo Lagrange. The latter, a close collaborator of Léon Blum, who was to be named Sub-Secretary of State for Sports and the Organization Leisure during the Popular Front played a central role in the rise of the movement, as we will see in the next chapter. In the upcoming paragraphs with will trace the early days of the CLAJ though its newsletter, *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse*, which first appeared at the end of 1934.

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[110] On the SFIO, the Communist Party and the question of youth see Joan Tumblety. *Remaking the Male Body*. Op. Cit., pp. 171-179

*Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse***: The Hostels' Voice**

Historians of France have generally dealt with the youth hostel movement as the expression of the Popular Front's reformist impulse in the matter of youth policy.[111] Although the Blum government, in its willingness to rely on group initiatives and associations, consecrated the model promoted by the youth hostel organizations, the close ties between the CLAJ and Léo Lagrange's ministry of Leisure and Sports was the

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[111] Pascal Ory. *La Belle Illusion: Culture et Politique Sous le Signe du Front Populaire.* Paris, 1994

consequence of a dual convergence of interests and ideological affinities. In the French collective memory, the Popular Front represents a heroic period during which the progressive communal will prevailed in a time of economic distress and international tension. Yet, it was a short-lived experience and the improvisational skills of young administrators like Lagrange made up for the lack of resources and time.[112] Reducing the experience of the youth hostel to the short two-year period of the Popular Front government takes our attention away from the fact that the movement was self-administered and autonomous, while making it difficult to study its evolution in relation to the larger social-political developments of the interwar period.

In order to understand the significance of the youth hostel movement in the context of the mid-1930s, one has to pay close attention to the CLAJ official magazine, *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse*. The magazine appeared for the first time in December 1934 and was mailed to every holder of a CLAJ subscription card. It's main purpose, as expressed in its subtitle, was to link every member of the organization, provide monthly news on the evolution of the movement, and occasionally contain mini-travelogues by youth hostel users. While *Die Jugendherberge* devoted significant space to adult writers, its French counterpart was exclusively produced by the users and reproduced the attitude of self-reliance characteristic of the movement. As such it functioned as a recording device as well as a space where the ideological platform of the movement was to be constantly be discussed and reworked by individual members. Understood as a primitive version of a fanzine or a blog, *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse* can serve as a remarkable source for the historian as it contains crucial information on the evolution of the

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[112] On Lagrange's activities within the framework of 1930s French youth and sports culture see Joan Tumblety. *Remaking the Male Body*. Op. Cit., pp. 79-93

organization but also on the way the incessant debates between users, on a wide range of

topics (dress, food, politics, organization, etc.) helped shape this historical evolution. The

steep rise in its circulation and number of pages serve as a good reminder of phenomenal

growth of the movement: while only 1000 copies of the four-page first issue were printed

in December 1934, by 1938 the average run was 30 000 copies and the magazine was

made up of 24 pages.[113] A young journalist and adventurer named Marc Augier, who was

a close acquaintance of the Grunebaum-Ballin couple, was named editor in chief of the

magazine, a position of influence within the movement which he was to occupy until the

spring of 1940.[114] Augier's role as the magazine's editor was to appraise the documents

submitted by individual users (essays, photographs, drawings, poems, and queries, etc.)

while giving the publication an overall theme and direction. Although *Le Cri des

Auberges* was virtually free from the editorial pressures imposed on traditional for-profit

or political periodicals, it remained largely dependent on the work of a small group of

users at the Paris club.

Building a Dream House: The CLAJ's early years

In her dissertation, Lucette Heller-Goldenberg wrote about the youth hostel

movement that: "There was no willingness to organize because the freezing of these

moments of perfect joy lived in the harmonious community had to be avoided at all cost.

The little group of individuals in a position of historical rupture with their time had no

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[113] Heller-Goldenberg. *Op. Cit.* p. 127

[114] On Augier's intellectual trajectory see Jerome Moreau. *Sous le Signe de la Roue Solaire: Itinéraire Politique de Saint-Loup*. Paris, 2008

need for chief or law (…) they felt strong enough to create a new society."[115] The story of

the CLAJ, as told by *Le Cri*, starts rather differently as the four pages of the magazine's

first issue, published in December 1934 sums up the progress that has been accomplished

since the creation of the movement in the summer of 1933. The first year of operation

was deemed a relative success as the CLAJ hostels recorded a total of 6000 housing

nights.[116]

  The order of the day was an organizing one and the most important narrative to

develop was that of bonding and the creation of a community through shared experience.

In the magazine's second issue, a hostel user named Guelpentz recalled his time in the

Fontainebleau youth hostel during the 1934 new year's eve: "Put together a dozen young

men and women, place them around a fireplace in a well lit room, add to it boundless

devotion and kindness from the exceptional *mère aubergiste* (a direct translation from the

German *herbergsmutter*), don't forget the clean air of the forest and the cold temperature,

finally add up a few drinks to a good dinner and you get a recipe which allowed a few

exhausted Parisians to spend an unforgettable new year's eve in an ideal youth hostel."[117]

In this ideal setting, the group of young men and women replaced the family in what still

fit within the imagery of the traditional gathering: the fireplace, the group dinner, and the

libations. But the description of the group's grand entrance in the following paragraph did

not leave any doubts on the nature of the guests: a bunch of ten young men and women

storm into the hostel singing "*Auprès de ma Blonde*" ("by my blond girlfriend"), the

youth hostel anthem, literally "revolutionizing" the temporary quiet atmosphere of the

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[115] Heller-Goldenberg. *Op. Cit.*, p. 154

[116] *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse*. No 2, January 1935, p. 2

[117] Guelpentz, N. "Le Jour de l'An a Fontainebleau: Une Bonne Recette" *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse.* No 2, January 1935, p. 3

place. But their forceful entrance was portrayed as devoid of any kind of group preference or snobbery as they immediately incorporated a small group that had preceded them in the hostel. The new year's eve party in many ways summed up the youth hostel ideal: food (fruits), wine, singing, and dancing: "each of us sang in one of the languages he knew: we heard some French, English, Russian, and even some rhymes! When midnight came we raised our glasses for peace. Then we went for a walk in the forest, because the weather was rather mild." This perfect gathering exposed a set of items which made up the ideological platform of the movement: a willful group of young men and women, the rural retreat away from the constraints of the city, the instant bonding of like-minded young individuals in the inviting atmosphere of the hostels, a certain form of cosmopolitanism, and peace. More importantly it consecrated the hostel itself as a make-up temple of youth rendering possible the development of this new set of practices in which the movement's ideas were embedded. From this dynamic emerged an inside/outside dialectic between the life in the hostel and that on the road. From the sheltered space of the common room or in the dormitories, the young men and women sought to live in accordance with their communal principles and suggest ideas later to be field-tested in the open world, on the roads and mountain trails.

A Socially Homogenous Group?

In its early days, and despite the presence of workers unions and political organizations such as the CGT or the Communist Party in the steering committee, the

users of the CLAJ hostels rarely belonged to the working class.[118] Until the coming to power of the Popular Front in the spring of 1936, workers and high school students were scarcely seen in youth hostels. Instead the hostels mostly catered to a group made up of students and young professionals from the Parisian upper middle-class in their early twenties. Although the youth hostels were opened to everyone between 16 and 30 years of age, the political awareness and social liberalism the organization implicitly demanded considerably restrained its early social base. But as the youth hostels gained ground and became more visible, the movement opened up to a number of new sub-groups within French society. In the provincial towns, the CLAJ found a precious relay with the numerous young schoolteachers who were affiliated with the teacher's union and the Socialist or Communists parties.[119] Building upon the trend inaugurated by Schirrmann in Germany and the pivotal role played by the *Instituteurs* (primary school teachers) throughout the history of the Third Republic[120], schoolteachers served as the movement's workhorses, often setting up and managing hostels in their area during their holidays but also traveling as youth hostel users themselves.

The social composition of the movement in its early stage is well reflected in an article in the third issue of the *Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse* in which a schoolteacher named Claire Douay recalls her stay at the youth hostel in Hossegor,[121] a resort town

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[118] On the social composition of the movement see Julian Jackson. "Le Temps des Loisirs." *Op. Cit.*, pp. 226-235; also Gary Cross. *A Quest for Time: The Reduction of Work in Britain and France*. Berkeley, 1989, pp. 171-194; Pascal Ory. *La Belle Illusion*. Op. Cit.,

[119] On the role of the schoolteachers in social movements in France see Antoine Prost. *Histoire de l'Education et de l'Enseignement depuis 1930*. Paris, 2004

[120] Weber. *Peasants into Frenchmen*. New York, 1971

[121] The Hossegor youth hostel name "golden cob" (l'épi d'or) was particularly revered in the CLAJ community as one of the first hostels opened by the secular branch of the movement. The house that served as the hostel had been donated by Emile Mayer, the father of Cécile Grunebaum-Ballin, and a prominent reformist thinker among military strategists. His pupils included Charles De Gaulle and Léo Lagrange. On Colonel Emile Mayer see Vincent Duclert (ed.). *Le Colonel Emile Mayer: de l'Affaire Dreyfus a De*

south of Bordeaux on the Atlantic coast, during the summer of 1934.[122] The short

travelogue begins with the hosteller's arrival at the hostel, framed as a textual equivalent

to a cinematic travelling shot: "It is located at the end of a serene alley flanked by quiet

pine trees, a long white house with blue painted blinds. It awaits the travellers' arrival,

doors and windows wide open. On the stone bench one can see old crinkled newspapers

and a bright scarf; the bottom of the old armchair sinks in and tears, and a strange fig-

tree, under its sharp-elbowed branches blue and red flowers blossom. The grass is dry and

broken, the flowers stretched and pale. They left everything in the disorderly state of a

hurried departure." The messy summerhouse, the idyllic vegetation, and the run down

furniture endow the place with a timeless eeriness. The hostel users quickly reappear,

preceded only by their loud and cheerful voices. They are on their way back from the

beach, the presence of the group is intimidating at first, but once the ice is broken the

narrator and her temporary roommates bond seamlessly. "You recognized those you were

afraid of it at first: they are those who, just like you, are twenty years of age and only

expect from life its simple and rugged delights. They are those who want to run away

from the unnecessary social constraints, from books, worries, and for a short period of

time raise above the everyday, above time, and try to find, in the sun, the air, the heavy

tiredness that deeply penetrates the body, the deep soul of their being, Freedom! Escape!

Conquest! Such vain words are here realized. Yes, it is freedom, freedom without

solitude or rough edges, without struggle or this feeling of discouragement that brings

you to the ground when you try to give a useless effort for a larger slice of life."

Gaulle. Paris, 2007; Henri Lerner. "Le Colonel Emile Mayer et son Cercle d'Amis." In *Revue Historique*, No 266 (July 1981), 75-94

[122] Claire Douay. "Hossegor, Auberge de Jeunesse." *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse.* No 3, February 1935, p. 4

The accents developed here find their echo in the expectations that come from the participation in the youth hostel experiment. The penetration into the summerhouse, the shelter/hostel mentioned earlier, suggests the accession to an exclusive community of like-minded individuals structured along generational lines. This protected space, functioning as the dream-house mentioned by Roland Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*, allows for a re-framing of the traditional social categories, effectively obliterating powerful identifications such as national belonging or gender differences.[123] For Claire Douay, the idea of freedom and the experience at the youth hostel was embedded within the semantic field of dreams: "It is the freedom of one's self, of one's youth that can expand freely in the warm atmosphere of life in common. You live from the bottom of the zealous audacity of your dreams which warm up to the contact of other similar dreams."[124] The gallery of portraits of the user's sharing the author's dreams give us indications on who might have spent time in a popular hotel such as then one in Hossegor in 1934: The German *doctor* who whistled symphonies sitting by the water at night, The "normalien", a member of the French elite school who, like his elders Nizan or Sartre "wears large glasses and loses himself in endless philosophical arguments",[125] a young Englishman who studied natural sciences at Cambridge, an austere and solitary German, an Italian woman who read Baudelaire out loud while others listened, forming a circle

[123] The poetic experience of the "dream house", to follow Bachelard's insight is a crucial dimension of the youth hostel experience and one through the close study of which one can detect slight changes in the movement's ideology and tensions within it. For the exposition of the concept see Gaston Bachelard. *La Poétique de l'Espace*. Paris, 1957, pp. 14-17. For a historical use of Bachelard's concept in regard to historical narratives see Helga Geyer-Ryan. "Imaginary Identity: Space, Gender, Nation." In Teresa Brennan & Martin Jay *Vision in Context*, New York, 1996, p. 124

[124] Douay. "Hossegor, Auberge de Jeunesse." *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse*. No 3, February 1935, p. 4

[125] On the individual and group trajectories of the Ecole Normale Superieure students in the interwar period see Jean-Francois Sirinelli. *Génération Intellectuelle: Khagneux et Normaliens dans l'Entre-Deux Guerres*. Paris, 1994; On Normale Supérieure in French social and political life see Pierre Bourdieu. *La Noblesse d'Etat: Grandes Ecoles et Esprit de Corps*. Paris, 1989; Nicole Masson. *L'Ecole Normale Superieure: Les Chemins de la Liberté*. Paris, 1994

around her, an attractive Russian girl who talked about philosophy while a young French high school student busied himself grinding coffee.

Most of the individuals mentioned in the list were upper middle-class intellectuals in their early twenties and, despite their different origins, shared what Claire Douay perceived as a similar experience with the harassing constraints of social life. The seamless bond between French schoolteachers, English, Russian, and German students, was made possible by the rejection of traditional forms of authority expressed in the "tightening bonds of a traditional conformism" through communal life in the "dream house" of the hostels. The strange parallel between the conditions of life of young and wealthy foreigners and that of a young provincial schoolteacher suggests that the hostels' ideal settings somewhat obliterated the differences between the users' conditions of life. As such, the French youth hostels made possible the adhesion of their users to a new form of political narrative. Decisively moving away from the category of the national in favor of a reaction against the existing order based on generational lines.
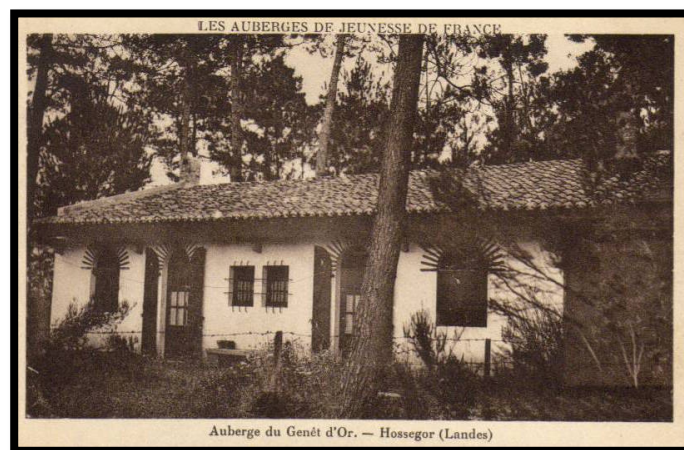
Figure 9 Auberge du Genet d'Or Hossegor 1934

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1936 and the Creation of the User's Clubs

Although the collection of the *Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse* held at the French National Archives[126] misses eight issues (No 4 to 12), which constitute the bulk of the year 1935, it is safe to assume a sort of editorial continuity between the last issue at our disposal (April 1935) and the first one (January 1936) at the end of this unfortunate archival gap. In any case, the year 1936 was to be a crucial one for the French youth hostels as the accession to power of the Popular Front coincided with the movement rapid transformation into an important social and political phenomenon.

By the beginning of 1936, the significance and dynamism of the movement was already palatable for many of its users. The transition from a "heroic" and miniscule group of young idealists into a nation-wide and structured movement seemed well under way.[127] The question of organization, norms and rules was one of the users' primary concerns, as the rapid development of the movement had seemingly become incompatible with the relaxed amateurism of the early days. By design, the CLAJ was a de-centralized organization which refused any kind of hierarchy among its members, but it lacked the local structures which would have made its growth possible on the ground. In October 1935, a small group of CLAJ members (men and women) founded the first users' club in

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[126] The BNF collection is a copy of the microform drawn from the library of the BDIC library in Nanterre which, to my knowledge, holds the most significant collection of interwar periodicals from France and other European countries.

[127] The term "heroic" is borrowed from Heller-Goldenberg. *Op. Cit.*, p. 72

Paris.[128] The concept of the club was borrowed from the German model but its founders

envisioned it as the basic unit of a democratic and egalitarian movement that in practice

gave it much greater powers.[129] In November 1935, the Paris club already had over 150

members. Local clubs were rapidly formed in the Paris sub-urban area, in Boulogne-

Billancourt, Colombes, Maisons-Alfort, Noisy-le-Sec, Saint Denis, Suresnes, Vincennes,

and Montreuil. Local clubs were also created in provincial towns in the beginning of

1936 in Bordeaux (February), Moulins (March), and Carcasonne (May). A central office

of the clubs was established in October 1936 and by the spring of 1937 there were over

100 clubs scattered around France. The independent nature of the Youth Hostel Center,

the ownership of the movement by its users was reaffirmed in the successful

establishment of the club as its primary unit and the source of its activity.[130]

In the February issue of *Le Cri des Auberges*, Pierre Ollier de Marichard, one of

the early and most active members of the movement (under the acronym POM), wrote a

column arguing for the need to better organize local excursions at the club level.[131] In his

piece POM asserted the importance of the club as the basic social unit for the movement

and the need for current members to be welcoming to potential newcomers. For him,

early club members had a moral responsibility towards others and the movement in

general. Their attitude towards life and the people they encountered had to be devoid of

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[128] On the creation of the user's club and their development in the years 1935-1936 see Heller-Goldenberg. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 131-156

[129] As Heller-Goldenberg recalls, the Steering Committee, which was made up of adults over 30 years of age, was split on the question of the user's club. Some considered that the Steering Committee should include representative of the user's club, others following the German model considered that there should be an adult board overseeing the movement's activities. It appears that the club, which was a spontaneous creation of the user's served as a means of leverage within the organization. In a sense the self-organization of the young men and women allowed them to put pressure on the steering committee and bypass some of its decisions. Heller-Goldenberg. *Op. Cit.* p. 137

[130] Heller-Goldenberg. *Op. Cit.* p. 140

[131] POM. "Qu'en Pensez-Vous?" *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse*. No 14, February 1936, p. 1

any kind of snobbism: "Comrades of the CLUB, you have to realize that you will be the ones people will look up to when considering whether or not to join the happy fellowship of the hostels. (…) You will have to show you are up to the task. We do not go on the road to show the brave "rednecks" whose villages we pass through, that we Parisians deign to come to their place. (…) Better than a tract we could give away, our attitude can make a difference, independently of our creating rules for ourselves. When joining the hostels and the USER'S CLUB to go about our effort with resilience, joy and method. (…) Genuine group life and working towards a common won't come out of a set of improvised moves, of a number of irregular bounces, and through the pointless observance of a fixed set of rules. They are forged in the joy and truth that set us free. We should try to avoid the slavery born from the bourgeois morals and pointless etiquette, but we should also be weary of the purposeless ruckus, of the lazy egoism that only lives for the moment."[132]

POM's sermon attempted to summarize the guidelines for a behavior conducive to the movement's growth. In his mind, the main difficulty was to avoid any kind of snobbery on the part of a limited circle of young men and women who thought of themselves as the forbearers of a cultural movement with a high potential for social change. The challenge posed by the integration of new members was in a large part met by the rapid creation of local clubs. As POM's text suggests, youth hostel users believed that difficult individual characters could be tamed and educated by group life and the adherence to rules of mutual respect universally accepted rather than a set of rigid and law-like constraints. In this framework, the club represented the smallest unit in the

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[132] POM. "Qu'en Pensez-Vous?" *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse*. No 14, February 1936, p. 1

movement and was responsible for the organization at the grassroots level. Camaraderie, membership, and the planning of excursions and other manifestations (concerts, theater representations, parties) all originated within the confines of the local club. The pages of *Le Cri des Auberges* served as a relay for the creation and development of these local groups, encouraging members of the CLAJ to join a local club or to gather together with other individual members to create one whenever there was not one in their area of residence. From 1936 on, the publication served as a tool to connect the different clubs together, federate their efforts at the national level and, no less significantly, function as an ever-growing chronicle of the movement's progress. In the spring of 1937, the *Cri des Auberges* published a piece written by Léo Lagrange in which the state secretary endorsed the idea of the club as the "keeper of the hostels' spirit."[133] In doing so, the "minister of leisure" decisively sided with the youth hostellers in their struggle to claim ownership of their movement.

The Temples of Spring: Hostels and Historical Imaginary

Despite its member's reluctance to engage directly in political discussions, the CLAJ's relationship to history was framed by a strong historicist discourse. Like other radical thinkers before them, the youth hostel users believed the world could be changed through action, only this time their doctrine did not promote political activism or violence but instead sought to act decisively through travel and pacific encounters. This sentiment was reinforced by the large freedom given to the members in their action. Although the

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[133] Léo Lagrange. "Le Club des Usagers est le Gardien de l'Esprit des Auberges." *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse*. Numéro Spécial, Mai 1937, p. 1

boundaries of the youth hostel movement's action were framed by the form and range of its activities, its users, through the concerted action of the clubs, intended to form a veritable commune of youth which sought to set itself apart from traditional power dynamics. This micro-polity was, from the outset, embedded in a revision of the common historical imaginary. In other words, the sheltered space of the hostels allowed the youths embarked in the hostels adventure to let their poetic imagination aloof and dream about a bright future in which their movement was to play a pivotal role.

The development of such a historic imaginary[134] was particularly evident in an article entitled "Anticipation" published in *Le Cri des Auberges* of March 1936 by Madeleine Paz, a female user: "Right here, on my table, lies the collection of *Le Cri des Auberges*. I only wanted to have a look at it, and yet I read it all. Everything. Something strange happens. The thing that perhaps takes place in the mind of every novelist, when a writer takes ownership of a fact or a group of facts and immediately transposes it to his inner world, where connections are established, followed by a germination, a ripening of ideas, and, one day, a dawn. There is nothing left for me to learn from photographs, charts, and printed signs: make way for the vision that just elevated itself. (…) I would like to mingle with the happy-go-lucky troop that has become part of the landscape and gives it an April feel, in its wake I would cross the threshold of one of these *hostels*, that in my own mind, without daring to tell anybody, I call the *temples of spring*. There are so many of them [hostels]! It is quite simple; they are everywhere. En 1936 (but it was back then, the heroic times) there were barely 120 or 150 of them. Nowadays (1943? *1943*?...

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[134] Claudio Fogu uses the concept of "historic imaginary" in his book about the relationship between History, Politics, and Aesthetics in Fascist Italy. I will return to it a number of times in this work and later propose my own version of it. See Fogu, Claudio. *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy*. Toronto, 1995

The vision carries me away at such a pace that it blurs the numbers of the calendar) there are thousands of them. There is not a rural and remote area, swept by the wind, that does not signal, from a distance, the welcoming shape of its roof. (…) What a spirit you gave birth to! The old flabby words of which only the bar remained, you filled them with sap: freedom, you live it up; since you have been meeting each other, brotherhood laughs with a beautiful, witty smile; because together you mingle with the morning full of alacrity, intelligence shook the dust; because you, hand in hand, with the same brotherly impetus, with the youth of the world, peace now brings you together. The more I look at them, the more I realize these visions are not that of novelist. They are substantial certainties. You see, young comrades, those who walked down into the social arena and take part in the struggle may only have one privilege: the possibility to say, in front of such and such movement: this one contains the future. (…) Tonight, in the peaceful atmosphere of the hostel and the good physical fatigue, when earth folds into night, and one hears the progress, in all the glory of its dawn, of the this deeply moving word, *tomorrow*, think that you form the first cohort of a miraculous procession: humanity marching towards unity.”[135]

Although the author feigned to reject any literary pretentions, her prose fell within the loose literary canon of poetic anticipation. The triumph of the youth hostel ideals as an actualized version of the French Republic's motto (Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité) did not make any doubt in her mind. The confusion of the present and the past was used as a literary device reinforcing the infallibility of the vision. This "vision" akin to a conception of the world in which "creative intuition" played a central role in the

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[135] Madeleine Paz. *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse*. No 15, March 1936, p. 3 On Madeleine Paz see Chapter 2

historical development of society, was framed by the idea that an organic unity of the

youths, led by a common craving for peace and harmony would bring about a utopian

world in which the youth hostels played a significant role. Madeleine Paz's rejection of

charts and photographs as evidence of the growth participated in this dynamic. This

inevitable organic growth amounted to the victory of a form of "pure spirit" over the

obstacles of the palatable world (politics, economics, society, etc…). This idealistic

historical imaginary, here presented in an extreme version, was an essential aspect of the

youth hostel discourse. Ideas of the present and the future came to be juxtaposed and

expressed in similar ways to the point where they became hardly distinguishable.

The idea of youth proved to be an extremely convenient signifier linking these

different temporalities and referred to through a number of allegories and metaphors such

as *spring* and *dawn*. The *temples of spring* (the hostels) were the places where the

historical imaginary was elaborated and from which it spread to the outside world. The

religious metaphor did not owe anything to chance as Madeleine Paz sought to justify her

belief in the hostels' mission as eluding rational explanation. The mystic/mythical nature

of the construction of self performed at the hostels served as a powerful metaphor for the

rejuvenation of society as a whole. The practice at the hostels was seen as a prospective

model *of* and a model *for* society and its reconstruction.[136]

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[136] On this particular point and the idea of a model *of* and a model *for* society see the anthropological hermeneutics of Clifford Geertz in "Religion as a Cultural System." in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York, 1973, p. 93. In his article, Geertz writes about social system as operating on two different levels: "For psychological and social systems, and for cultural models that we would not ordinarily refer to as *theories*, but rather as *doctrines*, *melodies*, or *rites* is in no way different [from construction patterns]. Unlike genes, and other non-symbolic information sources, which are only models *for*, not models *of*, culture patterns have an intrinsic double aspect: they give meaning, that is, objective conceptual form, to social psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves."

In the absence of a clear ideological canon, these "fantasies and projections" took

on a particularly protean form.[137] Most (if not all) youth hostel users writing in *Le Cri des*

Auberges subscribed to the historicist conception which saw their movement as the

harbinger of the future French and European society. Yet, beyond the loose triptych of

youth, travel, and hostels, few agreed on the methods and strategies which were to bring

about the utopian new world.

Reclaiming Space: The Youth Hostel's Spatial Imaginary

While the youth hostel's historical imaginary seemingly always posited a

historicist and utopian relationship between present and future, the movement's spatial

imaginary proved to be a much more complex category, informed as it was by the

particular leanings of individual members or groups. The idea of "spatial imaginary" can

be seen as a corollary to the more general idea of *imaginary* mentioned in the previous

section. Reflecting on the role of *imaginary* in the creation of mental scapes the Geoff

Eley wrote that: "The idea of the *imaginary* as developed from the thought of Cornelius

Castoriadis also becomes extremely helpful, namely as the cognitive ground of thought,

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[137] Here one can refer to the work of literary historian Claudio Fogu when he argues that the lacanian category of *imaginary* can be useful to understand such historical visions. For him, "Collective and individual imaginaries have been identified as consisting of mental images, situated somewhere between the faculty of the imagination and the structures of collective mentalities, and guiding the former toward the formulation of specific ideological fantasies and projections." Claudio Fogu. *Op. Cit.* p. 11 In his books footnotes, Fogu explains his re-working of the Lacanian notion of imaginary: "The imaginary is the space of ambivalence, of fantasy, of the desire for fusion, and the search for unmediated presence. It is a space, finally, where human consciousness maintains a repetitive, hereditary, and quasi-mechanic character, as opposed to the symbolic, which connotes the place where the subject constitutes itself through language, thereby distinguishing between subject and object. While rejecting the sharp polarization posited by Lacan between the psychic world image (the imaginary) and that of language (the symbolic), my notion of historic imaginary does resonate with the Lacanian stress on the agency of desire (for fusion) in the formation of collective mentalities. See Fogu. *Op. Cit.* p. 212

beliefs, and assumptions from which human agency may materialize, or the mental landscape where homes can be imagined and purposeful explorations occur."[138] The historic and spatial imaginary of the youth hostels combined to form a "political imaginary" which, according to Eley "suggests the contexts of thought, some of them willfully intended but others only partially understood, even entirely un-reflected that set people into motion. (…) More than any set of ideas, it is what makes the forming and framing of ideas possible in the first place."[139] As the CLAJ's network grew, the question of the geographical confines of the movement's action started to emerge.

Some like Marc Augier, the editor of *Le Cri des Auberges*, believed that the French youth hostel movement would only be able to fulfill its historical destiny by forming through adventure and the discovery of foreign countries, landscapes, and peoples. In article entitled *60 degrees North*, Augier recalled some of the reactions he heard to the travels of four members of the Paris club (Bentata, Aignan, Laforest, Pichaud) in the Norwegian youth hostels:[140]

-Does it follow our official line?

-France first!

-Let's develop the Club at home, for the rest we will see later!

Augier responded to this criticism by writing that the CLAJ was, "in essence an international movement". He then proceeded to call out the "armchair internationalists" (faire de l'internationalisme en vase clos) and argued that it was harder but necessary to

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[138] Geoff Eley. "Empire, Ideology and the East: Thoughts on Nazism's Spatial Imaginary." In Szejnmann, Claus-Christian and Maiken Umbach. *Heimat, Region, Empire: Spatial Identities Under National Socialism*. New York, 2012, p. 268

[139] Geoff Eley. *Op. Cit.* p. 268

[140] Marc Augier. "CLAJ 60 degrés latitude Nord." *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse*. No 17, May 1936, p. 7

"carry the image of the strength and greatness of our youth to the neighboring countries."
Augier conceded that the groundings of the CLAJ, symbolized as they were by the
hostels, were definitely in France, yet he seemed to assess the value of the French youth
hostel movement in relation to its European equivalents.

While Marc Augier and some of his comrades were decidedly attracted to the
exotic appeal of international travel, an interest that was to decisively frame their
geographic and political imaginary, others at the CLAJ sought to promote the idea of
domestic travel. In June 1936, an anonymous note predicting the opening of a 200th
hostel for the summer, argued for the beauty of the French countryside. The piece,
entitled *it is a beautiful castle… from the middle ages* (c'est un beau château… du moyen
âge), adopts a point of view diametrically opposed to that of Augier: "The most beautiful
regions of France do not always benefit from the publicity that should rightfully be theirs.
Do you know the Lot?[141] No? Then you must go to the Caminade youth hostel, county of
Villeseque, go there! (…) The Lot? It is at the same time a natural park like the
Yellostone (sic), a small Sahara like the naked Hammada plateaus,[142] it has deep and
scenic canyons similar to that of Colorado."[143] The author of this article surely
understood the mass appeal of remote touristic wonders of the United States and North
Africa, places that had become part of a public imaginary through American movies or
the stories of those who had visited the colonies across the Mediterranean. Yet, it
suggested that the re-discovery of France and its re-conquest through the concerted action
of the youth hostel users and the CLAJ presented itself as the main task of the movement.

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[141] The Lot is one of the most remote and rural departments in South-Western France.

[142] In Arabic, a Hammada is a type of desert landscape consisting of high, largely barren, hard, rocky
plateaus. In this particular case it refers to such landscapes in French North Africa, Morocco, Algeria, or
Tunisia.

[143] "C'est un beau château… du moyen âge." *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse.* No 18, June 1936, p. 3

This primary gap within the core group of hostel users, which seems to have crystallized around 1936, was only to widen during the following years. On the one hand Marc Augier and a small number of experienced (and often well in their 20s) travelers sought to extend the influence of the CLAJ at its fringes,[144] by travelling internationally and in extreme conditions. One the other the majority of club members conceived of the youth hostels as an essentially national organization (but one with an internationalist perspective), founded on the knowledge and recovery of the national territory, and increasingly on the preservation of local cultural traditions. Although these two trends were not antithetical, they suggest that two different conceptions of the relationship between time, space, and society coexisted within the movement.

Conclusion

By the spring of 1936, a few years after its foundation, the French youth hostel movement had become one of the most significant and dynamic youth formations in France. The success of the secular branch represented by the CLAJ had largely relegated the humanist-catholic leanings of the early days to the foreground in favor of a left wing and decidedly progressive sensibility. In this chapter, I have argued for a reassessment of the significance of the German origins of the movement and the transnational circulation of ideas and methods. The fascination of young French intellectuals for Germany, exemplified here by the case of Daniel Guérin, participated in the rapid development of

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[144] I believe the idea of fringes, denoting realms of action which are difficult to access, such as distant countries or inhospitable areas (extreme mountain conditions), became the way some of the early youth hostel users chose to distinguish themselves from the influx of new and (often) occasional comrades who joined the movement after 1936. This idea will be developed further in the next chapter.

this "imported" youth movement, the methods of which were deemed more attuned to the new social and political challenges of the interwar period than the traditional and rigid French republican educational framework. Building on the German romantic platform, the youth hostels intended to provide urban youths with relief from the moral and physical pollution of the big cities. This rather traditional critique of industrial modernity was completed by a more innovative attempt to take the youths away from the adults' watch, which was also deemed corruptive, in order to let them develop their own character. In France, the foundation of numerous users' clubs and the independence and dynamism of the youth hostel users led them to operate a virtual takeover of the youth hostel center which effectively became self-administered, laying the foundations for what many saw as a "republic of the youth." The hostel buildings, which provided shelter for the wandering youth to elaborate and put in practice their new philosophy of life, played a central role in the development of the movement, adding a crucial spatial component that brought a physical grounding to the new historic imaginary. The Popular Front government, which came to power in the spring of 1936 and inaugurated an ambitious program of social welfare and leisure, perceived the CLAJ as the perfect relay for its policy among the youths and actively supported its action. The next chapter will be concerned with the period ranging from June 1936- to April 1940 which can be see as the heyday of the French youth hostel movement.

Figure 10 CLAJ Postcard: Youth Hostel in Bedous, Western Pyrenees, 1936

Chapter Two

The Republic of Youth: The French Popular Front and the Youth Hostels (1936-1940)

"If we were to draw a picture representing the Popular Front, in the way artists have done for freedom, it would be that of a young man darkened by the sun, with long muscles, used to the bide of the sun, with a candid soul and yet without an ounce of naivety, that sings walking alongside other young men, similar and yet different, like brothers: *Let's towards life – Let's walk towards the morning.*"

André Chamson[1]

Introduction

In May 1936, after two years of political havoc wrought by the fascist leagues and the lingering economic crisis, the Popular Front coalition spearheaded by socialist intellectual Léon Blum was brought to power.[2] Its left-wing policy was based on a series of social measures intended to provide better life and labor conditions to the working and lower-middle classes. Its welfare and leisure programs were engineered in response to similar initiatives that had materialized in fascist countries such as *Kraft Durch Freude* in

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[1] André Chamson in Vendredi, August 21 1936. Cited in Jean-Louis Chappat. *Les Chemins de l'Espoir.* Op. Cit., p. 187. André Chamson was a left wing, protestant intellectual, archivist, novelist and essayist and one of the founders of socialist youth publication *Vendredi*. He was later elected to the Académie Francaise. On Chamson see Germaine Castel. *André Chamson et l'Histoire: Une Philosophie de la Paix.* Aix-en-Provence, 1998

[2] On the Popular Front see Julian Jackson. *The Popular Front.* Op. Cit.; Jacques Kergoat. *La France du Front Populaire.* Paris, 2006; Jean Vigreux. *Le Front Populaire.* Paris, 2011

Germany[3] and *Dopolavoro* in Italy.[4] The organization of leisure was handed to Léo

Lagrange, a young socialist and close collaborator of Blum, who was appointed as the

state-secretary of leisure and sports, a branch of the Ministry of Health.[5] In this position,

Lagrange was responsible for the development of an ambitious program intended to

provide workers and white collars with the means to travel, exercise, and more generally

occupy the free time they had received through the newly promulgated labor laws.[6]

Despite his relentless activity, Lagrange's tenure was handicapped, at the outset, by the

glaring lack of funds his administration received,[7] a situation that forced him to rely as

much as possible on pre-established, extra-governmental organizations.

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[3] On the KdF (Strength Through Joy) Nazi Leisure Organization see Shelley Baranowski, *Strength Through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich*. New York, 2003. For a broader consideration of the significance of travel in German history see Rudy Koshar, *German Travel Cultures*, Oxford, 2000. On the relationship between tourism and consumer culture in the 20th century see Ellen Furlough and Shelley Baranowski, *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and America*. Ann Arbor, 2011.

[4] On the Dopolavoro Fascist Leisure Organization see Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy*. New York, 2003.

[5] Despite his significance in collective memory as one of the central figures of the Popular Front government, Léo Lagrange has not been the subject of an abundant historical literature. Former socialist Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy, who took part in the Youth Hostel movement in the aftermath of WW2 has written a useful biography: Pierre Mauroy. *Léo Lagrange*. Paris, 1997. See also his wife's memoirs: Madeleine-Léo Lagrange. *Le Présent Indéfini: Mémoires d'Une Vie*. Paris, 1998; See also Jean-Louis Chappat. *Les Chemins de l'Espoir ou Combats de Léo Lagrange*. Paris, 1983; Christine Bouneau & Jean-Paul Callede (eds.). *Léo Lagrange: Une Perspective de Renouvellement dans la Construction des Jeunes Générations*. Paris, 2012; Yann Lasnier. *Léo Lagrange: L'Artisan du Temps Libre*. Paris, 2007

[6] On the Popular Front's leisure specifically see Julian Jackson. "Le Temps des Loisirs: Popular Tourism and Mass Leisure in the Vision of the Popular Front." In Martin Alexander & Helen Graham (eds.). *The French and Spanish Popular Front: Comparative Perspectives*. Cambridge, 1989, pp. 226-239

[7] From the creation of the first Blum government on June 4, 1936 until December 31, 1936 the sub-secretary of leisure and sports did not officially receive any credits. Its activity was supported financially by 25 000 monthly francs drawn from the secret funds of the ministry of the interior (10 000 francs), the council presidency (10 000 francs), and the foreign affairs (5 000 francs). See Ory, Pascal. *Op. Cit.* p. 718. Subventions largely increased during the period and, in 1938 amounted to just under 5 million francs (4 911 500 francs) see Marcel Bonnel. *Hygiene dans les Auberges de Jeunesse*. Op. Cit. p. 18

Figure 11 Léo Lagrange in his ministerial office, 1936

The CLAJ was one of the movements whose interests and methods echoed the Popular Front's political philosophy, emphasizing equality, and a modern conception of democracy relying heavily on associations and personal involvement. Through this common understanding of politics as the realm of educated and dedicated citizens, the Popular Front and the youth hostel movement participated in the same dynamic, seeking a renewal of liberal political practice at the grassroots level in response to the rise of far-right movements and the economic crisis in the early 1930s. Historian Julian Jackson argues that the Popular Front was a combined revolt of the working class against and the youth against a social order that prevented them from playing any significant political role. The idea of youth, expressed through the ever-important word *Jeunesse*, was endowed with a number of meanings, both symbolic and real, and played a fundamental role in the orientation of the Popular Front's policies.[8] While the labor reforms passed in the summer of 1936 addressed the queries of the working class[9], the Popular Front's

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[8] Jackson, Julian. *Op. Cit.* p. 19

[9] The Matignon agreements signed between representatives of the employers and CGT represented an unprecedented lift in the working class' conditions of life: wage increases up to 15%, elected work committees in factories over 10 people, collective bargaining, 40 hours week, and two weeks paid vacation. See Eley, Geoff. *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000*, Oxford, 2002, p. 269

support to the youth hostels exemplified its concern for the social and political demands of the new generation. Paris, which paved the way in terms of modernization, was by then a large industrial city, a socialist hub,[10] and the center of a booming artistic life that gave an increasing role to new mass media such as cinema and the radio.[11] The collaboration between the Popular Front and the hostels was in no way accidental as their coeval rise betrayed a dire need for a renewal of political, educational, and leisure practices and both attempted to address issues born from social changes that had affected French society in its entirety.

Support from the Popular Front to the youth hostels manifested itself in two ways: indirectly through the allocation of public funds (which became more readily available in 1937) to the development of tourism (discounted transport, state sponsored vouchers) and the construction of equipments (sports complexes, youth hostels and houses) and directly, through the construction of hostels and the organization of mass manifestations.[12] The partnership was such that Lagrange was deemed "the first minister of the youth hostels in the history of the Republic"[13] by the *Cri des Auberges*, acting as a father figure and giving the CLAJ institutional credibility. The period during which Léo Lagrange was in charge of the state-secretary of sports and leisure (June 1936 to February 1938) represents in many ways the apex of the youth hostel movement. Although the rise of the youth hostels had really begun during the year 1935, it was greatly amplified by the

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[10] On that topic see: Stovall, Tyler. *The Rise of the Paris Red Belt*. Berkeley, 1990 and *Paris and the Spirit of 1919: Consumer Struggles, Transnationalism, and Revolution*. New York, 2012

[11] Andrew, Dudley & Steven Hungar. *Popular Front Paris and the Poetics of Culture*. Cambridge, 2005

[12] According to Pascal Ory, 3 million francs were allocated by the sub-secretary for sports and leisure to the youth hostel movement. Ory, Pascal. *Op. Cit.* p. 779. Marcel Bonnel for his part provides a more detailed account. According to him, an annual subvention of 400 000 francs was allocated in 1938 and completed by construction and refurbishing funds (undisclosed) for the hostels. See Marcel Bonnel. *Op. Cit.*, p. 18

[13] *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse*. February 1937.

energy of the minister and his team in conjunction with the social dynamic created by the Popular Front, its welfare policies, and the promotion of secular and pacifist organizations. As Pascal Ory writes, "in the span of two years the implication of the Popular Front government was to elevate the youth hostels from a marginal activity to the most original myth of French society during the period."[14]

The meteoric rise of the youth hostel movement presented the CLAJ with serious organizational challenges. The influx of new and largely inexperienced members, some of whom had benefitted from the paid leaves and travel incentives promulgated by the Popular Front, forced the movement to rethink itself in order to cope with these new users who had not taken part in "heroic period" of the organization. By the end of 1937, the creation of numerous users' clubs (some targeting a specific audience, like the Eastern Parisian Railway Workers Club, or the Paris students' club)[15] had led to a shift in the power dynamics within the movement, the center of gravity being effectively displaced from the steering committee to the clubs and the users. This development, towards an internal form of grassroots democracy, was of course to Lagrange's liking but the empowerment of users also came with internal tensions. From 1936 until 1940, the pages of *Le Cri des Auberges* are filled with countless debates on the path to follow for the movement to succeed. While some argued for or against vegetarianism or about the proper youth hostel dress code, others touched on more dramatic topics such as the necessity to help refugees of the Spanish civil war. In any case these debates represent a

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[14] Ory. *Op. Cit.* p. 778

[15] By the end of 1937 the CLAJ administered 300 hostels, providing a record 20 000 users with 80 000 nights of accommodation. There were also 60 users' clubs. In 1938, there were over 400 hostels, 60 000 youth hostels members, and about 100 000 nights. See Heller-Goldenberg, Lucette. *Op. Cit.* p. 206

remarkable window on a movement that came to think of itself as the vanguard of a new age of democratic politics.

Putting the French youth hostel movement in context, the debates among CLAJ members have to be seen as a response to larger social-political evolutions in the period. Drawing on a large corpus of existing literature on the topic, I argue that he rapid development of mass cultural production and reproduction techniques in the interwar period significantly altered the formation of individual and group subjectivities[16]. In the late 1920s and the 1930s, the rise to prominence of cinema and photography as mass media brought about the emergence of "cultural niches" (perhaps too early to call "subcultures"), specific and limited group identifications of which the youth hostels can serve as a good example. The youth hostel members were enmeshed in a rising and complex consumer culture of which advertising and branding had become two of the most readily observable signs. While the *Cri des Auberges* had designated pages for advertising, where smart shop managers could showcase their camping and photographic

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[16] The literature on the relationship between mass culture, aesthetics, and politics in the interwar period and beyond has been flourishing in the last two or three decades. It is particularly true for Germany where the "re-discovery" of cultural theorists such as Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and Siegfried Kracauer has played a fundamental role in this intellectual development. In the case of Benjamin and Adorno, industrial modernity and mass culture were understood as complex historical processes with negative potentialities. This view is most notably expressed in two famous works: Theodor Adorno & Max Horkeimer. *The Dialectic of Enleightenment*. Stanford, 2007; and Walter Benjamin. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*. 1969. Although often associated with the Frankfurt school, Siegfried Kracauer proposes a take on similar issues without Benjamin and Adorno's strong historicist tendencies. See Siegfried Kracauer. *The Mass* Ornament. Cambridge, MA, 1996. On the Frankfurt School, see Jay, Martin. *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School*. Berkeley, 1996. On the question of mass culture in France: Jean-Pierre Rioux & Jean-Francois Sirinelli (eds.). *La Culture de Masse en France: De la Belle Epoque a Aujourd'hui*. Paris, 2002; Ory, Pascal. *La Belle Illusion*. Op. cit.; Régine Robin (ed.). *Masses et Culture de Masse dans les Années 30*. Paris, 1991; Alain Corbin (ed.). *L'Avenement des Loisirs*, *1850-1960*. Paris, 1995; Dominique Kalifa. *La Culture de Masse en France*. Paris, 2001. It is important to note that the concept of "histoire culturelle" in French historiography tends to differ significantly from the idea of "cultural history" in the United States. From a theoretical point of view it is much less permeated by cultural and literary studies and as a consequence often framed by a narrower, essentially historical perspective.

equipment to a receptive audience, the movement's positioning in regard to the rest of society amounted to modern form of branding: re-shaping the world was to be done in style! The question of dress and other group practices, which followed a loosely structured canon, suggest the importance of an aesthetic dimension for the youth hostel experience. Similarly, intellectual debates on the notion of form centered on a mobile but all-encompassing notion of authenticity that came to define the youth hostel worldview, but were also subjected to varying individual interpretations. During the years 1936-1938, groups within the movement sought to participate in the recovery of local folklore by performing songs and poems drawn from the regional repertoires. This concern with popular traditions echoed the rise of anthropology as a scientific discipline and the establishment of a National Museum of Arts and Popular Traditions under the direction of Georges-Henri Rivière.[17]

This chapter looks at the evolution of the French Youth hostel movement during the years 1936-1940. It refutes the idea that tends to see the CLAJ as a creation of the Popular Front and instead argues that both movements participated in the same social-historical dynamic which found its origins in the perceived need to modernize an antiquated social and political system. I focus on the French youth hostel movement during the years of the Popular Front, a golden era which culminated with the World Exhibit of 1937 for which an ultra-modern youth hostel was built with funds provided by the French government.[18] I argue that the Popular Front (1934-1938), through its liberal

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[17] On the action of the museum and its significance for the discipline of Anthropology see James Clifford. *The Predicament of Culture*. Cambridge (MA), 1988. See also Herman Lebovics. *True France: The Wars Over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945*. Ithaca, 1992; Isac Chiva. "Georges-Henri Riviere: Un Demi-Siecle d'Ethnologie de la France." *Terrain*, No 5 (October 1985), 76-83

[18] See Shanny Peer. *France on Display: Peasants, Provincials, and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World Fair*. New York, 1998

conception and association of culture and politics created an opening in the social imaginary that made possible to think of a different future within a democratic framework. Building upon this platform, the youth hostel movement sought a radical re-foundation of the French political and social life. Working around the notion of place and space, and following insights by theorists such as Gaston Bachelard, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, as well as Michel Foucault, I argue that the practice of travel within the French youth hostel network amounted to an outline for re-framing of the social.[19] As the guidebook published by the CLAJ seems to suggest, the mapping, hiking, and ethnographic activities of the movement were all geared towards the creation of an alternative map that could be opposed to an "official" one. Reclaiming space and local cultures was part of an effort to create an alternative, future polity rejecting the "dark" and "artificial" aspects of modernity (consumerism, pollution, urban life, moral and physical decay) in favor of search for cultural authenticity.

By 1938 two factions had formed within the youth hostel movement, one concerned with the development of the CLAJ within the French borders, the second more interested with transnational travel and extreme sporting activities. Although these two visions emerged from a similar ideological platform, they betrayed fundamental differences in the political imaginaries of their respective proponents. The group gathered around Marc Augier, the ubiquitous editor of the *Cri des Auberges*," progressively moved towards a radically anti-modernist position. When the German army invaded France in

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[19] For Bachelard's work the relationship between intimate space and poetics imagination see Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. New York, 1994 and *The Poetics of Reverie*. New York, 1971. On Deleuze and Guattari's notions of rhizome, de-territorialization, and nomadicism see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaux: Capitalism and Schizophrenia 2*. Minneapolis, 1987. On Foucault's concept of *Heterotopia* as a critique of Bachelard's understanding of space see Michel Foucault, *Les Hétérotopies*. Paris, 2009.

1940 most of those within this group chose to collaborate with the Nazi occupying forces,

lured by the promise of building a "new Europe" in which France would a decisive role to

play.

The Popular Front in mid-1930s France

In the Spring of 1936, the coming to power of the Popular Front government led

by socialist intellectual Léon Blum inaugurated a new era for French politics. This

alliance of left and center-left political formations (including the Communists, Socialists,

and Radicals) and workers' unions[20] found its roots in the perceived threat posed by the

rise of the far right on the domestic and continental scenes. The Nazi takeover in

Germany in 1933,[21] and the prolonged economic and political crisis[22] had invigorated the

French fascist leagues, some of which, like the Croix-de-Feu, led by Colonel de la

Rocque, had successfully presented themselves to a large audience as a viable ultra-

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[20] The *Comité du Rassemblement Populaire*, formed on July 14, 1936 was made up of ten major organizations: the SFIO, PCF, Radical Party, Independent Socialists, CGT, CGTU, CVIA and Amsterdam Committee (both anti-fascist surveillance committees), the League of the Rights of Man, and veterans' organizations. See Jackson, Julian. *Op. Cit.* p. 46-47.

[21] Geoff Eley has highlighted the remarkable impact the Nazi seizure of power had on European politics: "The Nazi seizure of power (30 January 1933) was a democratic catastrophe that reverberated across Europe. (…) The impact elsewhere was immense. While the term fascism already existed, its overpowering valency was new – as the future that had to be stopped. It named the main threat, internationally in the Third Reich's foreign aggressions, nationally in one's own society – a danger to the rights of labor and socialism, to the Soviet Union, to democracy, to peace, to cultural freedom, to decent and civilized values, to individual liberties, to progress. As communist militants, rank and file socialists, and Left intellectuals contemplated possible futures, the rise of fascism reshaped their rhetoric. "Stopping the fascists" dominated discussion. Eley, Geoff. *Op. Cit.*, p. 262

[22] The head of the government changed 5 times during the two years leading to the February 1934 events. See Jackson, Julian. *Op. Cit.* p. 9

nationalist alternative to the Republican model.[23] On February 6 1934, the leagues, using

the pretext of the "Stavisky affair," a corruption scandal in which government officials

were implicated, attempted to march on the national assembly. The demonstration turned

into a riot and the fighting between police forces and demonstrators, which lasted until

the next morning, left 15 dead and over 300 wounded.[24] These traumatic events elicited a

firm response from the left wing parties as the Communist (PCF) and Socialist (SFIO)

parties signed a treaty of electoral alliance on July 27, 1934. This agreement had been

prompted by the creation of local republican committees including members of both

parties but it also fell within the new anti-fascist policy of the Comintern under the

direction of Georgi Dimitrov.[25] The two years between the *Coup de Force* of the Fascist

leagues and the elections which brought Blum to power in many ways represent the apex

of popular politics in 20th France, a period of remarkable mobilization and innovation

during which grassroots militant organizations sought to fundamentally reshape French

political life. A wave of anti-Fascist demonstrations in February 1934 (French historian

Jean Vigreux counted 450 demonstrations in 350 towns between February 7 and February

[23] On the Croix-de Feu and other movements in the fascist orbit see: Robert Soucy. *French Fascism: The Second Wave*. New Haven, 1995; Soucy. *French Fascism: The First Wave*. New Haven, 1986; Irvine, William. "Fascism in France and the Strange Case of the Croix-de-Feu." *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 63, No. 2, June 1991, pp. 271-295; Michel Winock. *Nationalisme, Antisémitisme et Fascisme en France*. Paris, 1990; Zeev Sternhell. *Ni Droite Ni Gauche: L'Ideologie Fasciste en France*. Paris, 1983. For a local perspective see Kevin Passmore. *From Liberalism to Fascism: The Right in a French Province, 1928-1939*. Cambridge, 1997

[24] On the February 1934 riot see Serge Berstein. *Le 6 Février 1934*. Paris, 1975; Pierre Pelissier. *La République en Feu*. Paris, 2000

[25] Before the summer 1934 alliance with the socialists, the PCF had followed a "class against class" political line based on the idea that the SFIO were part of the bourgeois camp. This strategy had particularly destructive effects on the PCF audience. At the end of 1933, the party membership was reduced to 30 000 and the votes fell from over 1 million in the 1928 election to 300 000 in the second ballot of 1932. For a detailed account of the Communist party's strategy in the years leading to the Popular Front see Nicole Racine & Louis Bodin. *Le Parti Communiste Francais dans l'Entre-Deux* Guerres. Paris, 1982; Denis Peschanski. *Et Pourtant Ils Tournent: Vocabulaire et Stratégie du PCF, 1934-1936*. Paris, 1988; Julian Jackson. *Op. Cit.* pp. 22-51. For Dmitrov and the Comintern see Ronald Suny. *The Soviet Experiment*. New York, 2010; E.H Carr. *The Twilight of the Comintern*. London, 1982.

12 of 1934[26]) kick started a movement which saw the spontaneous creation of local

"republican and anti-fascist committees" and ultimately led to the creation of

organizations such as the Human Rights League (LDH), the Intellectuals' Anti-Fascist

Watch Committee (CVIA) and the International League Against Antisemitism (LICA).[27]

Perhaps more so than a political alliance between left wing parties and unions, the

Popular Front was, first and foremost a grassroots movement that sought to defend

democracy and the Republic against the looming threat of fascism.[28] As Julian Jackson

writes: "*the Popular Front transformed a defensive movement of anti-fascism into an*

authentic movement of liberation (quoting Manes Sperber). It represented an attempt to

break down the barriers of a compartmentalized and formal society – the barriers

between work and worker, intellectual and masses, culture and people, science and art."[29]

The "cultural revolution" operated during the Popular Front, which relied on a

remarkable interpenetration of arts and politics on the left, has been given a masterful

treatment by French historian Pascal Ory in his book *La Belle Illusion*.[30] This study

shows, through a methodical study of all aspects of cultural life under the Popular Front,

the ways in which the Blum government attempted to tackle the social-political

challenges of the 1930s through a reformist, yet democratic and egalitarian program.

Building on a similar interpretive line, but essentially focusing on politics, Julian Jackson

argues that the Popular Front was "a movement characteristic of European politics in the

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[26] Jean Vigreux. *Le Front Populaire, 1934-1938*. Paris, 2011, p. 14.

[27] See Nicole Racine-Furlaud. "Pacifistes et Antifascistes: Le Comité de Vigilance des Intellectuels Antifascistes" in Anne Roche & Christian Tarting (eds.). *Des Années 30: Groupes et Ruptures*. Paris, 1985

[28] On Anti-Fascism in interwar Europe see Gerd-Rainer Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism: Ideology, Activism and Contingency in the 1930s*. New York, 1996.

[29] Jackson. *Op. Cit.* p. 286

[30] Ory. *Op. Cit.*

1930s", in that its themes – youth, health, sport, mass-participation – and its style – the politics of mass demonstrations were in many ways reminiscent of those in vogue in fascist countries. Demonstrations and mass gatherings during the Popular Front differed from that of Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany in because "they represented, not the subsuming of the individual in an unstructured atomized mass, but precisely an assertion of the vitality of French democracy in a dense tissue of independent organizations. (…) In the area especially of culture and leisure, one of the strengths of the Popular Front was the contribution of the independent organizations which collaborated with, supplemented, and inspired the efforts of the government."[31] In opposition to the violent, anti-democratic demonstrations of force orchestrated in Germany by the Nazis, the immense mobilization on the left during the Popular Front reaffirmed a profound attachment to the values of parliamentary democracy and the Republic. The general strikes of May and June 1936 that followed the election of the Blum government served to assert the power of the democratic process against the reluctant entrepreneurial class.

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[31] Jackson. *Op. Cit.*, p. 285.

The founding of the CLAJ in 1933, involving a number of political or professional left-leaning organizations[32], in many ways amounted to a micro-level rehearsal of the strategies deployed during the formation of the Popular Front. The CLAJ had greatly benefitted from the position of influence of the chairwoman of the executive committee, Cécile Grunebaum-Ballin, within socialist circles. Her husband, Paul, was one of Blum's closest collaborators and at the center of a progressive power nexus that linked intellectuals, artists, politicians, and military officers.[33] Léo Lagrange himself was

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[32] See Chapter 1, p. 38.

[33] Paul Grunebaum-Ballin's personal itinerary is by, any account, exceptional. He was classmate of Marcel Proust at Lycée Condorcet later went on to work with Léon Blum in the Conseil d'Etat. As a prominent jurist, he was among the men who drafted the law on the separation of church and state in the years 1904-1905. After serving as Aristide Briand's chief of staff in the years 1908-1913, he chose to leave his political career aside and instead focus on two particular issues: affordable housing and cultural policies. From 1929

one of the youngest and most active members of the Grunebaum-Ballin network and his

nascent administration almost naturally embraced the CLAJ as the youth movement

whose program was the closest to its own. Both the CLAJ and the sub-secretariat lacked

funds and relied on individual and group enthusiasm and creativity to reach their

ambitious goals. Ultimately, the Popular Front and the youth hostel movement

participated in the same dynamic, seeking a renewal of liberal political, social, and

cultural practice at the grassroots level: the youth hostels were based on an egalitarian,

democratic, and associative model which echoed the Popular Front's conception of

society.[34]

Popular Front, Youth, and the CLAJ

The meteoric rise of the French youth hostel movement[35] coincided with a

paradigm shift in French social and political life. To the "antiquated" elites and modes of

government were opposed a vague, yet potent, notion of "youth" which recovered many

different meanings but was generally synonymous of movement, novelty, dynamism, and

until 1939 he was the head of the affordable housing authority of the Seine department while at the same time playing an important role in the development of an administration and legal status for the management of cinema. Although he was virtually unknown from the public, his far reaching connections and influence made him an important figure in French political life from the Dreyfus affair until the Second World War. Through his father in law, reformist officer Lt. Col. Emile Mayer, he was familiar with Léo Lagrange and Charles de Gaulle. See Brigitte Bergmann, *Paul Grunebaum-Ballin: Un Siecle au Service de la République*. Paris, 1988. For an inventory of his personal archives: Dominique Le Roux, *Inventaire Paul Grunebaum-Ballin*. Paris, 1982.

[34] The development of extra-curricular activities for young men and women was one of the cornerstones of Lagrange's leisure policies. Laura Lee-Downs has shown the ways in which his administration relied and supported the *Colonies de Vacances*, for schoolchildren under 16 years of age, at the local level. Laura-Lee Downs, *Childhood in the Promised Land. Op. Cit.* pp. 195-235.

[35] By the end of 1937 the CLAJ administered 300 hostels, providing a record 20 000 users with 80 000 nights of accommodation. There were also 60 users' clubs. In 1938, there were over 400 hostels, 60 000 youth hostels members, and about 100 000 nights. See Heller-Goldenberg. *Op. Cit.* p. 206

change. The coming to power of the Popular Front represented the high point of the

appropriation of the discourse on youth by the republican left and their communist allies.

The celebration of the concept of *jeunesse* as the ultimate image for ideas of political and

social dynamism came through the blurring of social classes and the merging of cultural

life that happened during the first Blum government (June 1936 – June 1937). In their

recent book on Parisian cultural life during the Popular Front, Dudley Andrew and Steven

Hungar argue for a better understanding of the interplay between culture and politics

during the Popular Front: "The year 1936 would be the compressed point where the

popular and the elite came closest to each other, and where the individual grains of sand

passing through the neck of the glass – grains that represent ideas, images, and practices

– are constricted in the pressure zone of those intense months. (…) By every measure, it

seems that the diffuse opinions and wildly disparate styles characterizing the arts and

ideas at the beginning of the decade braided themselves into filiations and associations

until 1937, when sheer entropy; as much as political and economic disappointment, led to

a listless dispersion of groups and their members, culminating in the demoralizing

months of the phony war and then the occupation."[36] In this synthetic paragraph about the

atmosphere and social-political dynamics of the time, the authors argue for the necessity

to understand the Popular Front as a revolutionary period. But, unlike the French or

Russsian revolutions, it was a pacific one, which did not intend to topple an authoritarian

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[36] Andrew Dudley and Steven Hungar, *Popular Front Paris and the Poetics of Culture*. Cambridge, MA, 2005, p. 143.

and conservative regime but instead sought to "consolidate all the gains of western civilization."[37]

The "compressed point" of Andrew and Hungar is reminiscent of David Harvey's theory of modernity as engendering an acceleration of historical time and the perception of it induced by the acceleration of the pace of life and industrial rhythms.[38] The Popular Front (understood here as a social movement with a political agenda) represented an attempt to cope with these radical transformations while retaining the democratic principles that had become the normative political principle of the Third Republic. Unlike most movements of the period, it proposed to increase the "level of democracy" in political life through the aforementioned blurring of classes, and the merging of political, social, and cultural practices. This complex process, which originated in the creation of local and national anti-fascist committees in the aftermath of the February 1934 riots, culminated in the spring and summer of 1936 and amounted to a reframing of the left political imaginary around the defense of the republic and the literal enactment of the *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* motto.

The Youth Hostel, Politics, and the Bodily Metaphor

As the previous chapter showed, *Le Cri des Auberges*, like other youth hostels publications, was conceived as a space devoid of political partisanship. Of course it did not preclude individual members to favor particular political organizations, but debates

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[37] Dudley & Hungar. *Op. Cit.*, p. 145.
[38] David Harvey. *The Condition of Postmodernity*, New York, 1990.

within the magazine's pages were to be circumscribed to issues pertaining directly to the hostels and the movement. These debates, and the youth hostel culture as a whole, were inherently political, but the rejection of traditional party allegiances and identifications suggests that the movement sought the re-foundation of political practice as a whole. As such, it was an expression of the spontaneous political mobilization of the years 1934-1937, and sought to cultivate responsible citizens through direct democratic practice.

The atmosphere of popular communion in the weeks leading the electoral victory of the Popular Front is easily perceptible in the pages of *Le Cri des Auberges.* In the June 1936 issue, an article entitled *Laïcité* (secularism) exhorted the movement's members to refrain from arguing about politics in the hostels and instead try to understand and live in harmony with others: "You come to the hostels in order to understand the heart of other young people. Contemplate the living hearts around you. Even at your age, and despite all the books you have read, there is still a lot for you to learn from life. By the way, if you absolutely have to argue about a topic forbidden by the *interior rules*, leave the hostel for a moment with your interlocutor. Go sit by the river, in the nearby forest, in front of a freshly plowed field. Once you are there, you are free to argue, comrade, if you still feel like it. In front of the purity of the spring, the freshness of the leaves, the smell of the earth, you will know how to forget your words of violence. Your formulas will soften progressively in order to harmonize with the ambiance."[39] The culture of group harmony over political discord, which had been one of the most important narrative tropes of the Popular Front movement and was then at its apex, had by that time, permeated sympathetic organizations like the CLAJ, which were not directly involved in

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[39] *Le Cri des Auberges.* No 18, June 1936, p. 4

political affairs. By relegating political debates within the hostels to the private sphere, the CLAJ and its members implicitly rejected the primacy of politics in the organization of society. It also marked a clear line between the outside world and that of the organization, effectively reinforcing the function of the hostels as shelters, protecting young men and from women from the "words of violence" and other forms of intellectual and physical pollution circulating in the outside world. The river and the fields, seen as a natural extension to the hostels, are seen as possessing the ability to cure violent discursive "diseases" caught be young men and women in contact with the maliciousness of the political world.

In this atmosphere of deep suspicion and defiance *vis a vis* the political world, its practices and its discourses, Léo Lagrange stood out as a public figure that could be trusted and emerged, in the months following the electoral victory of the Popular Front, as the tutelary figure which was to give the movement national recognition and credibility.[40] The paradoxical tension existing in the relationship between the youth hostels and politics was expressed in the Popular Front and its secretary of state in charge of the youth questions and leisure. The CLAJ seemingly never stood for the Popular Front as such, it was in many ways too political and abstract, but it did embrace the fatherly figure of Léo Lagrange, whose sensational interpersonal skills and engaged personality struck the right chord with the hostels users. The "Minister of the Youth Hostels", as *Le Cri des Auberges* liked to call him, was 35 years old when he entered

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[40] At a socialist rally in Lille on May 22, 1938, Lagrange recognized that the youth was weary of doctrinal debates and political action: "A majority of the youth is reluctant to participate in political action because it does not find in it the satisfaction of a dire need for leisure. We must, I believe, take the young away from partisan conflict, that can be deadly for them." Cited in Jean-Louis Chappat. *Les Chemins de l'Espoir*. Op. Cit. p. 278

government, which made it possible for the hostel crowds to think of him as one of their own.

Lagrange's embodiment of the ideal of the young, dynamic, and liberal democrat was never as evident as in the article of *Le Cri* relating the inauguration of a new hostel by the recently appointed minister: "Léo Lagrange appeared at the window of a dormitory. He said, simply but warmly how much he approved of our ideal, of our constant struggle against the forces of evil, of illness, of death, how much he would love to take part in our activities (songs and games). He went further still, as he promised to come with us someday, among us. This attitude will go straight to the hearts of our comrades and that of the youth of all countries who will gather *en masse* around our ideal, applauding at once the *minister of the youth hostels*."[41] Lagrange's words, with their organic tonality, reflected a political language of the time which devoted a remarkable amount of space to a pseudo-medical language and metaphors about the health of the social body and its threatening by various viruses (fascism, communism, modern life, pollution…). Lagrange had been able to capture the CLAJ's rejection of traditional politics, and frame the construction of the youth hostel movement as part of a larger struggle between good and evil. In this case it is easy to see that the "powers of darkness, illness, and death" had to be equated with fascism and conservatism in general. But much like their fascist enemies, Lagrange and the youth hostels shared, first and foremost, a political doctrine of action, meaning his involvement with the CLAJ departed from the idea of *youth politics* in favor of a *youthful* conception of political practice. Lagrange's

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[41] "Monsieur le Ministre: Notre Ami…" *Le Cri des Auberges*. No 19, July 1936, p. 1

wish to accompany the hostel users on the roads "taking part in their games and songs" also suggested his belief in everyday practice as a form of politics rather than in the practice of politics in the traditional sense of the term.

The meaning of *Jeunesse* was reaffirmed a few pages further in an article arguing that in times of trouble, "crises of transformation and expansion," human societies necessarily look towards youth to find a necessary surplus of force and vitality: "childhood and youth, are shrubs bound to become trees, and in their turn produce fruits. This natural social cycle has been neglected until now, ignore more than neglected, in France, by learned men and… careful, who always prefer to consider the acquired wealth rather than the usable capital."[42] Here, society was not seen through the lens of a bodily metaphor, but instead from a developmental perspective. Generational change was considered as a part of "natural social cycle" which had been ignored by "learned men", a loose term designating the ruling classes: intellectuals, politicians, and the bourgeoisie.[43] This group of men were seen as unable to cope with the challenges of an expanding and transforming society, metaphorically preventing the new generation from blossoming and realizing its natural destiny (post-structuralists of the Deleuzian school would say "its *becoming-tree*[44]"). Lagrange, as both a relatively young man and the proponent of a doctrine of action, from his position among circles of power represented an ideal ally and a bridge between the youth frustrated in its development and the conservative "learned"

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[42] "Place aux Jeunes!" *Le Cri des Auberges*. No 19, July 1936, p. 8

[43] In the next chapter we will see how this kind of criticism could be found, expressed in similar terms, among in the discourses of radical intellectuals on the left (Paul Nizan) and the right (Drieu la Rochelle).

[44] For Deleuze and Guattari on the metaphor of the tree in the articulation of power and knowledge in the West *see* Deuleuze & Guattari. "Rhizome." *Mille Plateaux: Capitalisme et Schizophrénie 2*. Paris, 1980.

men in power. The vegetal metaphor was a powerful one: as many hostel goers[45] sought

to rethink their everyday practices in accordance to their social agenda, the idea of

naturism, which was based on a vegetarian diet, made its way into the hostels.

Finally, the year 1936 also sanctioned the appearance of the word *Ajiste*, based on

the acronym AJ (Auberges de Jeunesse – youth hostels), which rapidly replaced more

convoluted and inaccurate terms such as *hostel user* or *hostel goer*. If we were to translate

it, *Ajiste* would be "hosteler" a word that not only defined hostel users but also meant

their active participation in the works of the youth hostel community. As such it became

part of a group specific language and a token name for the members of the movement.

The use of the word suggests the transition into a more mature period of the movement's

life and an attempt to better define its contours through the use of an inclusive term

defining its active participants.

Structuring a radical social discourse: naturism and health in the hostels

The opening of a new political horizon that followed the coming to power of the

Popular Front played an important role in the development of an original social and

historical imaginary within the French youth hostels. It came at a crucial time when the

movement was coming out of its infancy and looked for ways to refine its rules, ideology,

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[45] By the year 1936, a new term had appeared which was to define the youth hostel users: *Ajiste.* If we were to translate it, *Ajiste* would be "hosteler" a word which not only defined hostel users but also meant their active participation in the works of the youth hostel community. As such it became part of a group specific language and a token name for the members of the group. I have up to this point refrained from using the word as it seemed to suggest the transition into a more mature period of the movement's life. In the coming pages I will use it interchangeably with *hostel users* since the young people who took part in the movement did not seem to distinguish between the two after the appearance of *Ajiste* in late 1935- early 1936.

and set of practices. Furthermore, as the users' clubs had, by 1936, claimed a significant

role in the movement's organization and decision-making processes, the debates about the

future orientation of the CLAJ became more meaningful. This evolution was reflected by

their growing importance in the pages of *Le Cri des Auberges*. One recurring and central

issue in these debates had to do with questions of health and the body, a direct

consequence of the predominant role played by discourses on *pollution* in the

construction of the political identity of the movement.[46]

The question of hygiene and cleanliness at the youth hostels also had public

health implications. In 1938, a medical school student named Marcel Bonnel defended a

dissertation on "Hygiene in the youth hostels."[47] In the first few pages, the author exposed

the organization of the youth hostel movement and the mode of operation for a model

hostel. In this ideal-typical view, a particular emphasis was put on the "hostel father" as

the keeper of order and cleanliness. As such Bonnel, likely a hostel user himself, adhered

to the view that the *Ajistes*, potentially unruly and less concerned with hygiene, had to be

tamed and policed by an elderly authority.[48] In the thesis, Bonnel relied on a typology

that distinguished between three types of hostels according to the level of hygienic

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[46] It is important to note that the question of sex and sexual relations between *Ajistes* were systematically pushed aside and eluded in a way that suggests both the general unease with such issues, the *Ajistes* self-consciousness and their understanding of the issue as potentially scandalous for the general public. Yet, some of the suggestive pictures taken by prominents *Ajistes* such as Pierre Jamet or the fictional memoirs of Marc Augier show that romantic engagement and sexual relations between male and female *Ajistes* played an important role in the everyday life of the group. See Jamet, Pierre. *1936, Au Devant de la Vie*. Grenoble, 1982; Marc Augier. *Les Copains de la Belle Etoile*. Paris, 1941

[47] The question of hygiene in the hostels seemed to have been of interest to individuals and institutions well beyond the *Ajiste* group. A medical doctoral dissertation was defended at the Paris faculty of medicine on the topic, and published in the spring of 1939: Marcel Bonnel. *Hygiene dans les Auberges de la Jeunesse*. Paris, 1939. On a similar note see an article about the British women's league of health and beauty: Jill Julius Matthews, "They had Such a Lot of Fun: The Women's League of Health and Beauty Between the Wars." History Workshop Journal, No 30, January 1990, pp. 22-54.

[48] In an interesting passage we learn from Bonnel that the "hostel father" not only kept an accounting book but also a "police book" (livre de police) similar to that kept in schools. Marcel Bonnel. *Op. Cit.*, p. 17

comfort available. The first type comprised buildings that had specifically been built to serve as youth hostels, the most adequate example being the Kellerman youth hostel in Paris, inaugurated in 1937 for the world exhibit.[49] Here, the author insisted on the necessity to follow the example of the hostels recently built in Germany in which the lobby was designed to serve as a hygienic compartment equipped with an "undressing room" and leading to showers, the passage through which was compulsory to enter the hostel's main room. The author concluded that this type of hostel presented a satisfactory hygienic level, comparable to that of good hotel, the only issue being related to the question of heating and air circulation in large dormitories.[50] The second type of hostel represented, according to Bonnel, "the archetypal French hostel" most often consisting of re-purposed country houses, chalets.[51] In this case, the author noted, some basic arrangements, such as showers, faucets, and a shoe-storing room allowed to maintain satisfactory hygienic conditions. The third type was, according to Bonnel, bordering on the insalubrious. Such hostels, that made up a majority of the network, were often reclaimed farms in which the water supply was dependent on wells that often did not meet modern standards. Another problem had to do with the treatment of feces and trash that often had to be removed manually from the latrines. One of the hostels singled out by Bonnel as part of this type was that of Villeneuve-sur-Auvers, located some 30 kilometers south of Paris, and regularly used by frequent contributors to the *Cri des*

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[49] *Ibid*. p. 23
[50] *Ibid*. p. 26
[51] *Ibid*. p. 27

Auberges such as POM and Pierre Jamet. A number of pictures taken there by Jamet provide useful illustrations on the everyday life conditions at the hostels.[52]

Figure 13 Showering at the Hostel in Villeneuve sur Auvers 1937 © Pierre Jamet

The second dimension of the hygienic question touched upon by Bonnel had to do with individual bodily practices, as he argued: "The *Ajiste* is not a collective being for which a set of rules has organized everything: he travels, dresses and eats as he pleases and pays more or less attention to his hygiene."[53] Bonnel's work suggests that the youth hostel movement and its remarkable growth had started to draw attention from regulating authorities, towards the establishment of number of standards and norms that had until then been largely ignored or avoided. One interesting aspect of his thesis is the omission

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[52] Most of the pictures taken by Pierre Jamet during his stay at the hostels were showcased during an exhibition in Grenoble in 1936. See Pierre Jamet. *1936, Au Devant de la Vie*. Grenoble, 1982.
[53] Marcel Bonnel. *Op. Cit.*, p. 30

of the question of promiscuity and pre-marital sexual relations as a potential public health issue. Hostels within the CLAJ network were, without exception, co-educational, a fact that often drew the ire of the most conservative critics.

The predominance of questions of health, fitness and bodily hygiene betrayed the German and Romantic lineage of the French youth hostels, reproducing some of the discursive tropes that had framed the idea of the *Naturist* movement in Germany, during the late Wilhelmine and Weimar eras.[54] The idea of "living in harmony with natural forces"[55] was perceived positively within the movement, in no small way because it created a strong distinction with the everyday practices of the previous generations. Roland Trochery, an active youth hostel user, saw *Naturism* as a way to cure the illnesses and pollution in the modern world. In his analysis, "naturism rises against today's way of life, that accumulates defects and mistakes, enslaves man in a set of ridiculous preconceptions, and strips him of two of his two most precious belongings: health and freedom." But the idea of *Naturism*, besides the obvious connection to all things natural, the non-urban and the non-industrial, seemed to appear to many as mixed bag of interchangeable activities and practices with variable levels of commitment. The author acknowledged the efforts made by some to practice physical education in the outdoors or adhere to a strict vegetarian diet. According to him taking these necessary steps was only an introduction to the principles of *Naturism* that found their definite expression in the appearance of a new state of mind decisively influenced by the new, healthy lifestyle.

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[54] Michael Hau. *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: 1890-1930*. Chicago, 2003.

[55] Roland Trochery. "Le Naturisme Intégral." *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse*. No 19, July 1936, p. 8

Trochery ventured into drawing a program for this new philosophy of life that reproduced some of the arguments that structured the Popular Front discourse on youth, sports, and leisure: "Health for all, and through health the realization of human balance. Discipline, and through discipline, moral honesty. Probity in the struggle, and through probity, the re-establishing of work's value. Brotherly love, and through that love, the coming of peace. This is the program of *Naturism*."[56] This brief definition of *Naturism* (or what an assiduous *Ajiste* believed the word meant) shows the conflicting impulses at work in the creation and upholding of a set of practices that would be in par with the youth hostel movement's self image. While the concept of vegetarianism could be seen as a radically liberal opposition to traditional eating practices (at a time when meat was still seen by many as luxury) "and brotherly love" an attack against the rising nationalist and militaristic spirit of the times, Trochery's praise for the "value of work," "moral honesty through discipline," and "probity through effort" might be more akin to the discourses of traditional forms of conservatism. It would be misleading to see in such ideas the coming of Vichy's reactionary and authoritarian tendency, or a "fascist temptation." In this case references to discipline and moral honesty were more a function of the movement's historicist tendencies, it's historical becoming and programmatic ideology, than a clear "fascist temptation." Discipline and moral values were seen as pre-requisites and affirmed the inherently political dimension (albeit a novel one) of a movement that geared itself towards building a new society. Yet, in its essence, such a program largely exceeded the goals of the Popular Front, which sought to foster democracy within the pre-existing

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[56] Trochery. *Op. Cit.*

118

French political system, and shared some of the dramatic and socially transformative teleological tendencies of communism and fascism.

These deeply embedded conceptions of social vitality and renewal within the movement were expressed through ideas of individual and group discipline in which food practices seemed to play a significant role.[57] In rather traditional modernist fashion, the individual body of the youth hostel user to which was ascribed a rigorous set of practices was seen as the base unit of the movement's growth, a way to gauge its potential for success, and a metaphor for the organization's health as a whole. As such the individual body was at once subjected to socially conforming impulses (the healthy practices and concerns of the group) and a pre-existentialist discourse on the liberating qualities of a healthy lifestyle. Bodily pollution and food practices were the subject of an article titled "towards a more healthy life", published in August 1936, attesting of the importance of the question in the youth hostel community. The author, journalist and *Ajiste* Juliette Pary,[58] exhorted the paper's readers, in a Marxist-influenced fashion, to reject the delusional and harmful conception of life the results of which lay before everyone's eyes: "we need to react forcefully against food poisoning, the urban mentality (*citadinisme*), physical as well as moral decay. It would be so easy to live better, to live more naturally, in a cleaner way, while looking for the truth! As long as we do not free ourselves from antiquated and harmful (*néfastes*) dogmas and principles we will accumulate mistakes and misery on our heads and that of our lineage."

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[57] On food practices at the hostels and a critique of the excessive consumption of canned foods see Marcel Bonnel. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 35-36

[58] Juliette Pary was a journalist and fiction writer, born in 1903. During the 1930s she took part in the youth hostel movement and also served as an organizer for the Colonies de Vacances. See Laura Lee Downs. *Childhood in the Promised Land*. Op. Cit., pp. 225-227

For the author, the "poisoning" and food pollution did not only take place in the home kitchens, cantinas, and restaurants, but also in the hostels. She wondered how the CLAJ could have a decisive impact in the world if its hostels were not able to function according to a healthier and more human set of rules. Furthermore, the difficulty to decisively change food practices at the hostels was seen as a sign of the inability to move away from the polluted habits of everyday life, and posed a serious threat to the shelter-like environment of the "temples of spring." Pary argued that: "Our life at the hostels has too much to do with the thoughtless conformism of common life *(la vie courante)*. I would like to see something else there. I would like to see something else than these menus that disgusted me, that only had a place for canned foods, meats, and wine. Today's food which is too industrially denatured *(frelatée)*, too scientifically cooked, too plentiful, is one of the main reasons for human decay." The carefully selected wording displayed the author's concern for the "bad" aspects of modernity: the progressive disappearance of nature imagined as a positively nourishing force in favor of rationalized and scientific processes of food production. Although this evolution had made food plenty and readily available, this new processed form had made it virtually inedible, a poison for the mind and body. In the next paragraph, Pary seemingly negated the inherent life-sustaining quality of processed food by writing: "a little less *corpses (cadavres)*, please make more room on the table for salads, vegetables that are so diverse, and fruits especially."[59] Bodily pollution through food, understood here as the literal ingestion of dead substances (corpses), was perceived as a direct threat to the hostels. In this radical

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[59] Juliette Pary. "Pour une Vie Plus Saine." *Le Cri des Auberges*. No 20. August 1936, p. 5

interpretation, the shelter-like quality of the hostels seemed to only function insofar as they were totally sealed off from the rest of society. Mary Douglas had shown that food becomes potentially polluting when "the external boundaries of the social system are under pressure."[60] Here again, the individual body of the *Ajistes* served as a literal expression, a *model of* and *model for* the hostels and the organization as a whole. Yet, the relationship between food ingestion and the body remained an extremely tenuous one, because despite its dissenting nature expressed in the idea of refusal, its ramifications went all the way back to the doctrine of con-substantiation in the catholic thought. The contradictory essence and complexity of the discussion underlined the difficulty for the youth hostel users to cope with and transcend industrial modernity in some of its most intimate aspects.[61]

If a significant portion of the *Ajistes* chose to turn to a more or less strict vegetarian diet as part of a *naturist* inclination, some within the movement decided to remain carnivorous. This train of thought is carried unequivocally by a letter entitled "A Carnivore Woman" (*Une Carnivore*) sent to *Le Cri des Auberges* by an active female member named Petrouchka: "Let's eat in a more reasonable and thrifty way when at the hostels... But please, let's not take ourselves too seriously, and don't think of ourselves as social reformers, who want to change the world, under the pretext that the one in which we live is only *waste and rottenness*."[62] Debates about food and purity within the

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[60] In *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas warns us against the temptation to treat bodily margins (including alimentation through oral ingestion) independently from other (social) margins: "there is no reason to assume any primacy for the individual's attitude to his own bodily and emotional experience. (…) To understand bodily pollution we should try to argue back from the known dangers of society to the known selection of bodily themes and try to recognize what appositeness is there." Mary Douglas. *Purity and Danger*. New York, 2002, p. 150-157

[61] On the bund German organization see Mark Roseman, *A Past in Hiding*. New York, 2001.

[62] Petrouchka. "Une Carnivore." *Le Cri des Auberges*. No 23, January 1937, p. 12

movement served as a reminder of its limits as a socially revolutionary outfit. By 1937, it had grown significantly and attracted many students who mostly thought of it as a leisure organization in a way their more militant predecessors had not. Furthermore, the food debates highlighted the existence of different tendencies within the movement that did not necessarily have to do with experience in the youth hostels. They stemmed out of fundamentally different assessments on the state of the world at the time. The most radical users sought to reshape a world that had gone awry, feeding off the political dynamics of the time, while others simply went to the hostels looking for friendship, a means to discover the world, and get closer to nature. Both certainly sought to make the world more humane, but the means to attain strikingly differing goals was what often set the most ambitious *Ajistes* apart form the rest of the group.

Travel, Leisure Reforms, and the Youth Hostels

The theme of decay, which was so prevalent in the all the issues related to food, proved to be an extremely powerful metaphor to express the youth hostel movement's positioning towards society. Ideas of travel, youth and movement, wrapped up in a discourse of conquest (physical, social, personal, etc.), were constantly opposed to immobility, age, and regression. In an op-ed. piece, Marc Augier, celebrating the Popular Front's leisure policy, wrote about the need to wholeheartedly engage in travel: "A nation of young wanderers (*routiers*) has to rise up for the hostel movement to prosper, for our leisure activities to be a leisure of conquest. We will learn brotherhood, giving a helping hand while transcending ourselves through effort, on a terrain where opportunities to do

122

so are multiplied by the opposition between man and the forces of nature. The road wil be our battle ground (*terrain de combat*) for a better and healthier life, the road will keep us away from the easy paths that threaten us... Because if the leisure of tomorrow is not a leisure of conquest, it will be one of decay."[63]

One of the most significant contributions of the Popular Front was the development of a comprehensive leisure policy. French historian Léon Strauss has shown the complex development of a "new mode of appropriation of space and time" by the working class. He argues that this theme found its successful expression in the aesthetic realm during the world exhibition of 1937 and its flurry of events showcasing popular entertainment and leisure activities. Looking beyond the interwar period the authors argue that WWII represented a fundamental breach in the history of leisure: the militant dream of a workers' regeneration was to be replaced by a commodification and individualization of holidays in the postwar period.[64] It came as a direct consequence of the passing of a law promulgating the forty hours, 5-day week, and two annual weeks of paid holidays.[65] Léo Lagrange was, despite the limited resources of his administration, in charge of an ambitious program that was meant to be a democratic response to the

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[63] Marc Augier. "Vacances sur le Tas." *Le Cri des Auberges*. No 26, April 1937, p. 1

[64] On the significance of the Paid Holidays and the labour reforms of the Popular Front see Richez, J.C & Léon Strauss. "Un Temps Nouveau Pour les Ouvriers: Les Congés Payés." in Alain Corbin (ed.). *L'Avenement des Loisirs, 1850-1939*. Paris, 1995, pp. 373-412. The authors show the complex development of a "new mode of appropriation of space and time" by the working class. They argue convincingly that this theme found its successful expression in the aesthetic realm during the world exhibition of 1937 and its flurry of events showcasing popular entertainment and leisure activities. Looking beyond the interwar period the authors argue that WWII represented a fundamental breach in the history of leisure: the militant dream of a workers' regeneration was to be replaced by a commodification and individualization of holidays in the postwar period.

[65] The law on the two yearly holiday weeks was voted by the Senate on June 17, 1936 and became immediately applicable. See Nogueres, Henri. *La Vie Quotidienne en France au Temps du Front Populaire: 1935-1938*. Paris, 1977, p. 152.

remarkable development of mass leisure in neighboring fascist countries.[66] On July 30,

1936, Lagrange announced the creation of the "popular annual holiday ticket," a reduced

fare travel voucher which was to make possible for many working and lower-middle

class families to enjoy their first summer vacations.[67] Reduced travel fares that had been

obtained after arduous negotiations with travel companies, proved to be a popular

triumph, and up to this day represent the most lasting image of the Popular Front in social

memory. By the end of the summer these "Lagrange tickets" had been completed by

entire trains and boats chartered by the ministry, allowing working class families to take

trains to Toulouse and Saint Raphael and embark on Mediterranean cruises for even

lower fares. A few months later, Lagrange and his staff applied the same principles to the

Christmas holidays, effectively attacking one the most entrenched leisure spaces of the

privileged bourgeoisie: snow sports. Once again, the operation was a clear success as

over 50 000 people flocked to the Parisian train stations on their way to the mountains.[68]

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[66] For the German *Kraft Durch Freude* see Tim Mason. *Social Policy in the Third Reich: The Working Class and the National Community*. Oxford, 1993. For the Italian *Dopolavoro* see Victoria De Grazia. *The Culture of Content: Mass Organizations of Leisure in Fascist Italy*. New York, 2002. For a more general outlook see Rudy Koshar (ed.). *Histories of Leisure*. New York, 2002. There is an large amount of literature on leisure in the British social sciences: Chris Rojek. *Leisure and Culture*. London, 1999; Rojek. *De-Centering Leisure*. London, 1995; Karl Spracklen. *Leisure, Sports, and Society*. London, 2013; Aitchison, Cara, Nicola MacLeod, and Stephen Shaw (eds.). *Leisure and Tourism Landscapes: Social and Cultural Geographies*. London, 2000; Tony Blackshaw. *Leisure*. London, 2010; Rojek & John Urry. *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*. London, 1997; Towner, James. *A Historical Geography of Recreation and Tourism in the Western World: 1540-1940*. Chichester, 1996.

[67] The "Lagrange tickets" as they were almost instantly dubbed, were usable over a maximum period of 31 days and required a minimum stay of 5 days at the final destination. Using the voucher meant a 40 percent discount on travel fares for a worker and his family. For groups of 10 persons and more, the discount was bumped up to 50 percent. Some improvements were made for the year 1937: in families were the male adult was unemployed, women could be considered the "family head" and foreign citizens working in France were given the same advantages as their French colleagues. Nogueres, H. *Op. Cit.*, p. 153.

[68] Nogueres. *Op. Cit.*, p. 159
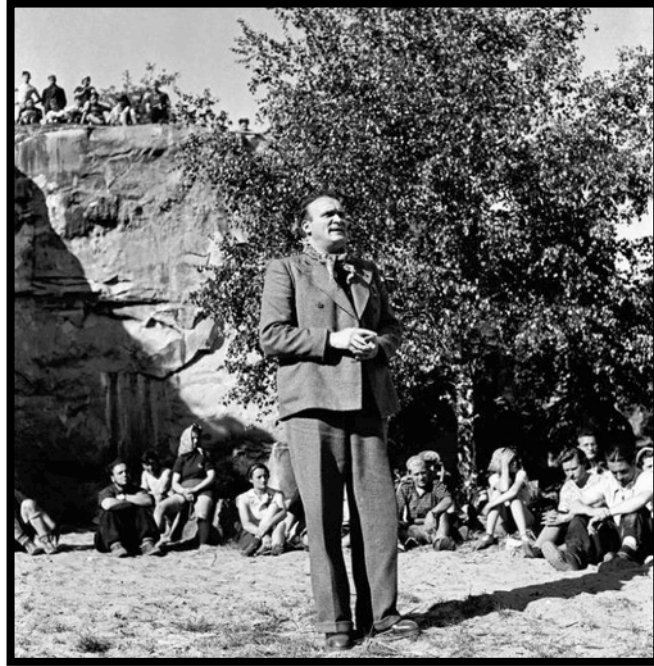
A high point in the winter leisure efforts and the communication of the ministry

was reached when Lagrange and his wife Madeleine hosted the inauguration of the "Léo

Lagrange" mountain youth hostel in the alpine village of Saint-Gervais on December 28,

1936. This event marked the anointment of the CLAJ as the semi-official youth

organization of the Popular Front and highlighted the success of the leisure and travel

policies undertaken by the new administration. According to *Le Cri des Auberges*,

Lagrange's collegial and friendly attitude during the ceremony strikingly departed from

the official customs of the Third Republic: "The prefect, who had put on his nicest

ceremonial hat (one with embroidered gold leaves) seemed to find our familiarity with

the minister rather out of place."[69] Perhaps the prefect had found it unusual and vexing

that Lagrange had chosen to greet the *Ajistes* crowd before any local official upon his

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[69] "Quand Léo Lagrange Inaugure." *Le Cri des Auberges*, No 23, January 1937, p. 5.

125

arrival at the train station. The article seemed to make a point of Lagrange's disdain for official protocol in favor of a profound attention to mundane individuals such as the hostel father Hertig (*"Le bon pere Hertig"*) or the youth hostel members. The minister undoubtedly perceived the youth hostel activists in a very favorable light, a fact that was highlighted by his willingness to participate in events and activities held at the hostels. Lagrange's grand entrance in the new Saint Gervais hostel was staged symbolically as he and his wife walked through a tunnel formed by hostel users holding their ski sticks in the air. This event hinted at the success of the "Lagrange tickets" and more generally the possibility for a democratic, yet voluntary leisure policy. It also seemed to open the door for a new practice of politics, in which non-descript state officials (the prefect, the head of the local police) seemed to recede to the background in favor of grassroots initiatives supported by dynamic and popular political leaders. In many ways, the description of the prefect resembled that of Jean Vigo's *Zéro de Conduite* in which state and school officials seemed overwhelmed and unmoved by the queries and lust for freedom of a new generation.[70] Lagrange, through his personal dynamism, disdain for protocol, and concern for the youth seemed to embody the figure of the modern leader, a brother-like protecting figure, that would ease the movement of the CLAJ and its users towards adulthood.

Morphing into a Mass Movement: The "Republic of Youth"

While the cooperation with the Popular Front consecrated the youth hostels as the most dynamic French youth formation of the period, the influx of new members posed

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[70] On Jean Vigo's *Zéro de Conduite* see Pierre Lherminier. *Jean Vigo: Un Cinéma Singulier*. 2007.

the question of their inclusion. During the early years (1933-1936), the CLAJ had mostly been made up of young professionals and students belonging to the urban middle and upper-middle class.[71] The success of the "Lagrange tickets" and that of a Popular Front leisure policy in which the CLAJ played a prominent role necessitated the inclusion of new members who often saw the youth hostels with a slightly different gaze. The first wave *Ajistes* were concerned with the lack of interest shown by newcomers for the direction of their movement. Some believed the profound socially transformative signification of the youth hostels may ultimately be lost and the organization become a cheap accommodation network for the urban working class. In reaction to these concerns, hostel users attempted to define a set of *forms* and *practices* that would be deemed compatible with the movement's philosophy. The question of form and the treatment received by the new users was the topic of play entitled "Allons au Devant de la Vie", written by *Ajistes* Muse Dalbray and Raymond Destac, which premiered on July 8 1937 in front of a crowd that included Léo Lagrange.[72] The play dealt with daily life at the hostels and the complicated relationship between a group of *Ajistes* made up of young men and women coming from different backgrounds, the hostel father, the local peasants, and a couple of newcomers unaware of the hostels customs. Focusing on the respect of the *Ajistes* customs, "Allons au Devant de la Vie" put a double emphasis on the need for the experienced youth hostels crowd to accept and train newcomers while at the same time criticizing the carelessness of some new users who had seemingly failed to understand the ideological potency of the youth hostels.[73]

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[71] See chapter 1

[72] Muse Dalbray & Raymond Destac. *Allons au Devant de la Vie.* Paris, 1937

[73] *Ibid.*

Faced with a similar problem, some *Ajistes* had chosen to clarify the position of the CLAJ *vis-a-vis* the working class incomers who might not be attuned to the expectations of their more experienced peers. Gaston Tyrand, who served as the head of the Eastern Paris Railway Workers Youth Hostel Clubs and was among the most active *Ajistes*, indirectly criticized this point of view as an elitist and intellectualist attitude: "It is not without regrets that I consider the castrating position in which our beautiful movement finds itself. I feel like it remains the privileged space (*chasse-gardée*) of our friends from the Latin Quarter and the Normal Schools. I do not wish to be overly critical because, after all, it is our teacher friends who brought this kind of leisure activity in France. Yet, I would love to see our CLAJ slide categorically towards us, the factory workers, the artisans, those with the deepest appreciation for fresh air because they are so deprived of it, also because we are ill equipped to enjoy such healthy pleasures."[74] Despite the friendly tone, Tyrand's article had a decidedly anti-intellectual stance, subtly suggesting that students and professors, who formed the overwhelming majority of the *Ajiste* community, had to make way for the working class. This point of view was in par with a social conception of the Popular Front that was based on the collaboration between left wing intellectuals and workers, a move that was meant to foster a larger participation of the working class in the country's cultural and political life. But it also betrayed a conception of life that pitted intellectual and physical labor against one another with a definite preference for the latter. When applied to the youth hostel ideology it translated into a doctrine of action, individual transcendence and physical exploits which in many ways echoed aspects of various modernist ideologies: futurism, fascism, stalinism, etc. In

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[74] Tyrand, Gaston. "Et Nous Autres..." *Le Cri des Auberges*. No 21, November 1936, p. 5.

the next issue, another Ajiste lauded Tyrand's initiative, urging his comrades to think of the CLAJ as an inclusive "small Republic of youth."[75]

Dress and the meaning(s) of style

The movement's ideal, expressed in the idea of the *Republic of Youth* was more precisely formulated during the years 1936-1937, when the Popular Front dynamic made a re-foundation of society thinkable. The problem of class was but an issue among a set of questions framing debates within the vibrant sub-cultural atmosphere of the hostels.[76] Besides the question of food that resonated with the complex entanglement of pollution, corporeality, and modernity, the definition of a proper hostel style seemed to spark the attention of the hostel community. The significance of dress and style became one of the most important subjects of debate within the movement. Personal attire came to be perceived as a reflection of the youth hostel movement's attitude towards life and became increasingly codified. The *Cri des Auberges* acknowledged the issue in the spring of 1937 in the section devoted to the users' debates: "As our movement grows, some issues which could, *a priori,* be seen as secondary tend to recover a remarkable importance in the youth hostel order. It is for instance the case with the issue of dress. For men, one can dress as sees fit, insofar as it is practical and decent. But for our female comrades, the problem is more difficult to solve. Should we wear shorts? Yes, but what is adapted for the beach atmosphere sometimes stands out awkwardly in the Parisian countryside, where

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[75] Bausch Gaston. "Bravo Camarade!" *Le Cri des Auberges*. January 1937, No 23, p. 12

[76] It might be problematic to use the term *subculture* in the pre-war context, as it seems to be generally associated with post-war societies in which mass culture is more developed. For a more elaborate take on the topic see Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London, 1979.

the simple outfits of our young comrades often strike the feelings of the peasantry, a traditional adversary of naturism."

This discussion of the complicated relationship between gender and dress is reminiscent of the issues tackled by Mary-Louise Roberts in her book *Civilization without Sexes*.[77] In the case of the hostels, style and attitude became the main topic through which, as Roberts writes, "the mass consumer society created new socioeconomic conditions within which a rethinking of the new female self had to take place. Like makeshift rigging, conventional notions of female identity had to be taken down and reassembled again."[78] The attire of the female *Ajiste,* the young modern woman *par excellence*, had to be versatile enough to be comfortable in a number of changing situations and environments and be socially acceptable.[79] The possible encounter, the gaze of the other, were fundamental considerations in the changing definition of what was deemed proper. It reflected the widening gap between a rapidly changing urban culture, and the conservative traditions of the countryside. After moving back and forth between ski and golf pants, enumerating the respective advantages of each, the *Ajistes* seemingly settled on the divided skirt (*jupe-culotte*) as the best compromise between comfort, active style, and social acceptability. In a sense, the hybrid nature of the chosen garment, halfway between pants and skirt, suggested that a decisive move had been made towards greater gender equality. It also showed that despite their radical discourses and

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[77] Mary-Louise Roberts. *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927*. Chicago, 1994.

[78] Roberts. *Op. Cit.* p. 12

[79] On fashion and moral crisis, see Roberts. *Op. Cit.* p. 71-76. An interesting passage is her discussion of Drieu la Rochelle's short story *Pique Nique* in which he "finds of certain interest concerning the appearance of modern woman that she evokes both a sense of exposure and a fundamental loss of innocence." Roberts, p. 75.

life changing ideals, the youth hostel users had to deal with a social mind frame that lagged far behind their own.

Figure 15 Male and Female Ajiste Style in 1937 © Pierre Jamet

The question of dress in the hostels was far from being limited to the delineation of acceptable gender differences, it also served as a means to define those who belonged in the movement by elevating clothing and equipment as the exterior sign of an "authentic" *Ajiste*. Choosing a backpack proved to be as arduous a task as any. The *Cri des Auberges* willingly gave advice to its readers, making clear that the choice of a particular model depended on the usage. But the kind of bag one was to carry also gave important indications on the veritable intentions of its owner. Too nice or clean a bag could help identify an hostel user as a "poser." The backpack (*sac a dos* - some liked to say Rucksack) came to be seen as the emblem of the new lifestyle. In the words of Marie Colmont, a female *Ajiste*, the "Republic of youth had become" the "backpacker's civilization" (*la civilisation du sac au dos*).

131

As the years passed and the hostels stylistic canon became more clearly defined, it appeared easier for the discerning eye to spot those who did not belong. Suitcases, of course, irredeemably stigmatized those who did not carry their own stuff.[80] Sometimes a brand new pair of shoes on the feet of an unknown hiker could spark a suspicious interest. Round city hats, like any other kind of urban attire had no place in the hostels. An illustrated page of *Le Cri des Auberges* showcasing eleven pictures taken by Pierre Jamet, perhaps the most prolific youth hostel photographer, attempted to tackle the issue of dress. It was entitled "What are the limits of the youth hostel attire" (*Ou commence?... ou s'arrete?... la tenue Ajiste???*)[81] and displayed various examples of male and female attire at the hostels. The illustrated page took a view that was diametrically opposed to the article on female dress, suggesting through the interplay between small images and entertaining captions, that there was no such thing as an ideal *Ajiste* dress code. Instead, the piece intended to show that the ideal hostel attire had to be the most adapted to the environment, the outdoors, and the one in which every user would feel comfortable and free-spirited while spending time among her/his comrades. The first image featured a girl wearing a one-piece bathing suit with an ironic caption reading, "what does father Adam think of it" (*Qu'en pense le pere Adam?*), mischievously likening the hostels to the Garden of Eden. The next three images showcased female shorts of various lengths, the last one being worn with a pair thigh high boots which undeniably brought a touch of urban chic and sex-appeal to the countryside. Unlike the previous article, this photographic panorama argued in favor of clothing practices that would take the surrounding environment and cultures into consideration. In doing so it created a sharp

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[80] See Muse Dalbray & Raymond Destac. *Op. Cit*. p. 28

[81] "Ou commence?... ou s'arrete?... La tenue ajiste??? *Le Cri des Auberges*. November 1937, No 31, p. 19.

distinction between life in closed *Ajiste* groups at the hostels and during interaction with outsiders, most predominantly during encounters with rural dwellers. Any kind of dress was here deemed acceptable, but the evident concern with the ability of the youth hostel users to fit within the environment indicates that the organization intended to bring about the "backpackers' civilization" progressively.

As the Youth Hostel phenomenon grew, the definition of an original *Ajiste* style including a backpack, a pair of hiking shoes, shorts, and a plaid shirt, came to attract sporting goods retailers and manufacturers. By late 1936, the last two pages of *Le Cri des Auberges* were devoted to announcing. It brought in a good source of revenue for a publication that was essentially made out of scraps but had reached significant circulation numbers.[82] The commodification of the Youth Hostel lifestyle was a direct consequence of the movement remarkable expansion, but it also spoke volumes about the ambiguous relationship of the *Ajistes* with a market economy they so often despised. Wandering around certainly gave these predominantly middle-class young men and women a sentiment of freedom *vis a vis* the increasingly mercantilist interwar society, but the very dynamics they sought to criticize, among which style and social distinction played an eminent role, also helped frame their own sense of belonging.[83]

Experience instead of Performance

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[82] By the year 1938, the monthly circulation of *Le Cri des Auberges* reached a peak of 20 000. It benefitted from subsidies by the CLAJ, as well as a portion of the annual membership fee of 30 francs. Individual copies could be bought in the hostels, the clubs, and at the CLAJ headquarters for 1 franc.
[83] POM. "La Tenue Ajiste..." *Le Cri des Auberges*. January 1937, No 33, p. 14.

Perhaps the complex relation between the youth hostels philosophy, the *Ajiste* style, and consumer culture was never as evident as in Gaston Tyrand and Marc Augier's mountaineering party near Chamonix in the French Alps, in December of 1937. Prepared for the extreme conditions of the winter mountainous terrain, the short expedition was intended to chart out the limits of youth hostel activity and set apart the most dedicated *Ajistes* from the freshest, most inexperienced ones (*"les sur le tas"*). Both Tyrand and Augier were experienced skiers[84], part of the most adventurous and active members of the CLAJ**[85]** and their outing, by pushing the limits of the hostels lifestyle, served as means to reaffirm a form of cultural authenticity. Yet, in this particular instance the emphasis was not put on group solidarity but instead in individual transcendence through the accomplishment of a sporting feat.

In the reportage's introduction, the hikers unconvincingly claimed that their undertaking was about experience and not performance, raving against the ski lifts and the "money god" which seemingly ruled the mountains of the paid holidays era.[86] Instead they argued that the mountain had to be willfully earned through effort. Their snowy getaway, recounted in a beautiful and energetic prose, was for a large part devoted to equipment and later duly criticized by fellow *Ajistes* for relying on virtually unaffordable,

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[84] On the relationship between Alpine skiing and modernity in the European alps in the first part of the 20th century see Andrew Denning. *Skiing Into Modernity: A Cultural and Environmental History*. Berkeley, 2015; for a broader perspective see John Allen. *The Culture of Sport and Skiing: From Antiquity to WWII*. Amherst, 2007

[85] In the earlier chapter I mentioned Augier's close ties with Cécile Grunebaum-Ballin and his influential position within the movement as the editor of the *Cri des Auberges*. We encountered Tyrand for the first time earlier in this chapter. He served as the director of the Youth Hostel Club of the Eastern Parisian Railway Workers. Both men were to play important roles during the wartime period through their collaboration with the Nazi occupation forces.

[86] On the relationship between Alpine Skiing and mass leisure see Andrew Denning. *Skiing Into Modernity*. Op. Cit., pp. 131-152

cutting edge mountain gear.[87] The "polar tents", inflatable mattresses, and water resistant gear had been provided by two of the leading outdoor equipment stores in Paris: "the house of youth" and "youth-sports" who also happened to be among the recurrent advertisers in the CLAJ's magazine. Tyrand and Augier's recounting of their expedition was framed by an evident elitist discourse which explicitly rejected commoners, embodied in the person of the one time hostel user or the "paid-holidayer." As such, it seemed to contradict the inclusive, Universalist program of the CLAJ as well as the philosophy of the Popular Front that sought to put together the one in the know (the elite, the intellectuals, etc.) and the laboring masses. Ultimately, it showed the contradictions born from the transition from a restricted group to a mass organization with a diverse audience.

Augier and Tyrand duly registered the criticism and decided to bring along a third member, Piquet, in their later attempt to break what was thought to be the world record for high altitude camping in the Swiss Jungfrau range. Yet, the tone of the article remained essentially the same, reiterating their sour criticism of the *sur le tas* with a somewhat envious tone. To the imagined prime photographic equipment of the "summer skiers," they opposed the ruggedness of the winter conditions, daring amateur skiers to give the real mountain conditions a try. Opposing a seemingly undiscerning consumerism of the *nouveau riches* to the exaltation of the "real" mountain conditions, they argued that the record did not mean much to them in regard to their larger quest: a return to a form a cultural authenticity, living in accordance to natural cycles and conditions, through an attempt to experience and comprehend pre-modern life conditions. For Tyrand and

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[87] Tyrand, Piquet, Augier. "La Haut sur la Montagne." *Le Cri des Auberges*. March 1938. No 35, pp. 12-15

Augier individual transcendence could only come in the engagement with incommensurable natural forces, an organic experience meant to bring about the essence of human life: "immense mountain, please spare me the storm of the avalanche for this night. I know I am nothing between your white hands, less than nothing, a man. But I came to you because I love you and because I want to be ahead of men in their rush towards real wealth (*richesses*)..."[88] The two young adventurers were concerned with a greater goal, a spiritual quest for an original and long lost lifestyle devoid of all the superfluous aspects of modern life. In the exhilarating atmosphere of the summits, their adventure transformed into a visionary experience, a quest for a new beginning, in the name of civilization: "let's get to what matters, camper-skier, my brother of tomorrow, because as I tell you, it is up there, in the future camps to be built, that I felt, and I will feel again, how much I remain, despite the automobile, despite cinema, the pen, three piece suit, the son of the caveman that slept on the Jungfraujoch glacier long before us. And this, you see, when you have felt it once, you shout with all your heart in the silence of the peaks: ... for civilization!"[89]

French cultural historian André Rauch has offered a compelling interpretation of this modern *drive towards the* mountain, of which Augier and Tyrand's adventures represent a late expression. For him the hiking stories "are emotion before knowledge and the mountain an object of wonder before becoming an element of science. The panorama provides an entry point to the sublime; the world's eternity is revealed in the immensity of a horizon which is impervious to human time. (...) As the distance that separates the bourgeois tourist from the mountain people placed on the doorstep of this *new time*

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[88] Tyrand, Piquet, Augier. *Op. Cit.* p. 15
[89] Tyrand, Piquet, Augier. *Op. Cit.* p. 15

reduces, the difference between the new conquerer of space and the immobile urban

bourgeoisie (*le rond-de-cuir*)[90] expands. (...) The ascension is given such an ascetic value

that the travel who reaches the summit is different from the man from below: for him,

history freezes on a feat of which he is the only one to grasp the intensity."[91] This attitude

towards life, inherently critical of industrial modernity, was at the intersection between

metaphysical quest and anthropological concern. In their alpine expeditions, Tyrand and

Augier sought forms of cultural authenticity linked to the origins of civilization, as if

experiencing the life-conditions of pre-modern men could inform them on how to re-

think modern civilization. This endeavor proved to be the extreme dimension of a

practice that had progressively taken a remarkable importance in the youth hostel agenda:

the rediscovery of folklore and local popular traditions.[92]

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[90] The *Ajiste* community often used the same term *ronds de cuir* signifies desktop employees, those, whether high or low standing who dictate and apply rules without having sufficient know of the situation on the ground.

[91] André Rauch. "Les Vacances et la Nature Revisitée." in Corbin (ed.). *L'Avenement des Loisirs, 1850-1939*. Paris, 1995, p. 104

[92] Mountains and Mountaineering have witnessed a regain of interest from historians in the last decade or so. See Peter H. Hansen. *The Summits of Modern Man: Mountaineering After the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA, 2013); Fergus Fleming, *Killing Dragons: The Conquest of the Alps* (London, 2000); Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: How Desolate and Forbidding Heights Were Transformed into Experiences of Indomitable Spirit* (London, 2003); Nicolas Guidici, *La Philosophie du Mont-Blanc* (Paris, 2000); Olivier Hoibian. *Les Alpinistes en France, 1870-1950: Une Histoire Culturelle*. Paris, 2000. On the place of the Himalaya in modern imaginary see Maurice Isserman and Stewart Weaver. *Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes* (New Haven, 2008). On skiing in the Victorian era: Ann C. Colley, *Victorians in the Mountains: Skiing the Sublime* (Burlington, VT, 2010) and the role of the mountain in development of class belonging in the French bourgeoisie: Olivier Hoibian (ed.), *L'Invention de l'Alpinisme: La Montagne et l'Affirmation de la Bourgeoisie Cultivée, 1786-1914* (Paris, 2008). On hiking and naturism see John A. Williams, *Turning to Nature in Germany: Hiking, Nudism, and Conservation, 1900-1940* (Stanford, 2007). On mountains and modern Italy: Marco Armiero, *A Rugged Nation: Mountains and the Making of Modern Italy* (Cambridge, 2011). On Alpinism in Nazi Germany Helmut Zebhauser, *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat* (Munich, 1997) and Rainer Amstader, *Der Alpinismus: Kultur, Organization, Politik* (Vienna, 1996). On the representation of the mountain as national landscape in German cinema see Johannes von Moltke, *No Place Like Home: Locations of Heimat in German Cinema* (Berkeley, 2005); Thomas Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1885-1945* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).
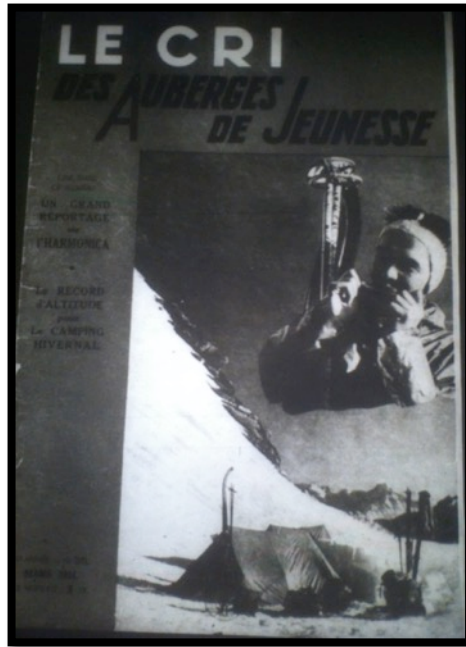
Looking for Cultural Authenticity: The Regionalist Impulse

By 1937 the CLAJ network, which counted over 200 hostels,[93] had grown in such

a way that it virtually covered the entire French territory. As the earlier part on dress

indicates, the question of the relationship between the youth hostel users and the local

populations proved to be a complicated one. In order to deal with the seemingly

unbridgeable cultural differences which transpired in every encounter between rural

populations and urban youths, the *Ajistes* decided to take a pro-active stance towards their

more rugged interlocutors. The regionalist movement within the hostels,[94] which sought

to re-discover cultural authenticity through the preservation of local folklores and

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[93] Heller-Goldenberg. *Histoire des Auberges de Jeunesse. Op. Cit.* p 220. At the end of the year 1937 there were 237 hostels including 3 in Algeria, 4 in Morocco, and 1 in Tunisia.

[94] On the historiography of regional idea see Celia Applegate. "A Europe of Regions: Reflections of the Historiography of Sub-national Places in Modern Times." *American Historical Review* 104, No 4 (October 1999): 1157-82

traditions emerged from the conflation of three intertwined dynamics: the encounter of rural life while traveling in the hostels, the world exhibit of 1937 which promoted French rural life and regional traditions, and the development of an indigenous form of anthropological practice through the action of the newly endowed Museum of the People's Arts and Traditions (*Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires - MATP*).[95]

These three dynamics, which played an important role in the formation of the youth hostel ideology, found their roots in the search for forms of French cultural authenticity at a time when mass culture and new media seemed to threaten the popular foundations of a national identity.[96] These debates came to prominence at a time when cultural anthropology emerged as an academic discipline of its own, under the influence of the likes of Michel Leiris and Paul Coze. Looking towards the much anticipated world exhibition of 1937, the Popular Front government decided to establish a museum of national folklore, the MATP. This concern with Folklore was clearly expressed by Paul Rivet, an anthropologist who was appointed director of the *Musée de L'Homme* by Léon Blum in 1936: for him the main cultural task of the Popular Front was to make culture accessible for all and cease to make it the reserved domain of a privileged elite.[97]

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[95] The encounter with rural populations proved a tough challenge to tackle for many enthusiastic *Ajistes*. As Julian Jackson perhaps too unequivocally argues: "As for using youth hostels to unite townspeople and peasants, there were numerous incidents between youth-hostellers and peasants offended by the more libertarian aspects of the movement. For its part, the *Cri des Auberges* was shocked that peasants sought out the bistro and the cinema could they not be told to love nature? The Popular Front, in short, remained an essentially urban phenomenon. Frequently the Popular Front tourist organizations had to remind workers that summer holidays coincided with the harvest time for the peasantry; tact was necessary." Julian Jackson. "Le Temps des Loisirs." *Op.Cit.*, p. 237

[96] In his book *True France*, Herman Lebovics argues that the study of folklore represented a contentious field (in the Bourdieusian sense) where "contentious paradigms coexisted and where political disputes happened around the theme of the *actual country (pays réel)*." See Lebovics. *True France: The Wars Over Cultural Identity*. Ithaca, 1994, p. 137.

[97] Lebovics. *Op. Cit.* p. 153.

As the director of the MATP, Rivet chose Georges-Henri Riviere, one of his close

collaborators, a relatively young man (he was born in 1897) who had strong connections

in the Parisian intellectual and artistic life. Riviere intended to develop the study of

folklore as an academic discipline by using the methods French and English speaking

ethnographers had been developing in the colonies and overseas territories.[98] In doing so

he intended to move folklore away from the revivalist impulses of the 19th century's

nationalist movements and instead chart out folkloric traditions on a regional basis. The

activities of the MTAP sought to preserve local traditions that were considered under the

threat of uniformization posed by modern mass consumer culture. It was a form of

folkloric preservation that attempted to move local cultures away from nationalistic

impulses and narratives in favor of a more scientific, educational approach.

Thinking in that way presupposed an understanding of the French national

unification as an almost finished historical process the looming completion of which

would most likely obliterate the multitude of local traditions and languages that had

preceded it. Rivet's vision of folklore was not anti-modern but rather embedded in an

intellectual framework defined by the development of anthropology as part of the

colonial experience. For historian Shanny Peer, the project of the MTAP was at the center

of an attempt to unite folkloric traditions, industrial modernity, and centralism.[99]

Furthermore, as Peer argues, the re-arrangement of folklore and its studies in the late

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[98] On this particular point see James Clifford's passages on Rivet, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Michel Leiris in James Clifford. *The Preidcament of Culture*. Op. Cit. pp. 138-140

[99] On this particular point Peer writes: "The institutionalization of folklore in a national, Parisian museum involved detaching folklore from its previous association with the cultural periphery toward identification with the center. There it was reinvented as an essential expression of French national identity, providing the antidote to standardization and to the feared loss of national specificity in the emerging *industrial civilization*."Shanny Peer. *France on Display: Peasants, Provincials, and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World Fair*. Ithaca, 1998, p. 153

1930s was deeply embedded in the consumer economy of the period. The regional exhibition at the 1937 world fair showcased regional goods produced according to ancestral methods, and very much operated as a shopping mall for "culturally authentic" products. The fact that the "proponents of folklore in 1937 were effectively proposing to use modern consumer strategies to market their product (...) and make it fashionable by appealing to the consumer's desire to possess unique or rare objects in an age where more and more goods were mass produced"[100] seems to attest of the complex and contradictory nature of the relationship between folklore and modernity during the Popular Front.

Figure 17 Kellerman Avenue Youth Hostel Paris 1937

The regained interest in folkloric traditions that took place at the time of the 1937 world fair proved to have a remarkable influence on the youth hostel movement. The *Ajistes* came to think of their travels as a form of "native ethnography" and took particular pride in helping preserve and document local customs, popular songs, and architecture. Reflecting on their experience in the countryside, the youth hostel users elaborated an informal and semi-scientific charter of conduct that loosely emulated an

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[100] Peer. *Op. Cit.* p. 165

anthropologist's fieldwork agenda. Trying to differentiate themselves from the mass of new holiday goers, they conceived of their activity as compilers of local folkloric traditions as having a profound social value. More importantly perhaps, this set of activities provided the movement with an important cultural legitimacy. To a certain extent, the rediscovery of folklore worked in a way similar to the alpine exploits of Tyrand and Augier, endowing individual members and groups with a form of individual and group authenticity. But unlike the extreme endeavors of the two alpinists, authenticity was more readily accessible to those among the *Ajistes* who chose to engage in the recovery of folkloric traditions. It did not require particular efforts or skills, but still provided a link with a form of historical becoming, in relation to culturally powerful images of the past. At the symbolic level, the bonds to an endless time, be it that of the summits or the pre-modern folkloric traditions, provided hostel users with an entry point into a imagined future.

When the 1937 world fair opened to the public in May 1937, the *Cri des Auberges* published a commentary on a few points that were considered as the main tenets of the CLAJ ideology: among questions of dress, secularism, and food, a renewed interest in the issue of regionalism appeared to stand out. Augier, attempting to sum up the general mood, advocated a dramatic increase in the significance of "regionalism" within the movement: "I ask for a return towards regionalism. Not the old selfishly hateful regionalism, that of the primitive and quarrelsome tribes, but towards the conquest of a freer, more noble, and broader spirit."[101] A certain concern with the preservation of local traditions had been noticeable in the pages of *Le Cri Auberges* at the end of the year

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[101] *Le Cri des Auberges.* May 1937. No 27, p. 9

1936. An article published in the December 1936 issue proposed a tentative "regionalist" program intended to create bonds between the hostels, the *Ajistes*, and the local populations. In a way similar to what had happened in the 1920s in Germany, the rapid growth of the French youth hostel organization made it possible to refine the hostel building and include architectural and stylistic considerations. For the article's author, the hostel had to be made in the "image of the country" as a sort of living museum of local folkloric traditions: "it should be representative, not only of the housing style and material conditions, but also of regional traditions and intellectual life, its artistic activity and particular spiritual form."[102]

Emulating the folklorist policies of the Popular Front from which it originated, the regionalist dimension of the youth hostel program was centered on the idea of cultural authenticity. Yet, in their re-appropriation of the countryside and its cultural traditions, the *Ajistes* sought to transcend the Popular Front's relatively moderate goals by creating bridges between a new man in the making and its pre-modern other. The rejection of significant aspects of industrial and urban modernity (food, pollution, idleness…) forced the *Ajistes* to think of themselves in relation to an idealized past. The "new world" was conceived in a dialectical relationship to the past, as the peasant and his traditions worked as a mirror image of the "new man." In order to imagine the future, the young hostel dreamers had to experience the past. Pushing the attempt to bond with an imagined past a notch further, and in doing so moving away from the youth hostel ideal, some *Ajistes* attempted to cut their ties with modern society and reclaim abandoned villages.

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[102] Sotteau. "Auberge de Jeunesse et Régionalisme." *Le Cri des Auberges*, December 1936, No 24, p. 10

S.O.S French Villages

One of the most incongruous and radical expressions of the regionalist impulse within the youth hostel movement found its realization in an attempt to reclaim an abandoned mountainous village, Travignon, in the Provence backcountry. This experiment found its roots in the *Contadour gatherings*,[103] which took place in Provence twice a year between 1935 and 1939, under the auspices of the then immensely popular pacifist writer Jean Giono.[104] The author, whose writings pitted rural and urban lifestyles against each other, had a profound influence on the youth hostel movement. Some sought to transcend the *Contadour* experiment by making their return to the countryside a permanent one. In a reportage entitled *S.O.S Village de France*, Marc Augier recalled the attempts by two *Ajistes* to reclaim and settle in the ruins of Travignon. After being taken by surprise by the ruggedness of his hosts' conditions of life, Augier found what he had come to find: "Sitting by the fire, a warm teacup in hand, I feel freed from the cold, from exhaustion, almost from solitude. And, in the order of aesthetic emotions I feel almost satisfied. I stand three hiking hours away from any human agglomeration, under a failing

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[103] Jean Giono inaugurated pacifist gatherings in the hamlet of Contadour in the Provencal backcountry in the fall of 1935. Intellectuals and students met there twice a year to discuss the possibility of the foundation of a new society based on traditional agriculture and the preservation of Folkloric tradition. See Lucette Heller-Goldenberg, *Le Contadour, 1935-1939*. Paris, 1972.

[104] Jean Giono published his first novel *Colline* in 1929 and rapidly became one of the most popular writers in France. Building upon his experience as a soldier during WWI, he adopted a pacifist stance and advocated a return to the land (*retour a la terre)* as a means to move away from a destructive industrial and urban lifestyle. The *Ajiste* community held Giono in high esteem. His novel *Que ma Joie Demeure*, published in 1935, in which a morose rural community is revived by a young and dynamic urbanite, had a remarkable influence of the youth hostel movement. A Provençal hostel was given the name of *Regain* (his third and perhaps most famous novel) and Giono took part in the creation of the *Auberges du Monde Nouveau* a radical branch of the CLAJ which made the return to nature the center of its political platform.

roof abandoned by a generation of farmers that city two city comrades are attempting to replace, they are young, happy, and daring."[105] Moving away from the purely ascetic experience, Augier attempted to draw lessons from the Travignon experiment. For him, a failed attempt to return to the land by the *Ajiste* community would be a catastrophe, so it had to be planned with the utmost care: "The return to the land, of which many of us speak since the great voice of Giono called upon us, men of goodwill, we have to interpret it, adapt it to the needs and possibilities of the *Ajistes*. (…) What we can do is a seasonal return to the land, considered as the proper use of our leisure time and not as a self-standing goal or a means of subsistence. (…) We can install not only hostels, but also actual *Ajiste* villages that would flourish every spring. (…) Here lies the new world that is yet to be built on the ruins of a rural world that was deeply shattered by the incommensurable mistakes of the civilization of steel. This is a unique opportunity to reset the balance between rural and urban collectivities, to prepare for a more harmonious cohabitation between young peasants and industrial workers."[106]

For Augier, the possible disappearance of a number of rural communities and their traditions, in favor of a uniform urban lifestyle made industrial modernity an incomplete and imbalanced experience. It seemed as if the brutal transformation of the socio-economic landscape, which brought about the abandonment of most remote settlements had left modern human societies missing essential elements of their collective identity, threatening the whole construction to crumble. For him, and many in the youth hostel movement, reclaiming abandoned spaces and traditions was necessary in order to

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[105] "S.O.S Village de France." *Le Cri des Auberges*. February 1938, p. 5
[106] "S.O.S Village de France." *Op. Cit.* p. 7

counterbalance the perceived negative effects of modernity. The remedy they proposed, a

tireless occupation of the territory and the reinvention of the countryside as a bridge

between two cultures, stemmed from a remarkable anxiety: the future had to be remade

because the relationship between the past and the present had been thrown off balance by

an all too rushed socio-economic development. Charting out the land and creating mental

and graphic images of the youth hostels' outreach played a decisive role in the

development of this new social imaginary.

The Way of the World: Mapmaking and Travel Experience

The notions of leisure, political engagement and social responsibility were so

tightly woven in the youth hostels' discourse that they became virtually indistinguishable.

The notion of "conquest" served a structuring element for this complex set of referents. It

was at once an individual and collective conquest, of the self, of the land, and of the

social, in which a sum of minute actions seemed to create the preconditions for an

imagined and much desired future. Their work as budding ethnographers was

accompanied by a remarkable cartographic activity, maps that were often drawn by hand,

which provided visual foundations for reclaiming the national space. From 1936 on,

youth hostel publications are flush with maps of hiking itineraries which, in conjunction

with photographs provided a foundation for thinking about the "new world in the

making." Historians of early modern Europe have shown the significance of maps as a

means to create power discourses and sanction the appropriation of territories by stats and

their corollaries.[107] The nomothetic dimension of the youth hostels mapmaking, the

record-taking nature of their trail-blazing (scouting?) activities is to be taken seriously if

we are to understand the socially programmatic dimension of the movement.[108]

Figure 18 Map of the CLAJ hostels in the Cevennes Region

The importance of drawing and thinking through maps has been clearly

emphasized by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari[109] who, in *Mille Plateaux*, equate re-

drawing of the social map to a revolutionary act opposed to a blue-print, the simple

reproduction of a pre-existing social order. In their characteristic style, Deleuze and

Guattari apply to spatial representation their theoretical distinction between the *tree* as the

traditional representation of power/knowledge in western society and the *rhizome* in

which power nexuses proceed in a non-linear fashion: "The Rhizome is map and not

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[107] On that topic see: David Woodward(ed.). *Cartography in the European Renaissance*. Chicago, 2007.

[108] The concept of *Nomos* understood as a set of customs and social norms or the meaningful worldviews of individuals can be useful to comprehend the dialectical relationship between mapmaking and the development of an original social imaginary in the youth hostels. In *The Nomos of the Earth*, Carl Schmitt has defined the *Nomos* from a political and legal perspective as: *Nomos* is the measure by which the land in a particular order is divided and situated; it is also the form of political, social, and religious order determined by this process. In Carl Schmitt. *The Nomos of the Earth*. New York, 2006, p. 70

[109] It is interesting to note that Félix Guattari's introduction to psychoanalysis happened when he took part, as teenage, in youth hostel activities. Guattari met pedagogue and psychoanalyst Fernand Oury in the early 1950s through the post-war youth hostel movement *Fédération Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse* which had replaced the CLAJ after WW2. See Gary Genosko. "Guattari, Pierre-Félix." Adrian Parr (ed.) *The Deleuze Dictionnary*. Edinburgh, 2011, p. 122

blueprint. (...) The map opposes the blueprint because it is looking towards

experimentation and directly linked to reality. The map does not reproduce a self-

contained unconscious: it <u>builds the unconscious</u>.[110] (...) The map is open, it is

connectable in all its dimensions, dismountable, can be flipped, able to receive endless

modifications. It can be torn apart, brushed away, adapt to mountings of every nature, be

started by an individual, a group, a social formation."[111] The very practice of travel, its

planning, realization, and the building of literary or visual narratives by the users of the

hostels amounted to a re-drawing of the map in the Deleuzian sense.[112] Geographic and

historical imagination became intimately linked in the creation of a new *social

imaginary*. The CLAJ's mapping activity was both a literal and a mental one and the

importance of registering, charting, and putting hostels on maps and guides always went

far beyond the simple practical considerations. Marcelle Moreau, a female *Ajiste* seemed

aware of the importance of mental models and maps when she wrote: "We are better than

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[110] My emphasis

[111] Deleuze & Guattari. *Mille Plateaux: Capitalisme et Schizophrenie 2*. Paris, 1980, p. 20

[112] Deleuze and Guattari oppose a *sedentary* writing of history, the point of view of the state expressed in the form of the *tree*, to a *nomadic*, non-linear one represented by the *rhizome*. For them: "Nomads invented a *war machine*, against the apparatus of the state. History never understood nomadism, never did the book understand the *outside*. Throughout a long history, the state has been the model for the book and for thought: the logos, the philosopher-king, the transcendence of thought, the interiority of the concept, the republic of spirit, the court of reason, the functionaries of thought, the lawmaker and subject. The state intending to be the interiorized image of a particular world-order, and to root man. But the relationship of a war machine with its outside is not another *model*, it is a particular layout (*agencement)* that makes thought become nomadic itself, the book a part for all the mobile machines, a stem for the rhizome." Deleuze & Guattari, *Op. Cit.*, p. 35-36. Although Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of *war machine* and its relationship to the state belong in another part of this work, it seems nonetheless useful to introduce the concept here in relation to ideas of travel, mapping, and the question of the interior/exterior dichotomy which, as we saw in the previous chapter served as a dynamic structuring imaginary for the youth hostels. Furthermore, the *tree/rhizome* and *sedentary/nomadic* oppositions suggest a potentially powerful interpretive grid for a movement which considered a practice based on travel as a way to transcend established customs and power relations and was always cautious in its relationship to the state.

a political group, we are a Republic of youth, we create the model (*maquette*) of tomorrow's world, of a *free* but *disciplined* world."[113]

The *Hostel Spirit*: The CLAJ user's guide

In 1937, the CLAJ published its first users' guide.[114] Unlike most travel guides of the period, which, as Roland Barthes wrote in *Mythologies* about the famous *Guide Bleu* "reduced geography to a monumental and empty world"[115], the guide was intended as an extension of *Le Cri des Auberges*. It was a practical guidebook that left aside considerations of style and focused on itineraries and housing details rather than historical monuments. The second issue appeared in January 1938 and cost 5 francs, roughly the average price of a night at the hostels.[116] Modeled after the German youth hostel travel books of the early 1930s, the 1938 CLAJ guidebook is, in many respects, an exceptional document. The editorial direction of the travel guide had been, like that of the *Cri des Auberges*, given to Marc Augier. A set of 12 rules to abide to was clearly stated at the book's outset in French, English, and German. They were complemented, and in many ways superseded by short sentences, often bits of writing that had previously been published in the magazine, found at the bottom of the pages. These sentences represented

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[113] Marcelle Moreau. "Liberté, Culture." *Le Cri des Auberges*. March 1937, No 25, p. 10

[114] During my time in the archives I have not been able to find paper or microform copies of any of the annual guides published by the CLAJ. Although I have not been able to look at the 1937 guide, I was fortunate enough to be given a mint copy of the 1938 edition by a friend. He had found it among piles of archival documents that had been left on the sidewalk in Paris' 7th arrondissement. The documents had belonged to feminist activist and communist sympathizer Gabrielle Duchene.

[115] Roland Barthes. "Le Guide Bleu." In *Mythologies*. Paris, 1957, p. 124

[116] Marc Augier (ed.). *Le Chemin de la Joie, 1938: Guide du Centre Laique des Auberges de Jeunesse.* Paris, 1938.

a sort of youth hostel gospel accompanying the *Ajistes* on the road and served as a reminder of this "free but disciplined world" Marcelle Moreau had written about so forcefully. This informal and nuclear code of conduct sought to define an attitude to adopt for a proper *Ajiste* lifestyle. Considerations of dress, alimentation, and courtesy suggested that exterior signs were not sufficient to identify an *Ajiste* but that there was instead "a kind of behavior that was or wasn't *Ajiste*."[117]

Figure 19 Cover of the CLAJ Travel Guide 1938

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[117] Augier (ed.). *Le Chemin de la Joie*, *Op. Cit.* p. 91

Although the travel guide put a strong emphasis on the code of conduct and the idea of "becoming *Ajiste*" as the gateway into an entirely new experience, its main purpose was cartographic. The national territory (with the adjunction of Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco where a few hostels had by then been opened) was divided in a number of regions with multiple charted itineraries for each of them. Departing from the administrative division of the territory in departments, the CLAJ travel guide proposed instead another, equally arbitrary, conception of space that was based on travel itineraries. What mattered here was the coherence and feasibility of excursions that depended on the density of the local hostel network. To a traditional cartographic practice which functioned as a an expression of established power centers, embodiments of the state such as the city, the prefecture, and major roads, the *Ajiste* geographic imagination opposed a map based on hostels and hiking paths. This alternative space, which in the words of Deleuze and Guattari represented an endlessly modifiable *map*, figuratively opposed the reproduction of official methods of space representation expressed in the form of the *blueprint*. The CLAJ guidebook suggests that the *Ajistes*, through the re-drawing of the national map based on their means of transportation and a different set of nodal points and areas of interest, attempted to think of an alternative reality in which their ideas and rules would prevail. Although the maps of the real world and the hostels overlapped they were not, from a symbolic point of view, entirely superimposable.

Going to the hostels seemed to cancel the possibility of a pre-existing social reality, for the *Ajistes* (it has been repeated at will in *Le Cri des Auberges*) did not think of themselves as *tourists* but as *nomads*. Hence, their opposition to forms of travel that privileged comfort stemmed from their concern with the intrusion of a sedentary reality

151

in the world of the hostels.[118] In conjunction with their theory of the rhizome/map,

Deleuze and Guattari propose to distinguish between *sedentary* and *nomadic*. For them,

history has "always been written from the point of view of the sedentary"[119] as an

expression of the will and the power of the state. The state, whose purpose lies in the

preservation of power systems (*organes*), is structured by its relationship to an outside

and is not thinkable independently of this relationship, as such; the *nomos* of the state is

that "of an inside and an outside. The state is sovereignty.[120] But sovereignty only rules

that which it is able to interiorize, to appropriate locally."[121] For Deleuze and Guattari the

nomads represent a form that is irreducible to the state, "a form of exteriority that is

necessarily that of a *war machine*[122], polymorphous and diffuse."[123] The *war machine* as

a "pure form of exteriority" is seen as necessarily coexisting with the state based on a

dialectic of inclusion/exclusion, it does not always wage war but expresses its exteriority

by taking various forms and relying on set of practices: "collective bodies always have

fringes or minorities that reconstitute groups similar to war machines, often under very

unlikely forms, in unlikely organizations such as building bridges, building cathedrals,

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[118] Here see the mocking of the youth hostellers carrying suitcases in Dalbray & Destac, *Op. Cit.* and in many instances in *Le Cri des Auberges*.

[119] Deleuze & Guattari. *Mille Plateaux: Capitalisme et Schizophrenie 2.* Paris, 1980, p. 34

[120] For Deleuze and Guattari, the notion of state greatly exceeds the minimal weberian notion of the monopoly on the means of violence, it includes state-related agencies and more broadly large segments (if not all) of civic society. In this definition, state is seen as the normative and structuring elements in society. In some ways it is reminiscent of Gramsci's understanding of state as "civil society" and of Althusser's ideological apparatuses of the state.

[121] Deleuze & Guattari. *Op. Cit.* p. 445

[122] For Deleuze and Guattari *The War Machine* is located historically between the "magical-despotic state" and the "juridical state" that includes a military institution. It is understood as a "fulguration coming from the outside" that makes possible the transition between a pre-modern and a modern state.

[123] Deleuze & Guattari. *Op. Cit.* p. 446

play music, a science, a technology, etc."[124] In this sense, the youth hostel movement

appears as a "dormant" *war machine*, a *nomadic* formation exogenous to the state and

seeking its own *deterritorialization* through a re-appropriation of space in practice

(travel) and theory (the map).

In *Hétérotopies*, Michel Foucault, trying to build upon Bachelard's

phenomenology of the "internal space"[125], attempts to define a set of "counter sites, a

kind of effectively enacted utopia in the real sites, all other real sites that can be found

within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted." For him,

even though it might be possible to locate such places in reality, they are "outside of all

places" and amount simultaneously to a mythic and real contestation of the space in

which we live."[126] Foucault, much like Deleuze and Guattari, notes that "there is

probably not a single culture in the world that fails to produce heterotopias" but he also

argues that *heterotopias* have a precise function in society and provided his with

examples suggesting that such indispensable places function as enclosed, socially

constructed spaces: sacred or forbidden places in so-called primitive societies and

heterotopias of crisis and deviation in modern societies such as boarding schools,

cemeteries, psychiatric hospitals and prisons. Furthermore, according to Foucault,

heterotopias have a given temporal value that he calls *heterochronias* which manifest

themselves when "the heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a

sort of absolute break with their traditional time."[127] Endowed with this peculiar temporal

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[124] Deleuze & Guattari. *Op. Cit.* p. 454

[125] Michel Foucault. "Des Espaces Autres: Hétérotopies." In *Le Corps Utopique: Suivi de les Hétérotopies*. Paris, 2009, p. 3

[126] Foucault. *Op. Cit.* p. 4

[127] Foucault. *Op. Cit.* p. 6

value, heterotopic spaces are not freely accessible, often based upon a system of "closing and opening" and rites of purification. Finally, Foucault suggests that some colonies may have functioned as perfect examples of heterotopias with a wide ranging symbolic value from the creation of "a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human space is partitioned, as still more illusory" to the opposite in which "their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed and jumbled."[128]

Far from being antithetical, the analyses found in *Mille Plateaux* and *Hétérotopies* can be combined to give a more subtle and layered interpretation of the youth hostel phenomenon. While Foucault's view is limited by the closed and spatially fixed dimension of his theoretical contribution, always focusing on an *inside* despite his early rejection of a similar tendency in Gaston Bachelard's work, Deleuze and Guattari, through the use fluid concepts such as *war machine* and *nomadic*, suggest that heterotopic formations can be both imaginary and transient. In the case of the youth hostel movement the *heterotopia*, far from being contained in an enclosed space, is structured by the hostels network and travel routes, while the physical space of the hostels serves as a repository and shelter for imagination, as Bachelard reminds us: "Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor. It has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination. Particularly, it nearly always exercises an attraction. For it concentrates being within limits that protect."[129] At the same time validating and showing the limits of both Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari's

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[128] Foucault. *Op. Cit.* p. 8
[129] Gaston Bachelard. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston, 1964, p. XXXV

theories, the youth hostels' conception space, both *nomadic* and fixed in physical sites,

re-territorializes or attempts to conserve territoriality in opposition to the state's

bureaucratic structure of de-territorialization.[130] The youth hostel movement functions as

a *war machine* insofar as it rejects the fixed (territorialized) categories of the state which

it offers to transcend through the creation of a new world based on travel, freedom, and

equality. This opposition is more forcefully expressed in generational terms, the old

versus the new, and a rejection of the "negative" aspects of urban modernity.

Furthermore, the hostels' itinerant, mapmaking and ethnographic-folkloric activities

appear as an attempt to break free from the uniformization, understood in Deleuzo-

Guattarian terms as *de-territorialization*, of the modern, consumer society.

Extending Horizons: Bringing the CLAJ Abroad

While the youth hostel activities and facilities where largely based in the French

national territory, the CLAJ had settled agreements of reciprocity with a number of

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[130] Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of territorialization and de-territorialization can be problematic at best, but they possess a remarkable power of suggestion. In order to enlighten their theory of Nomadology, the French philosophers use the example of the itinerant skill laborers of the middle ages, and their relationship to the building of cathedrals. They see the skills of these workers as an "itinerant science" on which a royal science is progressively imposed, making it part of the realm of the state: the internalization by the state of a previously exogenous practice: In the middle ages "members of the skilled workers' guild (compagnons) travelled incessantly, building cathedrals here and there, disposing of an active and passive power (mobility and strike) that did not suit the state's desires. The state countered by starting to manage construction sites, introducing in all labor divisions the supreme distinction between intellectual and manual worker, theoretical and practical, borrowed from the *governing-governed* difference. (…) We will not only say that there is no more need for skilled labor: non-skilled labor becomes a necessity, a de-qualification of labor. The state does not endow intellectuals or creators with power, instead it makes them into a highly dependent organism, that takes power away from those who now only reproduce or execute" Deleuze & Guattari. *Op. Cit.* p. 456. Through these processes of control and bureaucratic segmentarization, the state *de-territorializes* the nomadic, but it also *re-territorializes* according to these processes destroying in effect the nomadic nature of the *war machine*: "According to the *legal* model, one is constantly re-territorializing around a point of view, in a domain, according to a given set of relationships; but according to the *nomadic* model (modele ambulant), it is the process of de-territorialization itself that constitutes and extends the territory." Deleuze & Guattari. *Op. Cit.* p. 461

European and overseas youth hostel associations. The symbolic re-appropriation of land that constituted the basis of the youth hostel ideology also took place beyond the French borders, abroad and in the colonies. The French youth hostel movement had, after all, found its origins across the Rhine River. Because of the cost associated with traveling abroad, few *Ajistes* made it to foreign countries. Marc Augier was among those who did so the most often, traveling on his personal income or as the official representative of the CLAJ in international youth congregations.

As the domestic youth hostel network grew and the contours of the movement were shaping up, the *Ajistes* started looking beyond the national borders more regularly. The World Fair that was still going on at the time certainly played an important role in that development. As a means to sanction this evolution, the *Cri des Auberges* entirely devoted its October issue to the "youth hostels international."[131] The magazine contained a long reportage by Marc Augier who, during the summer of 1937, had chosen to ride his motorcycle around Europe in order to assess the quality of the neighboring countries' youth hostel networks. The piece, entitled "Five Thousand Kilometers Around Youth Hostel Europe" represented a veritable marathon and, much like his hiking exploits, attempt to break an informal record.[132] The author seemed to think of it as "a friendship tour in the other *Ajiste* world, the one that does not speak the same language (…) but where we will find our own *Ajiste* traditions and where all the youth of Europe builds a

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[131] *Le Cri des Auberges.* October 1937. No 30, p. 3

[132] Augier, Marc. "Cinq Mille Kilometres a Motocyclette Autour de L'Europe des Auberges." *Le Cri des Auberges.* October 1937. No 30, pp. 13-18

common international of healthy living and brotherly love."[133] During his motorcycle

expedition, Augier drove through Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands,

and Belgium. His travelogue resembled more a compendium of preconceived ideas on

national characters rather than a veritable exploration of foreign cultures. Yet, if we

compare Augier's impressions with that of Daniél Guérin, another young French reporter

inquiring on the state of the foreign youth hostels, the difference could not be more

striking.[134] While Guérin seemed in awe in front of the Germanic organization and the

scale of the country's youth hostels, Augier for his part always compared the French

youth hostels favorably to their Northern European counterparts. Augier never failed to

acknowledge the qualities or organization and cleanliness of the Swiss or Dutch hostels

but he seemed to find their atmosphere somewhat sterile in regard to the creativity and

dynamism of the French hostels. For him, the CLAJ set itself apart in that it pushed

further toward the realization of the idea of self organization, and freedom that of the

"republic of youth." Looking back at the CLAJ from his impeccable Dutch hostel in

Nijmegen, he wrote: "300 kilometers set us apart from France… An abyss between two

worlds. We leave behind a civilization that falls asleep in a state of absolute perfection,

we will return to the mold where the hopes of Europe are cast, the country where the

tomorrow will rise the most beautiful and humane hostels."[135]

The dream of a "Europe of the hostels" still seemed a far-fetched one. Augier had

had difficulties to create bonds with fellow youth hostel users from foreign countries.

Perhaps the term *Ajiste* that he freely applied to the young people he came across in the

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[133] Augier, Marc. *Op. Cit.* p. 13
[134] On Guérin see Chapter 1
[135] Augier. *Op. Cit.* p. 17

German or Swiss hostels, only designated a peculiar French social reality. The liberal side of the French Republic, which had only been augmented during the Popular Front, undoubtedly gave the French youth a literal and ideological freedom of movement that was hard to find in other countries. Although the French reporter did note the virtual absence of young men from the streets of Italy where Fascism had put them in military barracks instead of youth hostels, he was, somewhere between Innsbruck and Munich, struck in awe by the German highways which he called "the most gigantic European realization, where all speeds are possible, in one word the road metaphor of the Germanic Kolossal."[136] The meaning of Europe in his eyes was still undefined, but it seemed to consider multiple possibilities, from the fraternal and carefree atmosphere of the French hostels to the Nazi "rivers of concrete" which brought no limits to the daring motorcycle rider. These conflicting impulses seemed to be at the heart of a French youth hostel imaginary that was crossed by so many antagonistic ideas, part modernist, part conservative, it had for a large part been made possible by the opening of the social and political space created by the Popular Front. When this domestic dynamic faded the *Ajistes* were left with a dream house that was insufficient to shelter them from the repercussion of international politics.

Youth Hostels in the Colonies

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[136] Augier. *Op. Cit.* p. 17
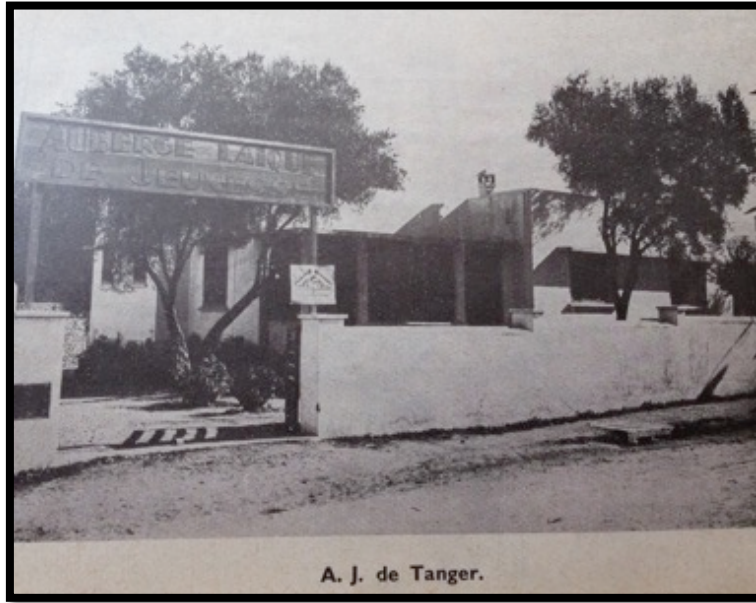
A. J. de Tanger.

Figure 20 Tangiers Youth Hostel in 1938

As the influence of CLAJ grew and the domestic hostels network more or less covered the entire French metropolitan territory, the *Ajistes* sought to develop the youth hostel movement in the colonies. Unlike extra-curricular activities that had largely been reserved to the colonizers and a select local elite, the CLAJ intended to build a network that would welcome as many indigenous young people as possible. The youth hostel movement's agenda was Internationalist rather than Universalist, although echoes of the "civilizing mission" were never too far in the *Ajistes* discourses on the hostels. An association regrouping young French people from Cambodia as well as Indochinese elite studying in Paris had already formed in the beginning of 1937.[137] An article proposed to set up an annual exchange program between young French people and some of their Indochinese comrades, in order to foster collaboration and peaceful relationship between

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[137] "Nos Missions en Indochine." *Le Cri des Auberges*. February 1937, No 24, p. 3

159

the two peoples. The overall tone seemed to move rather liberally from traditional

colonial discourse of the French enlightening the people of the colonies to an altogether

critical attitude towards colonization. In the end the article, which reproduced some of the

discursive tropes and the conflicted attitude of the Popular Front to the colonies[138],

proposed to think of the expansion of the CLAJ in Indochina as a policy of the *helping*

hand: "We will open youth hostels in Indochina, not in order to civilize peoples that often

reach the confines of silent wisdom, not in order to import the forged iron fences of our

public gardens. No, we will go to Indochina because the *hostel spirit* must travel around

the world, and Indochina is but a step along the way. Because in the Far-East, people

expect from us, with a dwindling patience, the unseen gesture of the helping hand."[139] As

its title suggests, the article equated the youth hostels that were to be built in Indochina to

the catholic missions that had preceded the French colonization, in the 18th century. In

doing so, it thought of the *Ajistes* as the vanguard of the new world to come, in which

colonizers and colonized would have an equal role to play. Yet, despite its evident

goodwill, it tended to reproduce some of the most problematic colonial discourses in

which the west was to bring novelty and enlightenment to subaltern subjects.[140]

       While the physical distance and the looming political trouble hindered the

development of the youth hostels in Indochina, it proved to be rather successful in North

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[138] French historians Pierre Brocheux et Daniel Hémery have argued that the Popular Front's colonial policy was in fact very much inspired by a policy of "neo-colonialism." They show that, when in power, the SFIO essentially renounced its support to the idea of *self-government* for Indochina in favor of a moderate social reformism, and found itself at odds with the queries of the highly organized (yet underground) Vietnamese working movement and the local Communist party. See Pierre Brocheux & Daniel Hémery. *Indochine: La Colonisation Ambigue, 1858-1954*. Paris, 2001, pp. 275-325

[139] "Nos Missions en Indochine." *Op. Cit.* p. 3

[140] A Cambodian youth hostel association name Yuvasala was founded in June 1938 at the Royal Library of Phnom Penh. The information was relayed in the *Cri des Auberges*, September 1938, No 39, p. 8. I did not find any information on that topic at the Overseas Archives in Aix-en-Provence.

Africa where the French presence and the links with the metropole were undeniably stronger. By the spring of 1937, a users' club and two hostels had been opened in Algeria: in Chréa, a mountain resort town some 57 kilometers from Algiers, and in *Les Mechtras* by the Djurdjura mountain in Kabylia.[141] The Algerian Secular Youth Hostels (Auberges de Jeunesse Laiques d'Algérie) had an affiliation with the CLAJ and saw its hostel network grow rapidly. In March 1939, following the inauguration of the new Algiers hostel, the Algerian association started publishing a monthly newspaper that followed the model of *Le Cri des Auberges*, providing local users with news, itineraries, and an open forum to discuss issues related to the movement.[142]
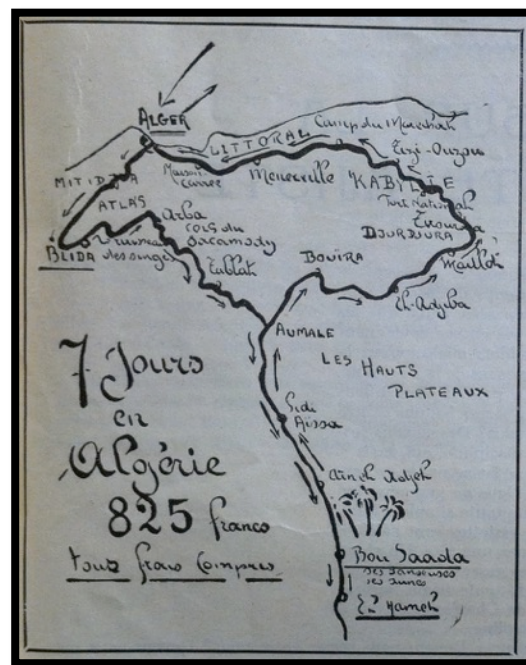

Figure 21 Map of Algerian Youth Hostels

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[141] "En Avant… Alger." *Le Cri des Auberges*. Mars 1937, No 25, p. 8
[142] *L'Appel Ajiste: Revue Mensuelle des Auberges de Jeunesse d'Algérie.* March 1939, No 1

The Algerian *Ajistes*, an overwhelming majority of whom came from French colon families, had chosen to administer their hostels directly, effectively ending the presence of adults, the hostel father and mother, in the youth hostels. This move towards autonomy and emancipation was justified as a means to create a greater involvement on the part of local club members.[143] As André Darritchon, one of the secretaries of the Algiers group wrote: "comrades gather in an effective way, and realize the republics of the youth with a concrete goal: help the common organization thrive: they act decisively."[144] The Algerian hostels seemed to reproduce some of the arguments that could be heard in the early days of the CLAJ, but they also benefitted form what had been accomplished in continental France. Furthermore, the Maghreb, much like the rural areas in France, appeared as an endless terrain for cultural exploration. Algeria and Morocco were seen as a veritable heaven for those of the *Ajistes* who fancied ethnographic excursions.

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[143] In May 1939, the Algerian youth hostel was based around the Algiers hostel claimed 500 members. The department had 7 other hostels and 25 local committees that were planning the opening of new sites. Jean Dumas. "A Nos Camarades Ajistes de France." *L'Appel Ajiste: Revue Mensuelle des Auberges de Jeunesse d'Algérie.* May 1939, No 3, p. 8

[144] *L'Appel Ajiste: Revue Mensuelle des Auberges de Jeunesse d'Algérie.* March 1939, No 3
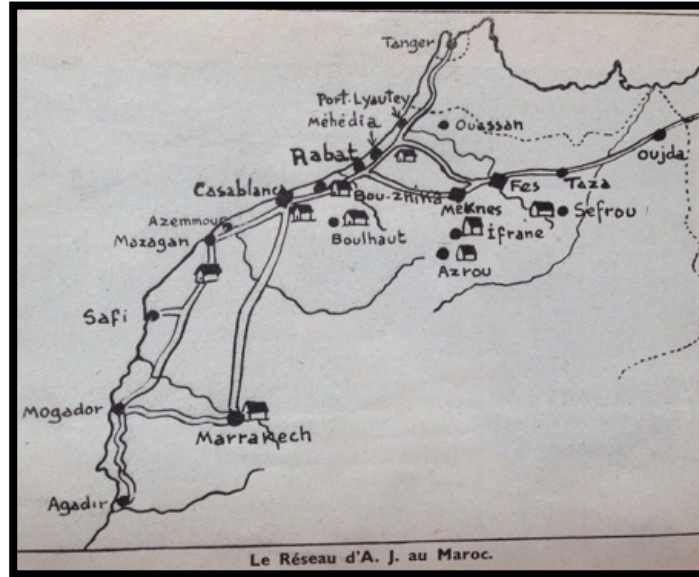
Beginning in 1937, the Algerian hostels association had sought to build links with Morocco. The local association in the protectorate, based in Port-Lyautey, had grown much more rapidly than its Algerian counterpart. By 1939, there were 19 youth hostels in Morocco located in major cities (Rabat, Casablanca, Tanger, Marakkech) as well as in the countryside (Djebel-Hebri, Méhédya). In rather traditional fashion, the Moroccan Secular youth hostel network had been created in 1937 by a professor, M. Lesvin, who served as the director of the Port-Lyautey middle school, and was directed by Jeanne Lavergne, who taught history in Rabat.[145] Unlike the Algerian youth hostels, the Moroccan hostels functioned as a section of the CLAJ. This position gave the Moroccan section great visibility but it also limited its leverage vis-à-vis the CLAJ central committee. Starting in October 1938, *Le Cri des Auberges* included a monthly page devoted to the Moroccan hostels. The connection between the Algerian and Moroccan associations, established in

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[145] "A.J Filles du Soleil." *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse*. February 1938, No 34, p. 8

163

1939, represented a remarkable gain for the *Ajiste* community in North Africa but as a reportage published in *l'Appel Ajiste*, travelling from Algeria to Morocco was often more arduous than travelling from a European country to another.[146]

For the CLAJ and the youth hostel community the colonies seemed to appear as a "last frontier." By the end of the 1930s, the hostel network had expanded in such a way that other territories had to be conquered. In the minds of many on the continent, North Africa and even more so Indochina, represented an "other" that was somewhat difficult to grasp. Despite the publicity that was given to the Moroccan hostels in the CLAJ press, few *Ajistes* crossed the Mediterranean to visit their comrades in the colonies. On the continent the Popular Front, through its leisure policy, made possible for workers to take part in the activity of a movement in which the urban bourgeoisie was over-represented. Perhaps more so than on the continent, the social and political conditions of the colonies exposed the limits of the youth hostel ideology. The Algerian hostels association, under the direct administration of its users, wanted to think of itself as the vanguard of a new social model. *In fine*, it remained a forward thinking travel experience for young members of an intellectual and white elite. The war, and after that the period of decolonization put an end to a dream that from the start had been laid on shaky ground.

Conclusion

The experience of the French secular youth hostels was, in many ways a byproduct of the French political culture of the 1930s. Firmly rooted as it was in the

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[146] Henri Rabeux. "Un Ajiste Algérien au Maroc." *L'Appel Ajiste: Revue Mensuelle des Auberges de Jeunesse d'Algérie.* March 1939, No 3 pp. 2-10

democratic left, its foundation and political evolution followed that of the Popular Front (1933-1939 - understood in a larger time frame than the period during which the left wing coalition was in power). It was a movement rejecting hierarchies in favor of a grassroots democratic syste, that, despite its rejection of party politics, stood for a profound re-foundation of the social through a new set of practices, a way to make politics out of traditional political practice. As such, the French youth hostels attempted to reshape the world outside of the existing realm of politics by refusing to reproduce pre-existing social and political structures such as hierarchy (patriarchy), gender, national identifications, etc.

The Popular Front was built over a four-year period, regrouping political, cultural, and professional organizations that identified with the left and a rejection of fascism. As Geoff Eley argues, the experience of the Popular Front amounted to an attempt by the "to build the new society in the frame of the old, both prefiguratively by exemplary institutions and behaviors in the working class movement and legislatively by reforms."[147] Although the youth hostel movement came out of the sweeping left wing dynamic of the early 1930s which materialized in the formation of the 1936 Blum government, its social imaginary differed from that of the Popular Front in two fundamental ways: First, it relied on a generational sentiment in which youth (*jeunesse*) was seen as a transformative/regenerative social force. Second, it intended to replace "destructive" social structures and practices (politics, nationalism, industrial excesses, urban dwelling, etc.) by an entirely new lifestyle of which the hostels were but a rehearsal. The rejection of modern life's most "debilitating" aspects was inscribed in the

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[147] Geoff Eley. *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000*, Oxford, 2002, p. 267

set of practices that formed the core of *Ajiste* activity (communal living, healthy alimentation, exercise) as well as in the spatial organization of the movement. I argue that traveling within the hostels amounted to a re-claiming of the national space, a practice that is most clearly perceivable in the hostel users' attempts to re-invent the territory through the drawing of maps, itineraries, and travel guides.

The youth hostel movement fits within Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *micropolitics* as self-organizing or auto-poetic, and it was precisely its poetic nature (the prevalence of imagination posited by Gaston Bachelard) that made it possible for the *Ajiste* community to think beyond the existing social and political structures. The power of daydreaming, the dialectic relationship between imaginary past and utopian future, was reinforced by cultural and physical activities at the hostels that gave the new movement substance and helped create powerful notions of authenticity. Chief among these was a practice of travel that was instrumental in uprooting hostel users from the society they sought to reinvent. Here again, Deleuze and Guattari give us an important clue by suggesting that *nomadic* life takes place in a non-structured environment where movement is primary.[148]

Over time, the micro-political practice at the hostels, based as it was processes of self-organization and poetic imagination that were highly contingent upon individual subjectivities, brought about the creation of two different factions. On the one hand those

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[148] In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt suggests that Totalitarian formations can are structured around the "absolute primacy of the movement (…) not only over the state, but also over the nation, the people and the positions of power held by the rulers themselves." Hannah Arendt. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York, 1973, p. 412. Although her use of the concept of movement directly refers to "the political movement" it is somewhat ambiguous and suggests another layer of analysis: movement as dynamism, transience, or direction: "Only a building can have a structure, but a movement can only have a direction." Arendt, Hannah. *Op Cit.*, p. 398. As such it resonates with Deluze and Guattari's notions of *nomadicism* and the *war-machine* as an exogenous agent to the state.

who remained true to the inclusive ideal of the Popular Front, on the other those who thought of the movement as an elitist and politically radical formation. Towards the end of the decade, as the prospects of peaceful cooperation and the coming about of a new world dwindled, the gap between the two factions widened. The Second World War, first through general mobilization then in the coming to power of the reactionary Vichy state, brought the secular youth hotels experience to an end. Unlike most of their former comrades, Marc Augier and Gaston Tyrand chose to collaborate with the Nazi occupying forces and took an active part in another political project based on youth and a radically new social imaginary: the Nazi European idea. Despite its evident leaning to the left the CLAJ, by positing a radical re-framing of the social, had opened up a space from which to radically re-think society. When it became clear that the democratic option would not live up to the hopes that had been placed in it, some chose instead to turn to fascism as a means to preserve European civilization and the youth international of which the *Ajistes* had caught a glimpse. Once again the map was to be redrawn, only this time it was in the terms of an extremely destructive ideology.

Chapter Three

Walking in Hitler's Shadow: Fascism, Economic Organization and the European question in France (1922-1944)

> "The fact that a united Europe is being constituted before our eyes, where
> the relationship between France and Germany will be fundamentally
> changed, should not be considered as the realization of an idea that we had
> until then considered unthinkable; On the contrary, it will happed because
> an underlying tendency throughout the history of the West, that sometimes
> seemed to prevail, but was always contained by others, will finally take
> over, because of new circumstances and the precise and the decisive will of
> a victor."
>
> Abel Bonnard[1]

Towards the end of the 1930s, Marc Augier and some of his comrades within the French youth hostel movement drifted away from the liberal internationalism that had framed their social and political engagement in favor of a brand of Europeanism that highlighted the peculiarities of European culture.[2] This ideological shift was prompted by three interrelated developments: the fall of the Popular Front government in 1938 which brought to an end the liberal political dynamic which had emerged in 1934; the crisis of growth of the youth hostel movement which stalled in the late 1930s and seemed to lack

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[1] Abel Bonnard. "La Sommation du Destin." In *Je Suis Partout*, May 2 1941. Cited in Bernard Bruneteau. *L'Europe Nouvelle de Hitler: Une Illusion des Intellectuels de la France de Vichy*. Monaco, 2003, p. 40. A prominent poet and novelist, member of the Académie Francaise, Bonnard's political views were close to that of Charles Maurras and the Action Francaise. In the late 1930s and early 1940 he progressively drifted towards fascism. He was one of the most prominent honorary members of the Groupe Collaboration and, upon his return as prime minister on April 1942, Pierre Laval named him Minister of Education, a position he retained until the end of the war. Bonnard, who was one of the few personalities expelled from the Académie Francaise for collusion with the enemy, found political asylum in Spain where he remained until his death in 1968. On Bonnard's political itinerary see Abel Bonnard. *Berlin, Hitler et Moi*. Paris, 1987; Olivier Mathieu. *Abel Bonnard: Une Aventure Inachevée*. Paris, 1988

[2] Augier's European vision is expressed most clearly in a speech he gave at the Grand-Palais in Paris in 1941: Marc Augier. *Les Jeunes Devant l'Aventure Européenne*. Paris, 1941.

direction; the emergence of a Europeanist right-wing current which understood fascism as a continent-wide solution for the imagined decay of European civilization.

The demise of the Popular Front in April 1938 signified the political failure of what many on the left had believed could be a credible alternative to center and the right and the dawn of a new liberal era. The strikes that followed the fall of the short-lived second Blum government (March-April 1938) were severely repressed by the government of right-wing radical Edouard Dalladier, a period during which the Communist Party and Workers Unions proved unable to prevent massive lay-offs and lost some of their influence.[3] The inability of the Popular Front to maintain a large enough coalition and stay in power also meant that the Youth Hostel Movement had lost its most important institutional ally. Although the CLAJ was by then well structured and financially sound, it had evolved along a trajectory parallel to that of the Left wing coalition. The *Ajistes* thought their movement as largely independent of any outside influence, but the existence of a liberal government quickly appeared as a precondition for the development of the "new world" they had so ardently wished for. What then were the possible means of action for a pacifist and left wing youth movement predicated on travel and cooperation? While many clung to the original idea of the hostels as the sites for the creation of a new lifestyle, a process that was to take a long time, others believed that the momentum was gone and sought to push the movement toward a new direction. As an important trendsetter in the CLAJ "heroic period" and a prominent voice within the *Ajiste* community, Marc Augier emerged as the central figure within this "reformist" faction. His ideological move was not only influenced by the shortcomings of the popular

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[3] Julian Jackson. *The Popular Front in France. Op. Cit.*; Eugen Weber. *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s*; Jean Vigreux. *Le Front Populaire*. Paris, 2011; Michel Margairaz, Danielle Tatarkowski & Daniel Lefeuvre. *Le Front Populaire*. Paris, 2009; Jacques Kergoat. *La France du Front Populaire*. Paris, 2009.

front or the stalled development of the youth hostels but perhaps more importantly by a new and powerful *Germanophile* trend within the anti-conformist French right.[4]

As Zeev Sternhell has argued in his controversial works on the French origins of the fascist movement[5], political formations that gravitated towards fascist Italy and later Nazi Germany often defied traditional left-right binaries. If the *Croix de Feu* of Colonel De la Rocque could safely be considered a right wing party, the *Parti Populaire Francais* of Jacques Doriot, a communist party outcast, proved to be more problematic. The emergence in the mid-1930s of a new trend within the radical French right that was mostly made up of communist and socialist defectors underlined a swift but profound evolution of the political landscape. The rise of fascist ideology in Europe came as consequence of what Geoff Eley has called the "crisis of the capitalist state."[6] This crisis of the "capitalist state" not only meant that of the modern industrial economic system but also of the mode of political representation that had come in its wake: parliamentary democracy. The rejection of parliamentary representation, the modern political system *par excellence*, made possible the switch from the radical left to the far right because to it was attached a set of shared ideological enemies: liberalism and capitalism, communism, and democracy.[7]

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[4] On the question of the "anti-conformist" French right in the late 1930s and 1940s see: Robert Soucy. *French Fascism: The Second Wave*. New Haven, 1997; Pascal Ory. *Les Collaborateurs: 1940-1945*. Paris, 1980; Pascal Ory. *La France Allemande: 1933-1945*. Paris, 1995; Philippe Burin. *La Dérive Fasciste: Doriot, Déat, Bergery, 1933-1945*. Paris, 2003. On the relationship between art and fascism see Mark Antliff. *The Mobilization of Myth, Art, and Culture in France*. Durham, 2007; On the French voluntary legion on the eastern front see: Pierre Giolitto. *Volontaires Francais sous l'Uniforme Allemand*. Paris, 2007.

[5] Zeev Sternhell. *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France*. Princeton, 1986; Zeev Sternhell, Maryo Snajder & Maria Ashaeri. *The Bith of Fascist Ideology*. Princeton, 1994.

[6] Geoff Eley. "What Produces Fascism: Preindustrial Traditions or a Crisis of a Capitalist State." *Politics and Society*. September 1983, No.12, pp. 53-82.

[7] In *La Dérive Fasciste*, Philippe Burrin draws a three headed ideal-typical chart of the elements that made possible the switch from the left to fascism: 1. A set of organizational principles and political methods

Those on the left who made the switch and went on to create their own political

parties with a fascist sensibility, most notably Jacques Doriot[8] (PPF) and Marcel Déat

(RNP – National Popular Rally), sought a radical re-foundation of the social and political

system.[9] Both Doriot (PCF – 1934) and Déat (SFIO – 1933) were expelled from their

respective political parties and chose to adhere to a set of political guidelines that

progressively converged towards Nazi Germany. From the international of the socialist

and communist parties, both iconoclast politicians moved in the direction of a corporatist

nationalism that emulated the sorelian roots of Italian fascism.[10] By the end of the 1930s,

Doriot and Déat ranked among the most vocal supporters of Nazi Germany, exhorting the

French public to side with peace and a political alliance with Germany.[11] This kind of

pacifism, which by no means was universal, was motivated by the belief that Hitler's way

represented the solution to the political and social woes of the modern world as a whole.

It was most forcefully expressed in Déat's plea for peace *Mourir pour Dantzig?* (Why

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reflected in the shared aspiration to become mass popular movements. 2. A number of irrational values such as a belief in human communion and collective action. 3. Shared ideological oppositions. Philippe Burrin. *La Dérive Fasciste*. pp. 27-28.

[8] On Doriot see Jean-Paul brunet. *Jacques Doriot*. Paris, 1986 and Bertram Gordon. *Collaborationism in France During the Second World War*. Ithaca, 1980.

[9] Originally a member of the SFIO, Marcel Déat was influenced by Henri de Man's *planist* ideology. In *Perspectives Socialistes*, a book he published in 1930, Déat argued for the foundation of a new political current within socialism, which he called neo-socialism. Although at that time he adhered to reformist agenda, Déat nonetheless operated a move towards fascism as he advocated national solidarity over class struggle, corporatism, and called for an authoritarian state as a response to capitalist deregulation. See Philippe Burrin. *La Dérive Fasciste*, pp. 139-175 and Jean-Paul Cointet. *Marcel Déat: Du Socialisme au National Socialisme*. Paris, 1998.

[10] On Sorel's influence on Mussolini's thought see James Gregor. *Young Mussolini and the Intellectual Origins of Fascism*. Berkeley, 1979. On Sorel's intellectual legacy and his followers see J.J. Roth. *The Cult of Violence: Sorel and the Sorelians*. Berkeley, 1980. On Sorel thought in the context of early 20th century France see Zeev Sternhell. *The Birth of Fascist Ideology*. Op. Cit. and Roger Griffin. *The Nature of Fascism*. London, 1993. For a more literary and theoretical approach see Alice Kaplan. *Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Litterature and French Intellectual Life*. Minneapolis, 1986, pp. 59-74.

[11] For a sociological approach to Déat's political itinerary within the Durkheimian school see Mathieu Desan & Johan Heilbron. "Young Durkheimians and the Temptation of Fascism: The Case of Marcel Déat." *History of Human Sciences*. May 2015

Die for Dantzig?), in which he showed his support to the Munich agreements and admiration for Nazi Germany.[12]

A particularly polarizing event, the Munich agreements brought about the convergence of the germanophile trends within the French left and right and the reshaping of the political landscape in three large groups: the pro-war including the SFIO and the nationalist right, the pacifists which included the communists, and those who advocated an alliance with Nazi Germany. Among the latter, the right-wing faction was made up of literary figures such as Robert Brasillach, Pierre Drieu la Rochelle[13] and Alphonse de Chateaubriant who was responsible for the creation in 1935 of the "French-German Committee", a think-tank that largely relied on subsidies from the German embassy in Paris. Drieu la Rochelle who, since 1927 and the publication of the novel *Le Jeune Européen* (the young European)[14] advocated European cooperation as a means to counter soviet expansion[15], was one of the first intellectuals to join Chateaubriant in his attempt to reach out to Nazi Germany. In 1937 upon his return from a trip to Germany, Chateaubriant published *La Gerbe des Forces*, in which he praised the social and economic achievements of Nazi Germany.[16] The book, which came out at a time when

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[12] Marcel Déat. "Mourir pour Dantzig?" L' Œuvre, 4 May 1939. On the impact Déat's article had on public opinion in France see Daniel Hucker. *Public Opinion and the End of the Appeasement in Britain and France*. London, 2011, pp. 157-163.

[13] On Brasillach and Drieu la Rochelle see David Carroll. *French Literary Fascism: Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, and the Ideology of Culture*. Princeton, 1998; Robert Soucy. *Fascist Intellectual: Drieu la Rochelle*. Berkeley, 1978; Robert Soucy. *French Fascism: The Second Wave*. Op. Cit. pp. 282-299; Alice Kaplan. *Reproductions of Banality*. Op. Cit. pp. 92-107; Jacques Lecarme. *Drieu la Rochelle ou le Bal des Maudits*. Paris, 2001; Jean-Louis Saint-Ygnan. *Drieu la Rochelle ou l'Obsession de la Décadence*. Paris, 1984.

[14] Pierre Drieu la Rochelle. *Le Jeune Européen*. Paris, 1927.

[15] This view was developed further a year later in the essay *Genève ou Moscou* : Pierre Drieu la Rochelle. *Genève ou Moscou*. Paris, 1928.

[16] Alphonse de Chateaubriand. *La Gerbe des Forces: Nouvelle Allemagne*. Paris, 1937.

the first Popular Front government was faltering, had a remarkable echo among those who had begun to question the parliamentary regime.

After the French military defeat of 1940 Chateaubriant was naturally chosen by the Nazis to preside over the "Collaboration group" which regrouped a number of intellectuals and businessmen willing to contribute to the German war effort.[17] The group's political line drew heavily on Chateaubriant's belief that France, as an agricultural country, had to find its place in the new European entity that was being patched together by Hitler. This vision served as the guiding line for an exhibition organized in collaboration with Otto Abetz, the German ambassador in France[18], which was entitled *La France Européenne* (European France). The exhibition opened on May 31, 1941 at the *Grand Palais* hall in Paris and testified of the unabashed ambition of the small fraction of the French intelligentsia that had chosen to fully compromise with the occupation forces.

In his volume on the collaborators, French historian Pascal Ory dismissed the "myth of the new Europe" as the adaptation to the French political register of "themes often foreign to its intellectual tradition, but the selective criterion of which always had to be in par with the vocabulary of Nazism."[19] This irrevocable rejection of a set of ideas deemed unauthentic because of their foreign origin obscures the significance of the idea of Europe not only in occupied France but for the wartime fascist project in general. Working against this simplistic interpretation, Bernard Bruneteau, has written a

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[17] On the collaboration group see Julien Prévotaux. *Un Européisme Nazi: Le Groupe Collaboration et l'Idéologie Européenne dans la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*. Paris, 2010

[18] For the role played by Abetz in the organization of the collaborationist circles in France see Barbara Lambauer. *Otto Abetz et les Francais ou l'Envers de la Collaboration*. Paris, 2002; also Robert O. Paxton. *Vichy France*. New York, 1972; for his role in the interwar see Pascal Ory. *Les Collaborateurs*. Op. Cit. pp. 14-20.

[19] Pascal Ory. *Les Collaborateurs*. Op. Cit. p. 146.

compelling intellectual history on the idea of "Hitler's Europe" among French intellectuals during the Second World War that argues for a reconsideration of the originality and significance of this particular trend.[20] Perhaps the most interesting aspect of his work lies in its exposition of the coalescence of very different individual and intellectual itineraries on the question of Europe, in the years 1941-1943. Bruneteau argues that, although collaborationist intellectuals were often instructed to emphasize their adhesion to the Nazi European project, their take on the subject remained largely influenced by their previous political itineraries, social belongings, and own representations. The unlikely association of former Communists (Doriot), Socialists (Déat) and reactionary Catholics (Chateaubriant) around the idea of "Hitler's Europe" seem to indicate it occupied a central place in the development of an original wartime French fascism.[21]

Drieu la Rochelle's early reflections on Europe (1927) and Chateaubriant's original analysis of France's future as located in the German orbit (1937) suggest that there was more to the Europeanist trend within collaborationist forces than historians of the period have been willing to make of it. The abject nature of the collaboration should not prevent us from understanding the importance of some of its central discourses. Starting from this premise, this chapter will be split in two parts. The first one will look at the writings of Drieu la Rochelle, Chateaubriant, and other like minded intellectuals in the interwar period in order to trace a genealogy of the European among the anti-parliamentary forces. The second will focus on the 1941 *France Européenne* exhibit, a

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[20] Bernard Bruneteau. *L'Europe Nouvelle de Hitler: Une Illusion des Intellectuels de la France de Vichy*. Monaco, 2003
[21] See Bernard Bruneteau, *Op. Cit.*, p. 15-16

remarkable occurrence that historians of the period have inexplicably bypassed, and show how it fit within the continental development of wartime fascist ideology.

Drieu la Rochelle: The European Myth and Total Man

The pan-European idea within the French literary circles emerged from the experience of the First World War and the futurist crucible through the writings of Pierre Drieu la Rochelle. In his post-war essay *Mesure de la France*, Drieu la Rochelle argued that the Great War had shown France's limits and that it could no longer be considered a major international power. This lucid, yet sour interpretation for a young nationalist led him to suggest that France's future lay within a larger European cooperation system. For Drieu the power of a country was dictated by its demographic weight: France had occupied a central geopolitical position in the 18th and 19th century when its population was the largest in the continent, but by 1870 it had been eclipsed by Germany, Great Britain, and even Italy.[22] Demographic vitality was here understood as a form of social and spiritual strength, a way to gauge the well-being of a nation: "This large number, the overwhelming number of our fathers, was not a simple consequence, it was a regenerating act, a moral deed. These millions signified force, confidence, and generosity. It was not only to the vitality of their ideas, the swiftness of their impetus that the French owed the fulfillment of their passions, high and low, over Europe, but their abundance, the magnificence of their sexual life."[23] The demise of France, its inability to regenerate after two centuries of continental domination, led Drieu to argue that a spirit

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[22] *Ibid*. pp. 19-20.

[23] *Ibid*. p. 20. On demographic policies in 19th century France see Joshua Cole. *The Power of large Numbers: Population, Politics, and Power in 19th Century France*. Ithaca, 2000

of equality among nations would ultimately replace the very idea of European

hegemony.[24]

In her book *Reproductions of Banality*, Alice Kaplan argues that Drieu's analysis

stood out in the intellectual landscape of the period in that it showed a remarkable

awareness of the world economy.[25] As one of the "few of the French fascist nationalists

to look beyond the boundaries of Europe and react to a world picture (…) he translates an

awareness of himself as an unhappy transitory figure into a study of France caught

between a world of classical imperialism and of stagnating production."[26] The moral

crisis of the young French intellectual in the aftermath of the Great War was also that of

classical modernity and vice versa. Ultimately this crisis was that of the modern political

form, the nation state, a view that was clearly expressed in the fifth chapter of *Mesure de

la France* entitled "Les Patries et l'Aventure Moderne" (Fatherlands and the Modern

Adventure).[27] Drieu's worldview was profoundly permeated by a technicist conception of

post-war modernity in many aspects similar to the one Carl Schmitt expressed in the

second half of the 1920s.[28] According to him, the "human decay" came as a consequence

of the dissolution of western morale and civilization, the questioning of "the foundations

of everything", which was only amplified by the "contraction of the planet" under the

combined effects of information and transportation technologies.[29] From this assessment

Drieu concluded that a world-historical paradigm shift was happening before his eyes and

that the very practice of politics, be it domestic or international, had to be reconsidered.

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[24] *Ibid.* p. 40.

[25] Alice Kaplan. *Reproductions of Banality*. Op. Cit. pp. 94-95.

[26] *Ibid.* p. 94

[27] Drieu la Rochelle. *Mesure de la France*, pp. 79-86.

[28] Carl Schmitt. *The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations*. Chicago, 2008 (1929).

[29] Drieu la Rochelle. *Mesure de la France*, p. 93.

The dynamic of closed domestic politics and the competition between major European powers for continental hegemony (France, Germany, and Britain) appeared outdated and ought to be replaced by a European cooperation system in which all nations would be equal. Finally, Drieu was concerned with the rise of new continental powers ensnaring the old, fractioned European state system: "Europe, placed as it is between empires of continental stature, suffers from its division in twenty five states, none of which is large enough to dominate all of the others or to represent it with dignity in the disproportionate competition between gigantic chunks of Asia and America."[30]

Figure 23 Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, Robert Brasillach, and Abel Bonnard

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[30] Drieu la Rochelle. *Mesure de la France*, p. 64.

Drieu la Rochelle's plea for Europe was born, like many of his contemporaries[31],

out of his concern for a seemingly threatened European civilization and culture. The

themes developed in *Mesure de la France* remained prevalent in his subsequent works,

novels and essays alike. The parallel between individual and social decay in an

increasingly consumerist post-war society form the core of his 1927 semi-autobiographic

novel, *Le Jeune Européen*. The book deals with the travels and life experiences of a

disgruntled young bourgeois who does not seem to care much for those who cross his

path. The gloomy atmosphere of the novel is nonetheless framed by the author's (and his

character's) mental struggles to find a way out of his personal dilemmas and social dead-

end. At times Drieu's detached tone is reminiscent of that of Céline, but unlike the author

of *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit*[32] he thinks of his books as a way to rethink society, not

merely criticize it in the most disdainful way possible.

For Literary historian David Carroll, the aesthetic and political dimensions of

Drieu la Rochelle's works of fiction are indistinguishable in that they participate in the

same intellectual quest: "The attraction of fascism to Drieu was precisely that of the

unbounded force of the creative imagination as it works to destroy and transcend the

limitation of both aesthetic and political form in order to realize a European spiritual

community beyond and a different type than all national communities, which are

determined by the more restrictive and "material" limitations of language, geography,

politics, and national culture of tradition."[33] The idea of the "young European", suggests

the vacuity of national distinctions and belonging and the uniformity of the modern

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[31] On the myth of Europe in relation to fascist ideology see Roger Griffin. "Europe for the Europeans: Fascist Myths of the European New Order, 1922-1992." In *A Fascist Century*. London, 2008, pp. 132-181.
[32] Louis-Ferdiand Céline. *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit*. Paris, 1932.
[33] David Carroll. *French Literary Fascism*. Op. Cit., p. 127.

experience that has become virtually "formless." This conception is expressed in a

paragraph in which the main character returns to Paris only to find himself engulfed in

modern, shapeless, and claustrophobic architectural forms and be literally swallowed,

like in any other major city, by the spectacles of acrobats, animals, and prostitutes.[34]

Drieu crudely expresses his disgust for humanity, its lust for money and

spectacles. To his eyes the theaters of Belleville in the working class districts of the

French capital represent the purest expression of the profound decay of modern society.

The "bastringue" piano, "impudent, trash of a few centuries, *pot-pourri* played by a

bunch of loonies from the far reaches of a province"[35] serves as the soundtrack for this

social cacophony. The author above all despises the metropolis, drawing an expressionist

portrait of the booming entertainment industry of interwar France. Unlike Kracauer in

Germany who adopted a distant, social scientific approach in his work on the lower-

middle class entertainment culture of Weimar Germany[36], Drieu dives deeply into a

world he wholeheartedly rejects. The human mass of the urban center takes up a fluid,

indistinguishable and shapeless form which can only be talked about through a the

linguistic register of food and garbage: "trash", "slaves sleeping in their feces",

"livestock herd" are some of the expressions used to refer to the men and women he

observes.[37] Yet in the theater, as the public settles and the room falters into obscurity, the

crowd disperses, subjugated as it is by the fascinating attraction of the spectacle. For

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[34] Pierre Drieu la Rochelle. *Le Jeune Européen*. Op. Cit. p. 102-104: "In a violent promiscuity, they stack their buildings on gloomy and expensive patches of land. (…) In the 20th century, whichever city the wandering man ends up in, animals and acrobats provide him with a kind of pleasure that need no translation. And everywhere the endless flow of dancers, the display of half-naked women show him the splendor of money which he looks for day in and day out and illustrate the venal love he will find on the sidewalk come midnight.

[35] Drieu la Rochelle. *Le Jeune Européen*, Op. Cit. p. 112.

[36] Siegfried Kracauer. *The Mass Ornament*. Cambridge, 1996.

[37] Drieu la Rochelle. *Le Jeune Européen*, Op. Cit. pp. 109-114.

Drieu it comes as a sign that the power of the mind is still present somewhere in the gutters of the city. The lighting of the projectors on the stage, an "incredible catastrophe", signifies the rebirth of the human spirit from the darkest corners of modern life: "there are still temples: man still opposes something to himself; he has not yet fully retreated in his slumbering greed. It is art." [38]

The idea of art and its ability to subjugate and transcend the masses play a central role in Drieu la Rochelle's conception of politics. His fictional works, function in parallel with his political essays, the former expressing an almost anthropological view of the practice of modern society, the latter proposing a conceptual and macro-social critique and a set of solutions to the political issues of the period. Although the date of the Drieu's "conversion" to fascism is difficult to establish, his concern in *Le Jeune Européen* with the spiritual values of man, the decay of modern civilization, and an attempt to produce a literary aesthetics containing the seeds of a reforming (in the sense of the creation of new forms) impulse suggest that he already gravitated in the fascist intellectual orbit by the years 1927-1928. According to David Carroll, Drieu la Rochelle fits within the fascist literary canon insofar as he was attempting to coalesce artwork and political reality: "Fascism should be treated as an extreme but logical development of a number of fundamental aesthetic concepts of cultural ideals: namely the notion of the integrity of *Man* as a founding cultural principle and political goal; of the totalized, organic unity of the artwork as both an aesthetic and political ideal; and finally of culture considered as

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[38] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

180

the model for the positive form of political totalization, the ultimate foundation for and the full realization of both the individual and the collectivity."[39]

The individual and collective well being attained through the development of the fascist political ideal represented, for the French novelist, a way out of the dead-end of classical modernity. In *Genève ou Moscou*[40], an essay he published in 1928, Drieu la Rochelle offered a more finely tuned version of the interpretive scheme he had sketched out in *Mesure de la France*. For him the multitude European countries had found themselves squeezed between the United States and the USSR, the two emerging empires, weakened as they were by their intestine wars and lingering political divisions. Far from being set apart by their political and economic systems, both countries were equated by Drieu as two forms of capitalistic and supra-national regimes which made them better fitted for the new technological age. Since he believed both the United State and the Soviet Union relied on a similar rational and technicist application of capitalist social and economic principles, the opposition between capitalism and communism had become merely rhetorical. The real purpose of these new imperial forces was to create a "planetary society" abiding to their rule.[41] The entire essay was framed as a means to exhort European countries to follow a path similar to that of the new hegemonic forces.

The precondition for the attainment of this new, pan-European state entity was the "destruction of local patriotism which opposed European patriotism."[42] Towards the end Drieu's essay took on a messianic note, arguing that if Europeans were not able to unite and put together a continental super-power, if the European spirit were not to triumph, the

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[39] David Carroll. *French Literary Fascism*. Op. Cit. p. 7.
[40] Pierre Drieu la Rochelle. *Genève ou Moscou*. Op. Cit.
[41] Pierre Drieu la Rochelle. *Genève ou Moscou*. Op. Cit., p. 5.
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

inability of the continent to compete economically with the United States would ultimately lead to the Soviet takeover of the whole of Europe: "If Geneva is not made, then Moscow will prevail."[43] If the cultural anguish showcased by Drieu was rather common in this period, the likening of the United States and the USSR has to be noted. For him, Soviet rationalism and American protectionism were two sides of the same communist coin, which was expressed in two forms of the same technicist imperialism. The question of forms is here essential as Drieu's essay was intended to convince his fellow French and European citizens that unification was but a necessity if European nations and culture were to survive. In this sense the next stage of European history had to be the formation of a continental entity, the homeland was seen here as a constantly moving notion that did not have to stop at the national stage, the natural evolution of which would be a larger, more inclusive political formation. Once again, David Carroll gives us some clues in order to put together Drieu la Rochelle's aesthetic and political claims: "Drieu believed that as long as a homeland was not yet determined as a nationand its boundaries and identity remained fluid, as long as its force was unrestricted by identifiable cultural norms, it would remain a purely spiritual, creative force. (…) The force of this unnamed, unmeasured, and unmeasurable homeland was the force of the unformed as well, the moment before form when force reigns and forms have not yet achieved finality. It was the moment before art and politics, therefore the *Dionysian* moment of pure explosive and chaotic invention."[44]

The moment of chaotic invention Carroll is referring to in his book took the form of a moment of poetic imagination akin to the ones described by Gaston Bachelard in *The*

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[43] *Ibid.,* p. 41.

[44] David Carroll. *French Literary Fascism*. Op. Cit. p. 7.

Poetics of Space.[45] In Drieu la Rochelle's dream, the crumbling houses of individual

continental nations could not offer enough shelter for European civilization, he instead

wished for the creation of a new imaginary house, a reshaped and common space, a new

homeland which would fulfill its primary protective function. Throughout the 1930s,

Drieu sought to refine the intellectual framework laid in *Mesure de la France* and *Geneve*

ou Moscou. The evolution of the international context, the rise of fascism in Germany

and Italy as well as the deepening of the antagonism between left and right in France, led

him to believe that the only way out of the civilizational decay implied a re-foundation of

the state system on a European federal model. His next foray into political essay writing

came in 1931, in the form of a book entitled *L'Europe contre les Patries*.[46] Drawing on

the same register as in his earlier essays, he used a demographic metaphor to strengthen

his argument: "What we call today nationalism is the leftovers of state of mind, which

has had its hour of absolute truth and fecundity. But these leftovers rot and become sour.

When men become conscious of a state of mind, it means that it has already started to

lose steam and stopped matching reality. (…) What used to be a spontaneous and

unconscious feeling, being part of a nation, becomes an attitude, being nationalist full of

intentions and significations that extrapolate far and away from the naïve departure

point."[47] Much like the demographic decline Drieu focused on a decade earlier in *Mesure*

de la France, the prevalence of an anachronistic form of nationalism was the source of

the sclerosis of European intellectual and political life. The old and weakening

nationalism of western and central European nations (England, France, Italy, Germany)

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[45] Gaston Bachelard. *The Poetics of Space*. Op. Cit.
[46] Pierre Drieu la Rochelle. *L'Europe contre les Patries*. Op. Cit.
[47] *Ibid.* p. 5.

found itself contaminated by the radical irredentism of young Eastern European

nationalisms. Here again, the specter of the "threatening continental federations (Russia,

America)"[48] was seen as the main reason to move against all forms of nationalism, its

resurgence in the West and the territorial questions in the East, and create a unified

continental entity.

The fascist insurrection of February 1934 consecrated the polarization of French

political life.[49] The left wing democratic reaction to the onslaught of the fascist leagues

against the republic culminated in the electoral victory of the Popular Front in the spring

of 1936. For the extreme right on the contrary, the period represented an opportunity to

regroup and rethink the modalities and forms of its political action. The failed fascist

coup had a subjugating effect on Drieu la Rochelle who perceived in the violent attempt

to bring down the republic the seeds of the political reformation he had so ardently

wished for. A few months after the failed coup, he published a book entitled *Socialisme*

Fasciste[50] in which he expressed his attraction for the dynamism of fascist ideology.

Attempting to move away from the Marxist tradition he vehemently opposed, Drieu

sought to find parallels between fascism and the French socialist tradition of the first half

of the 19th century. The essay, which was written upon his return from a courtesy trip to

Germany with his friend and right wing intellectual Bertrand de Jouvenel, was conceived

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[48] *Ibid*. p. 7.

[49] For a conservative interpretation of the February 1934 events see Serge Berstein. *Le 6 Fevrier 1934*. Paris, 1975. For a more recent take on the subject and especially the formation of a fascist sensibility in France in the wake of the failed fascist coup see Pierre Pélissier. *La République en Feu: 6 Février 1934*. Paris, 2000

[50] Pierre Drieu la Rochelle. *Socialisme Fasciste*. Paris, 1934. In the book, Drieu argued that the traditional expressions of the right (nationalist) and the left (democratic) participated of the same institutional logic based on the capitalist/parliamentary system: "Inherently, the worlds of the left and the right are tightly knit and cannot be separated. (…) The radical and socialist world is mostly attached to democratic side of capitalism, but in defending democracy it defends capitalism that takes advantage of it. The nationalist world is mostly attached to the capitalist side of democracy; but it is enmeshed with the business circles and needs democracy to preserve its quality of life." *Ibid*. p. 88.

as an attempt to solve some of the contradictions had expressed in his work. The concept

of fascist socialism served as a means to reconcile his Europeanism with the ultra-

nationalist dimension of fascist ideology.

A few months before the publication of *Socialism Fasciste*, the mayor and deputy

of the working class Parisian suburb of Saint-Denis Jacques Doriot, one of France's most

popular left wing politicians was expelled from the communist for diverging from the

Komintern official line.[51] Doriot then flipped his previous communist ideological

allegiance inside out, swapping the international brand of socialism preached by the

Moscow for a "national" socialism emphasizing the values of the French nation. This

move was partly dictated by his bitterness towards the French communists as well as his

belief that the path of history was going in the direction of Nazi Germany and Fascist

Italy. Now firmly opposed to a Popular Front he had been one of the first to advocate in

the early 1930s, Doriot founded his own, openly fascist party in 1936: the Parti Populaire

Francais (PPF –French People's Party). Drieu la Rochelle saw in the former communist

leader and his party the realization of the idea of fascist socialism he had prophesized a

couple of years earlier and joined the PPF that same year. He went to write two political

essays which justified his choice for Doriot: *Doriot ou la Vie d'un Ouvrier Francais*[52] in

1936 (Doriot: The Life of a French Worker) and *Avec Doriot*[53] (With Doriot) in 1937.

Although Doriot's approval of the Munich agreements in 1938 led Drieu to part

ways with the increasingly popular politician their convergence, which would have been

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[51] On Doriot's exclusion from the French Communist party see Philippe Burin. *La Dérive Fasciste*. Op. Cit., pp. 176-204. On Doriot's political itinerary in the interwar period see Laurent Kestel. *La Conversion Politique: Doriot, Le PPF et la Question du Fascisme Francais*. Paris, 2012; Jean-Paul Brunet. *Jacques Doriot*. Paris, 1986; Pascal Ory. *La France Allemande*. Op. Cit.; Robert Soucy. *French Fascism: The Second Wave*. Op. Cit.

[52] Pierre Drieu la Rochelle. *Doriot ou la Vie d'un Ouvrier Francais*. Paris, 1936.

[53] Pierre Drieu la Rochelle. *Avec Doriot*. Paris, 1937.

highly unlikely a few years earlier, suggests that the French political landscape had undergone a radical mutation in middle of the 1930s. The rise of an indigenous fascist movement which brought about the Popular Front opened a space for political dissent on the right and the left and a blurring of ideological lines. In this context, a French ultra-conservative writer and Germanophile, Alphonse de Chateaubriant produced a very successful pamphlet that in some ways brought together the ideas of Drieu la Rochelle and the activism of Doriot.

Alphonse de Chateaubriant: From Catholic Regionalism to French National Socialism

"The German stream whispers by the tune of the mountaineer flute… I listen, and I hear in the distance the sound of the Loire River… I where France is headed… What are men doing over there?... Through the greenery, I think of the reed by the river… and I cry…"
Alphonse de Chateaubriant, 1937[54]

Alphonse de Chateaubriant[55] was a rather idiosyncratic character in the political landscape of the French conservative right. Born in a noble family in Western France, he graduated from the prestigious military school of Saint Cyr but opted for a literary career instead. Unlike Doriot and Drieu la Rochelle, who were born at the turn of the century, he came of age at the time of the Dreyfus affair[56] and belonged to a French nationalist

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[54] Alphonse de Chateaubriant. *La Gerbe des Forces*. Op. Cit., p. 151.

[55] For an intellectual biography of Chateaubriant see Kay Chadwick. *Alphonse de Chateaubriant: Catholic Collaborator*. London, 2002.

[56] Chateaubriant's attitude during the Dreyfus affair proved to be rather intriguing. Unlike the overwhelming majority of Action Française supporter, he was on the side of Dreyfus during the trial of the French Jewish officer. On this particular note see Simon Epstein. *Les Dreyfusards sous l'Occupation*. Paris,

current influenced by Charles Maurras[57] and the Action Française.[58] As a novelist, he devoted his attention to the *terroir poitevin* an area where he spent most of his life, located between the towns of Poitiers and Angers in Western France. Chateaubriant became a national literay sensation when he received the prix Goncourt, the most prestigious French literary award, in 1911 for *Monsieur des Lourdines*, his first novel.[59] His attachment to the rural soil and the regional traditions was emphasized in *La Briere*[60], his second novel published in 1923. It received the *Great Prize of the French Academy* and sold over 600 000 copies, making it one of the most widely circulated books of fiction of the interwar period. Set in the marshlands of the Loire estuary, the book deals with the struggles of a local peat-cutter and the troubled relationship he entertains with his estranged son. Adopting a traditionalist point of view, the novel is based on the opposition between a rugged but morally and physically fulfilling country life and the corrupting nature of life in Nantes, the largest city in the area. Although the plot and set of images employed in the book were relatively classic and in many ways resembled the ones used by Jean Giono in his work on the provençal countryside, they become more interesting when considered against the backdrop of Chateaubriant's political output of the late 1930s.

2001; Gilles Manceron & Emmanuel Naquet (ed.). *Etre Dreyfusard Hier et Aujourd'hui*. Rennes, 2009, pp. 403-411.

[57] On Charles Maurras see Stéphane Giocanti. *Charles Maurras: Le Chaos et l'Ordre*. Paris, 2008; Olivier Dard. *Charles Maurras: Le Maitre et l'Action*. Paris, 2013.

[58] On the Action Francaise see Zeev Sternhell. *Neither Right Nor Left*. Op. Cit.; Eugen Weber. *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in 20th Century France*. Stanford, 1962; Francois Huguenin. *L'Action Française*. Paris, 2011; Jacques Prévotat. *L'Action Française*. Paris, 2004; For a traditional view and now contested view on the situation of the Action Française within the history of the French right see René Rémond. *Les Droites en France*. Paris, 1992.

[59] Alphonse de Chateaubriant. *Monsieur des Lourdines*. Paris, 1911.

[60] Alphonse de Chateaubriant. *La Biere*. Paris, 1923.

In May 1937, upon his return from a study trip in Germany, Chateaubriant published his most important political essay entitled *La Gerbe des Forces*.[61] For the catholic novelist, much like Drieu la Rochelle before him, the salvation of the French and European civilizations required a moral re-foundation. His travels in Hitler's Germany appeared to him as a revelation, in the biblical sense of the term, as he argued that National Socialism was "in the modern world the first state form that carries in its constitution the need to fight against evil."[62] The question of form, reminiscent of the aesthetic considerations expressed by Drieu, was highlighted by the formula *porte dans sa constitution* (carries in its constitution) which introduced a subtle organic reference to the semantic field of birth giving. Nestled in the new constitution and state form were the germs of a new historical dawn for the German nation ready to give birth to a new political being. Chateaubriant praised Hitler's perspicacity and his ability to deal with the woes that plagued modern Germany: "Hitler had realized that, in order to bring about the resurrection of his people, a simple improvement would be illusory; that he had to rebuild everything, start all over again; destroy, uproot intellectualism, liberalism, individualism, and proceed through the education of children."[63] Nazism was here understood as a conservative, reactionary revolution of a new kind.[64] To the regenerative dimension of Nazi ideology Chateaubriant attached his own Christian bias, making numerous allusions to the Christian tradition. The rebirth of the German national community was considered through the prism of the New Testament, Hitler serving as a new messiah, a new Christ.

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[61] Alphonse de Chateaubriant. *La Gerbe des Forces*. Paris, 1937.

[62] *Ibid.* p. 57.

[63] Chateaubriant. *La Gerbe des Forces*. Op. Cit. p. 80.

[64] I borrowed the expression "reactionary revolution" from James Forman. *Fascism: The Meaning and Experience of a Reactionary Revolution*. New York, 1974.

As understood by Chateaubriant, Hitler's transfiguration[65], from the political into the

religious leader, represents one the most significant dimensions of the regenerative power

of Nazism: "The authentic function of the chief is to delete the old, erroneous concepts,

from the people's mind, that which empty remove the power of belief from

consciousness. Hence the chief, or the Baptist, must wash with virulent splashes of water

the forehead of the society of yore, in order to purify that forehead and annihilate all the

treacherous thoughts."[66]Although this analysis denoted a profound misinterpretation of

the Nazis' relationship to Christianity, it nonetheless suggested that Nazism was

adaptable to different national grounds as a universal political religion.[67]

At the same time charismatic leader of a new kind and messiah of a political

religion, Hitler symbolized the new spirit of a revolution that rose against bolshevism.

Chateaubriant, like Drieu la Rochelle before him, conceived of communism as the latest

stage in the evolution of capitalism, a bourgeois society which had moved away from

religion during the Renaissance and the progressive rationalization of the late modern

period. Although the revolution was for the greatest part German, it was "universal in that

it was, between Rhine and Oder, the German expression of a universal necessity."[68]

Chateaubriant's attraction for Nazism stemmed from its vitality, a dimension of Hitler's

movement that was expressed in its profound interest in youth. The French catholic writer

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[65] In Chateaubriant's somewhat pompous style, the idea of Hitler's immanence reads as such: "Hitler is not just the name of a man anymore, it is the name of all in all. Because of its mysticism, Germany found the way towards a new reality." Chateaubriant. Op. Cit., p. 159.

[66] Chateaubriant. Op.Cit., p. 137-138.

[67] On a similar note one can look at Emilio Gentile's work on fascism as political religion. See Emilio Gentile. *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*. Cambridge (MA), 1996 and *Politics as Religion*. Princeton, 2002.

[68] Chateaubriant. Op. Cit., p. 140.

praised the German child as "one of the graces of nature"[69] endowed with a kind of purity which could be seen as a direct legacy of the Romantic Movement. More striking perhaps than the kind words of a conservative intellectual for the German Romantics of the 19th century were the similarities between Chateaubriant's characterization of the German youth and that of Daniel Guérin in Vu magazine in the early 1930s.[70] Both saw in the German youth a kind of purity that had literally abandoned its French counterpart, a glowing dynamism that irradiated and carried with it a message of hope, regeneration and national salvation. Much like the anarchist Guérin , the catholic Chateaubriant saw in the *Wandervogel* movement the vanguard of the youth revolution that was to take the world by storm.

The praise of new social forms required a new literary form and *La Gerbe des Forces* was structured as a travelogue so that it could appeal to the young and the most modern-minded audiences. In that sense it reproduced, in the much more polished style of a seasoned novelist, some of the narrative tropes which had been central in the development of the youth hostel literary and ideological canon. Marc Augier, who during the war was to become one of Chateaubriant's closest collaborators, working as an editor for his pro-Nazi newspaper *La Gerbe*, had relied on similar narrative strategies in his October 1937 European travelogue published in *Le Cri des Auberges*.[71] It is difficult to tell whether Augier had by then read *La Gerbe* des forces, but a close reading of both texts suggests both authors, despite their belonging to different ideological camps, had by the end of the year 1937 reached a similar intellectual stance on fundamental political

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[69] Chateaubriant. Op. Cit., p. 171.

[70] See Chapter 1.

[71] Augier, Marc. "Cinq Mille Kilometres a Motocyclette Autour de L'Europe des Auberges." *Le Cri des Auberges*. October 1937. No 30, pp. 13-18

issues such as youth, international cooperation, and on the position to adopt towards Nazi Germany. For Chateaubriant and, as we will see in the next chapter, for Augier, the interwar period had brought the question of youth to the forefront of political life. In his words, "youth had ceased to be youth for its own sake" instead "youth had become, under the sun, like a gigantic mass that listens in its core to the roaring of the future, because it is aware of the fact that the solution of an entire era is inscribed in the deeds it will accomplish."[72]

Chateaubriant's newfound pro-German zeal was to develop in a more concrete direction with the creation of the "French German committee" established in collaboration with the Otto Abetz, the German ambassador in Paris, as a means to foster the relationship between the two countries and, most importantly to gather around a single banner all the Nazi sympathizers in France. Chateaubriant, who was designated as the head of the new organization benefitted from his position as a virtual German cultural ambassador and was allowed to meet Hitler in Berchtesgaden in 1938. Upon his return, he likened the Nazi leader to the Christ, as a messianic figure of biblical proportions. The committee functioned as a pre-collaborationist Nazi propaganda structure which played a central role in the establishment of an indigenous Nazi force after the French defeat of 1940.

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[72] Chateaubriant. Op. Cit., p. 174.

Figure 24 Alphonse de Chateaubriant and Marcel Déat in Paris

The defeat of the French army in the spring of 1940 was followed by the partition
of the country in two zones. The southern zone was under the administration of the
reactionary and collaborationist regime headed by field Marshall Pétain who soon settled
in the spa resort town of Vichy, in central France.[73] The northern zone, for its part was
under the direct control of the German military authorities, which coordinated the
activities of the undermanned German police with that of the French administration and
police forces. The German embassy in Paris, under the direction of ambassador Otto
Abetz, was in charge of the promotion of the German war effort in France as well as the
development of political, cultural, and economic ties with French collaborationist

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[73] On the Vichy regime see Robert O. Paxton. *Vichy France: Old Guard, New Order*. New York, 1973;
Julian Jackson. *France: The Dark Years*. London, 2001; On everyday life in France during WWII see
Richard Vinen. *The Unfree French: Life Under the Occupation*. London, 2006; Francois-Georges Dreyfus.
Histoire de Vichy. Paris, 1990; Jean-Pierre Azéma & Francois Bedarida (ed.). *Le Régime de Vichy et les
Francais*. Paris, 1992; Denis Peschanski. *Vichy, 1940-1944: Controle et Exclusion*. Paris, 1999; On the
French administration under Vichy see Marc-Olivier Baruch. *Servir l'Etat Francais: l'Adminsitration en
France de 1940 a 1944*. Paris, 1997; Francois Bloch-Lainé & Claude Gruson. *Hauts Fonctionnaires Sous
l'Occupation*. Paris, 1996; Vincent Duclert (ed.). *Serviteurs de l'Etat Francais: Une Histoire Politique de
l'Administration*, 1875-1945. Paris, 2000.
[73] Pascal Ory. *Les Collaborateurs*. Op. Cit. p. 63.

forces.[74] During year 1940 and the beginning of 1941 the landscape of the collaboration

was taking shape in the occupied zone. From the rubbles of the Third Republic,[75] in the

midst of a number of aspiring leaders and pro-Nazi political groups, two parties emerged

that gathered most of those willing to take part in the new political game. The first one,

former communist Jacques Doriot's PPF (Parti Populaire Francais – French People's

Party) was, like its prewar incarnation, mostly popular among the working class.[76] The

second one, former socialist Marcel Déat's RNP (Rassablement National Populaire –

National People's Congress) was founded in February 1941 and recruited mostly among

intellectuals from the large urban centers. Dependent on the goodwill and financing of the

occupation authorities, and emulating the personalities of their leaders, both parties

attempted to carve an ideological niche for themselves. Like Doriot, the PPF largely

relied on its activism and aggression, while the RNP played a more significant role in the

collaborationist press, the collaboration group, in the ideological debates. While both

parties embraced the idea of Hitler's Europe their participation in the Nazi war effort

materialized in different ways: the PPF provided most of the volunteers for the anti-

Bolshevik legion[77] while the RNP, with prominent intellectuals like Déat, Georges

Albertini, or Francis Delaisi, sought to provide an ideological framework for the role

France was to play in the "new Europe."

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[74] The role of Otto Abetz, both a diplomat and a SS officer, in the French collaboration has been
powerfully exposed by Robert O. Paxton, through his pioneering reading of German archival documents.
See Robert Paxton. *La France de Vichy*. Paris, 1997, pp. 115-122; On the relationship between Abetz and
French intellectuals during WW2 also see Alice Kaplan. *The Collaborator: The Trial and Execution of
Robert Brasillach*. Chicago, 2001; on Abetz's postwar autobiography see Eckart Conze. "Otto Abetz." In
Jugendbewegt Gepragt. Op. Cit., pp. 55-68

[75] On this particular point see Bertram Gordon. *Collaborationism in France*, *Op. Cit.*; Pascal Ory. *Les
Collaborateurs Op. Cit.*; Gerhard Hirschfeld & Patrick Marsh. *Collaboration in France: Politics and
Culture*. Oxford, 1989

[76] According to Pascal Ory, the PPF had about 10000 members in June 1941 including 6000 in the
southern zone and 4000 in the north (2700 in Paris alone). Pascal Ory. *Les Collaborateurs*. Op. Cit., p. 103

[77] Pierre Giolitto. *Volontaires Francais sous l'Uniforme Allemand*. Paris, 2007

A few months after the Nazis took control of northern France, the interwar French German committee was transformed into the "Collaboration Group" in the fall of 1940.[78] The group's official purpose was to promote the works of Nazi Germany and help the French population[79] to gain a better understanding of the "German ambition to extend to the whole of Europe the benefit of the methods which were developed domestically with great success."[80] The group was split in a number of thematic sub-sections: literary, scientific, artistic, juridical, economic, and social. All aspects of the new regime were to be promoted in order to encourage laymen and powerful individuals alike to take part in the creation of a Nazi oriented France. According to Pascal Ory, the group's manifestations, cultural as well as economic, in Paris and in the province,[81] help understand the kind of role it is to play in the deployment of German propaganda in occupied France: "a circle of influential individuals, more *cultural* in Paris and more *economic* in the departments, often forced to compromise through as set a responsibilities, and sided by small-bourgeois everyday men dependent on the occupying forces because of their family or economic situation."[82] Benefitting from the protection and support of the German embassy in Paris, the Collaboration Group was one of the most active institutions in occupied France. According historian Julien Prévotaux, citing internal communications from Otto Abetz, the group had around 38000 members in 1942

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[78] Pascal Ory. *Les Collaborateurs*. Op. Cit. p. 63.

[79] The collaboration group, which was authorized in the Southern zone by the Vichy government in December 1941, had 63 subsections in the Northern and Southern zones by September 1943. See Pascal Ory. Op. Cit. p. 64. On the Collaboration Group and the wartime Europeanist discourse see Julien Prévotaux. *Un Européisme Nazi: Le Groupe Collaboration et l'Idéologie Européenne dans la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*. Paris, 2010.

[80] *Collaboration*. October 1942. Quoted in Pascal Ory. Op. Cit. p. 63.

[81] The creation of local committees in the southern zone was authorized by prime minister Admiral Darlan on September 29, 1941. See Pascal Ory. *Op. Cit.*, p. 63

[82] Pascal Ory. *Op. Cit*. p. 64.

(26000 in the northern zone, 12000 in the south) and over 42000 members in 1944 (33000 the north in 9500 in the south).[83] As such, the Collaboration Group was capable of putting together large events and in the spring of 1941 it organized an exhibition meant to showcase the benefits of a policy of extended collaboration with Nazi Germany.

The *France Européenne* Exhibition

Figure 25 Europe Nouvelle Exhibtion, August 1941

The collaboration group heyday came less than a year after its creation in the form of an exhibition entitled *La France Européenne* (European France). The exhibition, which took place in the *Grand Palais* hall in Paris and opened its doors on May 31 1941 was jointly organized with the German embassy in Paris and meant to showcase the role

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[83] Julien Prévotaux. *Le Groupe Collaboration*. Op. Cit., pp. 34-35

played by the "new France" in the nascent Nazi continental order. This event, which took place three weeks before the German invasion of the USSR, has often been dismissed as meaningless propaganda put together by German ambassador Otto Abetz. Yet, it represented the first attempt, by the French collaborators, at drawing a cohesive view of the place occupied by France in the event of a final German military victory and the creation of a Nazi continental empire. The exhibition filled up the large space of the Grand Palais and was imagined as a smaller, indoor version of the French regional showcase at the 1937 World Exhibit. The Normand farm, one of the highlights of the European France show is probably the best example of the recycling of the widespread folkloric impetus of the late 1930s.[84] Here, the ethnographic dimension of 1937 was downplayed in favor of an attempt to emphasize the economic and cultural significance of France in the larger European context. The country's relevance had been seriously shaken by its military obliteration at the hands of the Wehrmacht and its adhesion to a larger economic and political project opened the door for its progressive reassertion on the international stage. The show was inaugurated by Fernand de Brinon[85], the representative of the Vichy Government to the German high command in Paris (often referred to as Vichy's ambassador in Paris), General Otto Von Stulpnagel the head of the *Militarbefehlshaber* (German High Command), Pierre Laval, and Jacques de Lesdain, the director of the exhibition. Until its closing in October of the same year, 635 000 visitors attended *La France Européenne*, a large number for the period.

An aristocrat and former diplomat who, among other positions, served in China at the turn of the century, Jacques de Lesdain belonged to a small group of Germanophile

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[84] See Herman Lebovics. *True France*. Op. Cit. and Shanny Peer. *France on Display*. Op. Cit.

[85] For De Brinon's role during WWII see Robert O. Paxton. *Vichy France: Old Guard, New Order*. New York, 1973.

and anti-Semitic public figures whose ideological positions were very similar to that of Chateaubriant.[86] After the German invasion he was offered the editorial direction of the political section of *L'Illustration*, France's oldest and most popular conservative illustrated magazine. In the late 1930s, the magazine had promoted a nationalist line that drew heavily on references to the soil and the peasant foundations of modern France. The special issue on the 1937 world exhibition relied on the paradoxical but productive dialectical relationship between modern architecture and technology and the timeless traditions of local artisans, folkloric traditions, and regional specificities.[87] The exhibition was completed by a bi-monthly publication entitled *La France Européenne* that lasted until June 15 1943 and served as the principal outlet for ideas on the economic collaboration.[88] This rather unique publication, which has been largely ignored by the historians of the period, represents an interesting point of entry into the political and economic conceptions of the Europeanist collaboration circles. For Jacques de Lesdain, the exhibition amounted to a "leap of faith (un acte de foi) into the destiny of France, a leap of faith into the destiny of Europe. These two destinies cannot be fulfilled separately."[89] This "leap of faith" was understood as the link between conservative traditions "the glory of work and the social community" and the "European spirit," effectively bridging a gap between the ultra-conservatism of Vichy and the national socialism of the Parisian collaborators. Here, Europe was conceived of as a means to attain peace and security for European "races and nations" in an era of economic cooperation and benevolence between peoples.

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[86] Pascal Ory. *Op. Cit.* p. 83-86.

[87] *L'Illustration*. No 4928, 14 August 1937.

[88] Full collections of *La France Européenne* are preserved at the National Library in Paris and the BDIC in Nanterre but can only be consulted as microfilms (4 G 2189).

[89] Jacques de Lesdain. *La France Européenne*. No1, 31 May 1941, p. 9.

In many ways the exhibition gave a material form, albeit that of large-scale

models and reproductions such as that of the Truyeres hydroelectric dam[90], to the vision

of Europe expressed by Drieu la Rochelle in *Mesure de la France* or *Geneve ou Moscou*.

To the division of continental Europe by a large number of borders was to succeed a

continental union devoid of economic protectionism. This vision, expressed at the end of

the *France Européenne* first issue, interestingly prefigured the concerns that brought to

the creation of the European community in the aftermath of the war. With the help of

three illustrated maps used at the exhibition, the magazine opposed a Europe of

"yesterday" to that of "tomorrow."[91] For the author of the text, the future continental

organization, relying on an elaborate highway system and the collaboration of all peoples

was meant to ensure an optimal distribution of raw and manufactured goods, as well as

the "free and voluntary repartition of the workforce, providing workers and their families

the security and prosperity to which they aspire."[92]As Philippe Burrin argues, the

exhibition buried the idea of France as a hegemonic power on the continental scene,

effectively relinquishing the leadership to Germany. "The vanquished had to understand

its role as a subordinate in a continent on which Germany had acquired a leadership

right."[93] This redrawing of the political map of the continent meant that in the medium to

long term the French economy would play an entirely different role in the European

economy. The French industrial apparatus was to be subordinated to large German

groups such as IG farben through the signature of agreements that only left subsidiary

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[90] *Ibid*. p. 13.
[91] *Ibid*. pp. 24-25.
[92] *Ibid*. p. 25.
[93] Philippe Burrin. *La France Allemande: 1940-1944*. Paris, 1995, p. 298.

markets such as Spain or Portugal available to its products.[94] In this new macro-economic order, in which every European country was to concentrate on its productive strengths, France was ascribed the role of an agricultural center, a "wheat cellar" for the rest of the continent.

The economic dimension of the French collaboration, and more generally that of Hitler's Europe, has been the focus of a number of historical studies arguing for the significance of the economic question in the emergence of the Nazi continental project. These studies suggest that beyond the mobilization of all European resources by Albert Speer for Nazi war effort, many entrepreneurs in occupied countries willingly participated in the German requisition program, either because of their economic interest or of their ideological connivance with Hitler's project. In France, Annie Lacroix-Riz produced an extremely well researched study of the role of French bankers and industrialists played during the Second World War, showing their deep and willing involvement in the economic and political collaboration with the occupying forces.[95] In a more recent book, she expanded the time frame of her analysis in order to show that the wartime attitude of the French capital, its self-effacement in favor of a more powerful German rival[96], represented a long term strategy devised at the turn of the century and leading, through the war, to the establishment of the European Community in the late

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[94] French economic historian Annie Lacroix-Riz has shown the extent to which the Franco-German trade agreements signed after 1940 all but closed the central and northern European markets to the French industry. See Annie Lacroix-Riz. *Aux Origines du Carcan Européen (1900-1960): La France Sous Influence Allemande et Américaine*. Paris, 2014, pp. 87-112.

[95] Annie Lacroix-Riz. *Industriels et Banquiers Français Sous L'Occupation*. Paris, 2013.

[96] In his book on the German economy during the Third Reich, Adam Tooze has offered a diametrically opposed view, arguing that German economy during the interwar period and WWII was in many respects lagging behind its competitors such as the United Kingdom and France. See Adam Tooze. *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy*. New York, 2007, p. xxiii.

1950s.[97] Lacroix-Riz argument, largely inspired by the Marxist interpretation of Fascism as a disguised attempt by the ruling bourgeoisie to hold its grip on the proletariat and prevent a socialist revolution from happening[98], suggests that the repeated attempts by French industrialists to take part in a transnational economic alliance came as a consequence of the perceived inability of France to exist on its own in an increasingly globalized world order.

As British historian Adam Tooze wrote in *Wages of Destruction*, his magnum opus on the economic history of the Third Reich: "the defining feature of twentieth-century economic history is not the peculiar dominance of Germany or any other European country, but the eclipse of the "old continent" by a sequence of new economic powers, above all the United States."[99] Tooze argues that our historical understanding of the European 20th century is often predicated on the erroneous perception of Germany as a world beating economic behemoth. He suggests instead, that the economic policies of the Third Reich, and its precipitated war in the East represented an attempt to make up for its critical industrial deficiencies by seizing the Soviet Union's abundant natural resources. For Germany, devoid of an empire like the United Kingdom or France, the

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[97] Annie Lacroix-Riz. *Aux Origines du Carcan Européen (1900-1960): La France Sous Influence Allemande et Américaine*. Paris, 2014.

[98] In the introduction to her chapter on the economic collaboration during the Second World War, Lacroix-Riz writes: "The occupation confirmed the pre-war prognosis of the *Banque de France* governor on the direct control by Germany over advanced European countries. It made it possible to realize the programme of deflation of the workers' income, the supreme goal of the *Banque de France*: the workers' actual salaries decreased by 50% between 1940 and 1944." Annie Lacroix-Riz. *Aux Origines du Carcan Européen. Op. Cit.* p. 87. On the Marxist interpretation within the field of studies on Fascism see Geoff Eley. "Driving for Rule Extracting Content: Bases of Political Order Under Fascism." In Nazism as Fascism. *Op. Cit.* pp. 13-58; Mark Neocleous. "Revolution against the Revolution I: Capitalism, State Power, and the Conservative Revolution." In *Fascism*. Minneapolis, 1997, pp. 38-58; Ian Kershaw. *The Nazi Dictatorship: Perspectives and Problems of Interpretation*. London, 2000. For Marxist interpretations of Fascism see Nicos Poulantzas. *Fascism and Dictatorship*. London, 1979; Tim Mason. *Nazism, Fascism, and the Working Class*. New York, 1995; Detlev Peukert. *Inside Nazi Germany. Op. Cit.*

[99] Adam Tooze. *Op. Cit.* p. xxiii.

question of resources was even more crucial and exacerbated the reaction to the economic decline. After the military defeat of 1940, many French industrialists keenly advocated an economic partnership with Nazi Germany, which they perceived as the only way to halt the inexorable decline of the European continent. In 1935 already, Louis Renault, France's largest carmaker, had met with Hitler in Berlin to try to foster economic cooperation between the two countries, arguing that an economic war between France and Germany would only serve the interests of the United States and the United Kingdom.[100] Despite their different points of departure of object of study, both Lacroix-Riz and Tooze argue that the collaborationist impulse of the French industrialists and Hitler's aggression have to be understood in relation to the overwhelming rise to prominence of the United States. For Tooze, "historians have underestimated Hitler's acute awareness of the threat posed to Germany, along with the rest of the European powers, by the emergence of the United States as the dominant global super-power." In a Copernican epistemological shift, Tooze proposes to make "America the pivot of our understanding of the Third Reich"[101] and see the Nazi's political and military effort as a pre-emptive strike against the new world hegemonic power.[102] What made National Socialism stand out from other radical ideologies of the period was that instead of accepting the American dominance in a globalized capitalist world and Germany's

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[100] Annie Lacroix-Riz. *Op. Cit.* p. 90.

[101] Adam Tooze. *Op. Cit.* p. xxiv.

[102] In *The Wages of Destruction*, Tooze links Hitler's fascination with the American economic to the development of the Nazi's racial ideology: "In Hitler's mind, the threat posed to the Third Reich by the United States was not just that of conventional superpower rivalry. The threat was existential and bound up with Hitler's fear of the world Jewish conspiracy, manifested in the shape of *wall street Jewry* and the *Jewish Media* of the United States. It was this fantastical interpretation of the real balance of power that gave Hitler's decision making its volatile, risk-taking quality. Germany could simply not settle down to become an affluent satellite of the United States, as had seemed to be the destiny of the Weimar Republic in the 1920s, because this would result in enslavement to the world Jewish conspiracy, and ultimately race death. Adam Tooze. *Op. Cit.* p. xxvi.

peripheral place in it, "Hitler sought to sought to mobilize the frustrations of his population to mount an epic challenge to this order (…); by one last great land grab in the East it would create the self-sufficient basis for both domestic affluence and the platform necessary to prevail in the coming superpower competition with the United States."[103]

For the French collaborationists who participated in the "European France" exhibition like Francois Lehideux, Louis Renault's son in law who during the war served as the head of the automotive organization committee (COA) as well as the Vichy's minister of industrial production (February 1941-April 1942), walking in Nazi Germany's shadow signified the assurance that their interests (and that of France) would be preserved in the new world order in the making.[104] The exhibition put a particular emphasis on the role France had to play in the new continental order and the planned disappearance of trade border and taxes in the long term signified that European countries would behave as economic partners rather than adversaries. Although in the real world this "equality between" nations Drieu la Rochelle had wished for in *Geneve ou Moscou* never materialized, Nazi Germany always relying on its military dominance to squeeze resources out of its allies, the sincere belief of many in the existence of a future Nazi-led European "community of nations" is telling of a certain evolution of the mentalities. Furthermore, the reliance on Germany from a significant part of the conservative industrial elite fits within the pre-war attempts to seek a solution to domestic political issues beyond the national borders. The "European France", which was to "provide

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[103] *Ibid*. p. xxiv.

[104] On Lehideux's activites in the interwar period see Annie Lacroix-Riz. *Le Choix de la Défaite: Les Elites Francaises dans les Années 30*. Paris, 2010, pp. 23-42; During the Second World War see Robert O. Paxton. *Vichy France: Old Guard, New Order*. New York, 1972, pp. 216-218; Annie Lacroix-Riz. *Industriels et Banquiers. Op. Cit.*

French workers with a better future"[105] by making trade agreements obsolete, seemed to represent the supreme achievement for a class of high brow conservative capitalists and intellectuals who perceived expansionist American consumerism and Communist internationalism as two sides of the same coin. The idea of French economic subordination to Germany was clearly expressed by Jacques de Lesdain in an article entitled "the primary French duty" (Le premier devoir Francais).[106] For him, France had to focus on its strength, agricultural production, in order to play a useful role in the new European order. De Lesdain saw in the agricultural specialization of the country, and its willingness to become a piece in the Nazi continental puzzle, a means to escape "the harmful influence of the international trusts and Jewish hoarders."[107]

Francis Delaisi: Hitler's Europe as Economic Collaboration

The perspective of an economically integrated continent, under German leadership, represented the main area where the official policy of collaboration with Nazi Germany could garner an air of respectability. Under the impulsion of Walther Funk, the Reich Minister of Economic Affairs,[108] German intellectuals published a series of works on the integration of the European economy into a large continental ensemble under German leadership.[109] This trend found its most complete formulation in the works of

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[105] Exhibition panel reproduced in *La France Européenne*, No 3, August 1941, p. 6.

[106] Jacques de Lesdain. "Le Premier Devoir Francais." In *La France Européenne*, No 4, September 1941, pp. 7-8.

[107] *Ibid*. p. 7.

[108] On the role played by Walter Funk in the direction of the German economic propaganda see Adam Tooze. *Wages of Destruction*. Op. Cit.; Gotz Aly. *Hitler's Beneficiaries*. New York, 2006, pp. 66-67; Bernard Bruneteau. *L'Europe Nouvelle de Hitler*. Monaco, 2003, p. 68

[109] On this topic see Bernard Bruneteau. *Op. Cit.* pp. 68-71

Carl Schmitt and the *Großraum* theory elaborated in the late 1930s and during the Second World War[110]which predicted that large political entities were bound to replace antiquated nation-states in an increasingly interconnected world. The German embassy in France sought to popularize these theses within French intellectual and entrepreneurial circles by publishing, in the years 1941-1942, a number of Nazi-approved academic works on the prospect of economic collaboration in Hitler's Europe.[111] In fact, as the *France Européenne* exhibition seemed to suggest, the economic dimension of the Franco-German collaboration played a fundamental role in the development of an original French Europeanist fascism.

Before the Nazi takeover in Germany, in the mid-1920s and early 1930s, a number of French intellectuals had worked to develop a vision of politics and society based on the idea of European unification. This group, gathered around a number of periodicals such as, *La Revue des Vivants, Notre Temps, Europe Nouvelle*, without any clear ideological affiliation, included some of the men, like Marcel Déat, Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, Jacques Benoist-Méchin, Georges Albertini, and Fernand de Brinon,[112] who were to become the most vocal proponents of the idea of fascist Europe after 1940.[113] Out of these men who shared a visceral rejection of war Francis Delaisi, a history professor turned public intellectual and economist, developed the most compelling theoretical

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[110] Schmitt's *Großraum* was developed in a series of articles and formed the core of Schmitt's 1939 book *Volkerrechtliche Großraumordnung* as well as his post-war output. The chapter 5 will tackle these issues in detail.

[111] Bernard Bruneteau cites a number of books published at the height of the Franco-German collaboration period: Walter Pahl. *La Lutte Mondiale pour les Matieres Premieres*. Paris, 1942; Ferdinand Fried. *Le Tournant de l'Economie Mondiale*. Paris, 1942; Alfred Oesterheld. *Europe, Espace Economique*. Paris, 1942. This list even included a small introduction to Carl Schmitt's *Großraum* theory by a German academic: Ramon Schultz. *Le Grand Espace Economique Européen*. Paris, 1942

[112] On Fernand de Brinon see Joseph Gilbert. *Fernand de Brinon: l'Aristocrate de la Collaboration*. Paris, 2002

[113] Bernard Bruneteau. *Op. Cit.* p. 227

articulation of the relationship between modernity, international trade, and European integration. Originating from an anarcho-syndicalist trend within the French left, and a specialist in macro-economic issues, Delaisi published *Les Contradictions du Monde Moderne* (The Contradictions of the Modern World) in 1925.[114] The book, which proved influential in left wing reformist circles, sought to solve the problem of the relationship between an economically liberal, international trade system and the diverging interests of individual nation states. Delaisi believed that none of the existing political systems, democracy, communism or fascism could bring an enduring solution to this crippling contradiction. For him, a successful international trade system would necessarily bypass the control of national institutions in favor of more flexible international unions of workers, bankers, and industrialists.[115] This view was not only grounded in the rejection of the nation-state as an antiquated, war-fostering, political form but also in the belief that an international consciousness had emerged from the pointless destructions of the Great War. Delaisi argued that in an increasingly interconnected world, corporatist international solidarities were quickly replacing national allegiances and, following the model of the United States advocated a progressive reduction of trade taxes towards the creation of a European free trade area. As intellectual historians Vittorio Dini and Matthew D'Auria explain: "The end of custom barriers and a common currency, by allowing raw materials, goods and people to circulate freely would make it possible for each people of Europe to manufacture those goods it could produce at a lower cost, exchanging them with others it would produce at a higher cost. By such a token, the resources of each country would be used in the most profitable way, creating advantages to both consumers and

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[114] Francis Delaisi. *Les Contradictions du Monde Moderne*. Paris, 1925
[115] *Ibid*. p. 516

producers."[116] For Delaisi, the gap between the global development of commerce and the macro-political structures of the European continent had become unsustainable in the face of the rapid evolution of transportation technologies.

In 1929, Delaisi published *Les Deux Europes* (The Two Europes) in which he refined the analysis laid out in *Les Contradictions du Monde Moderne* by advocating for an elaborate trade system between industrial and agrarian countries on the continental scale.[117] Delaisi argued that the solution to the crisis of overproduction in highly industrialized northwestern Europe was contingent upon the modernization of the underdeveloped regions in Eastern and Southern Europe. In this framework, the construction of transportation infrastructures and the disappearance of trade taxes and protectionist policies would benefit the industrial West and agrarian East and South and create foundation for an advanced European integration. The French economist, who by that time was touring Europe in an effort to make his ideas better known to the public,[118] based his analysis on the example of the United States where the highly industrialized Northeast relied heavily on the agrarian South to provide food for its workers. In 1931, with the support of French Foreign Affairs minister Aristide Briand,[119] Delaisi presented a *Five Year Plan* at the SDN that sought to put into action the policies underlined in *Les Deux Europes*.[120]

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[116] Vittorio Dini & Matthew D'Auria (eds.). *The Space of Crisis: Images and Ideas of Europe in the Age of Crisis, 1914-1945*. Brussels, 2013, p. 18

[117] Francis Delaisi. *Les Deux Europes: l'Europe Industrielle et l'Europe Agricole.* Paris, 1929

[118] Michele Affinito & Guia Migani (eds.). *Les Deux Europe*. Brussels, 2009

[119] On Aristide Briand see Gerard Unger. *Aristide Briand*. Paris, 2005; Bernard Oudin. *Aristide Briand*. Paris, 2004; On Aristide Briand's role in the SDN see Jacques Bariéty (ed.). *Aristide Briand, La SDN et l'Europe: 1919-1932*. Paris, 2007

[120] Michele Affinito & Guia Migani (eds.). *Les Deux Europe*. Brussels, 2009, pp. 124-125; Genevieve Duchenne. *Esquisse d'Une Europe Nouvelle*. Brussels, 2008, pp. 283-292

During the Popular Front, Delaisi was particularly active, both as an economist

and a founding member of the Anti-Fascist Intellectuals' Committee (CVIA) and Human

Rights League.[121] In 1936 he published, in collaboration with the newspaper *Le

Crapouillot*, a pamphlet entitled *Les Financiers et la Démocratie* in which he denounced

the country's richest families' stronghold on the French national economy and the

democratic system.[122] Delaisi's ire was directed at the Wendel family, especially active in

the steel industry as a symbol of the oligarchic tendencies within the French economic

and political system. In the book, he accused Francois de Wendel,[123] a senator, regent of

the *Banque de France*, president of Steel Industry Committee (Comité des Forges) of

having pushed for a policy of deflation to serve his own interests.[124] In the late 1930s,

Delaisi's pacifism[125] and his perception of France as an oligarchy controlled by a mere

"200 families" brought him closer to Marcel Déat's neo-socialist group. By 1935 he was

a regular contributor to *L'Oeuvre*, Déat's newspaper, in which he expressed his

fascination with Hjlamar Schacht's[126] monetary reform as a means to finance the Third

Reich's economy without resorting to international capital.[127] "

Following Déat and the advocates of *integral pacifism*, disillusioned with

parliamentary democracy, Delaisi supported the Munich agreements and, after the defeat

of 1940 saw in the German continental hegemony the possibility to achieve his lifelong

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[121] On the CVIA see Nicole Racine-Furlaud. "Le Comité de Vigiliance des Intellectuels Anti-Fascistes (1934-1939): Anti-Fascisme et Pacifisme." *Le Mouvement Social*. No 101 (Oct.-Dec 1977), pp. 87-113
[122] Francis Delaisi. *Les Financiers et la Démocratie*. Paris, 1936
[123] On the Wendel family see Yves Guéna. *Les Wendel*. Paris, 2004; Pierre Fritsch. *Les Wendel: Rois de l'Acier Francais*. Paris, 1976; Jacques Marseille. *Les Wendel*. Paris, 2004
[124] *Ibid*. p. 56
[125] On the question of pacifism among French socialists in the interwar period see Michel Bilis. *Socialistes et Pacifistes, ou l'Impossible Dilemme des Socialistes Francais, 1933-1939*. Paris: Syros, 1979
[126] On Hjalmar Schacht and his economic reforms see John Brown. *Hitler's Banker: Hjalmar Schacht*. Boston, 1999
[127] Bernard Bruneteau. *Op. Cit.*, p. 264

dream of an economic European federation. Like much of the former left-wing

intellectuals who chose to collaborate with Germany, Delaisi gravitated in the orbit of

Déat's RNP after the foundation of the party in February 1941.[128] A renowned economist

and zealous supporter of the European idea in the interwar period, Delaisi served

throughout the Second World War as the RNP's quasi-official economic specialist. He

devoted numerous articles, in newspapers such as *L'Oeuvre* and *Jeune Force de France*

to the question of the French economy within the framework of Hitler's Europe. Most of

his output during the period consisted in an attempt to adapt his pre-war economic

theories to the realities of the Nazi-dominated continent.

In the spring of 1942, as the Axis forces were starting to lose their momentum

against the red army, Delaisi published *La Révolution Européene*.[129] The book exposed

his reworked economic thought in the context of Hitler's Europe, adding to his prewar

analysis the opposition between the United Kingdom and the United States as serving the

interests of the capital and the Axis as the agents of the united peoples of Europe: "For

the Anglo-Saxons [the war] is about maintaining the universal gold-standard; align the

prices of raw products to the of the peoples with the lowest standards of living and sell

manufactured products on the highest prices as decided by the trusts. A system that

benefits an oligarchy of traders and financiers that only seeks the individual profit of its

members."[130] In this framework, the financiers Delaisi denounced during the Popular

Front years in the pages of *Crapouillot* and *L'Oeuvre* had been re-cast as part of a larger

Anglo-American capitalist plan for world domination. Nazi-dominated Europe in the

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[128] On the RNP within the political landscape of the collaboration see Pascal Ory. *Les Collaborateurs*. Op. Cit. p. 112-115
[129] Francis Delaisi. *La Révolution Européene*. Bruxelles, 1942
[130] *Ibid*. p. 7

making on the other hand was understood as a means to break down the nation as the

essential means of capitalistic domination: "For the men of the Axis, the universe is too

broad and diverse, the Nation is too small: the world must be divided into autonomous

"living spaces" grouping peoples along racial, civilizations lines and having

complementary productions; direct their endeavors according to plans established by the

state in order to provide better living conditions to the masses."[131] Framed by a

comparison, in technical terms, between the American and Nazi economies, the book

argued that the new path Germany and Europe had embarked on would ultimately free

the continent from the two burdens that plagued the modern world: international capital,

and the nation state. The conclusion drew an uncanny parallel between "the European

Revolution" and the French Revolution: the liberal economy's "ancient regime, incapable

of solving the world crisis it had created" was in the process of being replaced by a "new

regime" in which national socialism had suppressed the privileges of the bankers

responsible for the crisis.[132] For Delaisi, the Second World War amounted to a

reenactment of the revolutionary war of 1792; the Ardennes breakthrough of 1940 and

the French defeat was like the "Valmy of the European Revolution" that unleashed a new

economy to conquer the old continent.

Despite his previous socialist sympathies and political commitment, Delaisi

perceived his endorsement of the idea of Hitler's Europe as a logical development. For

him the most important goal was to transcend the national paradigm and end the

dominance of international capital on the world economy. The revolutionary wars of the

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[131] *Ibid*. p. 8

[132] Francis Delaisi. *La Révolution Européene*. Op. Cit., p. 261

late 18th century had signified the beginning of the era of nations,[133] the Nazi conquest represented the evolution of the national spirit into a new social-political form adapted to the rapid technological change of the late modern period. Like most of the intellectuals that gravitated in the orbit of Déat and the RNP, Delaisi believed that the European unification, regardless of the means, would bring about peace and re-shape the global economic system. In doing so he made his own the Nazis' spatial visions and Carl Schmitt's teleological understanding of the relationship between space, power, and technology. The *Großraum* theory he borrowed from the German legal theorist was predicated on the creation of a number of continental blocs, one of which was to be a Nazi-dominated Europe pitted against a Communist Eastern space and a Capitalist Anglo-American West. This idealized conception of world politics obscured the extremely violent and exclusionary nature of Hitler's Europe and fascism, an ideology against which Delaisi had fought throughout the 1930s. In order to patch their dream of peace and Europe onto the new Nazi continental order, the former left wing economist had chose to give up the progressive dimension of his former political commitment and retain an economic program devoid of its substance. More importantly, as Delaisi's intellectual itinerary shows, what remained was a blind opposition to the idea of international capitalism and the belief that the European unification, whatever it may cost, was the solution to the crisis of the modern world.

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[133] See Eric Hobsbawm. *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848*. New York, 1996.

Conclusion

The adherence to the European project the *France Européene* exhibition intended to promote was predicated on the destruction of national borders and the reconstruction of a larger political entity, a continental empire imagined as an extension of the Nazi domestic project. Francis Delaisi, who by that time was a regular participant to the conferences of the Collaboration Group, was asked to put together two graphic maps presented at the exhibition and published in the October issue of *La France Européenne*. These two maps, that illustrated the future of European economic collaboration as devised in Delaisi's books from *Les Deux Europes* to *La Révolution Européenne*, showed the potential opening of the European space through the development of the Nazi autobahn project.[134] At the top of the page the first one, entitled "Europe of Yesterday," substituted fortified walls for national borders as a means to convey the harmful effects of the protectionist policies of the 1930s. The bottom half of the page figured the "Europe of Tomorrow," in which the fortifications had given way to a continent-wide network of highways linking all major urban centers, from Lisbon to Leningrad.

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[134] "L'Europe d'Hier et de Demain." *La France Européenne.* No 5, October 1941, p. 7

This effort in historical anticipation was prompted by the German invasion of the USSR that had begun a couple of months earlier. At this point, the rapid advance of the Wehrmacht in Soviet territory seemed to leave little doubt as to which side would emerge victorious in this epochal fight.

When the "European France" exhibition closed its door, in the fall of 1941, it had in many ways fulfilled its purpose. The French collaborationist forces had reorganized, moving away from Vichy's ambiguous reactionary nationalism in favor of a new brand of Europeanist Fascism. Despite their rivalries, the two most prominent French Fascist leaders, Jacques Doriot and Marcel Déat, had founded the *Légion des Volontaires Francais* (LVF), a French unit of the Wehrmacht that took part in military operations in the USSR in the summer of 1941.[135] While the magazine *La France Européenne* continued its publication for another two years, its content progressively moved away

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[135] On the LVF see Pierre Giolitto. *Volontaires Francais sous l'Uniforme Allemand.* Paris, 2007.

from economics and European integration in favor of fanatical Anti-Semitism. The relative success of the exhibition helped establish the Collaboration Group presided by Alphonse de Chateaubriant, and in which Drieu la Rochelle, Fernand de Brinon, and Abel Bonnard (Vichy government's education minister) served as honorary members, as the primary interlocutor for the German occupation forces. It also led to the creation of a Youth section, the *Jeunes de L'Europe Nouvelle* (JEN) in May 1941, under the direction of Jacques Schweitzer and Marc Augier that was largely made up of former Ajistes.[136] Closely tied the Déat's RNP, the JEN functioned as the armed wing of the French European Fascist forces. The following chapter will focus on the activities of this French Europeanist Fascist group.

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[136] See Sarah H. Shurts. *Redefining the "Engagé": Intellectual Identity and the French Extreme Right, 1898-1968*. Chapel Hill, 2007 (Unpublished Ph.D dissertation), p. 393.

Chapter Four

Political Conversion and European Fascism: Marc Augier and the JEN

"Our generation is marked by a clear tendency towards a return to
nomadism. It is our generation, and not myself that advocates a return
to the past. (…) The point is for the individual to draw from the sources
of heroic and aesthetic lives, to receive the teaching of natural combat
and all it implies: ruthless selection of species, the notion of law as
established by the deed of the strongest, and finally the search for the
notions of true beauty and greatness.

Marc Augier[1]

Introduction

The dramatic defeat of the French army and the collapse of the Third Republic in

the spring of 1940 consecrated the victory of those who had fought parliamentary

democracy throughout the interwar period. The Compiegne armistice of June 22 split the

country in two: The northern zone, under direct administration of the German army, saw

the emergence of a number of hardline fascist parties competing for Nazi favors and

subsidies.[2] The so-called "free-zone" in the South was under the control of the Vichy

government[3] that largely relied on the administrative framework inherited from the

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[1] Marc Augier. *Les Partisans*. Paris, 1943

[2] On the collaboration and fascists in France during WWII see Pascal Ory. *Les Collaborateurs: 1940-1945*.
Paris, 1976; Philipe Burrin. *La Dérive Fasciste: Doriot, Déat, Bergery*. Paris, 2003 & *La France
Allemande*. Paris, 1998; Pierre Milza. *Fascisme Francais: Passé et Present*. Paris, 2003; Brian Jenkins.
France in the Era of Fascism: Essays on the French Authoritarian Right. London, 2007

[3] On the Vichy regime see Robert O. Paxton. *Vichy France: Old Guard, New Order*. New York, 1973;
Julian Jackson. *France: The Dark Years*. London, 2001; On everyday life in France during WWII see

previous regime.[4] Deprived of a significant army by the armistice agreements,[5] the Vichy government attempted to mobilize youth through a series of movements and initiatives meant to foster individual fitness and morale as well as a combative and national spirit.

This integrated policy was overseen by the State Secretary of Youth, created in September 1940 and headed by Catholic engineer Georges Lamirand. It was instrumental in the creation of the paramilitary organization *Les Chantiers de la Jeunesse* (Youth Workshops), as well as a number of schools designed to train the future elites of the regime.[6] Although Field Marshall Pétain and his government thought of youth policy as an issue of the utmost importance, the German invasion of the Southern zone in November 1942 and the imposition of compulsory labor regulations that culminated in the institution of the *Service du Travail Obligatoire* (Compulsory Labor Service – STO) in February 1943 all but signaled the failure of Vichy's ambitious youth policies.[7]

Owing to the multiplicity of collaborationist political formations, the situation proved to be more complicated in the occupied zone. The first significant attempt to federate the collaborationist youth under a single banner was made in the spring of 1941 with the creation of the *Jeunes de l'Europe Nouvelle* (New Europe's Youth – JEN). The

Richard Vinen. *The Unfree French: Life Under the Occupation*. London, 2006; Francois-Georges Dreyfus. *Histoire de Vichy*. Paris, 1990; Jean-Pierre Azéma & Francois Bedarida (ed.). *Le Régime de Vichy et les Francais*. Paris, 1992; Denis Peschanski. *Vichy, 1940-1944: Controle et Exclusion*. Paris, 1999

[4] On the French administration under Vichy see Marc-Olivier Baruch. *Servir l'Etat Francais: l'Adminsitration en France de 1940 a 1944*. Paris, 1997; Francois Bloch-Lainé & Claude Gruson. *Hauts Fonctionnaires Sous l'Occupation*. Paris, 1996; Vincent Duclert (ed.). *Serviteurs de l'Etat Francais: Une Histoire Politique de l'Administration*, 1875-1945. Paris, 2000

[5] Vichy's transition army was limited to 100 000 men in the metropole and 300 000 spread around the colonies. See Robert O. Paxton. *L'Armée de Vichy: Le Corps des Officiers Francais, 1940-1944*. Paris, 2006; Christian Bachelier. "La Nouvelle Armée Francaise." In Jean- Pierre Azéma & Francois Bédarida (ed.) *La France des Années Noires (vol. 1)*. Paris, 2000

[6] On the question of youth under Vichy see Pierre Giolitto. *Histoire de la Jeunesse Sous Vichy*. Paris, 1991; Wilfred Halls. *The Youth of Vichy* France. Oxford, 1981. On the Vichy elite school at Uriage see Bernard Comte. *Une Utopie Combattante: l'Ecole des Cadres d'Uriage, 1940-1942*. Paris, 1991; Antoine Delestre. *Uriage: Une Communauté et une Ecole dans la Tourmente*. Nancy, 1989

[7] On the STO see Richard Vinen. *The Unfree French*. Op. Cit. pp. 247-282; Patrice Arnaud. *Histoire des Francais Requis en Allemagne Nazie, 1942-1945*. Paris, 2014

militant core of the movement, which served as the official youth section of the

Collaboration Group headed by Alphonse de Chateaubriant, was made up of former

Ajistes gathered around Marc Augier.[8] Although its membership remained relatively

small (around 4000 active members in 1942), the JEN was structured by a cohesive

ideology in which an economically integrated, Nazi dominated European continental

union was to supplant national formations. Augier and many of his comrades took these

ideas quite literally as they volunteered to fight alongside the Wehrmacht on the eastern

front as part of the *Legion des Volontaires Francais* (French Voluntary Legion – LVF).[9]

By the spring of 1942, the movement started publishing a monthly magazine entitled

Jeune Force de France that attempted to emulate some of the designs and narrative

tropes developed in Germany, Italy, and other European countries in the orbit of Nazi

Germany.

Ideologically akin to Marcel Déat's RNP[10] in their embrace of Europe as the

foundation of France's future, the evolution of the JEN is in many ways a reflection of

the personal itinerary of their leader Marc Augier. In order to understand the nature and

dynamic of this Europeanist French fascism, this chapter will be divided into three parts

which coincide with the steps taken by Augier and his followers. In order to provide

context and a counterpoint to the JEN, the first part looks at Vichy's youth policies. In the

second part I focus on two novels published by Augier during the Second World War: the

first one entitled *Les Copains de la Belle Etoile* (published in 1941) is a fictional account

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[8] On the role Augier played as part of the Groupe Collaboration see Julien Prévotaux. *Un Européisme Nazi.* Op. Cit.

[9] On the LVF and the French volunteers on the Eastern Front see Pierre Giolitto. *Volontaires Francais sous l'Uniforme Allemand.* Paris, 2007; Philippe Carrard. *The French Who Fought for Hitler: Memories form the Outcasts.* Cambridge, 2010

[10] On Déat and the RNP see Jean-Paul Cointet. *Marcel Déat.* Op. Cit.; Philippe Burrin. *La Dérive Fasciste: Doriot, Déat, Bergery.* Op. Cit.

of Augier's time as member of the Youth Hostel movement. The second one, *Les Skieurs de la Nuit* (published in 1944), written as travel reportage, tells the story of Augier's ski expedition in Finnish Laponia in 1939. Both are particularly interesting in that they offer two different perspectives on the author's conversion to fascism[11]. Focusing on the JEN and the emergence of the European idea at the intersection of discourses on youth and fascism, the chapter's final part shows that the idea of Europe became central to wartime fascist ideology because the alliance with Nazi Germany seemed to make the idea of the French nation-state anachronsitic. This is why, as I show, French fascists opposed Pétain's project of *Révolution Nationale* as shortsighted and antiquated. I suggest that, within the context of occupied France and the radicalization of war violence in the wake of the German invasion of the USSR, fascism could only exist if extracted from the national framework and projected into a supra-national historical fantasy.[12]

Vichy's youth program

As early as 1934, in a speech given at the annual lunch of the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* Philippe Pétain had expressed his vision for the youth.[13] Relaying some of the thoughts expressed in conservative circles linked to the Action Francaise, Pétain argued that the republican educative system was corrupting the national youth, attempting to

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[11] On the idea of the "conversion to fascism" in the case of Doriot and the PPF see Laurent Kestel. *Doriot, Le PPF et la Question du Fascisme Francais*. Paris, 2012

[12] On Fascism as a supra-national ideology see Roger Griffin. "Europe for the Europeans: Fascist Myths of the European New Order, 1922-1992." In *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*. London, 2008

[13] At the time Pétain served as the Minister of War in the Gaston Doumergue government formed on February 9 1934, in the wake of the fascist league riots. Pétain's three-page speech can be found in Philippe Pétain. *Paroles aux Francais: Messages et Ecrits, 1934-1941*. Paris, 1941, pp. 3-9

"destroy the state and society."[14] Seeking to compete with the Italian fascist, Nazi, and Soviet youth policies, Pétain advocated a tightening of links of the relationship between the school system and the military[15] as a means to ensure that "our youth benefits form a virile doctrine, pushing through collective effort, the national interest, glory and destiny of the motherland."[16] Concerned with the progress made by left wing and republican associations in terms of extra-curricular education, Pétain argued for a deeper consideration of the public space as a place to uphold the values learned in classroom or the military training camp. Pétain's ruthless attack on the republican institutions and his desire to foster develop a militaristic, nationalistic and virile spirit within the French youth was not only representative of the reactionary political current to which he belonged but also announced the contours of Vichy's future youth policy.

After it came to power in June 1940, the Vichy government tried to implement an inclusive youth policy capable of preparing the country for its future "redressement" (straightening up/recovery)[17] and provide structure for the training of young men in the absence of an army. By the end of the summer, the newly minted General Youth Bureau drafted a number of confidential notes pertaining to the organization of the youth

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[14] *Ibid.* p. 5

[15] *Ibid.* p. 7. "Pour être efficace, pour garder seulement sa vertu défensive, notre systeme militaire, comme tout système de nation armée, demande lui aussi a être vivifié par une politique d'éducation nationale. Le point capital de cette politique c'est l'action sur la jeunesse par le resserrement des liens entre l'école et l'armée."

[16] *Ibid*. p. 9.

[17] The idea of "redressement national" was one of the most common slogans of the Vichy state. Pétain used it in a radio broadcast address to the youth from 29 December 1940: In this short speech, he encouraged the national youth work in common as "the best way to escape the individualism and anarchy that lead to tyranny is to acquire a profound sense of community on the social and national plane. Learn how to work in common, obey in common, play in common. In one word, develop a team spirit among yourselves. This way you will prepare the solid foundations of a new French order, that will foster unbreakable bounds between you and will allow you to face the gigantic task of **national recovery** (redressement national)." See Philippe Pétain. *Paroles aux Francais*. Paris, 1999, pp. 231-234

policy.[18] The framework of the new administration was very much inspired by the State

Secretary set up by Léo Lagrange during the Popular Front, but a quick look at the

content of these documents shows a clear departure from the loose style of the beloved

"minister of youth." The directives set by Georges Lamirand, the new State Secretary,

were intended to give a specific orientation to extra-curricular activities in order to

prepare youth to serve the country while "maintaining the respect of high moral order as

well as high standards of civic, professional, and family education."[19] Walking in

Lagrange's footsteps, Lamirand and his administration chose to rely on pre-existing

youth movements instead of trying to create an all-encompassing youth organization on

the model of the Hitler youth.[20] This *modus operandi* was for a large part dictated by the

situation on the ground: the virtual exclusion of the Vichy government from large parts of

the national territory and the necessity to re-organize in a hurry forced the new

administration to borrow heavily from its predecessor.

In Lamirand's plan, youth movements[21] were to serve as the base unit for

ideologically motivated youth, provided they follow the conservative ideological

guidelines of the new state. In order to mobilize and supervise the majority of the youth

population, the Vichy government created two new and largely unsuccessful institutions:

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[18] The series of notes are preserved at the French national archives as part of the F/44 Jeunesse et Sports archival fund (1935-1963)

[19] AN F/44/1; "Projet d'Organisation Intérieure" August 29 1940, p. 1

[20] Lamirand's vision for the youth is most clearly expressed in a printed version of a speech he gave in Bordeaux on April 22 1941: Georges Lamirand. *France Nouvelle a nous, Jeunes! Vers l'Unité*. Paris, 1941;

[21] AN F/44/1; "Rapport de la Direction de la Jeunesse et du Commissariat Général des Sports" August 27 1940. The note argued that "only a movement, meaning a group of young people willing to give themselves an ideal that reaches beyond their own person or a Youth House are able to provide principles for a valuable education that, in the current circumstances, appear as the main task of the Ministry of Family and Youth"; p. 3

the *Maisons des Jeunes*[22] (Youth Houses) and the *Chantiers de Jeunesse*.[23] For the

Maisons des Jeunes, the new French state found its inspiration across the Rhine in the

Jungendhaus of the Hitler Youth that had been established in 1937. A non-dated internal

note emanating from Vichy's Ministry of Youth's studies bureau[24] detailed the ways in

which the Hitler Youth had been able to build over a thousand Youth Houses between

1937 and 1938. The report suggested that Vichy administration should try to emulate the

way in which the construction and administration of the structures, although partly

financed by the central state, had been entrusted locally to the communes.[25] The *Maisons*

des Jeunes were imagined as a tight knit network[26] of gathering sites for the youth

"destined to become the heart of local life for the youth of the country."[27] They were

bound to implement a program that devoted a significant amount of space to local

folklore, arts and traditions, a set of ideas that fit within Vichy's emphasis on the soil as

the source of national identity.[28] The failure of the *Maisons des Jeunes* in many ways

serve as a reminder of the discrepancy between Vichy's objectives and its achievements:

there were 41 youth houses in 1941 and only 189 at the end of 1943.[29]

The *Maisons des Jeunes* were conceived as the first step towards a complete

training program for the French youth, communal centers where light ideological work

was to be performed in preparation for the more serious tasks awaiting those old enough

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[22] AN F/44/1; "Projet d'Organisation Intérieure" August 29 1940, pp. 3-4

[23] AN F/44/1; "Projet d'Organisation Intérieure" August 29 1940, pp. 7-9

[24] AN/F/44/2; "Etude No 2: Les Maisons de Jeunesse Allemande"

[25] *Ibid*. p. 6

[26] The note suggested that each canton (about 5000 in France, one of the smallest administrative subdivisions) should have a *Maison des Jeunes*

[27] *Ibid*. p. 3

[28] On the relationship between Folklore, Vichy and the *Révolution Nationale* program see Christian Faure. *Le Projet Culturel de Vichy: Folklore et Révolution Nationale, 1940-1944*. Paris, 1989; Herman Lebovics. *True France: The Wars Over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945*. Paris, 1994, pp. 135-160

[29] Pierre Giolitto. *Histoire de la Jeunesse sous Vichy*. Paris, 1991, p. 546

to be drafted in paramilitary organizations. Vichy's main effort towards the creation of a national youth movement betrayed the profound influence of the military in shaping the contours of the new state. This policy materialized through the creation of two paramilitary youth movements: the *Chantiers de la Jeunesse*[30] controlled by the army and the less known *Jeunesse et Montagne*, a subdivision of the French air force.[31] The law creating the *Chantiers de la Jeunesse* was passed on July 30 1940 and the organization headed by General Joseph de la Porte du Theil.[32] A form of truncated military service, a six-month stay at the *Chantiers* was compulsory for all French men under 20 years of age: lumbering, camping, and forest hikes effectively replaced military drills. Political propaganda and political talk were strictly banned in favor of an ideology based on the cult of the chiefs and hierarchy expressed in the veneration of the father figure of Marshall Pétain.

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[30] On the *Chantiers de la Jeunesse* see: Pierre Giolitto. *Op. Cit.* pp. 548-610; Olivier Faron. *Les Chantiers de la Jeunesse: Avoir 20 ans Sous Pétain*. Paris, 2011; Antoine Huan (ed.). *Histoire des Chantiers de la Jeunesse.* Paris, 1992; Christophe Pécout. "Les Jeunes et la Politique de Vichy: Le Cas des Chantiers de Jeunesse." In *Histoire, Politique et Société*. No 4, 2008

[31] *Jeunesse et Montagne* which found its inspiration in the youth hostel movement was outlawed by the Italian occupation authorities in the Chamonix area. In the southern zone the organization remained active until January 1944. Documentation on its creation and organization can be found in AN/F/44/2

[32] Journal Officiel. August 1 1940, p. 4605

The ideology of the *Chantiers* exalted some of the core values of the Vichy state such as the return to the land, a strict gender separation, and the primacy of the elders; the forays into the woods under the command of decommissioned military officers, life in a wild setting and physical among young men of the same age were seen as means to combat individualism and modern urban society.[33] The model of the *Chantiers*, as a militaristic, conservative, and hierarchical movement, was also predicated on the abhorrence and fascination for the idea of moral and physical decay. While the Popular Front had tried to uplift the morale and physical condition of the French youth through the program implemented by Langrange's ministry, Vichy's conception of youth and fitness was framed by a profound racial anxiety expressed in the idea of the bodily decay of the French people. Pétain's National Revolution placed a particular emphasis on the

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[33] On the ideology of the Vichy state see Robert Paxton. *Vichy France*. Op. Cit.

cultivation of a healthy and strong body as a means to reinvigorate a sloping "French race" to the point where the youth program became a "bodily revolution"[34] through which the national body was to "re-educated."[35] Vichy's conception of the bodies of the French as "weakened and crippled" was not only correlated to the moral and physical "defeat of French manhood"[36] in 1940 but also to a feeling of inferiority towards Germany that had grown throughout the interwar period.[37]

During the Vichy period, the idea of masculine regeneration was as ideologically charged as any, and one of the clear areas where the collaborationist state attempted to borrow from and compete with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. This conception of the body, far from belonging solely to the catholic and reactionary right championed by the ageing field Marshall, echoed the definition of Fascism given by Drieu la Rochelle in a series of articles published in 1937 in *L'Emancipation Nationale*: "The most profound definition of fascism is this one: it is the political movement that moves the most decidedly, the most radically towards the reinstatement of a healthy body, dignity, fullness, and heroism – towards the defense of man against the big city and the machine."[38] Although Vichy's program was cut short by the imposition of the STO in February 1943[39] and the *Chantiers* and *Maisons de Jeunes* failed to provide an adequate

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[34] Pierre Giolitto. *Op. Cit.*, p. 180

[35] The meaning of the word is somewhat lost in translation. There is a double-entendre here as in French "re-education" means "physical therapy." In this sense, the new program was seen as having a socially therapeutic dimension

[36] The Expression is used by Joan Tumblety in her book on physical education in interwar and Vichy France: Joan Tumblety. *Remaking the Male Body*. Op. Cit., p. 205

[37] On this particular note see Daniel Guérin's reportage in the German youth hostels in chapter 1

[38] Pierre Drieu la Rochelle in *L'Emancipation* Nationale. August 20, 1937. Cited in Raoul Girardet. "Notes sur l'Esprit d'un Fascisme Francais, 1934-1939." *Revue Francaise de Science Politique*. Spring 1955, No 3, p. 533

[39] The STO was instituted on February 16 1943. In May 1943 Pierre Laval, the head of the Vichy government met with Hitler and Sauckel, the Nazi Minister of Labor and agreed to send 25 000 men from the *Chantiers* as part of the STO agreements (18 000 in Germany and 7 000 in France working for weapon

structure for the renewal of the French youth, its ideological platform bore the imprint of fascism.

The Youth Hostels in Turmoil

Upon its establishment in the fall of 1940, George Lamirand's youth and sports bureau attempted to "normalize" the situation of youth movements and organizations in the country according to the wishes of the "Maréchal." A decree signed by Pétain was promulgated in December 1940, known as the "law on the organization of French youth" it defined a loose set of rule to which youth movement had to abide.[40] Its purpose was to make possible for the youth and sports bureau to ban youth organizations the ideology of which it deemed contrary to Vichy's national revolution.[41] Because of its clear ties with the secular left and the Popular Front, the CLAJ was banned by the German authorities in the occupied zone, while in the southern zone, both the CLAJ and the FLAJ were immediately outlawed by the Vichy authorities in the summer of 1940.[42] In her book, Lucette Heller-Goldenberg recalls the struggle for the control of the CLAJ between a pro-German faction gathered around Marc Augier and a left-wing core grouped around POM and Robert Auclaire.[43]

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factories). According to Giolitto, about half of those mobilized for STO chose to go underground an join the resistance. Pierre Giolitto. *Op. Cit*. p. 598

[40] AN/F/44/2: "Loi sur l'Organisation de la Jeunesse Francaise."

[41] The law's first article listed four essential directions for the youth policy of the new regime: to exalt the national spirit and devote to the national revolution; encourage physical education and discipline; develop team spirit; prepare them to head a household and serve the community. *Ibid*. p. 1

[42] Daniel Lee. *Pétain's Jewsih Children: French Jewish Youth and the Vichy Regime, 1940-1942*. Oxford, 2014, p. 107.

[43] Lucette Heller-Goldenberg. *Histoire des Auberges de Jeunesse (vol. 2)*. Nice, 1983, pp. 595-650. Drawing on interviews with former CLAJ members from the 1970s, Heller-Goldenberg shows how Augier attempted to take control of the movement's headquarters on Rue de Valois in Paris.

The dispute seems to have been ultimately settled by the occupation authorities that only allowed the reopening of the CLAJ on March 18 1942.[44] Gaston Tyrand who, in the late 1930s, had participated in Marc Augier's mountain expeditions in the French and Swiss Alps, served as the organization's director.[45] In order to comply with the Nazi authorities' policies, this collaborationist version of the CLAJ banned Jews and Communists and functioned with very limited funds obtained from the German embassy. The experiment was short lived and the new CLAJ dissolved in November of the same year.[46] By that time the movement had become a shell of its old self, controlling a mere 22 hostels and counting just over 4000 members.[47]

Following its policy of "normalization" and regrouping of pre-existing youth movements, Vichy's youth and sports bureau merged the CLAJ and the LFAJ under a new youth hostel organization.[48] The new movement, which was officially created on March 14 1941,[49] took the name of *Auberges Francaises de la Jeunesse* (French Youth Hostels – AFJ) and Marc Sangnier[50] was elected as the honorary president. The success of the new movement owed much to the participation of students from the *Uriage* elite school that had been prominent *Ajistes* in the interwar period.[51] Perhaps the most

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[44] The reopening of the CLAJ in March 1942 was announced in *l'Oeuvre*, Marcel Déat's newspaper see *l'Oeuvre*, April 3, 1942.

[45] See Chapter 3. According to Heller-Goldenberg's transcripts of her interview with Gaston Tyrand, the resurgence of the CLAJ in 1942 was mostly due to the efforts of the former Eastern Parisian Worker's Club Tyrand had led during the interwar period. See Heller-Goldenberg. *Op. Cit*. p. 656-657.

[46] *Ibid*. p. 688-689.

[47] *Ibid*. p. 689.

[48] On the negotiations that led to the creation of a unified youth hostel movement under Vichy see Heller-Goldenberg. *Op. Cit*. pp. 756-845

[49] Journal Officiel. April 4 1941, p. 1460

[50] See Chapter 1

[51] Heller-Goldenberg counts 26 members of the Uriage school in the AJF: 3 instructors and 23 students. Heller-Goldenberg. *Op. Cit*. p. 798

significant among them was Pierre Ollier de Marichard (POM)[52] who was instrumental in founding a spinoff of the AFJ called *Camarades de la Route* (Comrades of the Road).[53]

Yet, despite the efforts of former *Ajistes* such as POM, the audience of the AFJ remained a very limited. The conditions of the war (lack of resources, travel restrictions) coupled with the lack of financial means and political will on the part of the Vichy government resulted in a significant drop in the enrollment and membership.[54] As the war dragged on, life conditions deteriorated and what remained of the Popular Front dream of the new world vanished. The invasion of the southern zone by the Wehrmacht in November 1942 effectively meant that a full-on collaborationist program was replacing the reactionary idea of the national revolution.[55] Many young men in the youth hostels and other youth movements chose to resist the Nazis either passively or by taking part in the resistance. Few chose to side with Nazi Germany. Within this group, Marc Augier and his followers make up an ideologically structured faction. We will now look at his "conversion" to fascism and the nature of the particular Europeanist brand of fascism he advocated.

The French Void: National Socialism as National Regeneration

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[52] See Chapter 2

[53] Daniel Lee. *Pétain's Jewish Children*. Op. Cit. p. 107

[54] According to Pierre Giolitto the enrollment in the youth hostel movement dropped to about 2000 in 1942 from 50 000 in 1938. Pierre Giolitto. *Histoire de la Jeunesse sous Vichy*. Paris, 1991, p. 525

[55] As Robert Paxton and Michael Marrus have shown in the case of Vichy's Jewish policy, Pétain cannot be absolved from the radical collaborationist direction taken by the French State after 1942. On the contrary his own radical conservatism led him to systematically lean towards the alliance with Germany. See Michael Marrus & Robert O. Paxton. *Vichy France and the Jews*. New York, 1981. Also Robert Paxton. *Vichy France. Op. Cit.*; Pascal Ory. *Les Collaborateurs. Op. Cit.*

By the end of the 1930s, Marc Augier and his comrades had adopted a more radical approach to the practice of travel, moving away from the simple nomadic life of the hostels in favor of mountaineering and motorcycle expeditions across Europe.[56] In later recollections, Augier credited his transformation to his reading Chateaubriant's *La Gerbe des Forces* and a subsequent trip around the youth hostels of Nazi Germany in 1938. When France declared war on Germany in September 1939, Marc Augier was mobilized in the French army and incorporated in an anti-aircraft unit in Lagny-sur-Marne. During one of his military leaves, he travelled to Noyers-sur-Serein to meet with Alphonse de Chateaubriant.[57] Augier was literally mesmerized by what he defined as the saint-like charisma of the right wing novelist: "Here I am, in front of Alphonse de Chateaubriant. He is wrapped in the copper colored reflections of a large wooden fire akin to the backgrounds of the Flemish paintings. (…) Physically he wins over the believer I already am and a feudal tie almost instantly binds us. I am 32 and I need to believe. After talking to him for an hour he appears to me as one of the saints of the catholic saga: called, as he desires and proclaims, to bear new clothes through the Hitlerian gest! He presents himself as the conciliator of the unconciliable."[58]

In Augier's words, the encounter with his mentor resulted in a feudal oath and a vassal dubbing, in many ways mimicking the oath to Hitler taken by German soldiers and the SS.[59] Moving towards the French national socialism extolled by Chateaubriant, the former *Ajiste* leader managed to escape during the military debacle and return to Paris. In

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[56] See Chapter 2.

[57] Marc Augier. *J'ai vu l'Allemagne*. Paris, 1941, p. 58. I deal with Alphonse de Chateaubriant's contribution to the French far-right in the 1930s, especially through his 1937 book *La Gerbe des Forces*, in chapter 3.

[58] *Ibid*. p. 60

[59] On the oath taken by German soldiers after 1934 see Ian Kershaw. *Hitler*. London, 2001, p. 318

the occupied capital he took an active part in the foundation of Chateaubriant's

collaborationist newspaper *La Gerbe*. Otto Abetz and the German embassy in Paris

provided funds for this new "weekly paper of the French will", Chateaubriant served as

the director and tutelary figure while Augier held the ambiguous position of general

manager.[60] In the first issue, published on July 11 1940, Augier signed four articles in

which he argued that the youth hostel movement should be revived, unified and serve as

the bulwark for the creation of a mass French youth movement. In opposition to the pre-

war spirit of the hostels, Augier wrote that the presence of a leader within the

organization was necessary to foster its success.[61] Seeking to benefit from his influential

position within the collaborationist circles, he attempted to position himself as the

providential leader of the French youth.

　　Moving away from Vichy's idea of renewal through re-education, Augier

believed that the unity of the French youth could only be achieved through a profound

renewal of the elites, replacing old leaders such as Marc Sangnier with young blood.[62]

Opposing the old and the new in such a radical way meant not only a criticism of the

Pétain government (implicit) or the former republican elites (explicit) but also suggested

a complete adhesion to the idea of "renewal" based on generational lines. By locating his

discourse within the semantic field of the "new" and the opposition between "young" and

"old," Augier effectively proclaimed his adhesion to the "palingenetic" fascist myth of

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[60] 100 000 copies of the newspaper's first issue were printed. The 4 page publication was quickly expanded to 10 pages. By 1943, 140 000 copies of *La Gerbe* were printed weekly. See Jerome Moreau. *Sous le Signe de la Roue Solaire: Itinéraire Politique de Saint Loup*. Paris, 2008, p. 82-85

[61] Marc Augier. "Le CLAJ Fait sa Révolution" in *La Gerbe*, July 11, 1940.

[62] Marc Augier. "Les Jeunes se Trompent? Et les Vieux?..." in *La Gerbe*, July 11, 1940. In this article Augier attacked Sangnier's support to the war in May 1940 as the last option against fascism.

renewal.[63] For him, the division of the French youth during the interwar period was a

consequence of old elites' tendencies to put their own interests before that of the

community,[64] in doing so he attempted to bridge the gap between his *Ajiste* past and his

new fascist allegiance.

Much like its subtitle suggested, *La Gerbe* was in search of the "French will."

Beyond this enigmatic formula lay the perception of France as an immobile and

antiquated polity and the search for a national renewal. This vision served as the

foundation for Chateaubriant's criticism of the French mind as stagnant, decadent and

outmatched by the vitality of the German thought. Reiterating some of the criticism

formulated in 1937 in *La Gerbe des Forces*, Chateaubriant wrote in 1942: "I am shocked

when I read foreign newspapers, by the difference in the angle of vision. French

newspapers assess events according to a set of egocentric political principles followed as

traditional in their ministries. (…) it is superficial and without grounding."[65] For him and

Augier, the solution to France's problems was to be found beyond the national borders in

a new kind of National Socialist internationalism: "France is bound in the future to have a

French policy, and the French expression of yesterday's policy does not have any place in

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[63] On the articulation between myth of renewal and fascist ideology see Roger Griffin. *Modernism and Fascism*. London, 2007.

[64] According to Augier, the relative failure of the interwar youth hostel movement could be seen as a direct consequence of the divisions of the old elites: "The people in power are the sole responsible for maintaining the division, serving two different masters: the Paris archbishop hidden behind the LFAJ and the masonic temples behind the CLAJ do not have anything to do with the hostel movement. Everything has to be re-considered according to the interests of the users' community." Marc Augier. "A Bas les Dissidences." In *La Gerbe*, July 11, 1940.

[65] Reiterating some of the criticism formulated in 1937 in *La Gerbe des Forces*, Chateaubriant wrote in 1942: "I am shocked when I read foreign newspapers, by the difference in the angle of vision. French newspapers assess events according to a set of egocentric political principles followed as traditional in their ministries. (…) it is superficial and without grounding." Alphonse de Chateaubriant. "Le National Socialisme et Nous." In *La Gerbe*. March 5, 1942.

a newspaper that sails with the wind of the new international spirit."[66] Augier did not

think differently when, in the summer of 1940 he wrote a severe indictment against the

politicians of the Third Republic, whose lifetime achievement found its realization in

nothingness: "Here we are, at the rotten intersection of dispute and hate, where

selfishness battles idiocy, and all the things we witnessed: capitalism trafficking human

labor, rotten politicians, a century of underground masonic politics, the prostitution of the

churches all led to this masterpiece, the French void."[67]

In *La Gerbe des Forces*, Chateaubriant had written about the lasting impression

the vitality and dynamism of the Hitler youth had made on him.[68] Following a similar

intellectual path, Augier argued that the French National regeneration could only be

achieved through a complete adhesion of the national youth to a radical, world changing

program. For him, like most of the Parisian collaborationists, this goal could only be

reached by following Nazi model: the unification of the French youth in an all-

encompassing, compulsory youth movement. Yet, the Vichy government happened to

favor a model similar to that of the Popular Front in which a multiplicity small youth

movements would receive the approbation of the youth bureau and potential subsidies.[69]

In a number of articles Augier argued against the *Chantiers de la Jeunesse*,[70] the

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[66] *Ibid.*

[67] Marc Augier. "Ceux qui Tristement sont Morts pour la Patrie." *La Gerbe*. July 18, 1940

[68] See Chapter 4

[69] A complete list of subsidies disbursed or planned by Vichy's youth bureau for the year 1944 can be found in the French national archives. The subsidies totaled 79 855 900 francs split among 88 different movements. See "Subventions Versées ou Engagées pour 1944." AN/F/44/2. The view of the youth bureau supporting the idea of multiple youth movements can be found in an article published by one of its officials: Michel Depouey. "Défense du Pluralisme." In *La Revue des Jeunes*. April 15, 1941.

[70] Marc Augier. "Le Paradis des Adjudants." in *La Gerbe*. February 2, 1941

centrifugal nature of the structure of the French youth,[71] and the militaristic spirit of the

Vichy government.[72] He concluded that the youth bureau and the Vichy youth policy as

whole were totally inadequate in the face of the gigantic task of bringing the French

youth onto the right path: "The youth bureau is undermined by the pluralism of the youth

movements. Although it should be second only to the economy, it occupies a subaltern

position within the French political organization. (…) If the task of the youth bureau is

the heaviest of all that lies on the shoulders of the national revolution, it is because it has

to prepare a <u>new man</u>. No racial or ideological platform allows M. Lamirand to define

this new man. (…) No myth (mystique) carries this youth that is left without a

revolutionary dynamic, primary condition for a renewal. (…) On the level of European

France I sensed I deep and persisting fear for all things German."[73]

     Through the limited actions and lukewarm attitude of the youth bureau towards

the Nazis, Augier perceived Vichy's inability to understand the necessary establishment

of relations with Germany as a precondition for a successful national revolution. Renewal

through youth and Franco-German collaboration appeared as two sides of the same coin

that Augier understood as a continuation of the pre-war pacifist ideal of the hostels.[74] As

he looked for means to rally the French youth around an indigenous form of National

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[71] Marc Augier. "Douze Mois d'Essais Incohérents ont Fait Surgir tous les Signes Exterieurs de l'Anarchie." In Paris-Soir, September 20, 1941

[72] Marc Augier. "Marchons au Pas Camarades." In *La Gerbe*. July 24, 1941

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] Using the same title as an article published in *Le Cri des Auberges de Jeunesse* en 1937, Augier wrote in *La Gerbe* in favor of a tightening of the Franco-German relations: "We need to establish sane, loyal, and if possible brotherly between two upcoming generations on either side of the Rhine river, here is an essential task and the sacred duty of our lives. We want it because a young Europe, in which we also want a happy England, is being created before our eyes and that this Europe is unthinkable without the bright light of great Germany, and without the historical genius of France returned to its peasant roots." In *La Gerbe*. August 1, 1940.

Socialism, Augier published two autobiographical books that recalled the late 1930s and his conversion to fascism.

"Solstice in Lapland": Primal Man versus the "Terror of History"

For Augier and his closest comrades, the process of conversion to fascism was intimately linked to the peculiar nature of their youth hostel experience. As I showed in chapter 2, Marc Augier appeared as the leader of an *Ajiste* faction that moved away from the confines of the hostels and the CLAJ network and sought transcendence in the practice of mountaineering, extreme travelling, and attempts "re-conquer" abandoned mountain villages.[75] Augier's radical experiments were conceived as an attempt build on the hostels' dynamic and travel beyond the confines of modern society in what amounted to a return to the primal, authentic conditions of existence, a mythical age in which he believed the true power of man resided. Much like his contemporary, historian of religions and philosopher Mircea Eliade,[76] Augier understood Christianity as the expressions of the advent of linear historical time that brought existential anguish, despair, and terror upon modern man. In *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Mircea Eliade argues that modern man's anxieties are for a large part due modern society's understanding of time as linear and historical, as opposed to the cyclical (based on natural cycles) conception of time observed in archaic societies. Pitting archaic and modern man against one another in an imaginary dialogue, Eliade writes: "For traditional man, modern man affords the type neither of a free being nor of a creator of history. On the contrary,

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[75] See Chapter 3

[76] Mircea Eliade. *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or Cosmos and History*. Princeton, 1965, pp. 157-158.

the man of the archaic civilizations can be proud of his mode of existence, which allows

him to be free and to create. He is free to be no longer what he was, free to annul his own

history through periodic abolition of time and collective regeneration. This freedom in

respect to his own history – which, for the modern, is not only irreversible but constitutes

human existence – cannot be claimed by the man who wills to be historical."[77]

 To the exploratory and ethnographic impetus that represented an essential part of

the youth hostels' ideology, Augier progressively added an anti-modernist dimension

borrowed from Jean Giono[78] and a pro-Nazi tendency cultivated through the reading of

Alphonse de Chateaubriant. In the winter of 1938, during the solstice period, Augier and

one of his *Ajiste* comrades, Edouard de Thuisy, set out for a ski expedition across Finnish

Lapland. Augier turned the cross-country travels into a book: published in the spring of

1940, "Solstice in Lapland" remained ambiguous as of its form in that it seemed to

borrow freely from travelogues, adventure novels, anthropological writing, and

reportage.[79] For Augier, Lapland (or "the Laplands" as he liked to distinguish between

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[77] On that particular topic Eliade writes: "We may say that Christianity is the "religion" of modern man and historical man, of the man who simultaneously discovered personal freedom and continuous time (in place of cyclical time). It is even interesting to note that the existence of God forced itself far more urgently upon modern man, for whom history exists as such, as history and not as repetition, than upon the man of the archaic and traditional cultures, who defend himself from the **terror of history**, had at its disposition all the myths, rites, and customs. (…) Since the "invention" of faith, in the Judaeo-Christian sense of the word (= for God all is possible), the man who has left the horizon of archetypes and repetition can no longer defend himself against that terror except through the idea of God. (…) Christianity proves to be the religion of "fallen man": and this to the extent to which modern man is irremediably identified with history and progress, and to which history and progress are a fall, both implying the final abandonment of the paradise of archetype and repetition. Mircea Eliade. *Op. Cit*. pp. 161-162.

[78] On Giono anti-modernist tendencies and his ambiguous role in the collaboration during WWII see Richard Golsan. *French Writers and the Politics of Complicity: Crises of Democracy in the 1940s and 1990s*. Baltimore, 2005, pp. 52-77

[79] Marc Augier. *Solstice en Laponie*. Paris, 1940. For the purpose of this chapter I use a later version of book, published by the Parisian editor Stock in 1944. It features a new title (*Les Skieurs de la Nuit*) and is augmented with an introduction by the author reflecting on the meaning of his Lapland adventure in the light of the evolution of the Second World War. Borrowing notable expressions from Céline and Giono, Augier wrote, in his 1944 foreword: "It seems to me that it is by reflecting on the nature of these two journeys through the night, night of the solstice above the polar circle, night of the war in a civilized

the regions and peoples of the European arctic) represented the ultimate environment to measure a man's heroic abilities, one in which the heroism of the camper is akin to that of the soldier: "The camper's heroism can (in the extreme conditions of Lapland) be situated on the same plane as the obscure, patient, tenacious courage of the soldier in the trenches facing the famous pilot who, in the air, accomplished brief and formidable war deeds."[80]

The arctic land itself appeared as the real world expression of the void, the infinite desolation and terror historical time had bestowed upon modern man: "a frightening measure of the infinite."[81] It was only in such hostile surroundings, similar in many ways to that of the mountaintops Augier and his comrades had also vowed to conquer, that the true essence of man could be uncovered, limited to its bare essentials. Furthermore, the geographic location of Lapland, at the northeastern extremity of the European continent, made it into an "extreme Europe",[82] an arctic *Finistère* stripped of all the graces and riches of civilization.[83] What Augier and his comrade De Thuisy looked for in the steppes of northern Finland was the roots and essence of what they believed to be European

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universe or so called, that I am able to draw, for my part, the sense of love that I must give to different conceptions of life, and determine the place where real riches lie." Marc Augier. *Les Skieurs de la Nuit*. Paris, 1944, p. 8. Here Augier seemed to argue for a formal syncretism between the anti-modern style of Giono and a more modern, atheist and fascist aesthetic inspired by the work of Céline. The unresolved contradiction between these two antagonistic tendencies represents on of the most peculiar dimensions of Augier's thought as developed in his wartime writings.

[80] Marc Augier. *Les Skieurs de la Nuit*. Op. Cit. p. 23

[81] *Ibid*. p. 48

[82] *Ibid*. p. 70

[83] On this particular topic Augier writes: "What gives this landscape its apocalyptic dimension is less it poignant desolation that its situation of extreme Europe. Here we are at the bow of the old ship of civilization and the riches and many images come to mind: sweet blooming plains, Mediterranean shorelines, loaded with the joy of the gaze, the high pastures of Savoy, all this European cultural capital, to which, because of the spirit of adventure, we turned our back, only to realize the meager nature of this accomplishment as if the continent, weakened because it produced to many riches did not have the strength to push its expansion all the way up to the 70th parallel and extend the sources of its splendor." *Ibid.*, p. 70

civilization, devoid of all its cultural and historical ornament and the signs of capitalism and modernity.[84]

The encounter with the indigenous people of the great north was, for the apprentice explorers, an opportunity to reflect on the similarities between the desires of the generation that came of age in the wake of WWI and the simple and rugged way of life of the Sami people. For Augier, the aspirations expressed by his generation in the youth hostels marked a profound rupture from their predecessors, who had lived before the cataclysm of the First World War.[85] In *Solstice en Laponie* he argued that the generation that had come of age in the aftermath of WWI had been characterized by a profound tendency towards a return to nomadism, first through the hostels and the leisure policies of the Popular Front then, for a select elite of which he considered himself the leader, through expeditions in inhospitable areas.

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[84] In the book's 1944 foreword, Augier equated the difficult conditions of life during the war, the dearth of goods and comfort, to the everyday conditions of life in Lapland: "Do we regret the lift of central heating, modern forms of housing? No! Do I regret my car now that there is no more gasoline? Not at all! I can easily live without an automobile, but it is absolutely impossible for me to stop feeding on this youth fountain, the mountains, and the remembrance of rich days I spend under the arctic sky in Lapland before the war." Augier. *Op. Cit.* p. 15

[85] Augier sees in the interwar generation a profound confusion in the face of modernity: "The truth, is that the men of my generation (les hommes de ma generation), born around 1914, with the first war of techniques, are at this very moment confronted with a profound existential crisis (desarroi), and are very different from those who drew certainties in their lives from the first decade of the century, lived through a successful marriage between natural riches inherited from the past and the first wonders of technology, and were so mesmerized by this association that the storm of 1914 never woke them up." Augier. *Op. Cit.* p. 12
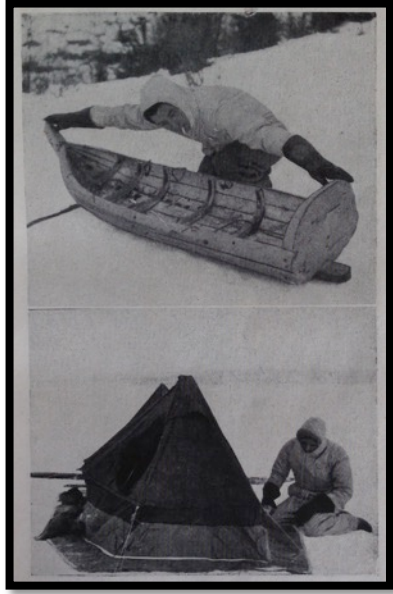
Figure 28 De Thuisy and Augier in Lapland 1939

Augier's notion of nomadism was already clearly tinted by his attraction and

adhesion to a form of thought akin to fascist ideology, in which individual transcendence

was erected as a cardinal value. In the nomadic lifestyle of the Sami, the

reporter/adventurer perceived the overwhelming significance of "sensorial and spiritual

inspirations."[86] The Lapland experiment represented for Augier a radical development of

the merry youth hostel lifestyle, tested in the most extreme conditions of the great north.

As he suggested, the deadly environment and the lack of any modern comfort

exponentially increased the sensorial and spiritual experience, for the individual faced

with the blizzard and the profound night of the arctic had to reach deep within himself in

order to attain the "roots of an heroic and aesthetic life."[87] This understanding of the Sami

lifestyle as an almost unattainable ideal, a return to the simplicity and ruggedness of an

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[86] Augier. *Op. Cit.* p. 12
[87] *Ibid.*

entirely pre-modern experience is predicated on a conception of the modern man similar to that of Mircea Eliade.[88] For Augier, the aesthetic life of the "great voyage towards the north"[89], the re-discovery of the heroic life buried in the depth of human experience, was the only way to summon the "best and most noble inner forces (…) drawing before [my] eyes another type of man representing what I would have liked to be born as, what I certainly had been in times far removed."[90] The rebirth of the primal man through the maiden voyage, the abolition of modern man's terror in the face of history was at the core of Augier's quest.

The initiation was already wrapped in a politically and racially loaded language. The rebirth of the primal man, the emergence of powerful aesthetic and sensorial experience also meant a conception of history that gave natural selection a particular credence. Following the example of the Sami, whose environment supposed the survival of the fittest, Augier's view on the "heroic and aesthetic life" was predicated on the idea of struggle for survival and all its corollaries: "merciless selection of species, selection of aristocracies for the life struggle, notion of law of the strongest and the best, finally research and application of the notion of true beauty and greatness."[91] Considered through this light, Augier's polar expedition had a double meaning: first it sought to move away from the "French void" described later in the pages of *La Gerbe* by investigating a pre-modern way of life, second it posited the rebirth of the man exposed

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[88] "The inhabitants of Lapland, here I mean the nomadic ones because the others, those who got to taste the dangerous charms of our civilization, have to be left out, live in deep contact with a complex set of natural forces that entirely elude us, either because our sensory abilities have lost some of their acuity or because our spirit has followed the path of fallacious values." Augier. *Op. Cit.* p. 165

[89] Augier. *Op. Cit.* p. 180

[90] *Ibid.*

[91] *Ibid.* p. 16

to the polar experience along the lines of the fascist palingenetic myth.[92] Drawing a connection between the interwar youth hostel practice and the way of life of the indigenous people of Lapland he had observed in Lapland, Augier concluded that a push towards *nomadism* was one of the distinctive characteristics of his generation. This belief, cultivated in the *Ajiste* milieu in the interwar period, was significant in that it made possible a profound realigning of personal and group identities from the nation(al) to local, generational, or supranational allegiances.

The repeated occurrence of the notion of *nomadism* in Augier's is interesting in that it reproduces some discursive tropes that were central to hostels' ideology. Augier's *modus operandi* through the phases of his "political conversion" to fascism followed patterns similar to that of the hostels. But in their extreme enterprises, in the great north or the alps, as Augier and his comrades added a layer of expertise and elitism to their individual background, their fascination with the primitive origins of manhood brought them closer to the theme of the race and racism that played such a central role in fascist ideology.[93] In Lapland and the Swiss Jungfrau, Augier reworked the nomadic spirit developed at the youth hostels along aesthetic and heroic lines which made it compatible with a fascist ideology based on racism, elitism and a millenarian conception of historical

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[92] See Roger Griffin. *Modernism and Fascism*. Op. Cit.

[93] On the relationship between nomadism and race Deleuze and Guattari write: "The classical image of thought, and the striping (stratification?) of thought, the striping of mental space that it operates, lend themselves to universality. (…) It is easy to characterize nomadic thought that refutes such an image and proceeds differently. It may not claim to represent a universally thinking subject, but on the contrary a singular race; and it does not base itself on an all-encompassing totality, but instead deploys itself in a horizon-less smooth space: steppe, desert, or sea. It is an altogether different type of equation that is established here between race defined as "tribe" and a smooth space defined as "milieu." A tribe in the desert instead of a universal subject under the horizon of the all-inclusive being. (…) How then to prevent the theme of race from morphing into racism, dominating and encompassing fascism, or more simply, artistocracy, or cult and folklore into micro-fascisms? And how to prevent the Eastern Pole from becoming the source of fantasy, that reactivates all the folklores and fantasies?" Deleuze and Guatari. *Mille Plateaux*. Op. Cit., p. 469

time. The complex elaboration of this new fascist personality became evident in the spring of 1941 when he published *Les Copains de la Belle Etoile*, a novel that staged the death of his old *Ajiste* self and his rebirth as a new fascist man.[94]

"Les Copains de la Belle Etoile": Retelling the Hostels Experiment

While he attempted and failed to take over the CLAJ in the months of trouble that followed the French military defeat, Augier set out to write a book on his experience in the youth hostels during the period of the Popular Front. Published in May 1941, the novel *Comrades Under the Stars* (Les Copains de la Belle Etoile) dealt with the experiences of a small *Ajiste* group from the beginnings of the movement in France to the Second World War. The narrative begins with the encounter of Pierrot, a Parisian communist industrial worker and Olivier, an idle and wealthy conservative man of noble descent, in the turmoil of the right wing insurrection of February 6 1934.[95] Pierrot, hiding at the top of a statue on the Place de la Concorde saves Olivier's life by helping him escape the gunshots of the anti-riot police. This bonding event brings the two young men together and a few weeks later Pierrot introduces Olivier to the joys of the *Ajiste* lifestyle in a hostel in the Parisian countryside. For Olivier, the discovery of the small community where boys and girls mingle without any afterthoughts[96] represents a happy departure from a life he had lived until then as a rich and blasé urbanite. Under Augier's pen,

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[94] Marc Augier. *Les Copains de la Belle Etoile*. Paris, 1941

[95] Building on existing literature on the Popular Front and the French far right in the interwar period, I argued in chapter 2 that the political riots of February 6 1934 marked the starting point of the Popular Front as a national political movement in reaction to the growing threat posed by the fascist leagues.

[96] Augier introduces his audience to a number of characters whose interconnected itineraries serve as the narrative structure for the book.

Olivier's adhesion to the *Ajiste* lifestyle and ideas amounts to an act of religious conversion, for the young man appears literally "subjugated" by the singing of his new comrades around the evening campfire.[97] Through his eyes, the author describes the mesmerizing effect of the campfire and the *Ajiste* choir, a powerfully inspiring combination capable of giving galvanizing powers. What Olivier witnesses, without being fully aware of it is the renewal of the small group with paganism or, as Augier writes: "One could not be fooled. What was coming down in the soul of the young, weakened by centuries of Christianity, by the inferiority complex of the cross, was a renewal of the primitive religion of the Gauls. (…) It was God's minute in its purest, most direct form, the fire, the songs, and the night."[98]

In Augier's novel, the discovery of the youth hostel bonfire was, for the outsider, an absolute revelation, a transcendental experience akin to his own discovery of the Sami lifestyle in the great north. For him the *Ajistes* effectively broke the spell cast upon European man with the advent of the Christian religion. Yet he, like the other men and women that form the fictional group at the core of his novel, had a complex relationship with modernity and technology. One of his characters, an older and more adventurous *Ajiste* named Jean Laval, embodies this very contradiction. Laval's character is, in many respects a mirror image of Augier's real life character cast in the novel; fascinated by motorcycles, speed, and performance he rides around Europe, establishing numerous records along the way. As a tutelary figure for other *Ajistes*, Laval later takes the lead of

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[97] "But, as soon as the first songs rose into the sky, he stopped caring about his female neighbor, captivated as he was by the spectacle, new for him, of a bonfire in the hostels." Marc Augier. *Les Copains de la Belle Etoile*. Paris, 1941, p. 46
[98] *Ibid.* p. 47

an expedition to reclaim an abandoned mountain village.[99] Short on money, food

supplies, and hit hard by the rigorous winter of the lower Alps, the small group is

progressively taken apart by dissensions and growing animosity. The failure of the

experience and the abandonment of the "re-conquered" grounds signify Laval's personal

failure as a leader. More importantly it suggests the impossibility to realize the "new

world" the *Ajistes* had so ardently wished for. The community appeared to him as a

small-scale model of a flawed society to which no quick remedy could be applied.[100]

Faced with the vacuity of the youth hostel ideal and the inescapable closing of a possible

other social future, Laval picks up his climbing gear and prepares for a last, definitive

struggle against the mountain.

The last part of the novel chronicles the disaggregation of the *Ajiste* movement

and follows two characters representing different expressions of Augier's preferred path.

Laval's impossible burden with the world and the inescapable petty difficulties of

everyday life takes an abrupt turn when he decides to attempt the impossible climb of the

north face of the Olan peak in the Dauphiné.[101] At the same time his alter ego Paul

Marcheron, one of the other *Ajistes* who attempted to save the abandoned village, takes

part in a youth hostel study trip in Nazi Germany in a Hitler Youth summer camp. In

Augier's mind, both represent the two ways in which one can realize its destiny. Laval's

epic struggle against the mountain is framed as an attempt for the adventurer to uncover

his true self, a transcendental and heroic experience in which man rids himself of the

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[99] This episode was inspired by the reportage Augier published in *Le Cri des Auberges* in 1938 entitled "SOS Villages des France". See Chapter 2.

[100100] "No, the new world was not to be achieved. In the Ajiste community one could find a small scale version of all the things that made life in society arduous." Marc Augier. *Op. Cit.* p. 161

[101] Marc Augier. *Les Copains de la Belle Etoile.* Op. Cit. p. 213. The Pic de l'Olan in the French Alps near Grenoble is renowned to be a particularly difficult hike because of the friable nature of the limestone of which it is made.

unbearable social constraints. In one of the book's most poignant sequences, Laval's futile but life-defining struggle against the mountain ends abruptly when, a few meters away from the summit, he loses his balance and falls into the void. The fall itself is cast as the moment when Laval understands the pointlessness of his search for adventure and his true realization in death.[102]

Laval's truly heroic death was echoed by Marcheron's cold political approach. From the Hitler Youth summer camp he believed he had brought back the model for a future successful organization of the French youth. What Marcheron had witnessed in the camp near Freiburg was "the birth of a community that [was] unique in Europe, a generation of master-men (maître-hommes) ready for all the struggles for life, for love… and, if necessary, war."[103] Through the character of Marcheron, Augier argues that the Hitler Youth's militaristic stance was geared towards peace, a strong and willing youth was all that was needed to ensure the triumph of vitality against occult forces. In doing that the former hostel leader had left behind the idea of the inclusive community of the hostels in favor of that of the elite of "master-men" the Hitler Youth attempted to build across the Rhine. For Augier and Marcheron, both the real life and imaginary expressions of the same spirit, it meant an allegiance to the Nazi project and his racial program. Upon his return from Germany, Marcheron confronts the steering committee of the AFA (the fictional alter-ego of the CLAJ) and his Jewish and left-wing members: Abramovitch,

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[102] Laval's fall from the cliff is described by Augier as a purely internalized event, from the climber's poibt of view: "To the indescribable anguish of the departure succeeded the flight in space. Between the second that marked the origin of his downfall and that of his body crashing on the glacier of the Sellettes, Jean Laval had the time to understand that his personal search for an explanation on the roads, among men, and in the silence of the mountains had been in vain, and that it was only now that he was to enter into the mystery of the world." Marc Augier. *Op. Cit.* p. 226
[103] *Ibid*. p. 168

Applebaum and Gombine.[104] For him the supposed duplicity of the French Jews and the

Popular Front had pushed Europe on the brink of another World War.[105]

In the book's last chapter Marcheron, now a pilot in the French air force intends

to fly across the border to surrender his aircraft to the German military. Much like

Laval's last stand against the mountain, Marcheron's flight is wrapped in a profound

dramatic intensity. For him the looming war was not a war between peoples but rather a

"European civil war" in which every man was free to choose his camp, and he had no

desire to fight against "a revolution that brought the West his salvation."[106] In the end the

young pilot, flying over Germany, chooses to return to his airbase in Lorraine, suggesting

that there is no way out of the worldly quarrels even for the most faithful believer in

peace. Through the characters of Marcheron and Laval and their ultimate failure to bring

about the "new world" that had been at the guide the *Ajiste* philosophy of life, Augier

sought to cut his ties with the Popular Front and claim allegiance to Nazism and the

German-led European master-men in the coming European civil war. Around the time of

the novel's publication he took the lead of a collaborationist youth group: *Les Jeunes de

l'Europe Nouvelle* (JEN).

"Thinking European": the JEN

At the beginning of the year 1941, Augier travelled to Germany to attend the

Leipzig fair for *La Gerbe* and confront his imagination with the reality of Hitler's

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[104] Augier substitutes the name Applebaum for Grunebaum-Ballin, the director of the CLAJ steering committee.
[105] Marc Augier. *Les Copains de la Belle Etoile*. Op.Cit. p. 229
[106] *Ibid*. p. 245

country. His travelogue reproduced some of the tropes encountered in the article he wrote at the time of the hostels (1938) about the German youth: cleanliness, order, and righteousness.[107] Later in the year, the newspaper articles were expanded into a book, printed by collaboration editing house Sorlot.[108] The book version of *J'ai Vu l'Allemagne* consisted in a set of articles published by the journalist on Nazi Germany before and during the war. It was conceived as a companion to Chateaubriant's *La Gerbe des Forces* and specifically addressed the French youth.

As historian Jerome Moreau notes in his work on Augier's intellectual itinerary, the French reporter and budding National Socialist looked at the Germans in the same way he considered the indigenous people of Finnish Lapland in his ski raid of 1939.[109] In opposition to the Frenchman who had seemingly lost his roots and connection with his ancestors, the Sami people much like the German National Socialists retained some of the fundamental characteristics of their forefathers. According to Augier, the decadent spirit of modernity and their original sense of community transformed into a deeply rooted selfishness had corrupted the soul of the French. The failure of the Republic to foster reform and the military defeat of 1940 were seen as the consequences of the loss of a collective spirit. Germany on the other hand, through the actions of the National Socialists, represented the expression of the rebirth and prevalence of the collective spirit inherited form the Germanic tribes. Drawing from the atemporal forces of the German people, the collective spirit Augier had encountered in Germany seemed to represent the authentic form of socialism: "Germany is collective-minded in its leisure and its work.

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[107] Marc Augier. "J'ai Vu l'Allemagne." *La Gerbe*. March 14, 1941
[108] Marc Augier. *J'ai Vu l'Allemagne*. Paris, 1941
[109] Jerome Moreau. *Sous le Signe de la Roue Solaire*. *Op. Cit.*, p. 105

And I wonder if the meaning of socialism can be acquired, whether the drive towards socialism is a question of education or of purely racial instinct. (…) One can see a powerful drive to organize socialism in the nation. (…) Communal life in an impoverished Europe in the aftermath of the war is, first and foremost, food and housing for all. For the French people it means the disappearance of the privileges of a few."[110]

As the fictional character of Marcheron had suggested in *Les Copains de la Belle Etoile*, Augier's fascination with Germany stemmed in large part from his belief in the inability of the French to organize, act and think collectively as one. The first year of the collaboration had seemed to confirm this intuition.[111] At the beginning of 1941, Alphonse de Chateaubriant asked Augier to create and take the lead of a youth section of the "Collaboration Group",[112] the purpose of which was to strengthen the ties between the French and German youths. The *Jeunes de l'Europe Nouvelle* (JEN – New Europe Youth) organization was formally introduced on May 17 1941 at a rally in Paris where Augier and his second Jacques Schweitzer gave a speech in front Chateaubriant and other representative of collaborationist organizations.[113] For its newly anointed leader, the JEN represented the most advanced organization in what was to define the second half of the European twentieth century: Franco-German relations.

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[110] Marc Augier. *J'ai Vu l'Allemangne*, p. 30.

[111] On the *Chantiers de la Jeunesse* and the leader's of Vichy's youth organization Augier wrote: "They are not precisely adventurers and have never uttered a single word capable of unleashing all of the youth's energies. At the time when France has to play its part through the courage of its great captains, its legendary explorers, its colonizers and its corsairs, it is turning its national youth into an army of functionaries." Marc Augier. *J'ai Vu l'Allemagne*, p. 131

[112] Jerome Moreau. *Op. Cit.* p. 134

[113] The rally took place at the *Maison de la Chimie* in the 7th arrondissement. Marc Augier & Jacques Schweitzer. *Le Dialogue Franco-Allemand: Jeunesses d'Europe Unissez-Vous, Causeries Données le 17 Mai 1941 a la Maison de la Chimie*. Paris, 1941

Augier perceived the "German problem"[114] as the expression of a larger

development with far-reaching consequences: "the gathering of peoples with common

origins and complementary contractual interests."[115] He argued that domestic problems of

economic or political nature could only be solved at the continental level and added, as a

definitive answer to those who could have doubted the necessity to collaborate with the

Nazi occupiers: "Thinking Franco-German today is to think European."[116] The necessity

to think and act with a European perspective was dictated, according to him, by the

alteration of the time and space relationship by transportation technologies: "our hopes

and our worries that could be limited to France at the time of the horse-unit, expand to the

whole of Europe today because the airplane-unit dictates our understanding of time and

space."[117] Developing an understanding of the relationship between space and technology

reminiscent of that found in the writings of Carl Schmitt;[118] Augier conceived of national

formations and the nation-states as belonging to a bygone era. For him, the future of

France was bound to that of Germany and European unity had to be achieved in order to

resist the economic and military onslaughts from other continents.[119]

The relative success of the JEN owed much to its adhesion to a strict Europeanist

ideological line. It was represented in major French cities through local subsections and

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[114] *Ibid.* p. 5 by this Augier meant the emergence of Germany as Europe's most powerful nation.
[115] *Ibid.*
[116] *Ibid.*
[117] *Ibid.*
[118] I discuss the relationship between continental imaginary, technology and space in the writings of Carl Schmitt in chapter 6. On the articulation between space, time, and technology see David Harvey. *The Condition of Postmodernity.* London, 1991; Paul Virilio. *Speed and Politics.* New York, 2006.
[119] *Ibid.* p. 17

counted up to 4000 members at the end of the year 1942[120]. By the fall of 1941 Augier

had left Paris to enroll, alongside Jacques Doriot and other political figures, as a war

reporter in the *Légion des Volontaires Francais* (French Voluntary Legion – LVF), an

auxiliary, anti-Bolshevik corps fighting on the Eastern Front.[121] For him, the fight against

communism represented the only way to preserve western (European) civilization from

the threat of extinction.[122] The destruction of bolshevism was, for Augier and his

comrades the only way to establish true socialism within the confines of European

civilization and the imposition of a fascist program.

From 1941 until the end of the war Augier effectively served as the main

propagandist for the volunteers on the Eastern Front, first as a war correspondent, then

after 1943 as the editor of the LVF magazine *Le Combattant Européen* and *Devenir*, the

official newspaper of the French SS Division Charlemagne.[123] His personal experience of

the war is the subject of *Les Partisans*[124], a book published during the war, and a number

of postwar memoirs published in the 1960s and 1970s.[125] After his departure for the front,

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[120] Jerome Moreau. *Op. Cit.* p. 129 Moreau credits the relatively large enrollment in the JEN to the persistence of some former CLAJ networks as well as its lack of concern for its members' belonging to other collaborationist movements (RNP, PPF, etc…).

[121] On the LVF and the French who fought with the Wehrmacht and the SS on the Eastern Front see Pierre Giolitto. *Volontaires Francais sous l'Uniforme Allemand*. Paris, 2007; Gérard le Marec & Pierre Philippe Lambert. *Les Francais sous le Casque Allemand*. Paris, 1994; Philippe Carrard. *The French Who Fought for Hitler: Memories from the Outcasts*. Cambridge, 2013. In the latter Carrard, discusses the place of memoirs and works of fiction written by former anti-Bolshevik volunteers in the construction of a post-war right wing discourse and alternative historical narratives. On Doriot's personal itinerary see Jean-Paul Brunet. *Jacques Doriot: Du Communisme au Fascisme*. Paris, 1986.

[122] Jerome Moreau. *Op. Cit*. p. 140 Moreau highlights Augier's reliance on a vocabulary borrowed from Chateaubriant's *La Gerbe des Forces*. He specifically notes his use of the notion of "volcanism" to suggest the overflow of negative human energies and rotting souls.

[123] On these two publications see Pierre Giolitto. *Les Francais sous l'Uniforme Allemand*. Op. Cit.

[124] Marc Augier. *Les Partisans*. Paris, 1943

[125] Augier's books on the war published under his post-war pseudo of Saint-Loup have had a strong influence in the far right "identity" circles since the 1960s. Saint Loup published 3 trilogies, the first one focuses on the French voluntaries on the Eastern Front during WW2 and comprises *Les Volontaires*. Paris, 1963; *Les Hérétiques*. Paris, 1965; *Les Nostalgiques*, Paris, 1967. The second trilogy focuses on the other foreign volunteers fighting alongside the Nazis on the Eastern Front: *Les SS de la Toison d'Or: Flamands*

Augier's focus seems to have shifted from questions of youth and ideology to the more practical matters pertaining to the experience of war. In his absence, the JEN continued to expand, creating informal bonds with Déat RNP and Doriot's PPF under the direction of Jacques Schweitzer.

Figure 29 Marc Augier in the USSR, 1942

Picturing Hitler's Europe: Jeune Force de France

By the end of the year 1941, in the wake of the Nazi invasion of the USSR and the creation of the LVF, the focus of French collaborationist forces had shifted towards a pan-Europeanism under German leadership. In *La Jeune Europe*, a quarterly periodical devoted to the advancement of the European collaboration among university students, Marcel Déat argued for the development of a supra national, "European Patriotism."[126] Echoing Augier's arguments in *La Gerbe*, Déat wrote that: "There can only be unity in

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et Wallons au Combat, 1941-1945. Paris, 1978; *La Division Azul*. Paris, 1978; and *Les Voiliers Fantomes d'Hitler*. Paris, 1973.

[126] Marcel Déat. "Patriotisme Européen." In *La Jeune Europe: Revue des Combattants de la Jeunesse Universitaire Européene*. Cahier 3, Fall 1942

the total solidarity of material life, in the total similarity of institutions. War and

revolution are shaking peoples up and unifying tendencies, creating a convergence of

social and political aspirations. It is an absolute pipe-dream to wish for a French unity

without going through the crucible of revolution."[127] At the beginning of 1942, the JEN

started the publication of a monthly magazine entitled *Jeune Force* that featured articles

on the place of France in Hitler's Europe.[128] At the end of 1942, benefitting from funds

from Déat's RNP, the magazine was renamed *Jeune Force de France* and morphed into

an elaborate illustrated publication modeled after Nazi youth publications.[129] Its editor-in-

chief, Philippe Merlin, had been one of Marc Augier's close collaborators since the time

of the CLAJ, and like him, many of the magazine's contributors were affiliated with the

RNP in some capacity.[130]

Following broader geo-political and military developments, chief among them the

weakening of the German army in the Eastern and Allies' landing in North Africa, the

Nazis invaded Vichy's "free zone" in November 1942. In terms of domestic policy it

translated into an accelerated collaboration between re-appointed Prime Minister Pierre

Laval and the Nazi authorities in Paris. It also meant a slowing down of the application of

the *Révolution Nationale* program and a greater reliance on the part of both the Germans

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[127] *Ibid*. p. 3

[128] Six issues of *Jeune Force* were published between May and October 1942. They are available at the BDIC in Nanterre and the BNF in Paris (GR FOL-JO-6072)

[129] The magazine's first issue was published on November 18 1942. According to the press commission of the Paris Police Archives 18 000 thousand copies were printed. Such a significant number suggests that *Jeune Force de France* received significant funding and that it was conceived in order to appeal to a broad audience within the young collaborationist circles. Archives de la Préfecture de Police de Paris (APPP) BA 1713

[130] Merlin's role in the collaborationist circles is briefly discussed in Bertram Gordon. *Collaborationism in France During the Second World War*. Ithaca, 1980, pp. 272-274. Based on testimonies former French Waffen SS, Gordon writes that after his enrollment in the French Waffen SS division at the end of 1943, Merlin found himself greatly disappointed for the lack of concern the Nazis showed for the French voluntaries. He supposedly complained to a SS dignitary in Berlin before committing suicide.

and Vichy on Ultra collaborationist movements such as the PPF, the RNP, and the JEN. On the ideological level it also meant a retreat towards the idea of "fortress Europe" which gained steam at the same time in Germany and in countries either occupied by or allied to the Nazis.[131] Most of the JEN members gravitated in the political orbit of Déat's RNP; unlike Doriot's PPF which tapped in the urban working class, the RNP appealed mostly to the educated and ex-SFIO fringe within collaborationist circles.[132] It was, as some put it at the time, the intellectual elite of the pro-Nazi French forces, an educated minority that sought to define the role of France in the new, German dominated Europe. The most prominent contributors to *Jeune Force de* France, men like Georges Albertini[133], Claude Harmel, Francis Delaisi[134], and Marc Augier all shared a similar trajectory, from left-wing pacifism in the 1930s to Europeanist fascism during the Second World War, and finally anti-communism during the cold war.

From its inception, *Jeune Force de France* proposed to conceive of politics and society in generational terms, Philippe Merlin's editorials were in many instances woven

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[131] On this particular point see Henri Rousso. *Le Régime de Vichy*. Paris, 2007, pp. 85-103; Robert O. Paxton. *Vichy France.* Op. Cit. pp. 234-326; Pascal Ory. *Les Collaborateurs*. Paris, 1977; Philippe Burrin. *La France a l'Heure Allemande*. Paris, 1995; Bertram Gordon. *Collaborationism in France During the Second World War*. Ithaca, 1980, pp. 230-313.

[132] According to Pascal Ory, Marcel Déat was "the paragon of this little republican bourgeoisie, the social progression of which is inseparable of the secular (laïques) institutions." He passed the aggregation exam and became a professor of sociology. His dissertation entitled *Perspectives Socialistes* was defended in 1931 and "established its author as the French theoretician of a revisionist, authoritarian, and national brand of socialism." Pascal Ory. *Les Collaborateurs*. Op. Cit. pp. 104-105

[133] Born in 1911 in a working class family, Georges Albertini became a history professor and SFIO militant in the early 1930s. By 1937 he was a regular collaborator of the *Noveaux Cahiers* periodical which intended to develop Franco-German relations. He participated in the *Anti-Fascist Committee of Intellectuals* during the Popular Front. As a pacifist he supported the 1938 Munich agreements. By 1942 he had become Marcel Déat's first deputy as the administrative secretary of the RNP. Despite his being imprisoned after the liberation, Albertini became an influential figure in postwar political circle, owing to the personal bonds he created during the occupation period. On Albertini see Pierre Rigoulot. *Georges Albertini: Socialiste, Collaborateur, Gaulliste*. Paris, 2012; Laurent Lemire. *L'Homme de l'Ombre: Georges Albertini, 1911-1993*. Paris, 1989. On Albertini's role in the collaboration during WW2 see Jean Lévy. *Le Dossier Georges Albertini: Une Intelligence avec l'Ennemi*. Paris, 1992; see also Pascal Ory. *Op. Cit.* pp. 112-113

[134] On Francis Delaisi's political and intellectual trajectory see chapter 4.

around a semantic opposition between old and new, more or less explicitly pitting the "old" Vichy government against the "new" and "young" Fascist men and their spirit of conquest.[135] For its second issue, which appeared on January 16 1943, *Jeune Force de France* published an article by Abel Bonnard, Vichy's Minister of Education and an ardent proponent of collaboration with the Nazis.[136] The piece entitled *Des Jeunes Gens Jeunes* exhorted the French youth to participate in the "great European upheaval" of the war. He argued that young men (jeunes gens) were the only ones capable to give themselves freely for a greater cause because " [their] soul was free enough for them to give themselves to the present."[137]

For Philippe Merlin, the European war amounted to a "revolutionary shift towards the production of new ideas and new forms."[138] In an earlier article published in 1941 in *Je Suis Partout*, Pierre Drieu la Rochelle had written: "Yesterday, for the freemasons and the Jews of Geneva, or for the agents of the Second and Third internationals, it was essential to renounce (in a dissimulated fashion for the former, brutally declared for the latter) one's homeland to admit Europe. Or rather not Europe, which is accurate, measured and concrete, but the world, which is vague and, like postponing something

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[135] In an article entitled "La Force Solution Française," Merlin compares the European spirit of the French fascists to the "pioneers and apostles who, abandoning this dwindling motherland, went away to conquer our empire." In *Jeune Force de France*. No 4, February 10 1943, p. 2

[136] Born in 1883, Bonnard embraced a literary career and entered the *Académie Française* in 1932. During the interwar period his political allegiance lay with the conservative, anti-republican and anti-Semitic tradition heralded by Mauras and Barres. In 1936 Bonnard broke his ties with the Action Francaise in favor of Doriot's PPF. At the same time he played a significant part in the Franco-German committee and became an honorary member of the Groupe Collaboration after its creation by Chateaubriant in 1940. Abel Bonnard served as the Ministry of Education in the Vichy government between February 25 1942 and August 20 1944. See Jean Pierre Azéma and Olivier Wieviorka. *Vichy, 1940-1944*. Op. Cit. p. 168; Robert O. Paxton. *Vichy France*. Op. Cit. pp. 159 & 332; On the place of Abel Bonnard among other collaborationists in Germany in 1944-1945 see Henry Rousso. *Un Chateau en Allemagne: La France de Pétain en Exil, Sigmaringen 1944-1945*. Paris, 1980

[137] Abel Bonnard. "Des Jeunes Gens Jeunes." *Jeune Force de France*. No 2, January 16 1943, p. 4

[138] Philippe Merlin. "L'Heure de la Jeunesse." *Jeune Force de France*. No 2, January 16 1943, p. 2 Author's emphasis. The sentence is underlined in the original text.

indefinitely, led one without thinking about it, to secretly more immediate calculations."[139] Drieu la Rochelle's Europe represented a re-framed idea of community pushed "beyond and outside the confines and forms of the nation to project other, less well formed, undetermined "forms" of the communal."[140] Both Drieu la Rochelle and Merlin believed that the idea of the nation and the nation-state was ill suited to tackle the challenges posed by boundless ideologies such as communism and capitalism. For the collaborationists who, like them, believed in the idea of a Nazi-dominated, unified Europe, "the production of new ideas and new forms" meant the readjustment of the political and social organization in response to the changing exigencies of the day.

While the JEN helped recruit fighters for the LVF and later the Charlemagne SS division, *Jeune Force de France* served as an outlet for collaborationists of the Europeanist tendency to voice their contempt for the lack of ambition and foresight of Vichy's youth policy. After the closing of the Uriage School by the Vichy government in January 1943, Philippe Merlin wrote that Prime Minister Laval had rightfully chosen to cut baits with one of the remnants of the individualist and liberal spirit of the interwar years.[141] The seeming lack of perspectives for the French youth within the domestic political realm forced the French fascists to look beyond the national boundaries. Despite their relative influence in France the JEN, much like other pro-Nazi groups had remained largely isolated from similar organizations in other European countries. The Nazi authorities in France, the OKW and Abetz's Paris embassy, always tried to limit the

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[139] Pierre Drieu la Rochelle. "La France dans l'Europe." *Je Suis Partout*. August 30 1941, p. 8. Edited by novelist Pierre Brasillach, *Je Suis Partout* was one of the most influential and widely circulated French fascist newspapers during WW2. See Michel Dobry (ed.). *Le Mythe de l'Allergie Francaise au Fascisme*. Paris, 2003; Pascal Ory. *Les Collaborateurs*. Op. Cit.;
[140] David Carroll, *French Literary Fascism: Nationalism, Antisemitism and the Ideology of Culture*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 126
[141] Philippe Merlin. "Vers la Fin du Pluralisme." In *Jeune Force de France*. No 3, January 26 1943 p. 2

direct contacts French fascists could entertain with like-minded European forces. The summer fascist youth games which took place in Breslau (Wroclaw) and Strasburg can be considered a good example of that: in the summer of 1942 representatives from 16 countries gathered for a week in Silesia and Alsace but no French delegation was invited by the Hitler Youth.[142]

Figure 30 Strasburg Games Poster, July 1942 © BNF

The magazine regularly published articles on large-scale youth movements in countries allied with Hitler's Germany. In fact, the closing article of each of the paper's first twenty issues was devoted to a youth movement or group in one of the countries that participated in the Nazi's war effort. This editorial trick made possible to present state sponsored, compulsory youth movements such as the the Italian Ballila[143], the Spanish Falange[144], or the Croatian Ustasha[145], as a possible future or the JEN as a large French

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[142] The Breslau Youth Games took place between August 23 and 30 1942. The first mention I encountered was in a magazine of the Slovak Hlinka Youth from 1942. For extended documentation see the brochure produced by the Hitler Jugend: *Sommerkampfspiele der Hitler Jugend 1942: Deutsche Jugendmeisterschaften Breslau 23. Bis 30. August 1942*. Breslau, 1942

[143] Marc Antonnet. "Avanti!" *Jeune Force de France*. No 10, May 16 1943, p. 9

[144] Philippe Merlin. "La Jeunesse Espagnole Marche." *Jeune Force de France*. No 2, January 16 1943, p. 7

[145] "U Comme Croatie." *Jeune Force de France*. No 13, July 15 1943, p. 10

youth movement. As such, this line of flight towards integration within Hitler's Europe coalesced possible historical becoming and political myth. This series of articles ended with back-to-back pieces on the JEN and Jeunesses Nationales Populaires (JNP – the RNP Youth Section)[146] and the Hitler Youth, a curious yet astute way to liken the small but radical French movement to the massive German model.[147]

European Heroism against Nihilism

Following the example set by the Hitler Youth[148], the JEN and the JNP sought to track down and denounce forms of anti-national behavior among the French youth. Far from adhering to a clear ideological canon, the young French fascists' enemy took the unexpected form of an idle, upper-middle class dandy. The Zazous,[149] a group loosely influenced by the American Zoot-Suits[150] and the German Edelweiss Pirates[151] whose members wore baggy pants and umbrellas on sunny days as a sign of defiance and liked to dance to the rhythm of swing and jazz. For fascist groups such as the JEN the Zazous,

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[146] "Jeunes Révolutionnaires." *Jeune Force de France*. No 17, October 1 1943, pp. 8-9. The official Youth Organization of the RNP, the JNP often organized joint events and rallies with the JEN. They often catered to a younger audience and counted around 3 000 members in 1942. See Dominique Venner. *Histoire de la Collaboration*. Paris, 2000, p. 160; Debbie Lackerstein. *National Regeneration in Vichy France: Ideas and Policies, 1930-1944*. London, 2013, p. 202

[147] Max France. "Ce Que les Jeunes Francais Voient en Allemagne." *Jeune Force de France*. No 17, October 1 1943, pp. 8-9

[148] On resistance youth movements in Nazi Germany see Detlev Peukert. "Young People: Mobilization and Refusal." In *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Everyday Life*. New Haven, 1987, pp. 145-186

[149] On the Zazous see Diana Crane. *Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing*. Chicago, 2001, p. 183; Larry Portis (ed.). *French Frenzies: A Social History of Pop Music in France*. London, 2004; Jean-Claude Loiseau. *Les Zazous*. Paris, 1990

[150] On the Zoot Suit movement in the United States see Luis Alvarez. *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance During WW2*. Berkeley, 2008; Eduardo Pagan. *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race and Riots in Wartime L.A*. Chapel Hill, 2003.

[151] On the Edelweiss pirates see Detlev Peukert. *Op. Cit*. pp. 154-165

who often belonged to the intellectual urban bourgeoisie, represented a sort of perfect

enemy: an idle and seemingly apolitical other with essentially irrelevant and epicurean

concerns. But the Zazous' embrace of American musical and clothing culture also

suggested a more profound form of resistance to the zealous collaborationism of Merlin,

Augier and their followers. According to *Jeune Force de France* the Zazous, too young

and without real leaders, were not blame for their erratic behavior. Rather their lack of

direction in life was a direct consequence of the failures of liberal democracy in the

interwar period, a social model without real leaders and a faulty school system.[152] But the

attempt to belittle a rather small group of high school and university students for its

musical and fashion fancy also betrayed a profound frustration with the inability of the

JEN and JNP to recruit beyond the small circle of converts.

To the idea of Nihilism[153] which, under the pen stroke of Merlin served to qualify

a wide range of political adversaries, from Vichy's general youth bureau to the

exuberantly defiant Zazous, *Jeune Force de France* opposed a conception of heroism

profoundly linked to the adhesion to the Nazi European project. The conflation of these

two ideas came as a response to the increased perception of the inanity of Vichy's

project, meaning that solutions to the social political problems of the time had to be

sought outside of the national boundaries. This de-territorialization of the ideological

struggle was also a consequence of the radicalization of the pro-Nazi fringe in the wake

of the Stalingrad defeat and the invasion of the "free-zone" by the Wehrmacht.[154]

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[152] Gerlenau. "La Mort des Zazous." *Jeune Force de France*. No 4, February 10 1943, p. 4

[153] Philippe Merlin. "Nihilisme et Jeunesse." *Jeune Force de France*. No 17, October 1 1943, p. 2 In this article, Merlin argued that the inability of Vichy's youth bureau to provide the militant French youth with structures and a clear vision for the future amounted to a form of nihilism.

[154] The Wehrmacht occupied the "free-zone" on November 9 1942, one day after the allies' landing in North Africa while the 6th German army capitulated in Stalingrad on February 2 1943. On February 18,

For Guy Lemonnier (alias Claude Harmel) who, after the war, was to be an influential figure in conservative political circles[155], the coming of Europe as a political and territorial reality was necessary and inevitable. The participation of multiple European countries in the war effort against capitalism and communism seemed to be the proof that the "the European nation" already existed.[156] This "nation" of different peoples had, according to the author, been forged throughout history by the Roman Empire and Christian religion, but more importantly perhaps "the descendants of the nomads of the steppes beyond the Danube river, of the fishermen along the Mediterranean shores, or that of the central European peasants all shared a similar bloodline."[157] Lemonnier, like most of his comrades, considered the war as a revolutionary period because they believed there was no turning back: in the same way the Napoleonic wars had signified the advent of the "era of nations", the epochal struggle between fascism and communism had made the European unification unavoidable. The fusion of European nations into a supra-national entity meant the dawn of a new social and political era. Yet, as he noted, most French people had remained blinded by their attachment to the old political forms of

Joseph Goebbels, the Third Reich's propaganda Minister gave a speech at the Berlin Sportpalast in which he exhorted the population to accept "total war" and promised that "all hell would break loose" on Germany's enemies. In the next chapter I argue that this speech shows a shift in the nature of the spatial imaginary of Nazism through the development of a strong Europeanist rhetoric.

[155] Claude Harmel (wrote under the Guy Lemonnier alias during WW2 in the pages of *Jeune Force de France*) was a member of the SFIO and the Socialist Students group between 1934 and 1939. During the war he worked as a journalist for the RNP and published a book on the nature of nationalism in Hitler's Europe. Harmel was sentenced to four years in prison after the liberation. He was released in 1947 and took part in a number of anti-Communist groups and publications. A specialist of the Workers' Unions, Harmel became the director of the *Institut d'Histoire Sociale*, a conservative think tank, in 1976 and served as a mentor for neo-liberal politicians Hervé Novelli and Alain Madelin. On his role during WW2 see Jean-Pierre Biondi. *La Mélée des Pacifistes, 1914-1945*. Paris, 2000.

[156] Guy Lemonnier. "La Nation Européenne." *Jeune Force de France*. No 26, May 1st 1944, p. 6

[157] *Ibid*.

yore.[158] Finally, Lemonnier concluded his highly historicist interpretation by a prophetic tirade on the European soul and the meaning of the war: "Europe will be because it already lives in us, because our enthusiasm will flow from a soul to another, because unlike the dreamers of the past we will use our muscles to serve our faith. If a nation is what we die for then Europe is already a nation."[159]

Moving a step further from Lemonnier's piece towards a macro-historical interpretation, Georges Albertini (writing under the pen name Michel Courage) wrote a few weeks later that the concerted evolution of technology and politics had brought about the era of "continental empires."[160] Quoting an article by Carl Schmitt on "the sovereignty of the state and the freedom of the sea",[161] Albertini argued that development of continental empires was not limited to Europe but rather happened as a global spatial-historical revolution. For him as for Schmitt, whose notion of *Grossraum*[162] he applied to his own analysis, the world was now divided in a few "continental empires" competing for global supremacy: "American, European-African[163], and Russo-Asian." In this piece, Georges Albertini, who was later to be a leading anti-communist intellectual in French

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[158] Lemonnier writes: "Every day that passes reinforces its material cohesion [the European nation] and it is becoming an organic whole. Yet, it still lacks a soul. European nations are bound together, and they now share a common fate, even though so many French people refuse to see it." Lemonnier. *Op. Cit.* p. 6

[159] *Ibid.*

[160] Michel Courage. "Empires et Continents." *Jeune Force de France*. No 27, May-June 1944, p. 5

[161] According to intellectual historian Tomas Mastnak: "Schmitt's intellectual production from that period was a German export article. The lecture on *Staatliche Souveranitat und Freies Meer* was published in Italy even before it appeared in print in Germany, and in French before the year was over (1941). The article *Das Meer Gegen Das Land* was also quickly published in Italian and French translations. The theme of that article became the subject of a lecture, which Schmitt gave at the Deutsches Wissenschaftliches Institut in Paris, in October 1941. The goal of the institute was the moral – part of the occupation establishment and a *forum for collaboration* – was the moral renewal of France out of the German spirit." Thomas Mastnak. "Schmitt's Behemoth." In *Thomas Hobbes and Carl Schmitt: The Politics of Order and Myth*. London, 2012, p. 30

[162] See chapter 6

[163] Albertini perceived the competition for the African riches as one of the main reasons for the conflict between England and Germany.

political circles, summed up the ideology that underlined the Europeanist tendency in the French collaboration. The Allies' landing in North Africa and the German defeat at Stalingrad brought about a radical development in fascist ideology that was expressed in the emergence of an Europeanist spatial-historical narrative. By the spring of 1943, French fascists and their German masters were standing on the same shaky ground, a shrinking continental empire they intended to defend in the name of "European civilization."
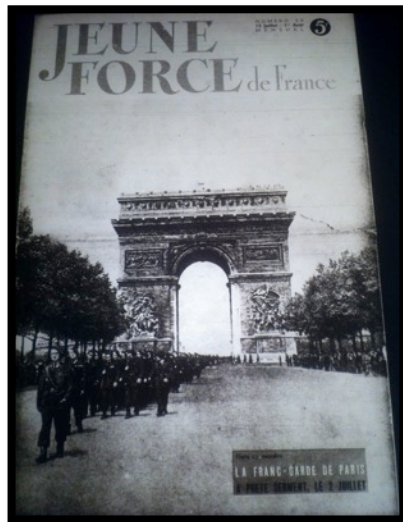

Figure 31 Jeune Force de France Cover July-August 1944

Conclusion

A month after the June 1944 Allies' landing in Normandy *Jeune Force de France* published its last issue. On the magazine's cover was a picture of the Parisian section of the *Milice*, the infamous pro-Nazi paramilitary force, parading on the Champs-Elysées

Strangely enough, this proved to be the only reference the magazine made to a Militia the meteoric rise of which had come to define the legacy of violence and full-on collaboration of the late Vichy period.[164] In fact the Milice, like the policy of deportations it helped fulfill and the struggle against the resistance alongside the Gestapo it carried out on a daily basis, represented the reverse, less glamorous side of the ideology Augier, Merlin, and their associates at JEN, the JNP, and the RNP so vehemently supported. The dream of a fascist Europe in which France would be able to thrive was flawed from the beginning because it necessitated a blind compromising with the murderous policies of the Nazis.

Through the study of the shortcomings of Vichy's youth policy, Marc Augier's political conversion to fascism, and the articulation of youth, fascism, and the idea of Europe in the pages of *Jeune Force de France*, this chapter has shown the ways in which the context the Second World War had made possible for a significant group within the French collaboration to think beyond the national paradigm and develop an original spatial and historical imaginary. Marc Augier's personal itinerary, from the youth hostels to the Eastern Front, is in many way emblematic of the trajectories within this group. His books, be it reportage of fiction, offer insight on the process of conversion to fascism as a form of personal renewal and rebirth. As this chapter shows this transformative experience, which in many ways echoed that of the conversion to the youth hostel lifestyle during the Popular Front, was a necessary stage in the development of a truly fascist personality characterized, in the French case, in the belief in a continental union to protect European civilization. It also represented a profound disavowal for the Vichy

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[164] On the history of the *Milice* see Pierre Giolitto. *Histoire de la Milice*. Paris, 2002

regime and its youth policy on the part of the most radical and politicized fringe of the French youth. The ideological canon that framed the engagement of Augier and the JEN was an uncanny mixture of political opportunism, a spirit of adventure, and the conviction that an alternate modernity was attainable. It was also fueled by a conception of macro-politics that bore the influence of German thinkers endorsed by the Nazis such as Carl Schmitt and pitted European culture and civilization against the United States in the USSR. Although Augier and his comrades were probably sincere in their belief that a continental alliance with Germany would be the best means to protect the French, their blind adherence to Nazism, like Déat, Drieu la Rochelle, or Francis Delaisi, led them to a political and personal dead end. Taking a step away from the specific French context, the next chapter will seek to understand the meaning of Hitler's Europe in conceptual terms, through the works of Carl Schmitt and Paul Virilio.

Chapter Five

The European Idea and the Atlantic Wall: On Spatial Theory and the Emergence of a Wartime Fascist Worldview

> "Europe… History is not made on the ground, through broad or narrow
> spaces, through thick or thin layers of time. History is also made in the
> mind of men, history as a human science. Man is not just appetite; he's
> not just desire. Man is also thought, anguish and dream. Under his feet
> he has a solid and stable ground. (…) All this is not enough, he runs
> away from it. He dreams, flies over these boring realities. He is always
> above, always beyond."
>
> Lucien Febvre[1]

Introduction

As the Third Reich finally crumbled under the concerted onslaught of the allies,

the idea of a unified and democratic Europe started to take shape. In 1957, a long decade

after the end of the Second World War, the European Community was founded in Rome,

the very place that had witnessed the creation of the first fascist state in 1922. The idea of

a unified Europe, both on the economic and political levels, has generally been

understood as a particular product of the post-war conditions, born from the desire to

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[1] Lucien Febvre. *L'Europe: Genese d'Une Civilisation*. Paris, 1999, p. 41

foster peace after the unprecedented destruction waged by the Nazis.[2] Although this

vision is exact, it nonetheless obscures the significance and development of the European

idea among supporters of the Nazi war effort, be it the Nazis and Italian Fascists

themselves, puppet governments like that of Slovakia or Croatia, or smaller

collaborationist groups as was the case in France and Belgium.[3] The concept of "Hitler's

Europe," an expression commonly used by specialists of the period usually, refers to the

territories and peoples which, at one point or another, fell under the control of Hitler's

armies, implicitly dismissing any attempt to understand wartime Europe as a complex

and intellectually meaningful political construct. Working against this assumption, this

chapter looks at "Hitler's Europe" from an entirely different perspective by arguing that

the idea of Europe played a fundamental role in the development of fascist ideology

which, during the course of the war, was re-calibrated from an ultra-nationalist toward a

pan-continental movement, in defense of a militarily and culturally overwhelmed

European civilization.

    Much like the rest of my work, this chapter is concerned with the interplay

between spatial and social imaginaries as the driving force behind the construction of

ideology. Here I argue that the particular conditions of the Second World War made

possible the emergence of the idea of a Nazi led "fortress Europe" as a conceivably viable

political model. Instead of trying to trace a genealogy of the European idea and its fascist

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[2] On Europe and the European idea see Mark Hewitson & Matthew D'auria (eds.). *Europe in Crisis: Intellectuals and the European Idea, 1917-1957*. New York, 2012; Vittorio Dini & Matthew D'Auria. *The Space of Crisis: Images and Ideas of Europe in the Age of Crisis, 1914-1945*. Brussels, 2013

[3] For the Belgian fascist forces and Léon Degrelle Rexist party see Martin Conway. *Collaboration in Belgium: Léon Degrelle and the Rexist Movement*. New Haven, 1993; Eddy de Bruyne. *Léon Degrelle et la Légion Wallonie: La Fin d'une Légende*. Brussels, 2013; Francis Balace & Alain Colignon. "Quelle Belgique dans l'Europe Allemande?" In *Jours de Guerre*. No 10 (1994), pp. 7-41; Jonathan Littell. *Le Sec et l'Humide: Une Breve Incursion en Territoire Fasciste*. Paris, 2007

"deviation" I start by looking at two important texts written in the direct aftermath of the war and exposing two different view of Europe in a *longue-durée* temporal frame: Lucien Febvre's *Course on Europe* which he gave at the College de France in 1944-1945,[4] and Carl Schmitt's *Nomos of the Earth* which was published in 1950.[5] I suggest that these competing visions, Febvre's democratic humanism and Carl Schmitt's radical conservatism,[6] stemmed from a similar understanding of the role played by European civilization in the construction of the modern world but strikingly differed in their modes of interpretation and conception of the future.

The second part of the chapter shifts to the use of the concept of Europe by the Nazis and their allies during the Second World War. I look at two crucial speeches given by Joseph Goebbels in 1940 and 1943 before focusing on articles in the Nazi periodicals *Das Schwarze Corps* and *Signal*. Building on that evidence I argue that the war brought upon a radical reconsideration of the Nazi special imaginary that found its most significant expression in the idea of "Fortress Europe" and the likening of the German war effort to a struggle for the preservation of European civilization against American consumerism and Soviet communism.

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[4] Febvre, Lucien. *L'Europe*. Paris, 1999.

[5] Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth: Law of the Jus Publicum Europeaum*. New York, 2003.

[6] Polemics about whether or not Schmitt was a Nazi seem irrelevant. His relatively early adhesion to the NSDAP as well as his writings suggest that he shared more than a simple abhorrence for the left and taste for order. Fascism and Nazism were polymorphous ideological constructs that made possible for intellectuals such as Heidegger or Schmitt to embark on Hitler's boat without sharing the party's rank and file lust for violence. On Schmitt's relationship with the Nazis see Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*. Cambridge (MA), 2005, pp. 56-59; Jan-Werner Muller, *A Dangerous Mind: Carl Schmitt in Postwar European Thought*. New Haven, 2003; Raphael Gross, *Carl Schmitt and the Jews: The Jewish Question, The Holocaust and German Legal Theory*. Madison, 2007; Gopal Balakrishnan, *The Enemy*. Verso, 2000; Wolin Richard, "Carl Schmitt: The Conservative Revolutionary Habitus and the Aesthtics of Horror." *Political Theory*, 3, 1992.

Building upon this understanding of the centrality of European in the evolution of

wartime fascist ideology, the chapter's third section focuses on the Atlantic Wall that was

built by the Nazis along the coast of occupied Europe between 1942 and 1944. Following

theoretical insights from Paul Virilio's *Bunker Archaeology*[7] I argue that the symbolic

function of bunkers laid on the oceanic shores by far exceeded their strategic value and

that they represent a remarkable source to understand the complex and dynamic spatial

conception of the Third Reich.

Anatomy of Civilization: Lucien Febvre's course at the College de France 1944-1945

In the fall of 1944 Lucien Febvre, the great historian of early modern Europe,

resumed his teaching activities at the *Collège de France*.[8] As a form of homage to his

colleague and cofounder of the *Annales* journal Marc Bloch, who had been executed by

the Nazis, Febvre built his first postwar course as an investigation on the history of

Europe. Framed by the *Annales* intellectual tradition of *longue-durée* analysis[9], it was

structured as an inquiry into the origins of European civilization. Spreading over an entire

academic year and twenty-five lessons, his course dealt with the idea of Europe, the

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[7] Paul Virilio, *Bunker Archaeology*. Princeton, 1997.

[8] For another textual analysis of Febvre's course see Vittorio Dini. "Lucien Febvre and the Idea of Europe." In Mark Hewitson and Matthew D'Auria. *Europe in Crisis: Intellectuals and the European Idea*, New York, 2012, pp. 271-283

[9] In his article *Empire, Ideology, and the East*, Geoff Eley discusses the problematic aspects of the conceptualization of space (or lack thereof) in the Braudelian *longue-durée* historical analysis and its articulation of the time-space relationship: "time functioned as a superordinate category, while place signified stasis and a kind of permanence, the solid and perduring ground of unchageability, in ways akin to Fernand Braudel's geographical time, the deep structures of the environment and their *longue-durée*." Eley. *Op. Cit.* p. 267.

intellectual history of a concept and its political development from the Ancient Greeks to the end of the Second World War.[10]

The choice of Europe as a theme was of course far from innocent, as Febvre intended to firmly oppose the use that had been made of the concept during the Second World War by the proponents of Hitler's "Fortress Europe".[11] For the *Annales* historian, Europe could not be defined as a geographic entity, since natural borders were always the reflection of power relations between states; he preferred a cultural definition instead. He believed things had to be represented in a more "modern" way expressed in terms of waves and streams: "the notion of current, for instance, to which we have become accustomed through electricity, currents that run into or around obstacles, currents that, with perpetual mobility (that of life) diversify, branch in and out and provide us with an image of historical life itself, distinguished by its mobility and diversity."[12] Such a conception of Europe was intimately linked to the historical development of an idea of civilization, a common culture that had grounding in Greek philosophy, the Roman administration, the Carolingian empire, and the Enlightenment. But the defining characteristic of his notion of Europe lay in its adhesion to the Christian doctrine.[13] Febvre saw in the Muslim conquest of the Southern Mediterranean the negative event that provoked a shift in the Christian world's center of gravity, from the Mediterranean to

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[10] Febvre, Lucien. *L'Europe*. Paris, 1999.

[11] In the first page of his text, Febvre agues against the "uses of the notion of Europe that had been recently heard", pitting his own analysis against the Nazi's conception of a continent unified by the German war effort. Febvre, *Op. Cit.*, p. 50.

[12] Febvre. *Op. Cit.* p. 39

[13] On a similar note, Charles Taylor writes about the unity of European civilization: "This sense of the unity of civilization goes way back, into the original self understanding as Latin Christendom bound together by an overarching supranational organization, the catholic church. Since then, under altered descriptions, of which the main modern one has been "Europe," this civilization has never lost the sense of its unity in shared principles of order." Charles Taylor. *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham, 2003, p. 178.

Northern Europe.[14] In his view, Charlemagne's empire represented the embryo of a future

entity, a cultural formation that founded its identity in relation to a "barbarian" other but

more importantly participated in a common cultural ideal.[15]

A structuring idea of civilization and conflation of peoples for the greater good is

of course in contradiction with the national idea, and Febvre did not fail to acknowledge

the 19th century as the demise of the European ideal expressed in the learned aristocratic

circles of the Enlightenment. In a surprising historicist flight, he saw Nazi Germany as

the ultimate expression of the antagonism between the nation and Europe: "we saw the

conquering power of the voracious nation that wanted to make Europe by absorbing all

the members, all the parts of Europe."[16] Perhaps as an effect of his *longue durée*

approach, Febvre's analysis is driven by an eminently culturalist tone, and his conception

of Europe, be it that of Charlemagne, of the Crusades, or that of the final months of the

Second World War, in essence did not seem to fundamentally differ from that from that

of his nationalist or Nazi adversaries. Febvre thought of Europe as "the fusion of the

Mediterranean and the Nordic worlds, two domains that essentially faced the same

problem: confronting the east, on the side of the nomadic peoples from the Asian steppes,

shelter and protect the nascent, frail, unstable European civilization."[17] Although, for him,

the Empire always belonged to the peoples that "built that wall"[18] (the *limes*), that stopped

the invasion, and pushed back into the enemy's territory, the eminent historian of the

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[14] Febvre refers to the Muslim conquest of the Eastern and Southern parts of the Mediterranean basin as "the great betrayal" or "the great turnaround. Febvre. *Op. Cit.* p. 92 & 108

[15] Febvre. *Op. Cit.* p. 125-128

[16] Febvre. *Op. Cit.* p. 287

[17] Febvre. *Op. Cit.* p. 294

[18] Febvre. *Op. Cit.* p. 295

early modern period saw in the cultural syncretism between the East and the West, "the introduction of Eastern cultural elements in the burgeoning European culture" a fundamental aspect of its development.

"Europe raises when empires crumble", the sentence borrowed from Marc Bloch[19] was used by Febvre to argue that Europe as a social-political entity could only exist when neighboring peoples bond together for the common good. It suggested a dialectical evolution in which the aggregation and disbanding of overarching powers bring about transformative crises: the Roman Empire, the Carolingian period, Bonaparte, and finally the Third Reich. Although not directly named, Hitler's Europe was seen as the last expression of the imperial impulse on the continent. From the ashes of the extreme expression of the nationalist will was to emerge a political formation worthy of the name of European civilization.

Ultimately, Febvre merely understood Europe as an idea born from the constantly evolving fear of conquest, destruction, and crumbling: "when Europeans are scared, they are afraid of death by inanition (…) scared of seeing Europe invaded by different social forms different of our traditional social forms."[20] In this approach, Europe was first and foremost an imaginary construct (Castoriadis), an ideal house (Bachelard) structured by an evolving dialectic between inside and outside (Deleuze & Guattari). The dynamic

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[19] "L'Europe a surgi très exactement quand l'Empire Romain a croulé." Bloch, Marc. *Cahiers des Annales*, vol. VII, p. 476. Quoted in Febvre. *Op. Cit.* p. 87. On Marc Bloch's understanding of the European question see Marc Bloch, "Problemes d'Europe." In *Histoire et Historiens*. Paris, 1995, pp. 133-144.

[20] Febvre. *Op. Cit.*, p. 104 In the preface to his book on the development of European civilization from the pre-historic times to the middle age, archeologist Barry Cunliffe see in the notion of perpetual movement one of the characteristic traits of European history: "What made Europe so influential was the restlessness of its people: it was as if they were hard wired to be mobile – and the seas that washed the [European] peninsula facilitated that mobility."

relationship between inside and outside was, in Febvre's mind, highly contingent upon

historical and technical developments. Hence, the ever-changing limits of Europe were

constantly stretched to the point where, in the 20th century, the Atlantic Ocean became as

porous a frontier as the "Asian steppe". Facing the need to conceptualize the boundless

expansion of the European political reality, the *Annales* historian urged his audience to

think of it in a three dimensional space. He concluded that although its surface lay in

Europe, its lines of flight were now infinite, as it was engaged in the collision of universal

interests. The problem of Europe had become the problem of the world.[21]

For Febvre, like the pan-European fascists he forcefully opposed, Europe had to

be thought of as part of an increasingly interconnected world. The very future of

European culture was to be profoundly impacted by the globalization of the world's

economic and cultural exchanges. Febvre's course and the time of its delivery, perhaps

more than its content, is significant in that it suggests that the idea of Europe was much

more central to wartime politics than historians of the 20th century have been willing to

acknowledge. Furthermore, its clear culturalist inclination was aligned with the wartime

discourses it implicitly attempted to engage: to the fascist vision of European culture as

threatened by American consumerism and Soviet Communism, Febvre responded that its

civilization was in fact a complex construction owing much to external input, marking a

clear fracture line between fascism and the *Annales* tradition of liberal humanism.

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[21] Febvre. *Op. Cit.* p. 305

Carl Schmitt, the *Großraum*, and the Concept of Spatial Revolution

Writing roughly at the same time, Carl Schmitt decidedly belonged to a different political tradition: an idealist conservatism that opposed liberalism and socialism as socially de-structuring forces. Much like Febvre's post-war course, Schmitt's writings dealt with the historical evolution of the European polity in the *longue-durée*, but unlike his French contemporary, Schmitt focused on the nature of European politics through the prism of international law, land appropriation and the sovereignty of the state.[22] During the Second World War, Schmitt had spent time in France in October 1941 for a lecture

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[22] On Carl Schmitt and the left see Chantal Mouffe (ed.). *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*. London, 1999. About Schmitt's adhesion to national socialism it seems fair to assume, following Gopal Balakrishnan that, "Despite his ambivalence towards its ideology, Schmitt had been willing to embrace National Socialism because it seemed to represent a solution to what he had identified as the main problems of political legitimacy in an age of mass politics; and until it was absolutely clear to him that the war was a lost cause, his reservations about national socialism concerned only its most destructive tendencies." Gopal Balakrishnan. *The Enemy: An Intellectual Biography of Carl Schmitt*. London, 2002. *In* the 1920s, Schmitt elaborated his juridical and political theory in his two most famous works: *Political Theology*. Chicago, 2007 and *The Concept of the Political*. Chicago, 2006

sponsored by the German embassy in Paris,[23] and in 1943 when he paid a visit to his

friend Ernst Jünger. His thought had, according to intellectual historian Bernard

Bruneteau, played a decisive role in the development of the Europeanist trend within

French collaborationist circles.[24] Schmitt, like many of his contemporaries, was

concerned with the possibility of cultural annihilation and weakening of the state through

the concerted effects of American prominence and the cult of technology, an anti-

modernist stance that was theorized in his idea of *Neutralization* and *Depoliticization*.[25]

His historicist views are perhaps best expressed in a quote from the *Concept of the

Political*: "Each of the innumerable changes and transformations of human history… has

brought forth new forms and dimensions of political association, annihilating earlier

political structures, calling forth foreign and civil wars, suddenly increasing or decreasing

the number of organized political units."[26] This vision was intimately linked to Schmitt's

understanding of the relationship between epoch-specific central *domains* and state

sovereignty and the fundamental role this dynamic played in the geo-political

organization of space. In *The Nomos of the Earth*, his major post-war work,[27] Schmitt

proposed a theory of the historical development of international law from the late middle

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[23] The talk was given at the Deutsches Wissenschaftliches Institut in Paris in October 1941. See Johan Tralau. *Thomas Hobbes and Carl Schmitt*. London, 2013, p. 30

[24] Bernard Bruneteau argues that Schmitt's conception of the Großraum, made popular in France by a series of translations and essays commissioned by Otto Abetz and the German embassy, helped popularize the idea of Hitler's Europe among French collaborationist intellectuals in the years 1941-1942. See Bernard Bruneteau. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 70-80

[25] Carl Schmitt. "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations." In Schmitt. *The Concept of the Political*. pp. 92-110.

[26] Carl Schmitt. *The Concept of the Political*. p. 46. Cited in Gopal Balakrishnan. *Op. Cit.*, p. 114.

[27] In the *Nomos of the Earth*, Carl Schmitt further elaborated on the themes which had been sketched out in the *Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations* at the heart of the Weimar political crisis (1929). He saw in what he identified as the loss of sovereignty of the European states the end of modernity, defined as the rule of the *Jus Publicum Europeum*: the spatial organization of the global space according to the European model of space appropriation. Carl Schmitt. *The Nomos of the Earth*. New York, 1953.

ages to the beginning of the cold war.[28] He argued that the international European legal system, the *Jus Publicum Europaeum*, which came into being at the end of the middle ages and found its most definite expression in the 1648 treaty of Westphalia, was the first *nomos of the earth* (global order). Schmitt believed that the "internal nomos of Europe" had been projected in the "external nomos of the earth" through the process of colonization and the global land appropriation by European powers.[29] He defined *nomos* as "the measure by which the land in a particular order is divided and situated"[30] but the notion also encompassed the forms of religious, social, and political orders determined by the very process of land appropriation.

For Schmitt, the *Jus Publicum Europeum*[31] had formed the *nomos of the earth* from the late 16th century to the end of the 19th century, when it had undergone a remarkable collapse[32] in relation to the *neutralization* and *depoliticization* of European public life. He considered the rise of the United States, the technicization of culture and discourses, and the lack of sovereignty of democratic governments as the main reasons for that momentous disaggregation, the final act of which was played during the First World War. In his mind, the end of the *Jus Publicum Europaeum* represented the end of

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[28] On the particular issue of Schmitt and international law see Louiza Odysseos & Fabio Petito (eds.). *The International Political Thought of Carl Schmitt*. London, 2007; Stephen Legg. *Spatiality, Sovereignty, nd Carl Schmitt Geographies of the Nomos*. London, 2011; William Hooker. *Carl Schmitt and International Law*. New York, 2009.

[29] Carl Schmitt. *The Nomos of the Earth*. *Op. Cit*. pp. 45-47.

[30] Carl Schmitt. *The Nomos of the Earth*. *Op. Cit*. p. 70

[31] Of the *Jus Publicum Europeaum* in relation to the emergence of the modern state Schmitt writes: "The jus publicum Europaeum, originally and essentially was a law among **states**, among European sovereigns. This European core determined the **nomos** of the rest of the earth. "Statehood" is not a universal concept, valid for all times and all peoples. Both in time and space, the term described a concrete historical fact. The particularity of this phenomenon called "state" lies in the fact that this political entity was the vehicle of secularization."

[32] *Neutralizations* and *Depoliticizations*

the modern (European) world order and by extension that of an era of "classical

modernity,"[33] which he considered the highest point in human historical development.

Building on the assumption that the era of the national, sovereign state was gone,

Schmitt sought to elaborate a new theory of land apportioning that was both

programmatic and prospective. In the book *Völkerrechtliche GroßRaumordnung mit*

Interventionsverbot für Raumfremde Machte (1939), Schmitt first exposed his conception

of the "Large Space" (*GroßRaum*) as the global legal system that was to succeed that of

the national state.[34] Based on the Monroe doctrine of 1823,[35] which defined a zone of

American influence that far exceeded the national borders of the United States, the

GroßRaum theory divided the world in territorial areas controlled by a few superpowers

(the United States, Germany, the USSR, Japan, the British Empire). As Gopal

Balakrishnan argues: "Schmitt finally broke his residual theoretical allegiances to the

sovereign state as the cornerstone of international order. He now recognized that the

European system of sovereign states which had emerged out of the rubble of feudalism

was experiencing its own terminal crisis, as the new technologies of warfare and

communication – aircraft and radio waves – created modes of organizing political space

which conflicted with and relativized the importance of boundaries based on the two-

dimensional coordinates of territorial sovereignty. Only those powers capable of

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[33] Detlev Peukert applied the concept of "crisis of classical modernity" to the Weimar period in his of interwar Germany: Detlev Peukert. *The Weimar Republic*. New York, 1996. It seems fitting to apply this concept to Schmitt's world historical analysis which sought to criticize parliamentary democracy in general, and the Weimar republic in particular the downfall of the European political order.
[34] On the concept of the *Grosraum* see Mika Luoma-aho. "Geopolitics and Grosspolitics: From Carl Schmitt to E.H Carr and James Burnham". In Louiza Odysseos & Fabio Petito (eds.). *Op. Cit*. pp. 37-55
[35] On the Monroe doctrine see Gretchen Murphy. *Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and the the Narratives of US Empire*. Durham, 2005

organizing the economic and political life of whole continents could occupy the strategic positions in these emergent, highly dynamic – indeed messy and diverse – geopolitical fields."[36] In this sense, Schmitt's *GroßRaum* theory registered the decisive impact technology[37] had on the modes of appropriation and control of physical space.

Each *GroßRaum*, which was to be composed of smaller areas sharing a common cultural and historical heritage, ought to be controlled by a guardian power, a Reich that "possessed a dynamic political and historical "idea" which determined what constituted a threat to the collective security of the wider *Grossraum*. The second-class satellite states, which Schmitt had once seen as the embodiment of political reason, were now nominal entities: no longer sovereign, they would be honeycombed by a vast network of military bases, radio towers and patrolled airspaces, controlled by a Reich."[38] Schmitt's ideas, for all their elaborate historical-juridical conceptualization, fit within the framework of the Nazi idea of *Lebensraum*. Yet, they also prefigured a post-war global order dominated by superpowers. Schmitt's highly historicist conception of international relations was based on a complex articulation between the fantasies of a Christian conservative mind and the elaborate theoretical insights of an intellectual with an intricate knowledge of philosophy, history, and the international legal system.

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[36] Gopal Balakrishnan. *Op. Cit.*, p. 237

[37] In *The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations* Schmitt writes about the myth of technology in the 20th century: "Given the overpowering suggestion of ever new and surprising inventions and achievements, there arose a religion of technical progress which promised all other problems would be solved by technological progress. This belief was self-evident to the great masses of the industrialized countries. They skipped all intermediary stages typical of the intellectual thinking of intellectual vanguards and turned their belief in miracles and an afterlife – a religion without intermediary stages – into a religion of technical miracles, human achievements, and the domination of nature. A magical religiosity became an equally magical technicity. The 20th century began as the age not only of technology but of a religious belief in technology. Schmitt. *Op. Cit.* p. 85

[38] Gopal Balakrishnan. *Op. Cit.*, p. 237

During the Second World War, Schmitt set out to write a remarkable yet

somewhat overlooked book entitled *Land and See*.[39] The book (published in the 1950s)

was conceived in the continuity of *Völkerrechtliche Großraumordnung* and as a

meditation on the dynamic nature between Land and See in human history. In the first

pages of this idiosyncratic work, Schmitt seemed to fully subscribe to the palingenetic

myth of rebirth that has been described by Roger Griffin[40] as one of the ideological

pillars of fascism: "Man is aware not only of the act of birth, but also of a possibility of a

rebirth. (…) Man can choose, and at certain moments in its history, he may even go so

far, through a gesture peculiar to him, as to change himself into a new form of his

historical existence[41], in virtue of which he readjusts and reorganizes himself."[42] Owing

much to his theoretical inclination towards international law, Schmitt's own iteration of

the palingenetic myth was intimately linked with the territorial reorganization he had

prophesized in *Völkerrechtliche Großraumordnung*. He argued that all significant tipping

points in human history implied a new perception of space, a "spatial revolution." Schmitt

defined the concept of spatial revolution as such: "Each time the forces of history cause a

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[39] Carl Schmitt. *Land and See*. Corvalis, 1997. The book formed the core of the talks Schmitt gave during the war throughout Europe.

[40] Analyzing the Nazi rites of passages as described in Goebbels' novel, Roger Griffin writes: "The moment of conversion to Nazism (in Goebbels' novel) is one of intoxication, of rebirth, of redemption – a transcending of the old self and the decadent age that produced it. (…) The core experiences which the Nazi manipulation of society, in all its aspects, sought to induce was that of being reborn from meaningless individual time into the epic communal time of the *Volksgemeinschaft*." Roger Griffin. *A Fascist Century*. London, 2008, p. 17.

[41] The idea of "a new form of historical existence" can certainly be linked to another tenet of fascist and more generally modernist thought: the idea of the "new man." On the relationship between the myth of rebirth and the fascist new man, Griffin writes: "Fascism's main goal was the total –and totalitarian-transformation of the political, moral and aesthetic culture of the nation to produce a new type of national community and a new type of "man": a social, political, cultural and anthropological revolution subsumed in the vision of imminent national rebirth (palingenesis)." Roger Griffin. *A Fascist Century*. p. 50.

[42] Carl Schmitt. *Land and See*. p. 5.

new breach, the surge of new energies brings new land an new seas into the visual field of human awareness, the spaces of historical existence undergo a corresponding change. Hence, new criteria appear, alongside of new dimensions of political and historical activity, new sciences, new social systems, nations are born and reborn. This redeployment might be so profound and so sudden that <u>it alters not only man's outlook, standards and criteria, but also the very contents of the notion of space</u>. It is in that context that one may talk of a spatial revolution."[43]

Building his argument around past examples of "spatial revolution(s)" such as Alexander the Great's conquests, the Roman Empire, and the impact of the Crusades on the development of Europe, Schmitt essentially described the emergence of new spatial imaginaries linked to what Reinhardt Kosselleck would call new "horizons of expectation."[44] Decidedly concerned with the present and the world-shattering dimension of the Second World War, Schmitt once again hinted at technology as the driving force behind the spatial revolution that unfolded before his eyes: the perception of space (and time) was decisively altered by the "surge of new energies", a set of technological advances (airplanes, radio waves, etc.) which redefined temporal experience and the apportioning of land.[45]

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[43] Carl Schmitt. *Land and See*. p. 29

[44] Reinhardt Kosselleck. *Future's Pasts: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. New York, 2004. Schmitt's influence on Kosselleck is pretty clear in his use of the concept of "Katechon," in the book's first essay (p. 6). About the notions of "space of experience and horizon of expectation" Kosselleck writes: "From that time on [Progress], the space of experience was no longer limited by the horizon of expectations; rather, the limits of the space of experience and of the horizon of expectations diverged. It became a rule that all previous experience might not count against the possible otherness of the future. The future would be different from the past, and better, to boot." Kosselleck. *Op. Cit.*, p. 280.

[45] On the compression of time and space in the modern period see David Harvey. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford, 1990.

In *Land and See*, Schmitt drew important connections between his work and Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*.[46] As Stephen Legg argues, both philosophers understood man as a "spatializing creature who fashions worlds by arranging the basic elements."[47] Both perceived the mastery of the elements such as water (the sea) and the air through technological innovation, as paradigm-changing events that dramatically altered man relationship to space. In this view, social orders could be equated with spatial orders and in a time of *neutralizations* brought on by the imposition of space-less ordering, humans deceived themselves thinking they had entered an age in which everything was mere production and consumption.[48] Through the idea of *Großraum*, he wrote in favor of a kind spatial reorganization that would be instrumental in restraining[49] the growth of the two countries in which the worship of technology had triumphed as a cardinal rule: the United Sates and the USSR.

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[46] In *Land and See*, Schmitt referred to Heidegger as a "contemporary German philosopher" without explicitly naming him. Carl Schmitt. *Op. Cit.*, p. 58. He went on to paraphrase his eminent colleague: "it is not the world that is in space, but rather, it is the space that is in the world.

[47] Stephen Legg. *Spatiality, Sovereignty, and Carl Schmitt Geographies of the Nomos*. London, 2011, p. 263.

[48] Stephen Legg. *Op. Cit.*, p. 265.

[49] In *The Nomos of the Earth*, Schmitt developed the concept of the *Katechon* to explain the balance of power between princes in pre-modern Europe (pre-1648 that is). For him the *Katechon* (restrainer) was represented by the continuous presence of an imperial power throughout the middle ages. As Schmitt argues, this restrained had a particular theological/historical function: "This Christian empire was not eternal. It always had its own end and that of the present **eon** in view. Nevertheless, it was capable of being a historical power. The decisive historical concept of this continuity was that of the restrainer: **katechon**. "Empire" in this sense meant the historical power to restrain the appearance of the Antichrist and the end of the present eon; it was a power that withholds, as the apostle Paul said in his second letter to the Thessalonians." Schmitt. *Op. Cit.*, p. 59. Looking at the evolution of Schmitt's thought, Raphael Gross argues that the concept of **katechon** "emerges only after a long-term confrontation with various elements of acceleration: secularization and neutralization of the political; the formalization and de-substantialization of constitutional doctrine. The process of acceleration that Schmitt opposes plays itself out in highly different forms. In Schmitt's writings before WW2, the image of the Katechon is directed at a range of developments that can be summarized under the rubric of "modernity." Gross. *Op. Cit.*, p. 175 In this analysis, Nazism and fascism would appear both as **restrainer** and an **accelerator**. Restrainer in the sense that they oppose the dissolution of the modern spatial order brought about by technology and neutralizations, accelerator in that this very opposition forces them to proceed to a re-organization of space within the framework of the GroßRaum theory.

In the *Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations* Schmitt explicitly warned his readers against the threat posed by the USSR has the harbinger of a new technological cult representing the coming about of a new *nomos*: "We in Central Europe live *sous l'oeil des Russes*.[50] For a century their psychological gaze has seen through our great words and institutions. Their vitality is strong enough to seize our knowledge and technology as weapons. Their prowess in rationalism and its opposite, as well as their potential for good and evil in orthodoxy, is overwhelming."[51] As early as 1929, Schmitt had sensed what he believed to be a global spatial reorganization in which the old world (European civilization and the international space order born from its irresistible expansion in the early modern period) was being superseded by new superpowers that had pushed the rationalization (secularization for Schmitt) of society to its edge.

Schmitt perceived this change of spatial-historical paradigm as ineluctable: "Relentlessly, the new *nomos* installs itself upon the ruins of the old. It is demanded by man's new relations with the elements, the old and the new, by the change in the standards and criteria of human existence."[52] The coming about of a new era in the global spatial order was not to be equated with the end of the world but instead the end of the age old world domination of continental Europe expressed in the end of the traditional relationship between land and sea. In a final passage that can be read as a criticism of the Nazis' existential fears and the futility of their flawed and shortsighted nature of their

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[50] On the emergence of an Anti-Russian sentiment in Germany see Troy Paddock. *Creating the Russian Peril: Education, the Public Sphere, and National Identity in Imperial Germany, 1890-1914*. Rochester, 2010.
[51] Carl Schmitt. *Op. Cit.*, p. 80.
[52] Carl Schmitt. *Op. Cit.*, p. 59

racialized worldview Schmitt wrote: "The fear of the new is often as strong as the fear of

the void, and as strong when the new is overcoming the void. That explains why many

people see but absurd chaos there where a new meaning seeks to impress itself. Indeed,

the old *nomos* is fading away, dragging a whole system of redundant standards, norms

and traditions with it, in its fall. On the other hand, there is nothing to show that is to

come will, by the force of things, be but chaos and nothingness, inimical to any *nomos*.

The fiercest confrontation between the old and the new forces may as well generate just

standards and criteria and forge new dimensions loaded with meaning."[53]

Schmitt's assessment is remarkable in that it places Nazism within a larger world

historical dynamic. It suggests that Hitler and his followers (and by extension *all* other

fascist formations) had rightly sensed the coming about of the new spatial organization,

but that their apocalyptic fantasies[54] (i.e "the fear of the void") precluded them from

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[53] *Ibid.*

[54] On the apocalyptic tendencies of Nazi ideology in relation to Anti-Semitism see Philippe Burrin. *Ressentiment et Apocalypse: Essai sur l'Antisémitisme Nazi*. Paris, 2004. Although Schmitt did not touch on the nature of Nazi Anti-Semitism per se, it could be argued, following his theory of the *nomos*, that the supposedly rootless and transient Jewish people represented, in the Nazi fantasy, the image of a the new space-less world order. Similarly, Jews could easily be associated with the United States and the USSR which, as Schmitt argued, were at the vanguard of the new cult of technology which had exploded the old nomos. In this sense the destruction of the Jews by the Nazis represented an attempt to deal with the group most directly associated with the threat to the modern world-order. In his well researched book *Carl Schmitt and the Jews*, Raphael Gross has convincingly argued that Schmitt's thought was, in fact, profoundly structured by Anti-Semitism. He suggests that thinking of Nazism as an essentially *political* phenomenon, following Schmitt's friend/enemy distinction as elaborated in *The Concept of the Political*, obliterates racism and Anti-Semitism as structuring elements of Nazi ideology. Raphael Gross, *Carl Schmitt and the Jews: The Jewish Question, The Holocaust and German Legal Theory*. Madison, 2007. About the place of the Jews in Schmitt's thought, Gopal Balakrishnan writes: "In Schmitt's mind the Jewish diaspora was Janus-faced, embodying everything and its opposite – legalism and anarchy; normativism and nihilism; moralism and raw sensualism – oppositions stemming from their essentially free-floating, abnormal condition as a diasporic people." Gopal Balakrishnan. *Op. Cit.*, p. 206. On a similar note, Mark Neocleous has shown that, in the Nazi mind, the Jews posed a double threat to the European world order: "Being a foreigner is the essence of the Jew rather than a transitory state. As such, the Jew poses a double threat. On the other hand, being a non-national nation means that the Jews are equally an inter-national nation, in that their nationless state allows them to drift across the borders of other, real, nations. (…) Both physically and intellectually, the Jew defies the truth on which all nations rest their

understanding the ineluctable nature of the global transformation.[55] It is an invitation to think of Nazism as a pre-emptive strike against an atomized and globalized "post-modern" world order structured by mass politics, consumerism, and the lack of clear territorial coordinates as a consequence of technological progress.[56] The passage from the modern to the post-modern, a deeply intellectual construction, is as much about a transformation of the political realm, as it is about experience and everyday life, two profoundly intertwined realms. Schmitt's focus on the political, despite his seemingly loose, yet ever-present attention to the cultural, stems from his concern in anticipation for a "depoliticized" world.

In *The Origins of Postmodernity*, Perry Anderson argues that the line of fracture between postmodernism and modernism "lies in the cancellation of political alternatives. (…) the possibility of other social orders was an essential horizon of modernism."[57] For

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claims: the naturally ascribed character of nationhood and the naturalness of national entities." Mark Neocleous. *Fascism*. London, 1997, p. 31.

[55] On the idea of the "Great transformation" see Karl Polanyi. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of our Time*. Boston, 2001.

[56] On this question, Mark Neocleous proposes a useful analytical grid to analyze the complex relationship between the political right and modernity: "how is order maintained in a world of constant change and thus disorder? (…) The social dislocation of modernity needs to be dealt with politically. There are three ways the political right (fascist or not) does it:

- Seeking to overcome the effects of capitalism (alienation and class divisions) ideologically.
- Through a strong state and strong leadership, strong enough to maintain order amidst the constant flux of change. Hence the primacy of politics.
- By invoking a return to past values, to as social and moral order prior to the current one of constant change, in which social unity existed. Nostalgically invoking the past and images of the past is a central feature of the political right in general and fascism in particular; in doing so the centrality of the nation and nature to fascist theory and practice is reiterated and consolidated, for the central myths invoked and the traditions invented either are *national* ones or concern some kind of repressed *natural* essence waiting to be reborn in the modern world. For this reason fascist modernity is simultaneously a world of myth."

See Mark Neocleous. *Op. Cit.*, p. 71.

[57] Perry Anderson. *The Origins of Postmodernity*. London, 1998, p. 92.

Schmitt, as for the German idealist tradition to which he belonged,[58] the realm of the

political, through criticism and decisive alignments, was where the world could be

weighed upon. The definition of the political as inseparable from the friend/enemy

distinction sketched out in *The Concept of the Political* served as a guideline for his later

work on spatial division and international law. He suggested, most evidently through his

writings on the *Jus Publicum Europeaum*, that the prominence of European civilization

(and with it classical modernity) was waning, and that continental Europe, if it was to

survive as a significant political area in the global order in the making, had be organized

as a *Großraum* under German aegis.

The *Großraum* theory served as a theoretical justification for the international

policy of the Third Reich, but Hitler's annexation strategy also fell within Schmitt's

historicist framework predicting the establishment of a new post-modern *nomos of the*

earth in which the rise of large powers would signify the end of the modern political form

par excellence, the nation state.[59] Schmitt's decision to end *Land and See*, a book with a

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[58] Perry Anderson. *Op. Cit*. p. 134. In an attempt to solve the difficult question raised by the complex location of the postmodern at the intersection (or rather in the interstices) between aesthetics and economics, Anderson reverts to German idealism and Schmitt's concept of the political: "For missing in this bifurcation (the political impotence of the postmodern era) is a sense of culture as a battlefield, that divides its protagonists. That is the space of politics understood as a space in its own right. (…) Such an understanding goes back to Kant, for whom philosophy itself was constituted as a *Kampfplatz* – a notion in the air of the German Enlightenment, whose military theorization came a generation (my emphasis) later in in Clausewitz. It was a major thinker of the Right who gave consequent expression to this emphasis in the filed of politics. Schmitt's definition of the political as inseparable from a division between friend and foe is, of course, not exhaustive. But that it captures an ineliminable dimension of all politics is scarcely to be doubted; and it is that sense of the political which bears on the culture of the postmodern. To recall this is not to summon any intrusion. The aesthetic and the political are certainly not to be equated or confused. But if they can be mediated it is because they share one thing in common. Both are inherently committed to critical judgment: discrimination between works of art, forms of state. Abstention from criticism, in either, is subscription. Postmodernism, like modernism, is a field of tensions. Division is an inescapable condition of engagement with it.

[59] On this particular point see Heinrich Meier. *The Lesson of Carl Schmitt*. Chicago, 1998, p. 168. On the articulation between historical narratives, the nation-state, and the enlightenment, historian Prasenjit Duara writes: "If History is the mode of being, the condition which enables modernity as possibility, the nation

clear anthropological dimension and filled with existential digressions, on the idea of the void as a deep-seated cultural anxiety was all but a coincidence. He had sensed in the apocalyptic coloration of Nazi ideology the sign of a profound existential anguish. The fear of the void, the fantasy of total annihilation in the ineluctable event of a *spatial revolution*, which fueled the most aggressive tendencies and singular dimensions of Hitler's discourse,[60] were at the heart of Schmitt's understanding of Nazism as a social-political phenomenon. The social and political imaginary of Nazism, saturated as it was with this fear, produced a conception of space that worked in ways similar to the notion of the *Großraum*. Although Schmitt's cynicism and well documented Anti-Semitism prevented him from objecting to the *Lebensraum* plan and the murderous nature of its execution on a moral basis, he nonetheless criticized the Nazis' fear-driven, self-destructing ways as deeply compromising Germany's place in the new *nomos of the earth*.[61]

"The Plastic Demon of Decay": Nazi wartime Europeanism as Anti-American and Anti-Soviet Sentiment

For Balakrishnan, Schmitt's thought was the product of the intense bi-partisan context of the Weimar era, registering the "shocks of an ongoing state of emergency, near revolutionary levels of political tension; they were chronicles of an interwar high politics,

state is the agency, the subject of History which will realize modernity." Prasenjit Duara. *Rescuing History from the Nation*. Chicago, 1995.

[60] For a stimulating, albeit convoluted, reflection on the notion of excess, accumulation and destruction throughout history, see Georges Bataille. *The Accursed Share*. New York, 1991.

[61] Schmitt. *Op. Cit.*, p. 59.

of winner take all contexts for the future."[62] In a similar fashion, the Third Reich's

historical mythology was predicated upon a certain idea of the future, in which the

national community, the *Volksgemeinschaft*, would rule over a large imperial and

colonial space, the *Lebensraum*.[63] The concept of *Lebensraum* had been coined at the

turn of the century (1901) by Friedrich Ratzel, a proponent of an organic brand of human

geography that considered states as living organisms,[64] but it really became part of the

vernacular when the Nazis made it into one of the central tenets of their program. In *The

Myth of the Twentieth Century* (1930)[65] Alfred Rosenberg, one of the most significant

Nazi ideologues, advocated for the conquest of the East and the development of a

German *Lebensraum* between the Elbe River and the Urals. He argued that "Russia owed

its culture and statehood to Germanic influences and that the Bolshevik revolution

represented a collapse into barbarism."[66] This thesis was not unlike Schmitt's conception

of the Soviet State as the expression of the decay of Western European civilization. Yet,

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[62] Balakrishnan. *Op. Cit.*, p. 268.

[63] On the spatial imaginary of Nazism see Geoff Eley. "Empire, Ideology, and the East: Thoughts on Nazism's Spatial Imaginary." In Claus-Christian Szejnmann and Maiken Umbach (eds.). 252-269. On the eastern territories see Michael Burleigh. *Germany Turns Eastward: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich*. Cambridge, 1988; Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius. *The German Myth of the East: 1800 to the Present*. Oxford, 2006; Gerhard Hirschfeld. "Nazi Germany and Eastern Europe." In Eduard Muhle (ed.). Germany and the European East in the 20th Century. Oxford, 2003, 69-90. About Ukraine specifically see: Wendy Lower. "Hitler's Garden of Eden in Ukraine: Nazi Colonialism, Volksdeutsche, and the Holocaust, 1941-1944" In Jonathan Petropoulos and John K. Roth (eds.). *Gray Zones: Ambiguity and Compromise in the Holocaust and its Aftermath*. New York, 2005, 185-204; Wendy Lower. *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine*. Chapel Hill, 2005. On Poland as a colonial space in German literature and film see Kristin Kopp. *Germany's Wild East: Constructing Poland as Colonial Space*. Ann Arbor, 2012. On the mystique of the Frontier (and its ties to the American imaginary) see David Blackbourn. *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany*. New York, 2006, 251-309. On the idea of nature in the national imaginary see Thomas M. Lekan. *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1885-1945*. Cambridge, MA, 2004.

[64] Liulevicius. *Op. Cit*. p. 123.

[65] Alfred Rosenberg. *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*. New York, 1980

[66] Liulevicius. *Op. Cit*. p. 177.

instead of emphasizing the role of a central *domain* in this evolution (technology), it focused on the fantasized responsibility of the Jews.

The spatial imaginary of Nazism was not a rational, fixed universe, but was instead based on a conception of the German race as the superior expression of the Western Peoples, in opposition to supposedly inferior Eastern peoples and most specifically the Slavs and the Jews. It was highly contingent upon the successful realization of the military conquest and occupation of the East. The invasion of the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany and its allies, on June 22 1941, brought about a radical evolution, a release, of Nazi ideologies and policies on two fronts: First, it meant the beginning of the systematic murder of the Soviet Jewish populations and Communist officials by the German forces.[67] Second, as a consequence of the opening up of a new space in the East and the rapidly changing fortunes of the Wehrmacht in its struggle against the Red Army, the Nazi spatial imaginary was profoundly transformed as the spirit of conquest gave way to a dynamic of entrenchment centered on a new European discourse. The coming pages will look at the second aspect of this question.

In a remarkable article on the relationship between anti-Semitism and the Nazi territorial fantasies, A. Dirk Moses has shown that Hitler's conception of space borrowed heavily from the colonial imaginary of the turn of the century, a reworked and ruthless version of which he turned against the populations of the USSR his armies had conquered. As Moses suggests, this policy of extreme violence stemmed from the Nazis' intent to assert the willpower and might of the German people in the face of the negative

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[67] On the relationship between the Nazi spatial imaginary and the Holocaust see: A. Dirk Moses. "Redemptive Anti-Semitism and the Imperialist Imaginary." In Christian Wiese and Paul Betts. *Years of Persecution, Years of Extermination: Saul Friedlander and the Future of Holocaust Studies.* London, 2010, 233-255.

events it had faced in the aftermath of the First World War (military defeat, economic

collapse…). Dirk Moses, following Castoriadis, agues that Hitler's reworking of the

European map first as a political project, then through military conquest, amounted to an

"act of radical imagination."[68] For him, this act of imagination was made possible by the

First World War, an "event" of world altering consequences, which brought about a

rupture in historical interpretation and social categories. Although Dirk Moses' relies

heavily on the concept of political and spatial imaginary (in Castoriadis, Charles Taylor,

or Deleuze) his analysis does not preclude any recourse to Carl Schmitt. On the contrary

it appears that Schmitt's idea of the *Großraum* fits within Moses intellectual scheme both

in terms of temporal framing (WWI as the threshold of classical European land

apportioning), and spatial imaginaries (the imperial space as an anti post-modern world

order – a Katechon/restrainer). In Schmitt's understanding of technology as the main

catalyst behind the explosion of the modern *nomos of the earth*, both the United States

and the USSR were deemed guilty of falling for the "cult of technology."

Historical studies have usually perceived the war in the East as the lens through

which the political imaginary of Nazism ought to be defined, as the apex of racist and

political violence. Yet, as Moses argues, in a way that echoes Schmitt's spatial theories,

that "the Nazis turned the ubiquitous ideology of colonial rule into ruthless expansionism

by emphasizing its exploitative dimension over any meliorative counter-discourses.

Nazism's raison d'être was imperial expansion. The purpose was not just to challenge the

Judeo-Bolshevism of the Soviet Union, but also to secure continental hegemony for the

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[68] Dirk Moses. *Op. Cit.*, p. 247.

ultimate showdown with the United States, whose awesome economic power Hitler had

begun to appreciate only after writing *Mein Kampf*."[69] This enlightening paragraph

suggests that Hitler had already formulated his own worldview in which the USSR and

the United States were deemed enemies of Germany because they already subscribed to a

post-modern, global (either communist or capitalist) social-political "Jewish" ethos.[70]

Although in the first years of the war (1941-1943) Nazi propaganda focused

almost exclusively on the Soviet enemy, unleashing a furious wave of anti-communism,

the American landings in North Africa (November 1942) and Sicily (July 1943)

combined with the disastrous surrender of the 6th army in Stalingrad (February 1943)

brought about a change in the discourses and political imaginaries of the Third Reich.

From a dynamic of conquest and expansion, the Nazi war effort morphed into a defensive

logic of entrenchment, the most palatable sign of which was the total "bunkerization" of

the German nation.[71] The development of anti-Americanism and a form of defensive

Europeanism from 1942 onwards is discernible in the famous speech Joseph Goebbels

gave at the Berlin sports palace[72] on 18 February 1943. The speech was broadcast live on

the radio, and somewhat pompously announced, in the wake of the Stalingrad surrender,

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[69] Dirk Moses. *Op. Cit.* p. 246.

[70] On that note, Dirk Moses suggests that in the years prior to WWI, the German nationalist right had already built an inverted colonizer/colonized dichotomy within Germany: An important distinction between colonial racism and anti-Semitism was the fact that Jews were *in* Germany and doing well. This spatial difference inverted the framing dichotomy of colonizer-colonized in Germany. Especially during WWI, anti-Semites coded events in terms of Jewish success and non-Jewish German suffering, indeed, as Jewish domination over non-Jewish Germans. Already during the 1912 elections, right wing German had decried supposed Jewish control of the "red" and "gold" internationals. (…) The development of capitalism was regarded as a Jewish imposition, a *control system* over gentiles." Dirk Moses. *Op. Cit.* p. 243.

[71] For a critical assessment of Schmitt's conception of war as a transformative force in terms of international right and state structures see Jean-Vincent Holeindre. "Carl Schmitt Penseur des Transformations de la Guerre." In Serge Sur (ed.). *Carl Schmitt: Concepts et Usages*. Paris, 2014

[72] On the "Bunkerization" of German buildings see Michael Foedrowitz. *Bunkerwelten: Luftschutzanlagen in Norddeurschland*. Berlin, 1998.

the storm that was going to "break loose" on the Reich enemies.[73] For him, the Soviet

successes, the "nightmare of the advancing East"[74] amounted to a deadly threat, not only

for the German nation, but for the whole of Europe: "The storm raging against [our]

venerable continent from the steppes this winter overshadows all previous human and

historical experience."[75] The possible "Bolshevization" of Europe would mean the total

destruction of European culture, putting a definitive end to the global dominance of

European civilization in what was portrayed in classical Christian fashion as the struggle

between good and evil.

Figure 33 "Total War - Shorter War" Berlin Sport Palace

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[73] Joseph Goebbels. "Total War." In Randall L. Bytwerk. *Landmark Speeches of National Socialism*. College Station. 2008, 112-140.

[74] This formula, which perfectly captures the fantasies associated with the Soviet advance, can found in Gabriel V. Liulevicius. *Op. Cit.* p. 203.

[75] Goebbels. *Op. Cit.* p. 116.

The Third Reich was here akin to Schmitt's concept of the *Katcheon*, the restrainer that had "the historical power to restrain the appearance of the Antichrist and the end of the present eon; it was a power that withholds."[76] Because it had no territorial boundaries and only sought world domination, the Soviet Union was seen by Goebbels as the negation of the existing world order, a danger from which no European country could escape. Against this imminent threat he concluded, Europe had no choice but to "live under axis protection or in a Bolshevist Europe."[77]

In the alliance between the Anglo-American powers and the Soviet Union, Goebbels, saw the inner workings of the Jewish virus that "conceals itself as Bolshevism in the Soviet Union, and plutocratic capitalism in the Anglo-Saxon states."[78] In this analysis, the European continent under German leadership was under the threat of a two-pronged attack aimed at European civilization and its order. Although Goebbels distinguished between the obvious (USSR) and covert (USA and UK) nature of the Jewish rule in allied countries, he nonetheless equated communism and capitalism as having a similar Jewish grounding. To the "plastic demon of decay" represented by the "international plutocracy and international Bolshevism"[79] he opposed the "entire continent" (effectively excluding Great-Britain from Europe as Schmitt had done in *Völkerrechtliche Großraumordnung*) and argued that "the German people and its Axis

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[76] Schmitt. *The Nomos of the Earth*. p. 59.
[77] Goebbels. *Op. Cit.* p. 120.
[78] Goebbels. *Op. Cit.* p. 121.
[79] Goebbels. *Op. Cit.* p. 120.

allies are fulfilling in the truest sense of the word a European mission."[80] For Goebbels,

the battle of Stalingrad was the symbol of a heroic resistance against "the revolt of the

steppes."[81] Although this formulation was reminiscent of Lucien Febvre's understanding

of European civilization as the result of a contradictory relationship between East and

West, it actually worked according to a diametrically opposed set of assumptions.

Goebbels, the Nazis, and Schmitt the possibility of the steppes' penetration into

the "healthy" European body as a mortal threat, first on the cultural (Bolshevism and the

Jews), then on the military level (the advancing red army). Febvre on the other hands

conceived of the interpenetration between the East and the West as one of the most

important historical cogs in the construction of European identity.[82] Yet, he also argued

that the genesis of a European sentiment happened in the middle-ages when the

Mediterranean and Nordic worlds were linked by the threat of an Eastern invasion.[83]

Although their respective political inclinations lead them to draw diametrically opposed

conclusions Febvre, Schmitt, and Goebbels all emphasized the Eastern threat as a

structuring element for the European identity and civilization. For Febvre, the notion of

European culture always laid within the walls built by the Empire, but the notion of

Europe, from its Roman and early medieval cradle, evolved as Empires crumbled. For the

Nazis, the very existence of the notion of Europe was under the mortal threat of the

"plastic demon of decay" symbolized by the polymorphous concept of "Judeo-

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[80] *Ibid.*

[81] *Ibid*.

[82] On this point, it could be argued that Febvre's conception of the Eastern works as an a-theoretical blueprint for Deleuze and Guattari's war machine and *nomadicism* theories.

[83] Febvre. *Op. Cit.*, p. 294.

Bolshevism." This profoundly historicist vision echoed Schmitt's concerns with the end

of an organized, modern European order, which was to be replaced by a seemingly

amorphous world. The association of Judaism and Bolshevism under a single formula

also suggested the likening of the two post-European powers, the United States and the

Soviet Union, as the negation of the *Jus Publicum Europaeum*.[84]

Figure 34 "The Meaning of History" Das Schwarze Korps

Although the ruthless nature of the war in the East and the Nazi racist ideology

made the USSR the focal point of Nazi propaganda, the place of the United States in Nazi

fantasies gradually increased as the war went on. As Goebbels' post-Stalingrad speech

seems to indicate, the USA and the Soviet Union came to be equated and portrayed in a

similar light as "infected" by Judaism and as a threat to European civilization. In March

1944, *Das Schwarze Korps*, the official organ of the Waffen SS, published an article on

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[84] On this particular point see Georges Henri Soutou. "Carl Schmitt et les Grands Espaces dans le Contexte de l'Allemagne National-Socialiste. In Serge Sur. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 19-35

the "Danger of Americanism."[85] The paper reproduced some of the arguments put forth

by Hitler's minister of propaganda, first and foremost the idea of decay and the likening

of the United States and the USSR as Jewish dominated areas. In the article's first

paragraph, Nazi dominated "young Europe and its young nations" are opposed to the

"senile world of dying liberalism."[86] Here, National Socialism is portrayed as a means to

realize the future, the preservation of national entities under the German umbrella, and

the coming about of "dreams on a world scale, a common Germanic will, a common

European will"[87] filling the void left open by liberalism. According to the author, the

deliquescence of England and Bolshevism as "the epitome of capitalist slavery" left

Americanism as the only alternative to "young Europe."[88]

The constitutive elements of the young Europe and its people are opposed to an

idea of Americanism that seemed to elude definition: "a sound character that develops

from racially conscious lines, tradition-rich families, good upbringing, and close

camaraderie." These ideas were nothing more than a mixed bag of freikorps-inspired

commonplace, but they seemed to oppose a sense of community and authenticity to a

form of rootless consumer culture: Americanism was seen as a spiritual vacuum. As such

it worked within the mental scape of the "fear of the void" defined by Carl Schmitt in the

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[85] "Die Gefahr des Amerikanismus." *Das Schwarze Korps*. 14 March 1944, pp. 1-2

[86] *Das Schwarze Korps. Op. Cit.*, p. 1.

[87] *Ibid*. p. 2.

[88] Americanism was here described in relation to Bolshevism: "Today Bolshevism may have reached its material and organizational pinnacle on the bent backs of its devotees, but as a spiritual movement it is finished. The crass incompetence of its methods and goals have proven it to be the very epitome of capitalist slavery. The only remaining alternative is Americanism. As strange as it may sound, it is the only serious competition to National Socialism's racial worldview in the struggle for the youth, in the struggle for the future of humanity. In the end, however, it is only a forerunner of Bolshevism." *Das Schwarze Korps. Op. Cit.*, p. 1

last paragraph of *Land and Sea*.[89] This anxiety was here expressed in the rejection of Americanism's lack of culture as a "concealed way of running the youth."[90] In the Nazi palingenetic conception of history, youth was endowed with the primary role in the fantasy of the rebirth. In this sense Americanism could appear as the most insidious of the two enemies "young Europe" faced. While Schmitt had criticized the "fear of the void", and the Nazis' blind stubbornness in the face of world altering, yet unavoidable changes, *Das Schwarze Korps* believed the struggle was spiritual as well as military and that the course of events of events could be reversed. The paper fully subscribed to Schmitt's interpretation of Americanism (i.e. consumerism, mass media, and the cult of technology) as one of the driving forces behind the depoliticization of society: "Americanism is a splendid method of depoliticization. The Jews have used jazz and movies, magazines and smut, gangsterism and free love, and every perverse desire, to keep American people so distracted that they pay no attention to their own fate. Even in politics, they are no longer influenced by the head, only by what is under the belt."[91] This uninspired rendering of Schmitt's *Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations* not only shows the ideological congruence between the legal theorist's thought and Nazi propaganda, but also exposes the complex nature of the Nazi political fantasies.

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[89] Schmitt. *Op. Cit.*, p. 59.

[90] *Das Schwarze Korps*. *Op. Cit.*, p. 2.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

A few days before the Anglo-American landing in Normandy the French edition

of *Signal*,[92] the bi-monthly Nazi illustrated magazine, published a special issue on

Europe.[93] On the cover, a portrait of Copernicus holding a globe in his hands which,

according to a caption, represented one of the liberators of the "European spirit

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[92] *Signal* was the most widely circulated Nazi illustrated magazine, translated in 25 languages (and available in the United States until December 1941), its circulation totaled 2 500 000 in the beginning of 1943. See Rainer Rutz. *Signal: Eine Deutsche Auslandillustrierte als Propagandainstrument im Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Essen, 2007, p. 97; See also Jeremy Harwood. *Hitler's War: World War II as Portrayed by Signal*. London, 2014; For a compilation of images from Signal see S.L Mayer. *Signal: Years of Triumph, 1940-1942*. London, 1978 and *Signal: Years of Retreat*. London, 1979

[93] *Signal* No 11, June 1944

ceaselessly searching for the truth."[94] The magazine's editor likened the Nazi war against

"tenebrous forces" to the intellectual war Copernicus had fought in the 16th century. The

core of the issue was made up of two maps: the first one (figure 36) juxtaposed the

"Europe of nations" born from the 1648 treaty of Westphalia (the main map) to a potential

Soviet dominated Europe (small map at the bottom) in the event of a German defeat in

the war. The message was simple but once again reproduced one of Carl Schmitt's main

ideas by insisting on the inevitable replacement of the model of land apportioning born in

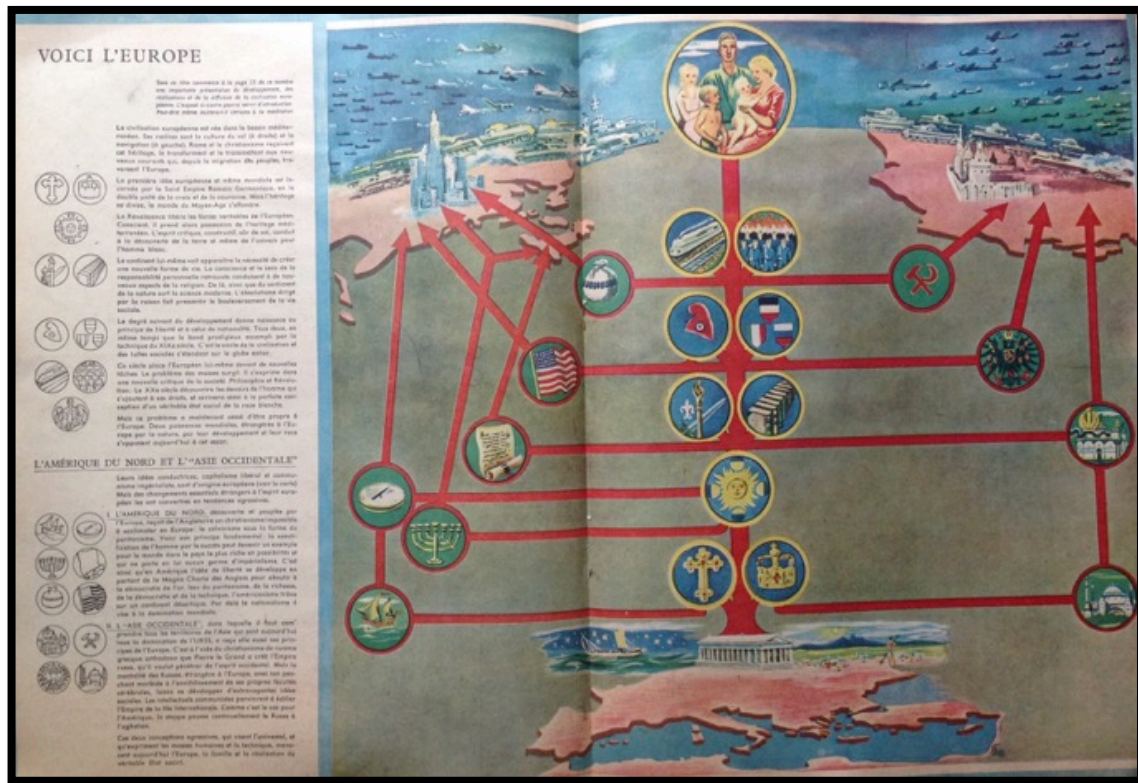the early modern era in favor of large continental entities.[95]

Figure 36 "Voici l'Europe" Signal, June 1944

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[94] *Ibid.*, p. 2

[95] "L'Europe Comme Ceci ou Comme Cela?" *Ibid.*, p. 18

Building on a similar intellectual platform, the second map (figure 37) relied on

complex set of icons organized as a tree and linked together by a set of arrows.[96] The

point of the graphic was to develop a historical narrative of European history and culture,

from the Mediterranean Greek and Latin roots, to the modern ideal represented by an

Aryan family sitting at the top of the tree. Along the way up, each major historical step: a

corresponding blue icon represented Christianity, Absolutism, the Encyclopedia, the

French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution. Each one of these blue icons was

linked to a green icon representing a deviation of the ideal European civilization leading

to the United States (on the left of the map) or to the USSR (the right side of the map). As

the caption argued: "The leading ideas of North America and Western Asia, American

capitalism and imperialist communism are of European origins, but fundamental changes

alien to the European spirit have converted them into aggressive tendencies."[97] In this

framework, both the United States and the USSR were seen as outgrowth and failed

parallels to European civilization. These competing and threatening others shared a

common relationship to space, the American West and the Russian steppes, and a

technicist spirit highlighted by a profound reliance on rational social organization and

technology. For the editor of the magazine, "these two aggressive conceptions, that seek

the universal, are expressed in human masses and technology, they threaten Europe,

family, and the realization of the true social state."[98] The map provided *Signal* readers

with a schematic, yet powerful overview of the Third Reich's worldview and its

historicist vision. To the "dark" version of modernity represented by the technicist,

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[96] "Voici l'Europe." *Ibid*., pp. 20-21
[97] "Voici l'Europe." *Ibid*., p. 20
[98] *Ibid*., p. 20

imperialist, and Jewish influenced United States and USSR, the National Socialist vision opposed a "good" modernity, the uncorrupted strain of European civilization that found its definitive expression in the model Aryan family.

The fantasy of cultural annihilation and the possible destruction of the European ideal by the United States and the USSR combined with the faltering of the German army on the battleground were instrumental in making the idea of Europe a centerpiece in Nazi political discourses in the last two years of the war. The conjunction of these two dynamics of ideological and military retreat and the focus on the idea of European civilization gave birth to a monumental defensive project that crystalized the delirious nature of the Nazi wartime ideology: the Atlantic Wall.

Bunker Archeology and the Spatial Imaginary of Nazism

The spatial imaginary of Nazism, framed as it was by notions of race, living space (*Lebensraum*), and national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) was a dynamic concept: these core tenets always remained at the heart of the Nazis' understanding of space, but meaning of *Lebensraum* was contingent upon the military situation and the changing fortunes of the German army. Goebbels' famous speech at the Sport Palace is enlightening in that it registered the emergence of the Europeanist rhetoric within the highest circles of the Nazi propaganda apparatus. The repeated recourse to the idea of Europe betrays an ideological retreat from a spirit of conquest and colonization to an enclosed and protective space. In more conceptual terms, the idea of Fortress Europe (*Festung Europa*) marks the transition from the predominance of the *Lebensraum* to an

idea of space akin to Carl Schmitt's *Grossraum*. Writing about Nazi ideology, Geoff Eley

argues for a reconsideration of the relationship between "Space"[99] and "Place"[100] as a

means to understand historical experience and imaginary: "The dual processes of

discursive space making and phenomenological emplacement become the particular

meaningful material practices that articulate, institutionalize and attempt to fix human

experiences."[101] The reshaping of the Nazi spatial imaginary in the wake of the Allies'

landing in North Africa (November 1942) and the military defeat at Stalingrad (January

1943) took its most dramatic form in the construction of the Atlantic Wall, a system of

fortified strongholds made of reinforced concrete which ranged from the Spanish border

in France to the coast of Norway.

The decision to fortify the Atlantic coast was taken in the spring of 1942 to

protect the Third Reich's left flank against a potential Anglo-American landing; it was

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[99] On the concept of Space see Nigel Thrift. *Spatial Formations*. London, 1996; Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift (eds.). *Thinking Space*. London, 2000; Henri Lefebvre. *The Production of Space*. Oxford, 1991; Derek Gregory. *Geographical Imagination*. New York, 1991. On the mapmaking as space-producing see Denis Cosgrove (ed.) *Mappings*. London, 1999.

[100] On the concept of Place see Tim Cresswell. *Space: A Short Introduction*. Oxford, 2004; James Duncan and David Ley (eds.). *Place, Culture, Representation*. New York, 1993; Paul Adams, Steven Hoelscher, and Karen Till (eds.). *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*. Minneapolis, 2001; Edward Relph. *Place and Placelessness*. London, 1976. On the relationship between place and experience see Yi-Fu Tuan. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis, 1977; Jodi Ellen Malpas. *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*. Cambridge, 1999. On the importance of movement and travel on the idea place see Marc Augé. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London, 1995.

[101] Geoff Eley. "Empire, Ideology, and the East." *Op. Cit.*, p. 267. On the matter of the space/time relationship Eley writes: "One of the main effect of this really decisive theoretical, or perhaps epistemological, move has been to render as problematic an older model of the relationship between time and space, in which time functioned as the superordinate category, while place signified stasis or a kind of permanence, the solid and perduring ground of unchangeability, in ways akin to Fernand Braudel's geographical time, the deep structures of the environment and their *longue durée*. Against those older habits of thought, the more recent rethinking of space overturns that presumed authority of time. From functioning as a mere "container" of historical experience, space re-emerges as its constitutive medium. We now have in its place a mobile processual field of time and space in which neither of those terms any longer exercises primacy, but rather become enfolded together in a much more dynamic conception of the flows and forms of society's collective life. (…) The old question of what is space gives way to a new one: namely, how is it that particular human practices, experiences and imaginings both create and deploy distinctive constructions of space?"

justified by the limited military personnel available to defend the western coastline, as most of the German army was busy battling the Red Army in the East. As early as March 1942, the German High Command issued a detailed order (directive 40) pertaining to the defense of coastal areas.[102] Hitler, a day after the beginning of the Operation Barbarossa June 22, 1941 moved into the "Wolf's Lair", a large bunker complex in Eastern Prussia[103], and envisioned the fortification of the coast as a means to keep at bay the threat of a western invasion. By November 1943, another directive emanating from the German high command elevated the defense of the Atlantic "front-line" as one of the Wehrmacht's main strategic priorities.[104] This military decree sanctioned the spatial reorganization of the German war effort towards the west in anticipation of an Anglo-American coastal landing. For Hitler, the greater danger now appeared to be in the West: "The danger in the East remains, but a greater danger now appears in the West: an Anglo-Saxon landing! In the east, the vast extent of the territory makes it possible for us to lose ground, even on large scale, without a fatal blow being dealt to the nervous system of Germany."[105] The only way to prepare for such an attack coming from the sea was to accelerate the construction of the fortifications on the Atlantic Coast.

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[102] The Fuhrer and Supreme Commander of Armed Forces. "Directive No 40: Competence of Commanders in Coastal Areas." In Paul Virilio. *Bunker Archeology*. Princeton, 1994, 185-190.

[103] On the Wolf's lair see Uwe Neumarker, Robert Conrad, and Cord Woywodt. *Wolfsschanze: Hitlers Machtzentrale im II. Weltkrieg*. Berlin, 1999; Franz W. Seidler. *Die Fuhrerhauptquartiere: Anlagen und Planungen im Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Berlin, 2000; Jerzy Szynkowski. *Das Fuhrer Haptquartier*. Ketrzyn, 1998. On the Organization Todt see Franz W. Seidler. *Fritz Todt: Baumeister des Dritten Reiches*. Munich, 1986 and Franz W. Seidler. *Die Organization Todt: Bauen fur Stadt und Wehrmacht 1938-1945*. Bonn, 1998.

[104] The Fuhrer and Supreme Commander of Armed Forces. "Directive No 51" In Paul Virilio. *Bunker Archeology*. Princeton, 1994, 191-195.

[105] The Fuhrer and Supreme Commander of Armed Forces. "Directive No 51" In Paul Virilio. *Bunker Archeology*. Princeton, 1994, p. 191.

Unlike the fortified lines of defense that had previously been built in Europe (Maginot, Siegfried, one could even go as far as the Roman Limes), the Atlantic Wall was not a single integrated project but the amalgamation of successive coastal defense works. The German navy was the first to build reinforced concrete structures as a means to strengthen the Atlantic ports that had fallen into German hands in France, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway in 1940. The second phase came in the fall of 1942, after Hitler's directive 40, and consisted in the construction of coastal batteries in the coastal areas identified as possible sites for an Anglo-American landing.[106] As Dutch military historians Rudi Rolf and Peter Saal show, "the arrangement of these batteries followed a common pattern which was improved and modified in the course of the war."[107] The eyes and ears of the battery were located in the control tower that was meant to direct the fire of a number of artillery bunkers located in the immediate vicinity.

Figure 37 "Barbara" Firing Tower in Tarnos, France © Paul Virilio

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[106] For a detailed account on the construction, design, and extent of the Atlantic Wall see Rudi Rolf and Peter Saal. *Fortress Europe*. Shrewsbury, 1988. 54-58. For a comprehensive understanding of reinforced concrete fortifications during WW2 see Jean-Louis Cohen. *Architecture in Uniform: Deigning and Building for the Second World War*. New Haven, 2010, 221-251By the time the allies landed in Normany, in June 1944, 12 247 fortifications were complete, with half a million sea obstacles laid. Blaine Taylor. *Hitler's Engineers: Fritz Todt and Albert Speer – Master Builders of the Third Reich*. Philadephia, 2010, p. 128

[107] Rolf and Saal. *Op. Cit.* p. 55.

The bulk of the planning and construction of the wall was executed by the Nazi

Engineer Corps, the Organization Todt (OT),[108] which relied heavily on forced labor and

the collaboration of local construction firms in the occupied territories.[109] After Fritz

Todt, the Minister of Armament, died in a place crash in February 1942, he was replaced

by Albert Speer who oversaw the construction of the Atlantic Wall. In his memoirs,

Speer has written about the wall as a doomed, foolish and backward thinking military

experiment: "For this task we consumed, in barely two years of intensive building,

seventeen million three hundred thousand cubic yards of concrete worth 3.7 DM. In

addition the armaments factories were deprived of 1.2 million metric tons of iron. All

expenditures this expenditures and effort was sheer waste. By means of a single brilliant

idea the enemy bypassed these defenses within two weeks after landing."[110] For all his

post-war self-absolution, Speer and his ministry carried out Hitler's maritime coastal plan

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[108] On the Organization Todt see Blaine Taylor. *Hitler's Engineers: Fritz Todt and Albert Speer – Master Builders of the Third Reich*. Philadephia, 2010. In the interwar period (1933-1938), Fritz Todt served as the General Inspector of German Roadways and was primarily responsible for the construction of the German Autobahns. The Organization Todt was created in 1938 and its prerogatives extended at the beginning of the Second World War (1940) when Fritz Todt was named Minister for Armaments and Munitions. It also signaled an exclusive reorientation of the organization towards military projects. Todt died in a plane crash in February 1942 and was immediately replaced by Albert Speer. On Todt's prewar work and the Nazi Autobahn project see Erhardt Schutz and Eckhard Gruber. *Mythos Reichsautobahn: Bau und Inszenierung der Strassen des Fuhrers 1933-1941*. Berlin, 1996; Thomas Zeller. *Driving Germany: The Landscape of the German Autobahn*. Oxford, 2007; Rudy Koshar. "Organic Machines: Cars, Drivers, and Nature from Imperial to Nazi Germany." In Thomas Lekan and Thomas Zeller (eds.). *Germany's Nature: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental History*. New Brunswick, 2005, 111-139. As far as Speer is concerned, historians have largely used his memoirs since their original publication in 1969: Albert Speer. *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs by Albert Speer*. London, 1970.

[109] A recent book has shown the zealous collaboration of some of the most advanced French construction firms in the Atlantic Wall works and their lack of content for the forced laborers brought on the construction sites by the Nazis. See Jerome Prieur. *Le Mur de l'Atlantique: Monument de la Collaboration*. Paris, 2010.

[110] Speer. *Op. Cit.* pp. 352-353. By "single brilliant idea" Speer refers to the "loading ramps and other installations built on the open coast" which allowed the allies to funnel crucial supplies, equipment, and reinforcement to the invasion forces. In doing so he underlines the static nature of the German defenses versus the mobility of the Allies, sanctioning a reversal of military tactics from the early stages of the war. In the next paragraphs Speer emphasized the similar assessment of Field Marshall Rommel who had been appointed general inspector of the coastal defenses in the west at the end of 1943, and believed the Altantic Wall would not be sufficient to counter a concerted sea and air general offensive from the allies.

zealously. It seemed that Hitler was deeply involved in the planning of the defensive installations down to the smallest details, designing bunkers models and shelters late at night. [111] Understood as such, these concrete reinforced structures recover a new meaning and can be understood, much like children's drawing imaginary or real houses, as the ideal shelters of Hitler's mind. As Speer's later comments suggest, this strategy represented the implicit acceptance of an ineluctable military death; Hitler's tactics amounted to an absolute reversal of the inside/outside perspective: the Nazi leader's mind and that of his followers were now submerged by the fear of the void they had tried to overcome through military conquest. The metaphorical nature of this reversal is perhaps best explained by Gaston Bachelard's investigations on the nature of the relationship between poetic imagination and space. He argues that <u>outside</u> and <u>inside</u> are inseparable in that they form a dialectic of division, the lines of which can be blurred as soon as they are brought into the metaphorical domain.[112] In Bachelard's mind, the balance between outside and inside is always unstable: "they are always ready to be reversed, to exchange their hostility."[113] From this instability emerges the existential fear of the void, which symbolizes both the possibility for being and destruction. In the face of this inner tension the French philosopher asks, "where can one flee, where find refuge? In what shelter can one find refuge? Space is nothing but a *horrible outside-inside*. And the nightmare is simple because it is radical."[114] For Hitler and his followers, the reversal of this dialectic

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[111] Speer. *Op. Cit.* p. 352.
[112] Gaston Bachelard. *Op. Cit.* p. 208.
[113] *Ibid*. p. 217.
[114] *Ibid.* p. 218.

was brought upon by the progressive sinking of the German armies, which was already perceptible in the fall of 1942, but the potential catastrophe, the fear of obliteration was always present at the heart of Nazi ideology. The inability of the blitzkrieg tactics to bring down the Soviet Union defeated the purpose of the pre-emptive strike strategy and pushed Nazism towards a vain defensive stage the definite metaphorical expression of which was the idea Fortress Europe and its physical embodiment: the Atlantic Wall.
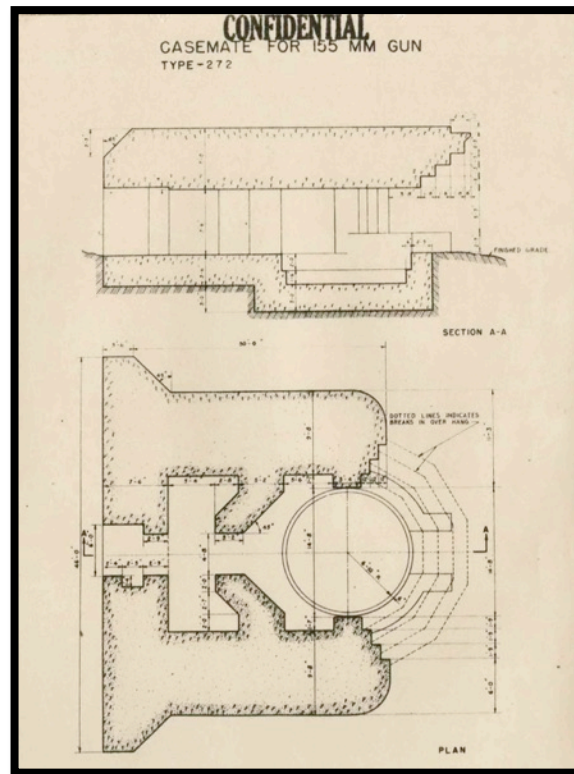

Figure 38 Atlantic Wall Casemate Model

The most remarkable, and to my knowledge only, theorization of the Atlantic Wall in relation to the spatial imaginary of Nazism comes in the form of a short essay by

French social theorist Paul Virilio entitled *Bunker Archeology*.[115] Although Virilio's

engagement with Nazism has been somewhat elliptic, it has always appeared as a central

nexus in his complex theoretical articulation of the relationship between speed,

technology, and politics. In his writings, chief among them his master opus *Speed and

Politics*,[116] the "Fascist moment" and the Second World War represent a transitory stage

in the alteration of the time-space dialectic by continuous technological progress. Much

like Schmitt before him in *Land and Sea*, Virilio sees Nazism as an attempt to both

forestall and slow-down the coming of a technological,[117] post-modern era.

In the book's introduction, Virilio discusses the irresistible attraction he felt for

the abandoned bunkers in the immediate post-war: "I see it as a case of intuition and also

as a convergence between the reality of the structure and the fact of its implantation

alongside the ocean: a convergence between my awareness of spatial phenomena -the

strong pull of the shores - and their being the locus of the works of the "Atlantic Wall"

facing the open sea, facing out into the void."[118] Virilio's thought operates at the

intersection of phenomenology[119] and the history of technology, drawing a relationship

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[115] Paul Virilio. *Bunker Archeology*. Princeton, 1994. For a synthetic approach to the works of Paul Virilio see Ian James. *Paul Virilio*. London, 2007; John Armittage (ed.). *Paul Virilio: From Modernism to Hypermodernism and Beyond*. London, 2000; Steve Redhead. *Paul Virilio: Theorist for an Accelerated Culture*. Edinburgh, 2004.

[116] Paul Virilio. *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology*. New York, 1986.

[117] In *Bunker Archeology's* first chapter, entitled "Military Space", Virilio writes about "the necessity of controlling constantly expanding territory, of scanning it in all directions (and, as of now, in three dimensions) while running up against as few obstacles as possible has constantly justified the increase in the penetration speed of means of transport and communication as well as the speed of projectiles." The "territorial expansion" has here to be understood not only in terms of land conquered but also historically in through the evolution of the means of transportation and military technology. Paul Virilio. *Bunker Archeology*. *Op. Cit.* p. 17.

[118] Virilio. *Op. Cit.* p. 10.

[119] In an introductory volume to the thought of Virilio, Ian James see a clear connection between the French thinker and Edmund Husserl: "Virilio shares with Husserl the idea that modern experience is shaped

between transport and military techniques and the evolution of the social.[120] In a way

similar to that of Schmitt in *The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations* and *The*

Nomos of the Earth, he argues that the rapid development of vehicles, projectiles, and

information technologies brought upon a change in the nature of land apportioning: "The

technological conjunction of the vehicle and the projectile concentrates both movements

of reduction. (…) They are but particles that develop *energy's area*. The conquest of the

earth appears above all as the conquest of energy's violence."[121]

　　In *Bunker Archeology*, Virilio seeks to bring to the surface a forgotten dimension

of the past through a careful study of its material remains: namely the role played by the

concrete bunkers and the idea of a sea-shore *limes* in the crystallization of the Nazi

spatial imaginary.[122] Because their very existence was predicated on a futile defensive

and immobile strategy, the Altlantic Wall Bunkers represented from the start, "the

funerary monuments of the German dream."[123] In the Sport Palace speech, Goebbels had

proclaimed that the Germans were not going to "duck down like Ostriches" in the face of

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by a techno-scientific worldview and, like Husserl, he seeks to uncover, rediscover and analyze a more immediate realm of perception which precedes the theoretical abstractions of scientific knowledge." Ian James. *Op. Cit.* p. 5. See also Edmund Husserl. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy*. Evanston, 1970 (1937).

[120] On this matter, Virilio writes: "The trajectory of an object, as well as the subject, carries an often unnoticed value, and the arrival of a new infrastructural-vehicular system always revolutionizes a society in overthrowing both its sense of material and its sense of social relationships – thus the sense of the entire social space. The superior speed of various means of communication and destruction is, in the hands of the military, the privileged means for a secret and permanent social transformation, a projectile for the destruction of the social continuum, a weapon, an *implosive*." Virilio. *Op. Cit.* p. 19. This process is akin to Deleuze and Guattari's "war machine" but the machine has to be taken here in a more literal sense whereas in *A Thousand Plateaus* the "war machine" appeared to always be a social formation.

[121] Virilio. *Op. Cit.* p. 20.

[122] Ian James. *Op. Cit.* p. 73.

[123] Virilio. *Op. Cit.* p. 29.

danger[124] yet, the construction of the Atlantic Wall represented just that. In a move strangely reminiscent of Heidegger and Schmitt, Virilio argues that Nazi ideology was almost exclusively based on the mastery of one element, the lithosphere: "Despite the war in the air and under the sea, the offensive of the first space weapons, the atmosphere and the hydrosphere remain foreign to Hitlerian ideology. And the feeling of being limited to the earth translates directly into the sentiment of vital space, the *Lebensraum*."[125] Digging deeper in the Nazi attachment to the ground, Virilio draws an opposition between Land and Sea: for him it is "the fantasies of man fearing to advance over the sea, which gave birth to the last West Wall, the Atlantic Wall, looking out over the void, over this moving and pernicious expanse, alive with the menacing presences; in front of the sea Hitler rediscovered ancient terrors[126]: waters, a place of madness, of anarchy, of monsters, and of women, too…"[127]

Moving away Schmitt's understanding of the articulation between land, sea, and existential fear, Virilio relies on his architectural expertise to offer an elaborate interpretation of the significance of the bunker in the spatial imaginary of Nazism.[128] For the French social scientist, the bunker's specificity lies in that it is "one of the rare modern

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[124] Goebbels. *Op. Cit.* p. 119.

[125] Virilio. *Op. Cit.* pp. 29-30.

[126] On the relationship between the seashore and the idea of the void in early modern Europe see Alain Corbin. *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World*. Bekeley, 1998. The title loses some of its appeal in the English translation, it might be better translated as: *Territories of the Void: The Lure of the Sea in the Western World*. On Corbin and his work on notions of imaginary and the senses in history see Anne-Emmanuelle Demartini, Dominique Kalifa, and Alain Corbin (eds.). *Imaginaire et Sensibilités au XIXeme siècle: Etudes pour Alain Corbin*. Paris, 2005.

[127] Virilio. *Op. Cit.* p. 30.

[128] Paul Virilio was originally trained as an architect and urban planner. As such, he moves away from a purely idealistic interpretation of the Nazi relationship to space and instead attempts to ground his analysis in the material dimension of architecture. The physical materiality of the bunker and their hybrid nature between houses and military machines represents a significant departure from the abstract consideration of land apportioning and international legal theory in Schmitt.

monolithic architectures."[129] This exceptional monolithic nature, its virtual separation

from the ground is expressed in its ability to remain solid when the surrounding ground is

being bombarded. The effect of modern weapons, and massive aerial bombing in

particular, are here seen as the reason for a profound dual change in the military and

spatial paradigms: "the possibilities of weapons had become so great that the mineral

element had become a part of the fluidity of the fluid; with the exception of rock, all the

earth is part of the movement of the ocean, a mutation of physical territory, in fact the

first type of "disintegration" before the arrival of nuclear arms."[130] The development of

new technologies of destruction and the "fluid" nature of the land of which Virilio speaks,

the "vertical possibility of destruction and invasion"[131] brought upon a restructuring of the

territories and the defensive walls that marked their limits: from the limits of the city (city

walls), to the limits of the nation states (maginot/siegfried fortifications), to the

continental lands delimited by the Atlantic Wall.

In this context, Fortress Europe is understood as the "moment in history when the

surface of the world exposed itself to aggression."[132] From the fear of the void signified

by the uncanny liquid immensity of the oceanic horizon, the transposition of war to the

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[129] Virilio. *Op. Cit.* p. 37.

[130] Virilio. *Op. Cit.* p. 38. About the nature of the bunker in relation to modern warfare, Virilio writes: "the bunker was built in relation to this new (military) climate; its restrained volume, its rounded or flattened angles, the thickness of its walls, the embrasure systems, the various types of concealment for its rare openings, its armor plating, iron doors, and air filters – all this depicts another military space, a new climactic reality." Virilio. *Op. Cit.* p. 39. The development of military technology studies here is but an expression of Schmitt's theory of technology and the central domain of the 20th century.

[131] Virilio. *Op. Cit.* p. 40.

[132] *Ibid.* Likening the urban and industrial shelters built by the OT to the Atlantic Wall bunkers, Virilio writes: "The was nothing more than a marine and aerial littoral, and the Atlantic Wall could not be dissociated from this industrial and civilian defense complex: the assault on Fortress Europe came in the Third dimension: the last military space."

entire territory effectively signified the "dematerialization of the ground" that in turn

meant that the "earth was no longer good lodging, but a pernicious and random expanse

belonging to the oceanic horizons it extended."[133] The bunkers seemed to provide an

alternative to this dematerialized space, serving as a physically autonomous (detached

from the unstable ground) hybrid between combat clothing and habitat, the "synthesis of

the vehicle that reduces speed and time."[134] In Virilio's mind, the bunkers become

anthropomorphic because they serve as a concrete armor in the face of the ballistic

aggression. They differ from traditional building structures in that there are no seams or

foundations, they "float on the ground"[135] in the same manner as a boat would float on

water, the bunkers' stability in the face of a constantly moving (bombarded) terrain is

guaranteed by its relative structural autonomy.

Figure 39 "Floating" Bunkers in Wissant, Northern France

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[133] Virilio. *Op. Cit.* p. 43.
[134] *Ibid.*
[135] Virilio. *Op. Cit.* p. 45.

When put in historical perspective, Virilio sees the bunker "abandoned on the sand of the littoral like the skin of a species that has disappeared" as the "last theatrical gesture in the endgame of Western history."[136] Put differently, the bunker appears as the last instance of classical modernity's warfare techniques, superseded as it was by its own technological improvement, and a final attempt to preserve a modern understanding of the classical European land apportioning. Much like that of the Nazis and their bunkers, or that of Carl Schmitt and his *Nomos of the Earth*, Virilio's conception of the relationship between time, space, and technology is profoundly historicist. The bunker embodies the historical myth of Nazi propaganda, and the fortifications were nothing but ideological. The casemates appear as a last and futile attempt to preserve physical grounding in a dematerialized world, a monument and allegory to the Nazi political imaginary or, as Virilio himself writes: "the bunkers on the European littoral were from the start the funerary monuments of the German dream."[137]

The immensity and futility of the Atlantic Wall project seems to reveal the mythic dimension of the idea of total war and leads Virilio to wonder about the prospective nature of the war.[138] Much like Carl Schmitt before him, he conceived of the Third Reich as a preemptive war against a de-territorialized or dematerialized world. The theoretical distinction between two expressions of a similar political evolution not only highlight the hermeneutic difference between Schmitt and Virilio's approaches, they also suggest a fundamental evolution in the spatial and political imaginary of the Third Reich. The era

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[136] Virilio. *Op. Cit.* p. 46.
[137] Virilio. *Op. Cit.* p. 29.
[138] Virilio. *Op. Cit.* p. 14.

of "Total War" which started with the invasion of the USSR in June 1941 enabled the most dramatic evolution of the Nazi regime, which can be found in its most radical acts, the holocaust and the mass murders in the East, as well as antiquated, yet symbolic bunkers of the Atlantic Wall, the Wolf's Lair, and the myriad reinforced concrete buildings scattered around the Third Reich's controlled territories. The Nazis attempted to re-make space and territory in a way that sought the negation of the influence of technical progress in the re-shaping of time and space.

From a symbolic standpoint, the fantasy of the thousand years' Reich was based on the assumption that history could be halted, contained, and mastered. As Virilio suggests, Hitler's empire was doomed from the start because it was based on a spatial policy of land appropriation that had been rendered meaningless by the latest technological progress, chief among them the airplane and telecommunications. The Third Reich conceived of itself as a *Katechon*, a restrainer on the model of the Roman emperors who, almost two thousand years earlier had built a series of defensive walls, the *Limes*, to halt the advance of the British tribes and the Germanic peoples.[139] The continental expansion of Hitler's empire and the association of collaborationist or occupied countries to the war effort against the allies made it a truly European project. It came to be equated with a struggle to preserve a classical modern European culture and its legal-spatial embodiments, the nation state and the *Jus Publicum Europeaum* that were thought to be the unsurpassable summit of human history. The Nazis' anti-

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[139] On the Roman *Limes* see: Chris Scarre. *The Penguin Historical Atlas of Ancient Rome*. London, 1995, 86-87; Michael Grant. *Atlas of Classical History*. New York, 1995; Benjamin Isaac. "The Meaning of *Limes* and *Limitanei* in Ancient Roman Sources. *Journal of Roman Studies*. No 78, 1988. On the idea of imperial frontier in the near-East see Benjamin Isaac. *The Limits of the Empire: The Roman Army in the East*. Oxford, 1992.

communism, anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism, although far from eliciting the same reactions on the ground, stemmed in large part from the closed nature of their spatial and social imaginary, their inability to think of a new global order. As Dirk Moses argues, the Nazis' anti-Semitism originated in a desire to protect Germany, the German spirit, against its "inner and outer enemies, an imperial country that had been thwarted by the Jewish colonizer whose international system held Germany in its thrall."[140]

The aporia, the impasse, represented by the Nazis' project[141] was a function of their social and geographic imaginary. On the relationship between the imaginary and the social institution, Cornelius Castoriadis writes: "the institution is a socially established, symbolic network, where functional and imaginary components are combined in variable proportions. *Alienation* is the autonomization and the dominance of the imaginary moment in the institution, which brings about the dominance of the institution over society."[142] For Castoriadis, individual and group subjectivities are structured on the model of a "fundamental fantasy" which emerges from a "radical imaginary."[143] As this chapter suggests, the "radical imaginary" of Nazism was fixed at the level of a complex spatial historical articulation and an inside-outside dichotomy. To the fear of the void and its multiple representations (Communism, Americanism, the ocean, the Jews, etc.), the Nazis opposed an imaginary space of the type Gaston Bachelard calls "felicitous space." To this "eulogized space" were attached protective values and images bound to become

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[140] A. Dirk Moses. *Op. Cit.* p. 248.

[141] *Ibid*. p. 236.

[142] Cornelius Castoriadis. *L'Institution Imaginaire de la Société*. Paris. 1975, p. 184.

[143] Castoriadis. *Op. Cit.* p. 199.

dominant. For him, "space that has been seized upon by imagination (…) has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination. Particularly it nearly always exercises an attraction, for it concentrates being within limits that protect. In the realm of images, the play between the exterior and intimacy is not a balanced one. (…) The imagination is ceaselessly imagining and enriching itself with new images."[144]

Although it might seem problematic to think of the "poetics of space" and imaginary when dealing with the Nazis, I believe it provides us with useful tools to understand their conception of space and its evolution in relation to the radically racist and murderous nature of their ideology and actions. In *A Thousand* Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari write that the fascist state is less totalitarian than it is suicidal: "unlike the totalitarian state which tries to obstruct all the potential lines of flight, fascism builds an intense line of flight, that it transforms into a line of pure destruction and abolition."[145] In the later years of the war, this radical line of flight found its ultimate expression in the holocaust and the total war prophesized by Goebbels. In terms of imaginary it also meant the absolute shrinkage of the spatial horizon of the Third Reich, from the idea of the *Lebensraum*, to fortress Europe, to the total "bunkerization" of society under the ballistic pressure of the allies' mass bombings. The form the Nazi spatial imaginary took depended on the development of events in the real world but, as Virilio, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, the cubby-hole/armor of the bunker was, from the very beginning, the historical becoming of an ideology fixated on an antiquated territorial fantasy. The Nazis'

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[144] Gaston Bachelard. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston, 1994, p. XXXV.

[145] Deleuze and Guattari. *Op. Cit*. p. 281. See also Paul Virilio. *L'Insécurité du Territoire*. Paris, 1993.

political dementia, filled with dreams of racial purity and *Lebensraum*, represented an

attempt to build a "protective house", a shelter that found its ultimate expression in the

radically reduced, virtually indestructible space of the bunker.

Conclusion: Europe, Fascism, and the War Machine

As a member of the LVF and later the French SS Division Charlemagne, Marc Augier participated in military operations in the East. Although his military contribution in the epochal struggle between the Red Army and the Wehrmacht was limited to anti-partisan and police operations in Berlarus and Western Russia, Augier gained from his experience a sense of entitlement akin to that of a missionary. Upon his return from the Eastern Front, as the tide of the war quickly turned against Germany, Augier published *Les Partisans*, a book based on his wartime memories and a reflection on the nature of his engagement alongside Hitler's armies.[1]

For Augier, the experience of the war did not dramatically differ from that of the youth hostels or his Lapland and mountaineering expeditions. It amounted to a more radical expression of the struggle for a new world he had so vehemently advocated since the early days of the French youth hostel movement. In Belarus he believed he had seen the most despicable aspects or urban and industrial civilization, individualism and greed, melt away in the face of danger; men had revealed their true nature when facing their

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[1] Marc Augier. *Les Partisans*. Paris, 1943; In 1962, Carl Schmitt gave two lectures in which he laid a theory of partisan warfare as an extension of the Großraum theory developed in *The Nomos of the Earth*, in which modern warfare, opposing larger, continental political and military entities to non-state actors, would progressively transform into partisan warfare. See Carl Schmitt. *Theory of the Partisan: Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political*. New York, 2007

own deaths.[2] The Eastern Front represented the "geometric area where coalesce all the forces of our miserable continent"[3]: in the topographic peculiarities of the Western Soviet Union, the Russian log-huts (isbas) and the increased distance between urban hubs, Augier perceived the emergence of a world virtually untouched by western culture. This "Slavic Far-West",[4] as he defined it, was open for conquest and destined to become a buffer-space, protecting continental Europe against the mythical danger of Asiatic invasions.

In Smolensk, Augier was confronted with what he saw as "the real origins of Red Russia, the product of a worldview that was diametrically opposed to ours and the destruction of which was necessary"[5]: the "Jewish" architecture, the American licensed factories, had led him to believe that the USSR was in fact an extension of the United States. According to him, the Nazi war in the East had prevented the advent of a new lifestyle: that of the American century. Directly plugged into the Nazi racial fantasy, Augier's idea of the American century meant the rule of a small Jewish elite over proletarized masses.

This understanding of global politics is consistent with the Nazi worldview, insofar as it conflates the American capitalist and Soviet communist models as two dimensions of a Jewish scheme for world domination. For Augier, the Jewish nature of Capitalism and Communism stemmed from their profound and irredeemable up-

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[2] On this Augier writes: "What matters in the end in this fake industrial civilization, the only sure thing that allows to gauge a man's abilities and weigh them so to say, on the scales of the real, is his behavior in the face of death." *Ibid*. p. 60

[3] *Ibid*. p. 73

[4] *Ibid*. p. 80. For a fascinating discussion of the influence of the mystique of the American Frontier on the spatial imaginary of Nazism see David Blackbourn. *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany*. New York, 2007, pp. 293-310; Carroll Kakel. *The American West and the Nazi East: A Comparative and Interpretive Perspective*. New York, 2011

[5] *Ibid*. p. 149

rootedness and their abandonment of any grounding in favor of a global order based on

rationalism and technology. More than a just a racial fantasy, the Nazis' anti-Semitism

was fueled by the fear of a globalized, uprooted world order in which nations and cultures

would be diluted into an endless flow of information and commodities.[6] With this

conceptual frame in mind, the invasion of the USSR and the incredible brutality that

came with it can be seen as a pre-emptive strike against the advent of a globalized, post-

modern world order. For Augier, the former militant pacifist, the war in the East was

worth fighting as "the war that would end all wars", deciding decisively between two

hegemonic and antagonistic conceptions of the world.[7]

From this worldview derived the powerful idea of "fortress Europe" which gained

steam as the war dragged on. As the possibility of a final victory against the USSR

progressively vanished, the concept of a German "vital space" (Lebensraum) morphed

into that of a "large space" (Grossraum), a culturally homogenous European entity under

German hegemony, as theorized at the same period by Carl Schmitt.[8] The speech Joseph

Goebbels gave at the Berlin Sport Place a mere two weeks after the Stalingrad debacle is

particularly enlightening in this regard. Historians have often looked at it as an exemplary

document showcasing the suicidal resolve of the Nazi leadership. Yet, a closer reading

reveals the repeated occurrence of the concepts of Europe and European civilization in

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[6] Mark Roseman has convincingly argued for a new approach to Nazi anti-semitism that would focus on the question of identity and community rather than on the racial fantasies. See Mark Roseman. "Race, Biology, and Nazi Violence." Paper circulated at a history workshop at Notre-Dame University in October 2012.

[7] In the first chapter of *Les Partisans*, Augier describes his arrival in the USSR as a moment of profound questioning on the nature of his military engagement: "The train has stopped. Beyond the ice one can only distinguish the black pine trees that retain a bit of the vanished light. I am dreaming. What in the world is the former pacifist of the youth hostels doing here, in this convoy that moves towards the frontline? Who or what drove me towards this violence that I used to despise, this form of confrontation between men that is war and that my whole generation rejected?" Marc Augier. *Les Partisans*. Op. Cit., p. 21

[8] See chapter 5. Carl Schmitt. *Land and See*. Op. Cit., 1942; Carl Schmitt. *The Nomos of the Earth*. Op. Cit., 2006 (1952)

314

Goebbels' discourse. It suggests, as I have argued in chapter 5, a profound evolution in the Nazis' spatial imaginary prompted by the development of the conflict and the transition form a war of conquest to a defensive military posture.

In this sense, the Europeanist discourse adopted by some of the French collaborationists at the beginning of 1941, a positioning both pragmatic and ideology-driven that was spearheaded by Augier and the JEN, became a central element of the Nazis' spatial and political imaginary when the Wehrmacht started to lose ground at the beginning of 1943. The foundations for this re-imagined vital space had already been laid in the spring of 1942 when the Nazis took on the construction of the Atlantic Wall, a colossal project of interconnected coastal fortifications stretched over 3000 kilometers, from the Basque country to the coast of Norway.[9] As Paul Virilio argues in *Bunker Archaeology*, the dubious strategic nature of the Atlantic Wall suggests that the Nazis attempted to make their own spatial-historical fantasy, a protective and enclosed living space, into a physical reality.[10] This projection of aspects of the Nazi myth onto geographical thinking and military planning shows the flexible nature of notions such as Lebensraum and Grossraum and the progressive drift towards a conception of space centered on the concept of Europe.

Through the examination of the individual and group trajectories of Marc Augier and his followers, my work traces a continuity between the Popular Front and the Eastern Front, between what started as a radical experiment in popular democracy and what came down as the most radically violent and anti-democratic regime in the 20th century. Historians of France have generally drawn a clear-cut line between the interwar

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[9] Hitler signed the formal order for the construction of the Atlantic Wall on March 23 1942, known as Fuhrer directive 40. See Paul Virilio. *Bunker Archaeology*. Op. Cit.,

[10] Paul Virilio. *Bunker Archaeology*. Op. Cit.

experience of the Popular Front and the collaborationist Vichy regime or the Nazi henchmen who ruled Parisian streets and intellectual life during the occupation.[11]

In its search for political alternatives and its attempt to "create a new world", a motto the *Ajistes* never ceased to repeat during the years 1933-1939, the CLAJ in many ways epitomized the spirit of the Popular Front. While the political and economic realities, expressed in the shaky government coalition with the more moderate Radical party, prevented the Blum government from enacting a program that would have profoundly reshaped French society, the CLAJ represented a youthful and radically progressive fringe that never ceased to challenge modern social norms of gender division, geographic boundaries, and inequality. Within the hostels and the hostels' network, through the observance of an *Ajiste* canon based on the practice of travel, arts, and communal life, those who embarked in the youth hostel experiment effectively created an alternate version of western modernity. This life-scale model for a new society based on equality and peace, and the rejection of the market economy and consumerism as foundations for human relationships was very much akin to the "utopian" socialist experiments of the beginning of the 19th century.[12]

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[11] On this topic see Julian Jackson. *France: The Dark Years*. Oxford, 2003; Robert O. Paxton. *Vichy France: Old Guard, New Order*. New York, 2001; Richard Vinen. *The Unfree French*. New Haven, 2007; Henry Rousso. *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*. Cambridge (MA), 1991; Jean-Pierre Azéma (ed). *Collaboration and Resistance: Images of Life in Vichy France, 1940-1944*. New York, 2001

[12] The socialist utopians, most importantly Henri Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Charles Fourier (1772-1837), and Robert Owen (1771-1858), sought to reorganize society along more egalitarian lines. As men who came of age during or in the direct aftermath of the French revolution, their works shared a generational impetus. On the socialist utopians see Barbara Goodwin & Keith Taylor. *The Politics of Utopia: A Study in Theory and Practice*. London, 1982; on the dynamics between socialist utopians and Marxism see Vincent Geoghean. *Utopianism and Marxism*. London, 1987; Shlomo Barer. *The Doctors of Revolution: 19th Century Thinkers Who Changed the World*. London, 2000; on socialism, democracy, and political culture after the 1848 revolutions see Geoff Eley. *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe*, 1850-2000. Oxford, 2002.

Men and women who took part in the youth hostel movement belonged to a generation that had come of age in the aftermath of the First World War and, although none of them had experienced the horrors of the trenches, their conception of life and society was based on a firm rejection of war. Their brand of pacifism relied on a model of political activism that rejected nationalism and national boundaries in favor of international cooperation and mutual understanding. Travel of course played a fundamental role in their political endeavors through their attempts to link the regional, national, and international levels, reaching out to peasants, urban workers, and foreign students alike. The visionary travel policies of Léo Lagrange, the Popular Front's sports and leisure state-secretary, which made it possible for the first time for the working class to travel, played a central role in the remarkable growth of the youth hostel movement during the years 1936-1938.

In order to understand the central dimension of the practice of travel in the youth hostel political vision, a novel occurrence in the French interwar political landscape, my work relies on an original theoretical framework.[13] Following insights from Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* I argue, in the dissertation's first chapter, that the *Ajistes* conceived of the physical sites of the hostels, farmhouses and other buildings, as shelters or safe-spaces under the protection of which they could foster their movements' growth and elaborate their vision for a new world.[14] As the movement rapidly grew in size during the Popular Front period, the *Ajistes* used the expanded hostels network to draw their own

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[13] The only existing monograph on the topic, a dissertation published by French historian Lucette Heller-Goldenberg in the 1980s, although remarkably documented, failed to propose any coherent theoretical interpretation and instead saw in the interwar youth hostels a prefiguration of the 1960s student movements. Lucette Heller-Goldenberg. *Histoire des Auberges de Jeunesse des Origines a la Libération: 1929-1945*. Nice, 1985; The same goes for the section on the hostels in Pascal Ory's mammoth opus on cultural life during the Popular Front: Pascal Ory. *La Belle Illusion*. Paris, 1993

[14] Gaston Bachelard. *La Poétique de l'Espace*. Paris,

alternate social map, a blueprint for a new world, with its own routes and hotspots, that could be superimposed on the pre-existing one. That "Republic of Youth", to use one of the most popular hostels formulas, was based on the practice of travel as a means to counter the supposed ills of modern urban life. It was not fixed entity, either geographically or in terms of power location but instead belonged to its transient members and the user's clubs as the expression of their common will. As such, the revolutionary political model developed in the French youth hostels opposed their *nomadic* conception of the social to a traditional *sedentary* and hierarchical one.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari lay out the concept of *war machine*.[15] For them, the *war machine* indicates for social formations of various structures, composition and goals, a type of organization based on a relationship of exteriority *vis-a-vis* the state.[16] Any given group can constitute itself as a *war machine*, not by seeking war, but by becoming heterogeneous to the state apparatus and administrative procedures that control the social field. In this sense, the CLAJ and the youth hostel movement, by seeking social upheaval outside of the state-sanctioned forms and norms had already organized as a war machine. Deleuze and Guattari oppose *ribbed spaces* – understood as the areas where the state deploys its organizing power – and

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[15] Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari. "Traité de Nomadologie: La Machine de Guerre." In *Mille Plateaux*. Paris, 1980

[16] On the question of the irreducible nature of the war machine, Deleuze and Guattari write: "Bands, no less than worldwide organizations, imply a form irreducible to the State and that this form of exteriority necessarily presents itself as a diffuse and polymorphous war machine. It is a *nomos* very different from the "law." The State-form, as a form of interiority, has a tendency to reproduce itself, remaining identical to itself across its variations and easily recognizable within the limits of its poles, always seeking public recognition (there is no masked State). But the war machine's form of exteriority is such that it exists only in its own metamorphoses; it exists in an industrial innovation as well as in a technological invention, in a commercial circuit as well as in a religious creation, in all flows and currents that only secondarily allow themselves to be appropriated by the State. It is in terms not of independence, but not of existence and competition *in a perpetual field of interaction*, that we must conceive of exteriority and interiority, war machines of metamorphosis and State apparatuses of identity, bands and kingdoms, megamachines and empires. The same field circumscribes its interiority in States, but describes its exteriority in what escapes States or stands against states." Deleuze and Guattari. *Mille Plateaux*. Op. Cit., p. 446

smooth spaces – areas removed from the grasp of state power – as the respective realms of the *sedentary* on the one hand, and the *nomadic* on the other. The youth hostels' *war machine* is *nomadic* both literally and figuratively in that it charts out and occupies such a *smooth space*. In doing so it seeks to escape the State's territorializing activities, the quartering of the social and geographic space.

A significant part of this work has been devoted to the transition, operated by Augier and his followers, from the left wing and pacifist CLAJ, to the battlefields of the Eastern front. The recourse to intellectual history, and the analysis of the emergence of fascist and Europeanist discourses in the 1930s, a trend represented by the decisive role Alphonse de Chateaubriant's writings played in Augier's conversion to fascism, does not suffice to explain this radical switch in political allegiances. As my research suggests, the adhesion to such ideas was conditioned by the very practice of the youth hostels and the search for *externality* in regard to the rest of society. The concept of *nomadism* is present as a structuring element, but not without contradictions, in all of Augier's works from the late 1930s and the 1940s.[17] In fact, it seems that he conceived of *nomadism* as the common thread between his various activities – as an *Ajiste*, an adventurer, a journalist, an anti-Bolshevik voluntary… - during the interwar period and the Second World War. His adhesion to the youth hostel movement or the Europeanist brand of fascism seems motivated by the recognition of the revolutionary potential of both movements.

Likewise, Augier's switch from the CLAJ to Chateaubriant's Europeanist national-socialism happened, around 1938-1939, at a time when it had become clear that

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[17] In *Les Partisans*, Augier writes that "camping is practiced exclusively by urban dwellers, the urban dweller is rootless, therefore a nomad." In Augier. *Op. Cit.* p. 122. In *Les Copains de la Belle Etoile* and *Les Skieurs de la Nuit*, Augier on the contrary opposes the *Nomads* (the *Ajistes*, the Sami) to the modern city dwellers.

the youth hostel movement would not succeed in bringing about a "new world."

Although he remained a committed *Ajiste* and the editor of the CLAJ magazine, until the

spring of 1940, Augier's writings and the practice of elitist activities (mountaineering,

cross-continent trips, Lapland expedition) that fell outside of the youth hostel canon

suggest that he had all but abandoned the hostels ideal by the time the last Popular Front

government stepped down (April 1938). The political switch from the CLAJ to fascism

has to be understood in regard to the closing of the *line of flight* of the youth hostel

movement.[18] The looming war, the conscription of young men effectively meant the

failure of the hostels to realize peace, a seemingly unattainable goal that had been the

driving force behind the movement. As the possibility to change the future vanished, the

youth hostels were reduced to a mere network of cheap hotels, an outcome the *Ajistes* had

so vehemently rejected. The movement had lost its meaning.

Borrowing as it did from German romantic traditions, the French youth hostel

movement was all about community, but notions of *Volk* and *Volksgemeinschaft* had been

replaced by a kind of republican universalism that sought to include large fraction of the

society provided they fit the generational criteria and abide to the *Ajiste* way of life. Like

the *Wandervogel* before them, members of the CLAJ rejected the individualism of the

metropolis in favor of a new form of community structured as an antidote, a positive

opposite to the supposed ills of the modern world. The underlying ambition of the youth

hostels was to re-create the social bonds that had been destroyed by the market economy

and industrial modernity. The various attempts by its members to return to the land, their

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[18] For Deleuze and Guattari, the *lines of flight* represent the possible historical becoming(s) for the *war machine* that is understood as "a linear ordering that is built on a number of *lines of flight*. In this sense the *war machine* is not intended for war; it is concerned with a very special object, *smooth space*, that it creates, occupies and propagates." Gilles Deleuze. *Pourparlers 1972-1990*. Paris, 2003, p. 50

quasi-ethnographic interest in folklore and Augier's own fascination with tight knit communities in Lapland or the Alps all point to that direction. The centrality of the notion of community in the youth hostel experience should also be considered a factor in its possible mutation towards fascism.

The fading of the youth hostels dynamism, their inability to bring about permanent peace and a new world, prompted Augier and his partisans to seek another model or political form capable of shaking up modern society. Although the youth hostel and Nazi ideals were based on diametrically opposed conceptions of the social, their shared position of externality towards the state may have made them compatible in some counterintuitive ways. Similarly, their shared insistence on the re-creation of the social bonds that had been threatened by consumerism and rational thinking made it possible for some of the *Ajistes* to consider the similarities rather than the differences between these two movements. As the first chapter suggests, the German origins of the youth hostel movement, born from a romantic tradition that erected the return to nature as a cardinal rule, played a fundamental role in uniting youths from European countries through a similar set of practices based on travel and communal life. The continental dimension of the youth hostels, as a generational movement that sought to transcend national boundaries, also made the possibility of a European unification, regardless of it modalities, appealing to some.

The hostels' commitment to practice rather than ideology also participated in making radical shifts in political allegiances thinkable. Spatial imaginaries and historical becoming were the main structuring elements of the *Ajiste* movement and, as its social and political horizon vanished with the advent of the Second World War, individual

members were left to themselves to figure out the proper stance to adopt. The majority of them chose to side with the democratic legacy of the Popular Front and adopt defiant attitudes towards Vichy and the German occupation that often led them to take part in resistance activities. Those who followed Augier, in the JEN or the LVF, often perceived their fight for Hitler's Europe as the continuation of the youth hostel experiment.

At the end of the war, the allies' quick advance on the western front prompted the evacuation of the most prominent French collaborators to Sigmaringen, in Southern Germany. In a surreal ambiance described with much contempt by Louis Ferdinand Céline,[19] Augier spent a few months in the German town[20] before finding his way to Argentina after hiding away in France and Italy. There, he served as an instructor in the alpine division of the Argentinean military and worked on his memoirs and various pieces of writing.[21] Having been absolved for his wartime deeds, he returned to France in 1953 after the publication, under the pen name Saint-Loup, of a novel entitled *The Night Starts at Cape Horn*.[22] The book, the plot of which was centered on the struggle for survival of the indigenous peoples of Patagonia, initially received a critical acclaim; it was one of the frontrunners for the prestigious Goncourt literary prize until its removal from the competition after the identity of its author was revealed.[23]

For the next 40 years or so, until his death in 1990, Augier/Saint-Loup published an immense body of work on his two major fantasies: the volunteers on the Eastern front

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[19] Louis-Ferdinand Céline. *D'un Chateau l'Autre.* Paris, 1957

[20] For a historians' view on Sigmaringen see Henry Rousso. *Un Chateau en Allemagne: La France de Pétain en Exil, Sigmaringen 1944-1945*. Paris, 1980; Christine Sautermeister. *Céline a Sigmaringen*. Montréal, 2013

[21] On Augier's time in Argentina see Uki Goni. *The Real Odesssa: Smuggling the Nazi's to Peron's Argentina*. London, 2003

[22] Saint-Loup. *La Nuit Commence au Cap-Horn*. Paris, 1953

[23] Augier's identity was revealed in 1953 by an article in the *Figaro Littéraire* magazine.

and the ancestral communities of Europe. The latter was centered on the notion of *carnal fatherlands* (patries charnelles), based on Alphonse de Chateaubriant's regional and organic nationalism, which conceived of Europe as the home of a large number of interrelated, ethnically and culturally coherent human groups.[24] This primarily racial conception of culture, history and society was clearly influenced by the German Volkisch movement, but it integrated the idea of Europe, as in Schmitt's Grossraum, as it had been developed during the Second World War. In *Gotterdammerung*, his last and semi-autobiographic work on his experience in the Waffen SS, Saint-Loup recalls his time in "Haus Germania", the SS training school in Heidelsheim. According to him, a fraction of the SS leadership had ascribed to a new plan, moving away from pangermanism in favor of a Federal European entity, a "borderless, decentralized Europe that would extend from the Atlantic to the Urals."[25] At the SS school, Augier claimed, he had seen the future SS leaders adopt a "pan European, supranational, and anti-imperialist" project, the idea of which had come, in large part as a response to the involvement of voluntaries from other European countries.[26] In Heidelsheim he had seen a map that contained the essence of this reworked Nazi project. He later produced a reworked version of it in one of his books: *Les SS de la Toison d'Or*.[27]

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[24] The series comprised books on the people of Britanny, *Plus de Pardon Pour les Bretons*. Paris, 1971; the Occitan of southwestern France, *Nouveaux Cathares Pour Montségur*. Paris, 1986; and the peoples of Piedmont, *La République du Mont-Blanc*. Paris, 1982

[25] On this particular point see the work of literary historian Philippe Carrard. *The French Who Fought for Hitler: Memories from the Outcasts*. Cambridge, 2010, p. 148

[26] Saint-Loup. *Gotterdammerung: Ou Rencontre avec la Bete*. Paris, 1986, p. 94

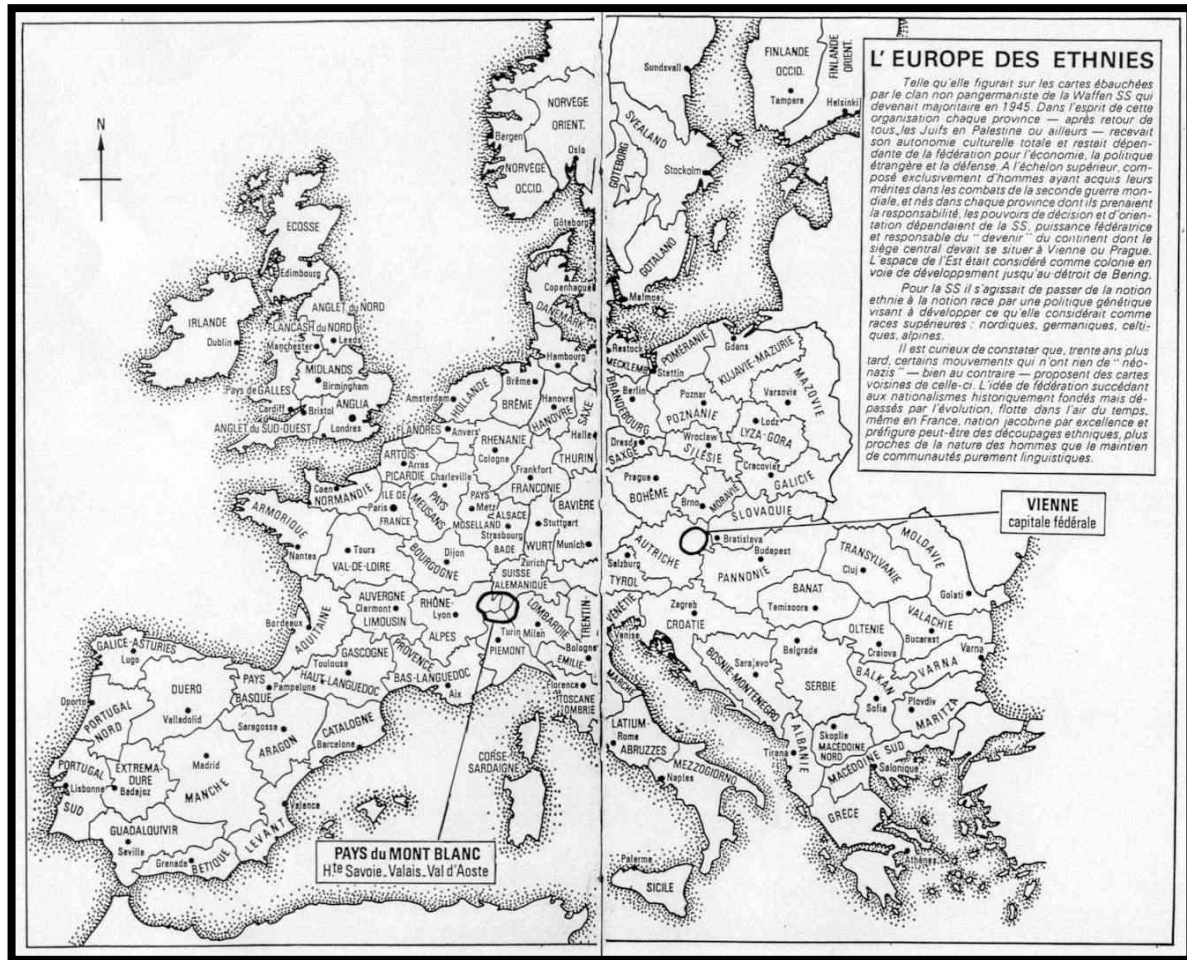[27] Saint-Loup. *Les SS de la Toison d'Or*. Paris, 1978

Figure 40 Saint-Loup's map of Ethnic Europe

Strangely enough, the imaginary map Augier drew some thirty years after the end of the war, of what he thought would have been the ideal spatial organization of the European continent had the Nazi prevailed, would have undoubtedly spoken to the hearts of many in the *Ajiste* community, in its rejection of national borders and towards the re-invention of communal bonds and a certain attachment to local identities and folklore. More than a corruption of the youth hostel ideal, the drift of Augier and his followers towards Europeanist fascism shows that spatial imaginaries can be filled with seemingly

contradictory impulses, and that, more often than not, it is the dynamism of a movement and the sense of historical becoming it projects, rather than its ideological platform that gains men over to its cause. In the early 1930s, the promise of hope contained in the message of the Popular Front made it into a sweeping political machine spearheaded by the revolutionary model of the youth hostels. By the end of the decade, the tide had turned and the momentum was on the side of fascism. For those who focused more on an imaginary construction than on the suffering of others, the underlying ideology made little to no difference.

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336

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