From Enthusiasm to Disenchantment: the French Police and the Vichy regime, 1940–1944

SIMON KITSON

In 1972, in an influential and important text entitled *Vichy France, Old Guard and New Order*, the American historian Robert Paxton complained of the absence of research concerning the police in France during the Second World War.[1] This silence was part of a wider gap within French scholarship where, until the end of that decade, policing questions were generally given little academic consideration.[2] But absence of research was indeed even more obvious with regard to the years between 1940 and 1944, when the semi-autonomous Vichy government used its police in collaboration with the Nazi occupier. Scholarly reluctance to address this period of police history originated partly from a practical consideration: the belief that archival sources could not be found or that the subject was likely to be something of a minefield. But there was also a more political consideration. Before the 1970s it had been assumed that when the police had rounded up Jews or those to be sent for forced labour or when it had arrested resisters they were simply obeying the dictates of the Nazi occupier. The realisation, inspired by Paxton and others, that the French government had to a large extent taken the initiative in the process opened up a new field of scholarly enquiry. From the late 1970s onwards the historiography began to examine much more closely the responsibility of French policing agencies in carrying out German dirty work. Another brick was added to the historiographical edifice in the early 1990s when researchers began to apply a 'history from below' approach to examine how police officers themselves reacted to the constraints and opportunities offered by the occupation.[3] The policing of

[1] Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France, Old Guard and New Order, 1940–44*, new edn (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 398.

[2] For a discussion of this general absence of research see the introductions to Jean-Louis Loubet Del Bayle (ed.), *Police et Société* (Toulouse: Presses de l'Institut d'Etudes Politiques, 1989); and Marie Vogel and Jean-Marc Berlière, 'Police, état et société en France (1930–1960)', *Cahiers de l'IHTP*, no. 36, March 1997.

[3] Jean-Marc Berlière and Denis Peschanski (eds.), *La police française* (Paris: Documentation Française, 2000); Jean-Marc Berlière, *Le monde des polices en France* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1996), 163–202; Jean-Marc Berlière and Denis Peschanski, 'Police et policiers parisiens face à la lutte armée, 1941–44', in Jean-Marc Berlière and Denis Peschanski (eds.), *Pouvoirs et polices au XXe Siècle* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1997), 137–76; Yves Dame, 'La police française en Allier sous l'occupation', Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies (history), Université Clermont-Ferrand, 1984; Jacques Delarue, 'La police', in

Contemporary European History, **11**, 3 (2002), pp. 371–390 © 2002 Cambridge University Press
DOI:10.1017/S0960777302003028 Printed in the United Kingdom

Second World War France is now firmly established on the historiographical map, even if much work still needs to be done.[4]

Two competing historiographies of the police during the Vichy years have emerged. On the one hand, the official history of the institution pretends that the vast majority of policemen entered the Resistance at an early stage and spent their time engaging in the most spectacular forms of Resistance activity.[5] Written mainly by former policemen, this official historiography accepts the existence of a few 'stray sheep' who actively sought collaboration, but pays little attention to the very real desire on the part of the Vichy government to use its police as a tool of collaboration. This causes it to overlook the fact that when police opposition to collaboration remained passive, this passivity had far worse consequences than in other socio-professional categories. On the other hand, the vision of collective and scholarly memory often portrays the police as an institution whose members readily accepted Vichy and German orders. In this version the police remained obedient until a change of position, inspired largely by opportunism, led to an inevitable turning of coats in summer 1944.[6]

This article will draw on the important historiographical contributions made to the debate about the policing of wartime France by these various authors. But the

Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida, *Vichy et les Français* (Paris: Fayard, 1992), 303–11; Jacques Delarue, 'La police sous l'occupation', *L'Histoire,* no. 29 (1980), 6–15; Lineda Hafid, 'La police à Orléans sous l'occupation', mémoire de maîtrise, Orléans, 1993; Bernd Kasten, *'Gute Franzosen' die französische Polizei und die deutsche Besatzungsmacht im besetzen Frankreich 1940–44,* (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1993); Simon Kitson, 'The Marseille police in their context, from Popular Front to Liberation', dissertation for Ph. D. (supervised by Roderick Kedward), Sussex University, 1995; Simon Kitson, 'The police in the Liberation of Paris', in H. R. Kedward and Nancy Wood, *The Liberation of France. Image and Event* (Oxford: Berg, 1995), 43–56; Simon Kitson, 'The police and the deportation of Jews from the Bouches-du-Rhône in August and September 1942', *Modern and Contemporary France*, 5, 3 (August 1997), 309–18; Simon Kitson, 'L'évolution de la Résistance dans la police marseillaise', in Jean-Marie Guillon and Robert Mencherini (eds.), *La Résistance et les Européens du Sud* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), 257–70; Simon Kitson, 'Arresting Nazi agents in Vichy France, 1940–1942', *Intelligence and National Security* (Spring 2000), 80–120; Henri Longuechaud, *Conformément à l'ordre de nos chefs. Le drame des forces de l'ordre sous l'occupation, 1940–1944* (Paris: Plon, 1985); Jean-Marie Muller, *Désobéir à Vichy. La résistance civile des fonctionnaires de police* (Nancy: Presses Universitaires, 1994); Alain Pinel, 'Contribution à la sociogénèse des forces civiles de maintien de l'ordre: les groupes mobiles de réserves sous Vichy, 1941–44', mémoire de DEA (sociologie politique), Université Paris 1, 1994; Maurice Rajsfus, *La police de Vichy* (Paris: Le Cherche-Midi, 1995); Paul Ramé, 'La police dans le Finistère pendant l'occupation et la Libération', mémoire de maîtrise, Université de Bretagne, 1999; Yvan Stefan, *A broken sword: policing France during the German occupation* (Chicago: Univerity of Illinois, 1992); John F. Sweets, 'La police et la population dans la France de Vichy: une étude de cas conforme et fidèle', *Guerres mondiales et Conflits contemporains*, 155 (1989), 63–73; Bernard Vaugon, 'La préfecture de police de Paris pendant l'occupation allemande', *Administration*, 144 (1989), 143–45.

[4] For an overview of the bibliography of the police see: Marie Vogel and Jean-Marc Berlière, 'Police, état et société en France, 1930–1960', *Cahiers de l'IHTP* 36, March 1997.

[5] See for example Association des Anciens Résistants et Combattants du Ministère de l'Intérieur, *Pages d'Histoire,* Paris, 1975; Henry Buisson, *La police, son histoire* (Vichy: impr. de Wallon, 1950).

[6] The most extreme version of this provided by Maurice Rajsfus, *La police de Vichy, les forces de l'ordre françaises au service de la Gestapo, 1940–44* (Paris: Le Cherche-Midi, 1995). A far more subtle, sophisticated, nuanced and 'objective' approach is offered by Jean-Marc Berlière, one of the very best specialists on the French police. Berlière, although disagreeing with much of Rajsfus' approach, usually portrays police opposition to Vichy as not only very late but also often opportunistic.

interpretation offered here will not wholeheartedly accept either the official history or some of the basic assumptions of much of the 'alternative' historiography. As more than just a survey of the secondary literature, this article will also present original findings made as a result of extensive work on a range of primary sources. Since 1991 this author has been actively researching questions of policing and counter-espionage during the Vichy period. The aim was to get behind the polemics and to give as honest a presentation of the subject matter as possible. To do this the use of a multiplicity of high-quality sources was a necessity. Particularly useful were the investigations of the police inspectorate (Inspection Générale des Services Administratifs) as well as the periodical reports of the prefect and police reports of all natures. These were supplemented with documents originating from various official sources such as the Armistice Commissions, accounts of police and public opinion written by the postal censors or contained in the papers of Vichy head of state Philippe Pétain. Police trade union documents were of most use for the years either side of the Vichy government but occasionally offered insights on the period treated here. Documents drawn up within the framework of the purge of police officers are important sources, but the historian should be careful not to read backwards uncritically from these documents, written as they were in the politically charged atmosphere of the Liberation. Considerable use has been made of general Resistance documents from the Commissariat National à l'Intérieur and the Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action as well as archives emanating from Resistance groupings specific to the police. This information was supplemented by both written and oral evidence gathered from former police officers and those particularly targeted by police action (Jews, resisters, *réfractaires* from the STO). Memoirs of former police officers as well as those from these targeted categories completed the documentation.[7]

There can be no doubting the importance of the police to the Vichy government. As in other authoritarian states, the police would ensure the suppression of public liberties and in the absence of democratic means of expression would monitor public opinion on behalf of the government.[8] Vichy considered the institution as a means of guaranteeing the survival of the state, particularly since ministers were aware from as early as the middle of 1941 that their government was extremely unpopular.[9] The institution thus became an essential pillar in the

[7] The documents consulted during ten years of research are located in diverse centres, in particular in the Departmental Archives in Marseille (henceforth AD BDR), the National Archives in Paris (henceforth AN), the Centre d'Archives Contemporaines at Fontainebleau (henceforth CAC), the Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine and the Centre de Documentation Juive et Contemporaine (henceforth CDJC). Additional material was also made available in Marseille by the central police station and the Association de Policiers Résistants de Marseille, as well as by the *Provençal* newspaper. The author has also consulted material held by the Departmental Archives of the Seine-St. Denis at Bobigny, the Paris Préfecture de police and the Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre (henceforth SHAT).

[8] For policing of other authoritarian states see Berlière and Peschanski, *Pouvoirs et police au XXe Siècle*; Mark Mazower (ed.), *The Policing of Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Providence, RI: Berghahn, 1997.

[9] For the unpopularity of Vichy see: AN, 2AG 618, Bernard de Plas à M. Bernard Ménétrel, 12/2/

extensive programme of social reform, known as the National Revolution, introduced from France's makeshift capital.[10]

Especially important for Pétain's regime was that the police were a symbol of the prerogatives and legitimacy of a sovereign state. Sovereignty was this government's obsession; the police were its means to secure it. Paradoxically, in southern France and the empire, which remained unoccupied until November 1942, policing did not just target the Allies or the Resistance but also included some 'anti-German' missions which have been totally ignored by the historiography. Extreme forms of pro-German propaganda were punished. These usually involved unflattering descriptions of conditions in France compared with those on the other side of the Rhine.[11] There were some internments of women who had sexual relations with members of Axis Armistice Commissions and the first head-shavings of women for 'horizontal collaboration' were actually carried out by the Vichy authorities in north Africa in August and September 1941.[12] The police also arrested black-marketeers. Of course, the black market was not just working for the occupation forces, but there were arrests of individuals known to be buying goods illicitly for the Germans.[13] Until June 1942, those attempting to attract volunteers from the southern zone to work in the Reich were subject to arrest.[14] The police sought to protect sovereignty by operating alongside the secret services to limit the penetration of Vichy territory by agents of foreign powers. In southern France and the empire around two thousand Nazi agents were arrested, imprisoned and in some cases tortured by the police of this collaborating state.[15] In the unoccupied zones the

42. See also Pétain's speech of 12 August 1941 admitting to this unpopularity: Jean-Claude Barbas (ed.), *Philippe Pétain: discours aux Français* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1989), 164–73. See also the work of Pierre Laborie and in particular *L'opinion française sous Vichy* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1990).

[10] AN 2AG 520 CC 104 A, document entitled 'le Ministère de la police', undated but evidently summer 1941.

[11] SHAT 1P 89, Le Général Commandant en Chef, Weygand à M. l'Amiral de la Flotte, Vice-Président du Conseil, no 9745/EM/E, 15 November, 1941. In his letter to Pétain on 3 March 1941, Weygand described how German propaganda in North Africa represented a mortal danger for French interests there before adding 'j'estime indispensable de lutter contre elle par tous les moyens en notre pouvoir': SHAT 1P 89, Le Général commandant en chef Weygand à M. le Maréchal de France, no 1175/EM/2, 3/3/41, Objet: propagande allemande en Afrique du Nord.

[12] SHAT 1P 89, Déposition du Général de Brigade de Perier des troupes coloniales (Colonel Chef d' Etat-Major du Général Weygand); for concern over intimate relations between French and Germans see Jacques Britsch, 'Nous n'accepterons pas la défaite', unpublished war diary of 2e Bureau officer, 69 (entry for 18/2/41).

[13] AN F1A 4681, Le Général Bourget aux 1er et 2ème Groupes de Divisions Militaires, no 29.990/DSA/12, Vichy, 16/9/41; AN F60 521, Commission d'internement,16 January 1942 (Lagardère affair); AN BB30 1709, report on Gaetan Laperlier.

[14] AN AJ41 491, L'Inspecteur Rapenne à M. le Commissaire Spécial, chef de service à Montluçon, no 4160, Objet: 'activité Commission Allemande de la Croix-Rouge', 9/6/41; AN AJ41 1680 [21-07], Le Général de corps d'armée Doyen, Président de la Délégation Française auprès de la Commission Allemande d'Armistice à M. le Général Huntziger, Ministre, Secrétaire d'Etat à la guerre (DSA), no 12489/AE, ' Objet: Délégués allemands en zone libre', 1/2/41.

[15] AN F60 393, Le Général d'Armée Huntziger, Commandant en chef des forces terrestres, Ministre Secrétaire d'Etat à la Guerre à M. l'Amiral de la Flotte, vice-Président du Conseil, 'Objet: activité de Services de Renseignements allemands', no 10581/2/Cab, 10/6/41; SHAT 1K 545 10, Bilan des affaires d'espionnage et de propagande ennemis (allemands, italiens, japonais) soumises par le contre-espionnage

institution was thus used partly as a means of securing political independence from the Axis powers. In the directly occupied northern zone maintaining sovereignty in policing matters took on a different and much more negative form. It meant trying to limit the extent to which German police services would have to intervene directly in questions of public order. To keep policing in this zone in French hands Vichy was prepared to go to extraordinary lengths, including doing the Nazis' dirty work for them.[16] Here, by trying to secure administrative sovereignty, policing was linking the political destiny of Vichy ever closer to that of the Nazis.

The police thus became vital to Vichy's external political objectives and emerged as an essential tool of collaboration.[17] As time went on the prominent place held in Franco-German negotiations by questions of policing became even more paramount as Vichy slowly but surely lost most of its other early bargaining counters.[18] Once the empire was occupied by the Allies and the French fleet sunk, the only things left to Vichy to negotiate after November 1942 were the collaboration of state administrations and the resources of French industry. The potential importance of the French police from a German perspective should not be underestimated. Vichy's obsession with sovereignty and willingness to do the Nazis' dirty work could allow the Germans to occupy France with the minimum deployment of German police and military resources.[19]

In order to support both its internal programme of reform and its foreign policy choices with regard to the Nazis, Vichy needed forces of law and order on which it could rely. New regimes often regard with great mistrust a police force inherited from a predecessor of differing ideological persuasion. When they assume control they have the choice of establishing a new institution, reforming the structures of the existing one or changing its personnel.

Abolishing existing structures was rare in the case of the passage from democracies to dictatorships, and Vichy proved no exception in entrusting the bulk of its police work to the pre-existing regular force. Using the existing institution would limit any questions over the fundamental legitimacy of its policing policies. However, during the occupation years a number of parallel police forces *were* created in France as in many of the other dictatorships. These were usually made up

à la Justice Militaire de 1940 à 1942; SHAT 1K 545 10, Tableau nominatif des arrestations; AN 3W 91, le Commissaire Principal de la Surveillance du Territoire, Marseille à M. Le directeur de la police de Sûreté, Vichy, no 4488, 15/11/42; AN F1a 3690–32, le Directeur Adjoint du Cabinet à M. le Secrétaire Général pour la police, AC/MG, 14/4/42. Simon Kitson, 'Arresting Nazi agents in Vichy France, 1940–1942', *Intelligence and National Security* (Spring 2000), 80–120.

[16] Jean-Marc Berlière and Denis Peschanski, 'Police et policiers parisiens face à la lutte armée, 1941–44', in François Marcot (ed.), *La Résistance et les Français: lutte armée et maquis*, Annales littéraires de l'Université de Franche-Comté, 1996; Marc-Olivier Baruch, *Servir l'Etat Français* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), 372; Julian Jackson, *France, The Dark Years, 1940–44* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 181–2.

[17] Baruch, *Servir l'Etat Français*, 365.

[18] On Vichy's bargaining counters see Jean-Pierre Azéma and Olivier Wieviorka, *Vichy, 1940–44* (Paris: Perrin, 1997), 54–58.

[19] In mid-1942 the German police comprised somewhere between 2,500 and 3,000 officials in France: Serge Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz. Le rôle de Vichy dans la solution finale de la question juive en France*, II (Paris: Fayard, 1983), 81–2; M. Marrus and R. O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 241; Jackson, *France, The Dark Years*, 362.

of extreme-right fanatics who specialised in the hunting down of the regime's designated targets. The Police aux Questions Juives focused on antisemitic persecution. The Service des Sociétés Secrètes operated against Freemasons. The Service de Police Anti-Communiste saw itself as the champion of anti-Bolshevism.[20] For the most part these structures remained marginal in wartime France. It was only from January 1944 that one of the new institutions, the Milice, an extreme-right militia established a year earlier, really began to replace the regular police.[21] In its reluctance to do away totally with existing police forces in favour of the new fanatical parallel movements, Vichy mirrored the pattern established in other dictatorships. Instead, it allowed the simultaneous existence of pre-established forces with these new parallel structures. This attempted to make use of the age-old theory of divide and rule. In other words, new and old structures should mutually spur each other into action through rivalry, with the infusion of a political agenda from the new force and professional expertise from the old.

Although Vichy wanted to make use of the regular force, it was determined to engage in widespread reform.[22] Tampering with the inherited structures would serve as a means of differentiating the new regime from the old as well as a way of trying to ensure control of the institution. Most importantly it would allow for a more efficient police force which was designed both to impress the Germans and to offer the maximum performance with regard to collaboration and defending the National Revolution.[23] Between April and July 1941 eleven legal texts set these structural reforms in motion. The reformed structure was rationalised and unified and included increased specialisation, particularly in the political domain, where new crowd control units were set up under the inoffensive title of Groupes Mobiles de Réserve (Mobile Reserve Units). New police training schools were also established.[24] The republic's municipal police forces were integrated into a new national structure offering increased centralisation and reducing the influence of local mayors in the delicate question of policing.

To further ensure the loyalty of this regular force, the possibility of purging its personnel was given serious thought.[25] It was well known that the police inherited from the Third Republic was divided politically but that within it currents attached

[20] Jacques Delarue, 'La police', in Azéma and Bédarida, *Vichy et les Français,* 303–11; Lucien Sabah, *Une police politique de Vichy: le service des sociétés secrètes* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1996); Marc-Olivier Baruch, *Servir l'Etat Français*, 59–60; Jean-Marc Berlière, *Le monde des polices en France* (Brussels: Editions Complexe), 1996, 174–84; Jackson, *France, The Dark Years*, 260–2.

[21] Jean-Pierre Azéma, 'La Milice', *Vingtième Siècle*, 28 (1990), 83–105; 'La Milice est bien une police', *France Socialiste*, 2 March 1943; Marcel Déat, 'La tâche civique des miliciens', *L'Oeuvre,*16 July 1943.

[22] AN 2AG 520 CC 104 A, Cabinet Civil du Maréchal Pétain, note sur la réorganisation de la police, undated; Kitson, 'The Marseille police in their context', 87–100.

[23] AN 3W 310, Peyrouton à Pétain, 17/12/40; this sentiment is echoed in a letter in AN 2AG 618 from General Besson (Inspecteur des 13ème et 16ème régions) to M. le Général d'Armée, Inspecteur Général des Formations Terrestres, on 20 July 1940.

[24] AN F60 942, note de M. Rogez, Inspecteur des Finances, sur l'organisation et le fonctionnement des Ecoles de police de la Sûreté Nationale.

[25] AN 3W 310, letter from Marcel Peyrouton to Maréchal Pétain, 17 Dec. 1940.

to the radicals and the socialist party held very important positions.[26] This was largely the result of the influence of the Freemasons and of the sizeable police trade unions in the interwar institution.[27] The police had shown themselves to be avid defenders of the republic and merciless opponents of those from the political extremes, regardless of whether extremists came from the left or the right.[28] Since many of those who now gravitated to the new government came from this latter extreme it should come as no surprise that, throughout the occupation years, they continued to call for a serious purge of the police.[29] The Vichy regime itself, however, saw things in a different light. The regime's interior ministers decided to create a legal mechanism for removing police officers opposed to the government but initially made only very limited recourse to it. This meant that the threat of being purged was always present for those who stepped out of line but that only those who were considered to be totally beyond redemption would be immediately relieved of their responsibilities.[30] This tactic was inspired by the realisation that the new government needed the professional competence of those in place and the hope that their tradition of obedience could be used to encourage them to accept the regime's orders unquestioningly. Moreover, a practical difficulty confronted anyone wishing to purge more widely. More than one and a half million men were absent as prisoners of war, rendering the replacement of purged elements difficult in a police force which was already failing to meet its recruitment targets.[31]

With the purge limited nationally to about two hundred individuals, the new police force began with much the same personnel as under the republic.[32] Having

[26] Centre de Documentation Juive et Contemporaine (CDJC) V 37, note pour M. l'Ambassadeur Abetz, 22/9/41; AN F41 266 Synthèse des Contrôles Techniques, 21/1–5/2/41; AD BDR M6 11057, Préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône à M. le Secrétaire Général à la police, objet: état d'esprit de la population, 2/12/41; AD BDR M6 11065, Contrôle Technique, Interception de Courrier, Pasteur Robert P., Marseille à M. and Mme Alex M., Genève, Suisse, 22/4/41. Berlière and Peschanski, 'Police et policiers parisiens', 171; Jean-Marc Berlière, 'Police et République: une acculturation réciproque', in Berlière and Peschanski, *La police française*, 30; Guillon, 'Le Var', 202; Denis Peschanski, 'Dans la tourmente', in Berlière and Peschanski, *La police française*, 68; Simon Kitson, 'Marseille: à l'épreuve du politique, 1936–38', in Berlière and Peschanski, *La police française*, 43–58; Simon Kitson, 'Les policiers marseillais et le Front Populaire', *XXe Siècle* (January 2000), 47–58.

[27] AN F1A 4565, Inspection Générale des Services Administratifs, Rapport à M. le Chef du Gouvernement, Ministre, Secrétaire d'Etat à l'Intérieur, police municipale de Clermont-Ferrand, Vichy, 7 February 1941; Michel Berges, *Le syndicalisme policier en France, 1880–1940* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995); Marie Vogel, 'Politiques policières et systèmes locaux: les polices des villes dans l'entre-deux guerres', *Revue française de sociologie*, 3 (July–Sep. 1994), 413–33; Daphné Delamotte, 'Le syndicalisme dans la fonction publique: le cas de la police', mémoire d'IEP, Paris, 1977; Jean-Pierre Ergas, 'Le syndicalisme des gardiens de la paix', mémoire d'IEP, Paris, 1962; Jean-Michel Vernis, 'Le syndicalisme dans la police nationale', mémoire d'IEP, Toulouse, 1980.

[28] Berlière, 'Police et République', 17–31; Simon Kitson, 'The police and the Clichy "massacre"', in Richard Bessel and Clive Emsley, *Patterns of Provocation* (New York: Berghahn, 2000), 29–40; Guillon, 'Le Var', 204.

[29] AN F60 1668, réunion des dirigeants du PPF, 24/10/43; Déat, 'La tâche civique des Miliciens'.

[30] Jean-Louis Laubry, 'Les régions de Limoges et d'Orléans' in Berlière and Peschanski, *La police française,* 76–7; Guillon, 'Le Var', 203.

[31] Franck Liaigre, 'Nantes', in Berlière and Peschanski, *La police française*, 95; Simon Kitson, 'The Marseille police in their context', 62–63.

[32] C. Angeli and P. Gillet, *La police dans la Politique, 1944–1954* (Paris: Grasset, 1967), 22.

the same faces around helped foster the impression that the early Vichy years were really just business as usual. This impression was further enhanced by the fact that Vichy chose initially to make use of existing laws wherever possible. Moreover the categories of people being targeted by the new government were similar to those which had been singled out by the government of Edouard Daladier at the end of the Third Republic.[33] Vichy interned foreigners and communists; from 1939 onwards the republic had pursued a similar policy.[34] It was true that their motives differed. The republic had been following a logic of emergency measures to deal with a moment of national crisis. The Vichy regime entered into a policy of deliberate exclusion of these categories for political reasons. But for rank-and-file police officers such technicalities mattered little. The limited sense of genuine change between the last government of the Third Republic which had ruled by decree and used strong arm tactics and a Vichy government determined initially to appear relatively civilised helped to encourage loyalty on the part of police personnel. This ensured that their first response to the change of government was the reflex to obey in much the same way that the republic had been obeyed.

Few voices of dissent were raised in the police when the Vichy government first came to power. Influences which might have helped push police officers into opposition to such a regime were immediately silenced. Political parties were scrapped. Police trade unions were abolished. The Freemasons, who had been very active in police circles, found themselves outlawed. Vichy was not only considered to be a legitimate government by most of the rank and file but many, even among formerly republican policemen, actually welcomed its arrival in power. The head of the Vichy regime, Marshal Philippe Pétain, had considerable public prestige, not least among former soldiers, of whom the police counted a large number within its ranks. A new regime often means new opportunities.[35] In its discourse, Vichy elevated the police to the status of an elite corps and obsessively referred to its love of public order.[36] It promised more resources and better pay. The structural reform which it introduced was along similar lines to that which had been pushed for by police trade unions in the 1920s and 1930s. Besides, Vichy and the police had some common enemies. The police had long tracked down communists. Hostility was bitter, particularly in the wake of bloody street fights between police officers and militants beginning in 1925. In the pages of communist organs, many bitter column inches were given over to anti-police tirades. Little wonder then that when Vichy asked for police help in its anti-communist crusade, police officers responded willingly, monitoring communist activity, arresting militants, torturing many and

[33] Jean-Marc Berlière, *Le monde des polices en France* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1996), 169.

[34] Pascal Maysounave, 'La répression dans le Limousin: une affaire trop sérieuse pour l'abandonner à la seule police française' in Berlière and Peschanski, *La police française*, 137.

[35] Denis Peschanski, 'Dans la tourmente', in Berlière and Peschanski, *La police française*, 62–63; Guillon, 'Le Var', 205.

[36] D. Peschanski, 'Du régime d'exception à l'assainissement national', in J.-P. Rioux, Antoine Prost and J.-P. Azéma, *Les Communistes français de Munich à Châteaubriant* (Paris: FNSP, 1987), 155; J.-M. Guillon, 'La philosophie politique de la Révolution nationale', in Azéma and Bédarida, *Vichy et les Français*, 171–2.

eventually handing over some to the Nazis.[37] Foreigners constituted another common enemy, a fact which was to have dire consequences for refugee Jews. Although in republican France the police had no specific history of antisemitism, it did have a long tradition of xenophobia. Given that an important proportion of the Jews targeted by Vichy were foreigners from central Europe, the police were easily able to adapt their xenophobic traditions to the antisemitic stance of this new government. These traditions were not alien to the important contribution of the French police to the policy of identifying and interning Jews from 1940 onwards, and then of participating in their deportation to the death camps of eastern Europe from 1942.[38] The French, not the German, police arrested most of the 76,000 Jews deported from France.

However, uncritical support for Vichy in police circles faded long before the regime had officially disappeared. Police officers became increasingly disenchanted from mid-1942 onwards.[39] The government had promised their social promotion to the rank of an elite organisation. It had massively reneged on its promise. Civil service salaries had been hit particularly badly by the galloping inflation of the period. Police working conditions had become quite simply appalling. A growth in manpower had by no means compensated for the new demands made on the force.[40] Political policing increased the workload. The police were expected to track Jews or resisters but they also had to enforce Vichy's moral agenda, as Miranda Pollard outlines with regard to the increasingly severe suppression of abortion.[41] Sarah Fishman has shown that the Vichy period was also one when criminality

[37] Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre (SHAT) archives 1K 545 6, diary of General Bridoux, entry for 23 October 1942; Denis Peschanski, 'La répression anti-communiste dans le départment de la Seine (1940–42)', in Denis Peschanski (ed.), *Vichy 1940–44, Archives de guerre d'Angelo Tasca* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1985), 111–37; Denis Peschanski, 'Exclusion, persécution, répression' in Azéma and Bédarida, *Vichy et les Français,* 209–34; Christian Bougeard, 'Le Finistère' in Berlière and Peschanski, *La police française*, 92–93; Jeanne Gillot-Voisin, 'Concurrence et coopération en Saône-et-Loire' in Berlière and Peschanski, *La police française*, 118–119; Michel Goubet, 'Etude départementale: répression et exclusion dans la région toulousaine' in Azéma and Bédarida, *Vichy et les Français*, 236.

[38] Serge Klarsfeld, *Vichy–Auschwitz. Le rôle de Vichy dans la solution finale de la question juive en France,* 2 vols. (Paris: Fayard, 1983); Serge Klarsfeld, *Le calendrier de la persécution des Juifs en France, 1940–44* (Paris: Les Fils et Filles des déportés Juifs de France, 1993); Jacques Delarue, 'La police et l'administration', in G. Wellers, A. Kaspi et S. Klarsfeld, *La France et la question juive 1940–1944* (Paris: Editions Sylvie Messinger, 1981), 57–79; William Gueraiche, 'Administration et répression sous l'occupation: les "affaires juives" de la préfecture de Charente-Inférieure (septembre 1940–juillet 1944', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 45, 2 (April–June 1998), 480–503; Simon Kitson, 'The police and the deportation of Jews from the Bouches-du-Rhône in August and September 1942', *Modern and Contemporary France*, 5, 3 (August 1997), 309–18.

[39] Simon Kitson, 'L'évolution de la Résistance dans la police marseillaise', 257–70; Robert Zaretsky, *Nîmes at war (*University Park, PA : Penn State University Press, 1995), 208–11; John F. Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 185.

[40] AN F1A 4539, Inspection Générale des Services Administratifs, 'Répartition des attributions et effectifs', 1941; AN F1A 4539, Inspection Générale des Services Administratifs (signé M. Breton), Objet: fonctionnement des Services Régionaux de police (région de Toulouse), Vichy, le 20/9/43; AN AJ41 626, Effectifs de la police de la Région de Marseille, 18/6/42.

[41] Miranda Pollard, 'Vichy and abortion: policing the body and the new moral order in everyday life', in Sarah Fishman et al., *France at War* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 191–204.

increased.[42] In most localities manpower levels were said to be at crisis point. In Nîmes the prefect complained that at night he had just twelve men to cover a city of 90,000 inhabitants covering more than 30 square kilometres.[43] Everywhere ten- to sixteen-hour shifts became the norm.[44] The American historian John Sweets paints a pathetic picture of police officers in Clermont-Ferrand, whose uniforms were torn and tattered and who barely had any leather left on their shoes.[45] In Marseille many police stations had no furniture or even a typewriter.[46] The multiplication of police services and the damage inflicted by Allied bombing meant that many services were forced into temporary and usually inadequate accommodation. One police station was installed in a former bar and no one thought to take down the sign outside indicating its previous use. Another was established in an abandoned butcher's shop, and meat hooks still hung from the ceiling.[47] The police might have had machine guns but they often did not have any ammunition to put in them and in many cases had received no training in how to use them.[48] This was a far cry from the elite status that Vichy had promised. The cumulative effect of such working conditions was to demoralise police services. This may not have pushed them automatically into an active opposition to Vichy or the Germans but it certainly helped create a climate in which anti-Vichy propaganda could be spread.

By the middle of 1943 it became evident that both Vichy and the Germans were having extreme difficulties with the French police.[49] There are numerous indications of this.[50] Vichy had initially spoken of the police as an elite body but by summer 1943 such praise in government discourse was increasingly limited to the specialist mobile force, the Groupes Mobiles de Réserve.[51] Ordinary policemen

[42] Sarah Fishman, 'Youth in Vichy France: the juvenile crime wave and its implications' in Fishman, *France at War*, 205–20.

[43] Zaretsky, *Nîmes at war*, 169–70.

[44] AN F1a 4516, Inspection Générale des Services Administratifs, 'Constations faites dans certains services de police du ressort de l'intendance de Clermont-Ferrand', Vichy, 13/12/43; AN F7 14909 [993] Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Préfets Régionaux, no 537–4551 POL/GMR/P, 28/12/43. Laubry, 'Les régions de Limoges et d'Orléans', 84; Christian Bougeard, 'Le Finistère', 90.

[45] John F. Sweets, 'La police et la population dans la France de Vichy: une étude de cas conforme et fidèle', *Guerres mondiales et Conflits contemporains,* 155 (1989), 63–73. In the Var the poor state of police uniforms is also noted: Guillon, 'Le Var', 204.

[46] Centre d'Archives Contemporaines (CAC-Fontainebleau) 860679, art 4, Contrôle des Commissariats d'arrondissements de la ville de Marseille, rapport no 164, 31/3/44.

[47] Centre d'Archives Contemporaines (CAC-Fontainebleau) 860679, art 4, Contrôle des Commissariats d'arrondissements de la ville de Marseille, rapport no 164, 31/3/44. Kitson, 'The Marseille police in their context'. Foreign Office, *France Basic Handbook, part III: France since June 1940* (London, 1944), 61–2.

[48] AN F7 14907, PN cab A no 1304/3, 21/9/43. Bougeard, 'Le Finistère', 88; Jean-Henri Calmon and Roger Picard, 'La Vienne', in Berlière and Peschanski, *La police française*, 159.

[49] Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 260.

[50] AN F1a 3922, CNI, document no 54-KW71, source 95130, dated 31/10/42; AN F1a 3922, D.7/3, Marseille, 17/7/42; AN F1a 3922, cl.D7-III, source AM 31, télégr. 16/7/42; Archives Départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône (henceforth AD BDR) M611071, Circulaire confidentielle de la section du bureau politique pour la zone libre, SFIC, non datée, interceptée le 7/12/42.

[51] AN 3W 89, Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Préfets Régionaux, no 333 SG/Pol Circ/SMO, 27/7/43. Cf also AN F7 14894, le délégué du Secrétaire Général au Maintien de l'Ordre à MM.

found their own role more and more reduced to that of guarding public buildings.[52] In their annual evaluations the marks given to experienced police officers dropped sharply about this time, indicating that their activity was giving ever less satisfaction to their superiors. Transferring officers from one region to another as a punishment for inactivity became an epidemic.[53] In Marseille, the regional prefect wrote desperately to Premier Pierre Laval in May 1943 asking for the transfer of his entire police force of almost 5,000 men, so convinced was he of its unreliability.[54] Having failed in this request he organised a meeting with Horace Manicacci, the local head of the underground socialist party, during which the prefect acknowledged that Manicacci had more influence with the rank and file than he did.[55] The political branch of the police, the Renseignements Généraux, issued Vichy with weekly summaries of public opinion and from summer 1943 these began systematically to include a sub-section dealing with opinion within police services. The police were no longer just a tool of the regime; they had become an object of scrutiny.

Nazi authorities were coming increasingly into conflict with local police services. A number of police officers were being arrested for acts of resistance.[56] In spring 1943 the 'Flora' report concerning mass arrests carried out by the German police (Sipo-SD) in the 'Combat' Resistance movement revealed that 10 per cent of all those identified during this investigation were police officers. Overall, 1,048 members of the Police Nationale (i.e. not including the Parisian force or the Gendarmerie) were deported from France as political prisoners in the four years of occupation.[57] This seriously undermined confidence in the institution. In their correspondence with Vichy the occupiers complained of 'the general political attitude of police officers and gendarmes who refuse to collaborate with the German

les Préfets Régionaux, 26/1/44. Even the GMR was sometimes considered suspect: AN F1a 3766, Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Commandants des GMR, no 499–3711 Pol GMR C.B., 25/11/43. AN F7 14908 [849], Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Préfets, no 335 Pol 8 Circ, 29/7/43; AN F7 14909, Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Préfets Régionaux, no 477 SG-Pol Circ STMO, 12/11/43.

[52] In September 1943, police chief René Bousquet drew up a list of the percentage of the Police Urbaine given over to this type of activity. The percentages varied greatly from one city to the next, with only 10 per cent of the police in Toulouse being used for this activity compared with 52.5 per cent in Paris. In two cities, Châteauroux and Marseille, all the Police Urbaine were engaged in only this activity. AN F7 14908 [849], Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Préfets, no 335 Pol 8 Circ, 29/7/43; AN F7 14909, Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Préfets Régionaux, no 477 SG-Pol Circ STMO, 12/11/43. See also Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France*, 185.

[53] AN F7 14909 [986], Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Préfets Régionaux, no 515 Pol 4 Circ, 10/12/43; AN F60 484, le Secrétaire Général du Gouvernement au SGMO, no 1075 SG, 26/2/44.

[54] Centre d'Archives Contemporaines [Fontainebleau] MI 26205, 860679, art 4, le Préfet Régional de Marseille à M. le Chef du Gouvernement, Ministre Secrétaire d'Etat à l'Intérieur, no 00347, 22/5/43

[55] AN 3W 236 [21 RB], evidence from Horace Manicacci, Director of *le Provençal*, 22/5/45.

[56] AN F7 14890 [101], le commandant en chef des SS en France à M. le Président Laval, 18/10/43; AN F7 14890 [A101], le commandant en chef ouest (Rundstedt) à M. le Maréchal Pétain, 11/11/43; AN F1a 3848, Internal memo of Dr Knochen, 19/8/43, intercepted and translated by the Commissariat National à l'Intérieur. AN F7 14909 [1302], Note du SGMO, 4/6/44.

[57] Berlière, *Le monde des polices en France*, 199.

police'.[58] Such sentiments were reiterated in internal memos, such as that written by General Knochen to colleagues within the SS, in which he concluded that 'today, the French police can be counted on less than ever in serious cases to intervene in the slightest measure to defend German interests'.[59] French demands for new arms and materials for their police were hence greeted with great reluctance. The Germans had to intervene directly in matters of public order ever more frequently.[60] Of 44,000 arrests for political activity in 1943 only 10,000 were the work of the French police. The rest were carried out directly by the Germans.[61] From the beginning of 1944, the occupiers were forced to give overall control of policing to the fanatical militia, the Milice française, a policy they had consistently wished to avoid up to that point through fear of the effect this might have on public opinion. This change in tactic was directly inspired by the unreliability of the regular police.

Resisters themselves began to acknowledge police support. A gaullist report in spring 1943 concerning the Toulon police claimed that ninety-one members of that force were 'friends' of the Resistance, forty-eight were 'enemies' and forty-four were 'neutral' or unsure.[62] As the occupation progressed, Resistance tracts and BBC broadcasts to France made an increasing distinction between the specialist political branches like the Paris-based Brigades Spéciales or the Groupes Mobiles de Réserve and the main body of the police who the Resistance claimed were sympathetic to their cause.[63] Roger Chevrier, broadcasting on 16 June 1943 in the series 'Les Français parlent aux Français', stated that 'when we refer to the ''Vichy police'', it goes without saying that we are not speaking of the whole of the French police of which, we know, the majority are behaving as good patriots, but rather of the minority of sad individuals who have deliberately put themselves in the service of the enemy'.[64] Of course, making this distinction was partly an attempt to flatter ordinary policemen, in the hope of encouraging them to further distance themselves from these 'sad individuals', in much the same way as the BBC was careful with its

[58] AN F7 14890 [A101], le commandant en chef ouest (Rundstedt) à M. le Maréchal Pétain, 11/11/43.

[59] AN F1a 3848, Internal memo of Dr Knochen, 19/8/43, intercepted by the Commissariat National à l'Intérieur.

[60] Calmon and Picard, 'La Vienne', 159; Guillon, 'Le Var', 210; Peschanski, 'Dans la tourmente', 73.

[61] Michael Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs* (Paris: Le livre de Poche, 1981), 450; Hans Umbreit, *Der MBF in Frankreich, 1940–44* (Boppard-am-Rhein, 1968), 143.

[62] Guillon, 'Le Var', 212. A Resistance internal report from late 1942 claimed that 65 per cent of the police were gaullist or Anglophile, another 30 per cent wanted an Allied victory but were critical of the British and only 5 per cent were favourable to collaboration. Such percentages should, of course, be subjected to extreme caution: AN 72AJ 1912, 'La police et la collaboration', (signed by 'Paul Vandeuil'), 10/7/42. See also AN F1a 3922, CNI, document no 54-KW71, source 95130, dated 31/10/42 where the agent writes: 'While I'm on the subject of the police, I shall continue by saying that its mentality has, in general, evolved in favour of the Allies. In Nice for instance, it is 90 per cent gaullist.'

[63] AN F1a 3729, Commissariat National à l'Intérieur, 'Note pour M. Boris', London, 28/10/43; AN 3W 236 [21 RB], evidence from Horace Manicacci, Director of *'le Provençal'*, 22/5/45. Foreign Office, *France since June 1940*, 61.

[64] Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac, *Les voix de la Liberté*, Documentation Française, III (Paris: 1975), 183. In other BBC Resistance programmes similar statements are made by Maurice Schumann in the 'Honneur et Patrie' broadcasts of 22 March and 5 April 1943, Idem, 118 and 129.

use of the words 'Nazi' and 'German' in its German-language broadcasts. However, this does not mean that the distinction was not a genuine one.[65]

The police participated on many levels in the Resistance. From the postwar testimony of resisters it is clear that few Resistance structures did not benefit from the help of at least one sympathetic policeman.[66] In its most spectacular manifestations police resistance took the form of shoot-outs with the Germans. There are very few indications that this ever occurred before summer 1944 but the police did play a significant role in the combats of the Liberation, particularly in Paris.[67] The more common currency of police resistance consisted of losing a compromising report, sending information on to Resistance networks, supplying false identity cards, tipping off someone of an imminent arrest, dragging one's feet when asked to perform a task and closing one's eyes to acts of opposition.[68] Resistance archives are rich with copies of administrative reports forwarded illicitly from police services to the Free French movement in London and Algiers. From summer 1943 police resistance shifted away from simply being the acts of isolated individuals towards being a much more organised affair with its own specific structures, such as the Réseau Ajax, Police et Patrie, Honneur de la Police, NAP-Police and Front National de la Police.[69]

[65] AN F1a 3729, Commissariat National à l'Intérieur, 'Note pour M. Boris', London, 28/10/43.

[66] The resister Jean Gemähling offers an interesting eye-witness account concerning the scope of police resistance. He had dealings with the police on numerous levels. An early left-wing opponent of the Vichy government, Gemähling was one of the key players of Varian Fry's Emergency Rescue Committee which helped anti-Nazis and Jews escape from France. He subsequently became head of the 'Kasanga' network, one of the main gaullist information networks. Gemähling, who was arrested twice, has written that most Resistance organisations had friendly contacts within the police and indeed that almost all police stations contained some resisters. Jean Gemähling, 'Le réseau ''Kasanga'' et la police', in Pierre Millacet and Lucien Pissarelli (eds.), *Résistance, Libération: documents et témoignages* (Paris: SARL, 1974), 205.

[67] *Combattre, hebdomadaire illustré des amis des FTPF,* special issue 'L'insurrection de Marseille, août 1944', undated but probably November 1944. *Revue du Tarn,* 134 (Summer 1989), 297–309; AN 72AJ 198, Redon, *Souvenirs de la Résistance dans le département du Tarn, 1944;* oral evidence from Joseph Bronzini. AD BDR 56W 39; 'Bulletin d'information du Comité Départemental de Libération de Rumilly', *l'Agriculteur Savoyard,* 16/9/44. Kitson, 'The police in the Liberation of Paris'; Simon Kitson, 'Rehabilitation and frustration: the experience of Marseille police officers at the Liberation', *Journal of Contemporary History,* 33, 4 (October 1998); Simon Kitson, 'La reconstitution de la police à Marseille: août 1944–février 1945', *Provence Historique*, 178 (October 1994), 497–509.

[68] AD BDR 56W 14, testimonies of Raymond Berg, Jean Gemähling, Auguste Clary and Francis Crémieux. Maurice Chevance-Bertin, *Vingt mille heures d'angoisses, 1940–45* (Paris: Laffont, 1990), 118–26; Donald Caskie, *Le Chardon d'Ecosse, un pasteur écossais dans la résistance, 1940–44* (Lausanne: Editions rencontre, 1969), 164–66; Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, *L'Arche de Noé* (Paris: Plon), 1989, 213; Gemähling, 'Le réseau ''Kasanga'' et la police', 205. Laurent Douzou (ed.), 'Souvenirs inédits d'Yvon Morandat', *Cahiers de l'IHTP*, no 29, September 1994, 74–5. Oral evidence from Jean Gemähling, Paris, 2 Feb. 1993; Guillon, 'Le Var', 208; Pascal Maysounave, 'La répression dans le Limousin: une affaire trop sérieuse pour l'abandonner à la seule police française', in Berlière and Peschanski, *La police française*, 152–153; Marc-Olivier Baruch, *Servir l'Etat Français*, 491; M. R. D. Foot, *SOE in France* (London: HMSO, 1966), 120.

[69] AN 72 AJ 66, Historique du NAP par Claude Bourdet; Claude Bourdet, *L'aventure incertaine* (Stock, 1975); Henri Michel, *Les courants de pensée de la Résistance* (Paris: PUF, 1962), 302; John F. Sweets, *The Politics of Resistance in France, 1940–44* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1976), 37; Alban Vistel, *La nuit sans ombre* (Paris: Fayard, 1970), 209.

Undoubtedly resistance was in fact much more frequent within the police than in most socio-professional categories. Almost 2 per cent of serving policemen were deported by the Germans for political activity. A high proportion of individuals killed fighting for the Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur during the Liberation were actually policemen. Neither is it a coincidence that the police figure so prominently in photos of post-Liberation Resistance processions. The Resistance specialist Jean-Marie Guillon is one of the few to recognise explicitly that the police played an above-average role in anti-German activity. In a comparison of police involvement in the Resistance and that of teachers he concludes that the former were far more often involved.[70] It should be noted, however, that one of the peculiarities of police resistance was the particularly large number of police officers who helped the Resistance without ever being fully fledged members.[71]

Numerous reasons can be put forward to explain the frequency of this involvement in the Resistance, not least of which is the question of opportunity. Being at the spearhead of the repression and persecution of targeted groups meant that by the same token the police were far more likely to be in a position to engage in acts of resistance than the average citizen. For example, although police circles were a breeding ground for xenophobia, some police officers did feel compassion towards the victims of Jewish persecution, and in some cases were prepared to take advantage of their professional dealings with Jews to translate this compassion into more active help.[72]

The role the police were being asked to play in collaboration encouraged some to seek actively to improve the image of their institution. Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, leader of the Alliance Resistance group, remembers that one of the policemen who joined her network had explained his motivation for doing so in exactly those terms.[73] The pseudonyms adopted by police resisters in Marseille underline this same point, since some took on *noms de guerre* such as 'the incorruptible' as a clear backlash against the largely negative and corrupt image of their force in the 1930s and the hope that out of resistance might come a new police force above reproach.[74]

Moreover an increasing number of police officers were coming to the realisation that what they were being asked to do was no longer a simple continuum of what their duties under the republic.[75] Initially, Vichy had, broadly speaking, targeted categories similar to those on which the police had traditionally focused: foreigners

[70] Guillon, 'Le Var', 215.

[71] Dominique Veillon, *Le Franc-Tireur* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977), 253.

[72] Oral evidence from Victor Algazi and Roxanne Algazi (born Matalon), Marseille, 18/12/92. Oral evidence from Ignace Doboin, Paris, 6/2/93. Jean-Marie Muller, *Désobéir à Vichy*; Kitson, 'The police and the deportation of Jews from the Bouches-du-Rhône; Guillon, 'Le Var', 209; William Gueraiche, 'Police, Préfecture et Autorités Allemandes en Charente-Inférieure' in Berlière and Peschanski, *La police française*, 131; A. Cohen, *Persécutions et sauvetages* (Paris: Cerf, 1993), 295.

[73] *France Soir,* 'Souvenirs de l'agente secrète no 1, ''Marie Madeleine''', 24/4/47. Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, 'Le réseau *Alliance* et les Policiers', in Association des anciens résistants et combattants du Ministère de l'Intérieur, *Pages d'Histoire* (Paris: 1975), 98.

[74] AN 3AG/2/53, list of members of Ajax, 'Secteur 9, Marseille'.

[75] AN F1a 3729, Commissariat National à l'Intérieur, 'Note pour M. Boris', London, 28/10/43;

and communists. By 1943, such selectivity had gone out the window. The institution of a forced labour scheme applicable to all French men between the ages of twenty and twenty-two massively undermined Vichy's relationship with the police. All the more so since huge numbers of new recruits were suddenly drafted into the police from the ranks of those seeking to avoid this very measure, which furthered a tendency of the moment for the police to become a haven for those with a gripe against the regime.[76] Traditionally one of the central roles of the French police has been defending the nation. With this forced labour scheme it was virtually impossible for police officers to believe that they were serving the national interest. That the police were subject to an acute patriotic identity crisis was a fear particularly underlined by Vichy police chief René Bousquet in his negotiations with SS General Karl Oberg between June 1942 and April 1943.[77] Indeed, resignation letters were sent from police officers to the Vichy hierarchy underlining just such a sentiment, and some policemen refused to carry out investigations unless they received a guarantee that the persons arrested would not be handed over to the Germans.[78]

The Resistance helped fan these flames of discontent and began an active campaign of encouraging gaullists to take advantage of police recruitment shortages to join up and use the possibilities thereby offered to undermine from the inside.[79] The police were in any event far more likely to come into contact with Resistance propaganda than other sections of the population. For one thing not only did they

Fourcade, *L'Arche de Noé*, 260; Michel Chaumet and Jean-Marie Pouplain, 'Les Deux-Sèvres', in Berlière and Peschanski, *La police française*, 193.

[76] Written evidence from Blaise Andrieu, 1 Apr. 1993. Oral evidence from Joseph Bronzini, 10 May 1993. Oral evidence from Marcel Parodi, 24 Sep. 93. AN F9 2266, Mme Graveille and Mme Jousserand à M. Le Chef du Gouvernement, 1/3/43; AN 3W 89, Le Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Préfets, pol. cab. A no 259, 28/5/43; AD BDR M6 11094, Le Chef du Gouvernement à MM. les Préfets, 23/2/43; AN 3W 90, Le Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Préfets, zone sud, no 289 pol. cab. circ., 1/7/43; AN AJ40 1260, Secrétaire Général à la police à M. le Général Commandant Supérieur des SS, Cab A no 795, le 4/3/43; AN F7 14908 [document no 741], Le Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Intendants de police, no 91 pol. cab. circ., 4/3/43; AN F1a 4526, IGSA, rapport à M. le Chef du Gouvernement, 26/3/43. AN F60 1668, Police Nationale, Bulletin Hebdomadaire de Renseignements, no 11, 18/3/43. AN F7 14986, Note de M. Augustin, 17/7/44. Fred Kupferman, *Laval, 1883–1945* (Paris: Flammarion, 1983), 403; M. Georges, *Le temps des armes sans arme* (Paris: Ed. S.a.r.l. Elvire, 1990), 48; Guillon, 'Le Var', 206.

[77] AN F7 14886, 'Collaboration des polices'; AN 3W 92, déposition de Karl Oberg, 16/4/47. For similar sentiments expressed earlier, see AN 2AG 618, Bernard de Plas à M. Bernard Ménétrel, 12/2/42.

[78] AN F1a 3922, CNI, document no 2263/RNA-Z, 1/9/42; AN 3W 88, le Commissaire Principal Tudesq à M. le Secrétaire Général à la police, 7/8/43; Archives des Groupes-Francs de Marseille, Le Commissaire de police de Sûreté Robert Matteï de la SAP à M. le Commissaire Divisionnaire, police de Sûreté, no 2179 SAP, 7/8/43. *Le Palais Libre* (Organe du Front National des Juristes), 8 (May 1944). AN F1a 3021, CNI, copie intégrale du télégramme secret et confidentiel, no 00122 de M. l'Intendant de police, Marseille. AN F7 14909 [1108], Directeur Général de la police Nationale à MM. les Préfets Régionaux, no 81, Pol 2 Circ, February 1944.

[79] *Combat,* 43 (April 1943). Police chief René Bousquet even claimed that a large number of communists, obeying the orders of their party, entered the police at this moment: AN F7 14908 [document no 808], Le Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Préfets Régionaux, no 248 pol. cab. circ., 'objet- introduction d'éléments douteux dans la police', 2/6/43. Bousquet was keen to prevent any such opponents taking advantage of such recruitment possibilities: Marc-Olivier Baruch, *Servir l'Etat Français*, 394; Pascale Froment, *René Bousquet* (Paris: Stock, 1994), 219.

receive Resistance tracts specifically aimed at them, but they were also responsible for gathering up Resistance leaflets found on their beat or during the course of their investigations.[80] Moreover, the police form an institution in which some branches have to spend much time sitting around waiting for something to happen. There is evidence to suggest that in some police stations this time was used in listening to the Resistance broadcasts of the BBC.[81] Sometimes the propaganda message eventually sunk in.

One message which was becoming increasingly audible on those wavelengths was the warning that police officers who behaved unfavourably to the Resistance would be punished, and the names of policemen who were zealous collaborators were broadcast.[82] Sometimes these warnings were followed by the execution of the named individual. In these circumstances, fear also became a motivator, encouraging some policemen to take out the insurance policy of a carefully chosen act of resistance to secure their future.[83] Noting how vital police help had been to them, the internal Resistance sent instructions to the BBC to step up the campaign of intimidating individual policemen considered zealous: 'Is London not aware that a large number of us have been saved by sympathisers [within the police]? And that others have only fallen because they were unfortunate enough to fall into the hands of dirty collaborators. A radio campaign is necessary. It will bear fruit.'[84]

Having noted the scope and motivations of police resistance it is now necessary to underline its limitations. It must be remembered that not all the difficulties of Vichy or the Germans within the institution are imputable to resistance. As Pierre Laborie and Jacques Semelin have made clear in articles seeking to define the notion, for an action to be considered as resistance there had to be a clear intention to resist and a consciousness on the part of the perpetrator that that is indeed what they were doing.[85] Complaining about poor working conditions might have helped instil a climate of opposition but was not in itself an act of resistance. Moreover, disenchantment was not the only reason for a decline in police efficiency. Frequent transfers of personnel and constant reform undoubtedly undermined efficiency in

[80] AN F60 1689, CNI, 'tracts adressés à la police', February 1943; AN FIA 3765, Note de Necker pour Maurice Sidobre, inf. début Sept 1943; AN F7 14888 [tracts 1943], *La Voix de France,* undated; AD BDR M6 11078, RG Bulletin Hebdomadaire, 15–21/11/43; AD BDR M6 11079, RG Bulletin Hebdomadaire, 13–19/12/43.

[81] Kitson, 'The Marseille police in their context', 190.

[82] AN F1a 3922, JAX/35008, 25/5/43; AN F1a 3729, no 526d/BCRA/NM, note pour M. Soustelle, London, 7/12/42; AN F1a 3729, no 2505/d/BCRA/NM, note pour M. Boris, 16/5/43.

[83] AD BDR M6 11076, RG Bulletin Hebdomadaire, 16–22/8/43; AN 72AJ 35, Note du 27/11/43 sur l'organisation Ajax communiquée par M. J.Gemähling; AN F60 1701, Le Chef du Gouvernement aux Commandants de la Gendarmerie, no 12868-T-GEND. Laubry, 'Les régions de Limoges et d'Orléans', 85; Bougeard, 'Le Finistère', 93; Guillon, 'Le Var', 211.

[84] AN F1a 3922, JAX/35008, 25/5/43. On this point see also AN F1a 3729, no 526d/BCRA/NM, note pour M. Soustelle, Londres, 7/12/42; AN F1a 3729, no 2505/d/BCRA/NM, note pour M. Boris, 16/5/43.

[85] Jacques Semelin, 'Qu'est-ce que résister?' *Esprit*, January 1994, 50–63; Pierre Laborie, 'L'idée de Résistance, entre définition et sens, retour sur un questionnement', *Les Cahiers de l'IHTP* 37, December 1997, 15–28.

the last couple of years of the occupation.[86] The demands on police manpower meant that simple overwork was sometimes a factor explaining the increasing difficulties of the personnel in fulfilling all the tasks required of them. Another element undermining the total control exercised by central government was the question of corruption. This had already been a problem in police circles in the 1930s, but the possibilities were now hugely increased owing to the removal of some of the democratic controls on policing.[87]

Moreover, help offered by police resistance was never distributed evenly. Gaullists were far more likely to benefit from the complicity of a policeman than was a communist.[88] Jews were much less likely to be offered a helping hand than those seeking to evade the forced labour draft.[89] Maintaining a position within the institution often meant that in order to carry out an act of resistance or to engage in complicity with the Resistance, an ostensible display of zeal was required in another domain as a cover-up. This problem even affected those who were the most active resisters within the force.[90] The end result of these ambiguities was that few police officers had absolutely nothing to reproach themselves with at the Liberation. Many others could point to an act which could be passed off as an act of resistance before a tribunal as a counterweight to the rest of their activity.[91]

The nature of police resistance was not only ambiguous; it was also conditioned by a professional culture where traditions of obedience and autonomy coexisted.[92] A cult of obedience was one of the fundamental values within the institution. The state made frequent reference to this concept in order to encourage a passive acceptance of its instructions. Individual police officers could shelter behind the notion of obedience as a way of denying any personal responsibility for their actions.[93] How far the institution's *cult* of obedience developed into a genuine

[86] AN F7 14909 [986], Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Préfets Régionaux, no 515 Pol 4 Circ, 10/12/43. AN F60 1689, CNI, l'opinion publique en France d'après les rapports officiels de Vichy, January to March 1944. AD BDR M6 11081, RG Bulletin Hebdomadaire, 17–23/4/44.

[87] There were numerous examples of accusations of corruption within the administration generally and the police in particular. See for example: AD BDR M6 11074, Rapport journalier des RG, 11/6/43; AD BDR M6 11081, RG Bulletin Hebdomadaire, 5–11/7/43; AD BDR, M6 11078 RG Bulletin Hebdomadaire, 27/9–3/10/43; AD BDR, 55W 162, rapport de la résistance, Polygone CE, RJ 973, dated 15/8/44 but referring to events which took place at the end of 1943.

[88] Oral evidence from the Resisters Francis Crémieux (Paris: 5/3/93) and from Jean Gemähling (Paris: 2/2/93), both of the *Combat* network. AN F1A 4565, Inspection Générale des Services Administratifs (signé Jean Ginolhac), Rapport à M. le Chef du Gouvernement, Ministre, Secrétaire d'Etat à l'Intérieur, 'Evasion du Capitaine Fourcaud de l'hôtel-Dieu de Clermont-Ferrand', Vichy, 14/8/42; AN 3W 92, déposition de Karl Oberg, 16/4/47; Henri Longuechaud, *Conformément à l'ordre de nos chefs. Le drame des forces de l'ordre sous l'occupation, 1940–1944* (Paris: Plon, 1985), 204; Denis Peschanski, 'Exclusion, persécution, répression', in Azéma and Bedarida, *Vichy et les Français*, 225; Franck Liaigre in Berlière and Peschanski, *La police française*, 103.

[89] AN F1a 4516, Inspection Générale des Services Administratifs, Rapport à M. le Chef du Gouvernement, Ministre, Secrétaire d'Etat à l'Intérieur, Vichy, 2 March 1943; Kitson, 'L'évolution de la Résistance dans la police marseillaise', 252.

[90] AN F1a 3729, Commissariat National à l'Intérieur, 'Note pour M. Boris', London, 28/10/43.

[91] Pascal Maysounave, 'La répression dans le Limousin', 152–153.

[92] Kitson, 'Marseille', 43.

[93] AN 56W 47, déposition du Commissaire Etienne, 7/2/45.

culture of obedience where instructions were unthinkingly obeyed was subject to a number of considerations and varied between different branches within the police as well as according to the type of mission being carried out. Some branches of the police had particularly tight hierarchical control, thereby helping to secure obedience. This was the case in the Police Mobile, where officers were directly accountable to both the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice, and where *inspecteurs* would very often be accompanied by *commissaires* in their missions. On the other hand, Gardiens de la Paix, who accounted for the vast majority of the personnel, enjoyed a degree of autonomy in their everyday activity. The laws which they were expected to enforce were written in very vague and general terms, leaving considerable scope for interpretation. Walkie-talkies were yet to come into being, and *gardiens* could use their initiative in unexpected circumstances encountered on their beat. Of course, controls did exist. Officers of the Gardiens de la Paix would carry out impromptu checks on the beats of their subordinates but given their own limited numbers these were infrequent. *Gardiens* would often operate in pairs or groups, making their autonomy subject to colleagues' assent. The wearing of a uniform made them the object of public scrutiny. But Vichy's constant efforts to tighten and reinforce these controls or to offer incentives for the successful completion of a mission demonstrate an awareness that obedience was not always automatic and was subject to constant negotiation between the different actors.[94] The institution never did function by orders alone, however. There remained margins of autonomy and initiative. Rank-and-file officers had their own input into the repressive process. Indeed, sometimes it was only their initiative and personal observation which brought cases to the attention of the senior hierarchy in the first place. Often the way in which they wrote their reports could have considerable bearing on a case. Although each rung of the administrative ladder would subsequently paraphrase these in their own words the fundamental essence of the report usually remained faithful to their initial author. Where gaullist influence on the police was generally successful was in undermining their enthusiasm to serve Vichy. This undermined the institution in those areas dependant on initiative from below or where subordinate officers could exploit a degree of autonomy. However, Vichy could still hope to ensure the obedience of its civil servants in situations where close hierarchical supervision could be followed by severe punishment. Few open rebellions occurred in closely monitored operations, with the result that in situations where more senior officers were present, police behaviour was often dictated by the attitude of the hierarchical superior on hand, although in many cases even their support for Vichy had become problematic.[95]

[94] AN F7 14908 [632], le Chef du Gouvernement à MM. les Préfets Régionaux, no 1136 SG Pol., 19/8/42; AN F7 14907 [556], le Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Préfets Régionaux, no 443 SG Circ., 27/7/42; AN F7 14907 [484], le Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Préfets Régionaux, no 390 Pol. I Circ., 20/6/42; AN F7 14907 [538], le Secrétaire Général à la police à MM. les Préfets Régionaux, 1er Bureau no 419, Pol. I Circ., 9/7/42; AN F7 14908 [734], Le Secrétaire Général à la police à M. Le Préfet Régional, 19/2/43. AN F1a 3729, Commissariat National à l'Intérieur, "Note pour M. Boris", London, 28/10/43. AN F7 14907, PN Cab A no 1304/3, 21/9/43.

[95] Oral evidence from former Inspecteur Robert Picq. AN F1a 3021, CNI, copie intégrale du

Although the general trend within the police was for a distancing from Vichy, some branches and some individuals actually became more involved in collaboration as the Liberation approached. In some cases ideological considerations such as the fear of communist revolution or anger at Resistance attacks on colleagues pushed them towards ever greater complicity with the Nazis. Others felt that their own personal record meant that they had little more to lose. Those acting out of ideological obsession or desperation were often quick to splatter the walls of police stations with the blood of arrested resisters.[96] In Paris, the infamous Brigades Spéciales remained zealous to the end.[97] Even in Marseille, where the police had all but collapsed by summer 1943, the Groupes Mobiles de Réserve were still executing resisters in July 1944.[98]

Both the competing historiographies described earlier have partially failed to take account of all the subtleties of the police position as analysed here. The official history wrongly assumes that many police officers were early opponents of the regime. This underestimates the extent to which the police served the regime loyally during the first two years, suppressing public liberties and enforcing the political and moral new order. In fact, resistance within the ranks of the institution was, broadly speaking, an isolated affair before summer 1942. Even after that time, although policemen were far more likely to engage in acts of resistance than the mass of the population, only a minority were ever fully fledged members of Resistance movements. Even their activity rarely escaped a certain degree of ambiguity owing to the need to try to preserve their posts within the institution or in some cases a reluctance to embrace all forms of Resistance activity equally. Moreover, those historians sympathetic to the police are inclined to gloss over the damage inflicted and the darker aspects of police behaviour. The majority of the 76,000 Jews deported from France were arrested by the French police. Many of the communists to die at the hands of the Germans were captured by agents of the French administration. Numerous incidents of torture occurred in police stations. Bribery and corruption were widespread. In remembering the Second World War the police need to face up to these realities. It is not enough to insist on the courageous behaviour of officers during the insurrection or on individual participation in the Resistance.

The official history is subject to criticism, but what may be termed the 'alternative' historiography also needs to be heavily nuanced. Mainstream historians referring to police activity during the war have generally set out to answer the question 'why were the Vichy police so efficient?'. The answer is usually thought to lie in a culture of obedience. However, the problem with this question and answer is that they are based on a flawed assumption. In fact the most striking thing about

télégramme secret et confidentiel, no 00122 de M. l'Intendant de police, Marseille. AN F7 14890 [A101], le commandant en chef ouest (Rundstedt) à M. le Maréchal Pétain, 11/11/43.

[96] Goubet, 'La région toulousaine', 236.

[97] Berlière and Peschanski, 'Police et policiers parisiens', 137–76.

[98] AD BDR 56W 73, le Commissaire Principal Becq à M. le Commissaire Central, 6/9/44; Kitson, 'The Marseille police in their context', 209.

policing during the Vichy years is the rapid decline in efficiency after the last quarter of 1942, a decline which deepened still further the following year. Although the torture and handing over of large numbers of communists continued into 1944, in more general terms the bulk of the damage inflicted by the French police was carried out before the end of 1942. Almost all the gaullists arrested thereafter were captured directly by the Germans. More than half of the Jews deported had already been sent eastwards by the end of 1942. The forced labour schemes which began in September 1942 and were expanded in February 1943 brought new compromises for the institution, but they also gave rise to imaginative new ways of sabotaging repression on a massive scale. The police never entirely collapsed but the decline in efficiency was dramatic. Too frequently historians imagine that right up to the end Vichy had to do little more than issue an instruction for it to be automatically obeyed. In reality obedience was subject to a number of considerations: the degree of hierarchical control of a particular mission; police perception of the potential victim of repression and the traditions of the particular branch of the police. Scholars and to an even greater extent the general public underestimate the extent of police resistance. Acts of inertia and occasional collusion are not sufficiently recognised. Moreover the activity and the number of policemen whose opposition was more active is generally overlooked. The police certainly had been a pillar of the Vichy regime in its early years and the institution's subsequent decline in efficiency was not just due to resistance. But in the last two years of the occupation police behaviour was considerably more ambiguous than is frequently acknowledged. Failure to recognise this is not only historically incorrect: it is also dangerous in the message it transmits to future generations. It is important that today's police officers do not come to believe that the passive obedience generally associated with their wartime counterparts was inevitable behaviour in such circumstances. Many Vichy police officers did ultimately make use of those zones of autonomy open to them, in spite of their government. The Resistance recognised this; why can't historians?