

The Cultivation of Friendship: French and German Cultural Cooperation, 1925-1954

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## ABSTRACT

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The Cultivation of Friendship: French and German Cultural Cooperation, 1925-1954  
(under the direction of Donald M. Reid)

Through a series of case studies of French-German friendship societies, this dissertation investigates the ways in which activists in France and Germany battled the dominant strains of nationalism to overcome their traditional antagonism. It asks how the Germans and the French recast their relationship as “hereditary enemies” to enable them to become partners at the heart of today’s Europe. Looking to the transformative power of civic activism, it examines how journalists, intellectuals, students, industrialists, and priests developed associations and lobbying groups to reconfigure the French-German dynamic through cultural exchanges, bilingual or binational journals, conferences, lectures, exhibits, and charitable ventures. As a study of transnational cultural relations, this dissertation focuses on individual mediators along with the networks and institutions they developed; it also explores the history of the idea of cooperation.

Attempts at rapprochement in the interwar period proved remarkably resilient in the face of the prevalent nationalist spirit. While failing to override hostilities and sustain peace, the campaign for cooperation adopted a new face in the misguided shape of collaborationism during the Second World War. The push toward cooperation continued into the postwar period in two vastly different directions. Some invoked the idea of cooperation as an allegedly new way to overcome the Franco-German antagonism and

achieve lasting peace in a European community. But former Nazis and collaborators also harnessed this notion of cooperation after the war; they recast their wartime behavior in the more positive light of long-term efforts toward European cooperation.

This study helps reshape the way we look at cooperation in 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. It underscores the role of intellectual and cultural efforts in fostering healthier international relations. By arguing that the quest for cooperation was not simply a postwar venture, but that it emerged from the Locarno era, this study shows how advocates of cooperation persisted in their work even during the most marked periods of hostility. Ultimately, I contend that interwar efforts for cooperation helped shape both Vichy-era collaboration and postwar reconciliation.

To my parents who are everything and more

and

To Ruth Ilse Passman (1912-2008), who made history—and everything else—so vibrant

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Auswärtiges Amt	German Foreign Ministry
AN	Archives Nationales	French National Archives
AOFAA	Archives de l'Occupation Française en Allemagne et en Autriche	
BAKo	Bundesarchiv Koblenz	
BCRA	Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action	
BDIC	Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine	
BILD	Bureau International de Liaison et de Documentation	
CFA	Comité France-Allemagne	
CECES	Centre d'Études Culturelles, Économiques et Sociales	
CFEAN	Comité français d'échanges avec l'Allemagne nouvelle	
CIDES	Centre d'Information et de Documentation Économiques et Sociales	
DAAD	Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst	
DBP	Deutsche Botschaft Paris	German Embassy in Paris
DEP	Direction de l'Éducation Publique	
DFG	Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft	
DFMh	Deutsch-Französische Monatshefte/ Cahiers franco-allemands	
DFR	Deutsch-Französische Rundschau	
DGAC	Direction Générale des Affaires Culturelles	
Gufa	Groupement universitaire franco-allemand	
GüZ	Gesellschaft für übernationaler Zusammenarbeit	
HC	High Commission	
JEN	Jeunes de l'Europe Nouvelle	
LEG	Ligue d'Études Germaniques	
MAE	Ministère d'Affaires Etrangères	French Foreign Ministry
OFAJ	Office Franco-Allemand pour la Jeunesse	
ONUUF	Office National des Universités et Écoles Françaises	
PA-AA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtiges Amt	
PPF	Parti Populaire Français	
RDR	Rassemblement Démocratique et Révolutionnaire	
SD	Sicherheitsdienst	
UNC	Union Nationale des Combattants	
UNIC	Union Nationale Indépendante des Combattants	
UF	Union Fédérale	
ZFO	French Zone of Occupied Germany	

## INTRODUCTION

An abyss has been dug between France and Germany that centuries . . . won't make good.—Ernest Renan, 1871<sup>1</sup>

Let us look ahead with eyes cleansed of our old sufferings, with the clear eyes of free men. Let us dare look around us with sympathy, let us dare eye Europe and our former enemies and our former allies, let us dare propose—and if necessary impose—the necessary reconciliations. Let us vanquish those who only laid low our arms, a precarious victory which could be called chance, via understanding, a definitive and fruitful victory. Out of fear of being duped by those we fought, let us not be duped by ancestral terrors and sterile hatreds.

Let us dare to live, dare to love, dare to create.—Régis de Vibraye, 1929<sup>2</sup>

In his *Where does nationalism lead?*, penned ten years after the Great War had ended, Régis de Vibraye wrote of the dangerous “mystique” of nationalism and the dawn of an “international consciousness” that could serve as a “new ethic.”<sup>3</sup> De Vibraye was not alone in sensing the desperate need to think beyond national terms. In the decades after the First World War, networks of students, scholars, artists, businessmen, and clergy addressed the promise of a peaceful future under the auspices of Franco-German cultural cooperation. They aimed to reverse the tide of enmity particularly evident since the

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<sup>1</sup>As quoted in Beate Gödde-Baumanns, “L’idée des deux Allemagnes dans l’historiographie française des années 1871-1914,” *Francia* 12 (1984): 612.

<sup>2</sup>Régis de Vibraye, *Ou mène le nationalisme?* (Paris: Editions Argo, 1929), 185-186. De Vibraye wrote this book in the summer of 1928.

<sup>3</sup>De Vibraye, *Ou mène le nationalisme?*, 183.

Franco-Prussian War. In an era shadowed by perennial suspicion and marked by two bitter wars, these Europeans sought mutual understanding.

This dissertation explores various configurations of French-German cooperation through a series of case studies of Franco-German friendship societies from 1925 to 1954. These “friendship societies” included associations, lobbying groups, and less formal committees geared toward reconfiguring the French-German relationship. They promoted cooperation in a variety of ways, whether by administering exchanges (most commonly for students); leading educational trips and outings; holding lectures, conferences, and retreats; sponsoring art exhibits, films, and concerts; or setting up charitable ventures. All but one (the earliest of the groups under consideration) published periodicals that both informed readers about the other country or about French-German relations more broadly and helped consolidate a community of supporters of the cause.

By examining how members of such organizations imagined and continually reformulated their conceptions of cooperation, this study highlights the ways in which German and French activists argued about and understood their relationships to their own nation, to each other’s nations, and to Europe. In arranging opportunities for travel and bilateral encounter, designing publications, and mounting cultural events, these advocates of cooperation battled the dominant strains of nationalism. Whether their efforts were based on transnational developments like pacifism and the youth movement, beliefs like Catholicism, or shared experiences (for example, among veterans or academics), French and German activists established enduring networks that transcended the boundaries of the nation-state to promote the possibility of future European harmony.

Joint French and German attempts at rapprochement in the interwar period proved remarkably resilient in the face of the prevalent nationalist spirit in both nations. While such efforts failed to override antagonisms and sustain peace, the campaign for cooperation adopted a new face in the misguided shape of collaborationism during the Second World War. The push toward cooperation continued into the postwar period in two vastly different directions. Some invoked the notion as an allegedly new way to overcome the entrenched Franco-German antagonism and achieve lasting peace in a European community. But former Nazis and collaborators also harnessed this idea of cooperation after the war; they recast their wartime behavior in the more positive light of long-term efforts toward European cooperation. Ultimately, these continuities reveal that interwar efforts for cooperation helped lay the cultural groundwork for both Vichy-era collaboration and postwar reconciliation.

Such efforts took place against the backdrop of a long, tortured history of French-German conflict. Napoleon's invasion and occupation of the German states sparked the German drive to unity. Between 1870 and 1945, the French and Germans fought three wars and weathered several close calls. The German Empire's annexation of Alsace-Lorraine served for 48 years as a constant reminder of French defeat. Conversely, French influence in the Saar, whether indirect or direct, was a thorn in the German side after both world wars. And the French and Germans would engage in alternating occupations for much of the period between 1914 and 1955. Since the 1815 Congress of Vienna for the Germans and the Franco-Prussian War for the French, the idea of an *Erbfeind* or an

*ennemi héréditaire* lent a tremendous virulence to the most basic French-German interactions.<sup>4</sup>

France and Germany fought, most obviously, for territory. Above all, the Rhineland, Alsace, Lorraine, and the Saar became constant objects of French-German tensions. Liberated or lusted after, occupied or annexed—these areas and others, too, caught between the two European giants—suffered the fate of many borderlands. Their resources—coal, steel, even the Rhine itself—were coveted and their custody in dispute; potential resources, like Morocco, similarly fell under the shadow of the French-German rivalry. At times, France and Germany also fought over people as both nations laid claim to the population of Alsace and Lorraine; this struggle translated into a clash over the nature of national identity. The neighbors argued over pettier issues as well. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the two nations fought over proprietary rights to artistic and architectural movements. Did the Gothic, for example, represent the German or the French national style? And the memory of these battles—real and imagined—would color and shape the interactions, not only of diplomats, but also of ordinary citizens.

Just as a rhetoric of danger and suspicion shaded the French-German relationship, a wealth of stereotypes governed it. The French and the Germans invoked their nations' relationship as a metaphor to describe good versus evil, light versus dark, surface versus depth: the two nations were, invariably, opposites. This relationship served as a symbol to mark morality and immorality, as a barometer of decency. Toward the end of the First

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<sup>4</sup>For the dating of the term “Erbfeind,” see Julius W. Friend, *The Linchpin: French-German Relations 1950-1990* (Washington D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1991), 8. For the dating of the term “ennemi héréditaire,” see Gödde-Baumanns, 609; Michael E. Nolan, *The Inverted Mirror: Mythologizing the Enemy in France and Germany, 1898-1914* (New York: Berghahn, 2005), 24-27. Nolan suggests that the idea of the French as the hereditary enemy likewise crystallized after 1870/1871 in Germany.



World War, French Premier Georges Clemenceau wrote, “Is this not what the words epitomize, *France facing Germany*? Do they not represent the two historical poles, the encounter of two nations representing the good and evil?”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, until 1900, calling someone “Prussian” legally qualified as libel or slander in France.<sup>6</sup>

While the Germans became the prototypical Huns in the French mind, some Germans cultivated a similar impression of the French. Heinrich von Treitschke, for example, wrote about the “Gallic vandals” with their “Hunnish courage” in an 1870 discussion of the Alsatian question. In the same year, Prussian scientist Emil du Bois-Reymond invoked the “Celtic wildness” of the French in his rectorship address on Friedrich Wilhelmstag at Berlin University.<sup>7</sup> At various points in time, each imagined the other as the aggressor, whether in the shape of Napoleon or Bismarck. According to Michael Nolan, each nation tended to project its fears about its own weaknesses onto the other.<sup>8</sup>

Yet ascribing such differences to the other nation did not always entail derision. In fact, since the Franco-Prussian War, the French have commonly resorted to an idea of the two Germanies, the “good Germany” of Goethe, Kant, and Beethoven, and the “bad Germany” of Attila, Bismarck, and Krupp.<sup>9</sup> In similar fashion, the Germans embraced the French impressionists (long before the French themselves), while shunning French

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<sup>5</sup>Georges Clemenceau, *France Facing Germany: Speeches and Articles*, trans. Ernest Hunter Wright (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1919), xxiv.

<sup>6</sup>Harvey Clark Greisman, “The Enemy Concept in Franco-German Relations, 1870-1914,” *History of European Ideas* 19, nos. 1-3 (1994): 43.

<sup>7</sup>Bernard Trouillet, *Das deutsch-französische Verhältnis im Spiegel von Kultur und Sprache* (Weinheim: Beltz Verlag, 1981), 143-145.

<sup>8</sup>Nolan, 2, 6, 41.

<sup>9</sup>Gödde-Baumanns, 609-619.

superficiality and decadence. Mutual fascination as well as mutual suspicion guided the French and German imaginations.<sup>10</sup> As we shall see, “cultural germanophilia” could walk hand-in-hand with “political germanophobia,”<sup>11</sup> just as the same could be said for cultural francophilia and political francophobia.

This coexistence of fear and love brings us to the title of this study. Peter Gay has eloquently written about the “cultivation of hatred” across 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe.<sup>12</sup> Yet surely the greater challenge lies in cultivating friendships than hatred. For the protagonists of this study, each diplomatic standoff, trade conflict, or nationalist tract made their task all the harder. In many cases, such frustrations led to the dissolution of a particular Franco-German organization or prompted a number of its members to quit. Some activists, however, found inspiration precisely in these crises diplomats could not be relied upon to resolve. The term cultivation thus seems especially well-suited to this study: first, in its insistence on the fastidious, labored nature of the quest for cooperation, and second, in its other sense of broadmindedness, of being cultured, even (dare I say) civilized or cosmopolitan.

Practitioners of what Akira Iriye has called cultural internationalism sought to ease tensions between the two historic enemies for a wide variety of reasons. These

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<sup>10</sup>See, for example, *Distanz und Aneignung. Kunstbeziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich 1870-1945. Relations Artistiques entre la France et l'Allemagne 1870-1945*. Passagen/Passages vol. 8, ed. Alexandre Kostka and Françoise Lucbert (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004).

<sup>11</sup>More rarely cultural germanophobia coexisted with political germanophilia. Conversely, it is certainly a challenge to think of a case in which cultural francophobia coincided with political francophilia. For the first argument, see Françoise Lucbert, “‘Artiste par le cerveau et l’oreille’: La perception de l’art allemand dans les milieux d’avant-garde parisiens de la fin du XIXe siècle,” in *Distanz und Aneignung. Kunstbeziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich 1870-1945. Relations Artistiques entre la France et l'Allemagne 1870-1945*. Passagen/Passages vol. 8, ed. Alexandre Kostka and Françoise Lucbert (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004), 53.

<sup>12</sup>For an explanation of his title and quite different uses of the term “cultivation,” see Peter Gay, *The Cultivation of Hatred. The Bourgeois Experience Victoria to Freud*, vol. 3 (New York: Norton, 1993), 9.

activists, however, shared a wish to redefine the relationship between the two nations as one no longer based on antagonism. Not only did they envision alternate possibilities, they themselves worked to create a Germany and a France that could interact peaceably, perhaps even cordially. For cultural internationalists, culture acted not only as an end but as a means; culture could structure behavior. Accordingly, world affairs could be conducted in a new fashion. Dialogue and exchange could prove a more effective vehicle of diplomacy than the exertion of power.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, rather than wending our way through diplomatic conferences, summits, treaties, and internal legislative deliberations to address French and German attempts at conciliation (much less chronicling the French-German feuds that made these ventures necessary in the first place), we will instead explore the ways in which engaged citizens themselves took on the challenge of diplomacy. In their classic study of the history of French intellectuals, Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli chose to define intellectuals by their political engagement (rather than by their brilliance). For them, an intellectual was “a type of missionary . . . a confessor or martyr of great principles in the middle of the barbarians.”<sup>14</sup> And while the activists examined here only rarely enjoyed the intellectual stature of an Albert Einstein or a Jean-Paul Sartre, they understood themselves to be performing a similar pioneering function. Though many of these mediators were not intellectuals in the traditional sense of great thinkers (and some were not even especially well-educated), they engaged in a particular form of civic debate that went against the grain.

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<sup>13</sup>Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), see especially pages 2-12.

<sup>14</sup>Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France de l'affaire Dreyfus à nos jours* (Paris: A. Colin, 1986), 9.

This study approaches transnational cultural relations in several ways.<sup>15</sup> First, it addresses the level of individual mediators—agents of cultural transfer who carried with them ideas and values across borders and “translated” them for those on the other side. It considers this process of transfer not as unidirectional, but as circular. And it takes into account the “multiplying factor” that many of these mediators had as educators, pastors, and representatives of the media; though they were relatively few, their ideas and feats of cultural translation reached a broader audience.<sup>16</sup> Second, it looks at the cross-border networks and institutions these mediators built and maintained.<sup>17</sup> The participants, and more centrally, the architects of these networks sought to fashion new modes of cross-border communication and community. Third, it analyzes the ideas that these mediators were engaging, debating, and propagating. In this way, *The Cultivation of Friendship* also is a transnational history of the idea of cooperation and its interpenetration with notions of national identity and at times ideological or religious frameworks.

Focusing on civic activism, this dissertation examines how engaged citizens conducted a new form of mediation, generally complementary—but at times in opposition—to the efforts of national governments. More particularly, it addresses the

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<sup>15</sup>On the advantages and drawbacks of using the lens of cultural transfer, *histoire croisée*, comparative history, and transnational approaches more generally, see the following: Akira Iriye, “Transnational History,” *Contemporary European History* 13, no. 2 (2004): 211-222; Jürgen Kocka, “Comparison and Beyond,” *History and Theory* 42 (Feb. 2003): 39-44; Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity,” *History and Theory* 45 (Feb. 2006): 30-50; Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung: Der Ansatz der *Histoire Croisée* und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002): 607-636.

<sup>16</sup>See Arnd Bauerkämper, Konrad H. Jarausch, and Marcus M. Payk, “Einleitung: Transatlantische Mittler und die kulturelle Demokratisierung Westdeutschlands 1945-1970,” in *Demokratiewunder Transatlantische Mittler und die kulturelle Öffnung Westdeutschlands 1945-1970*, ed. Arnd Bauerkämper, Konrad H. Jarausch, and Marcus M. Payk (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 11-37.

<sup>17</sup>See Hans Manfred Bock, “Transaction, transfert et constitution de réseaux. Concepts pour une histoire sociale des relations culturelles transnationales,” in *Échanges culturels et relations diplomatiques: Présences françaises à Berlin au temps de la République de Weimar*, ed. Hans Manfred Bock, Gilbert Krebs (Paris: Publications de l’Institut Allemand, Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2004), 7-31.

ways in which an array of private organizations challenged the traditional Franco-German antagonism by constructing new models of cooperation. In addition to analyzing their practice of cooperation, this study dissects their shifting ideas about the nature of cooperation itself.

The route to cooperation was by no means straight. Members of French-German groups from the 1920s and early 1930s continually reassessed and reframed their pursuit of cooperation over the course of the 1930s and 1940s. Some carried a rather steady undercurrent of amity beneath a rising tide of animosity into the war years. Others involved in the 1920s abandoned their activism during the Nazi era, only to renew their interest in reconciliation after 1945. Alternatively, some of those pegged as collaborators during the Second World War reemerged in the 1950s as, once again, public champions of Franco-German friendship.

This project investigates how and why particular people chose to act as intermediaries between two historically feuding nations and societies. What led them to enter into the thorny Franco-German debate? Why did they choose to continue to endorse conciliation, even in the face of mounting affronts on the part of the other nation? What were the proverbial straws that broke the camel's back? And why would some return to the fold?

Following a number of itineraries will shed light on these decisions. For example, Régis de Vibraye, whose 1930 anti-nationalist book *Allemagne 1930* touted Franco-German entente as a prerequisite for European peace, joined the Weimar-era Mayrisch Komitee rather late in its life. De Vibraye would maintain his enlistment in the cause of cooperation through his contributions to the Comité France-Allemagne in the 1930s and

the Groupe Collaboration of the Occupation era. Otto Abetz, the art teacher and youth group leader who launched the Sohlbergkreis in 1930, helped steer the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft of the 1930s, served as the German Ambassador to occupied France, and was then thrown in jail after the war. Upon his release, Abetz joined a new Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft. In contrast, Emmanuel Mounier, the Catholic philosopher involved in the New Order groups of the 1930s, founded a committee for cooperation in 1948 that explicitly forbade collaborators from participating.

This dissertation, of course, focuses on a specific milieu and in no way claims to describe the whole of French and German society during this period. Rather, the groups and individuals discussed here tended to defy majority opinion; that was often their very importance.<sup>18</sup> What is handled is a particular meeting point between two national cultures. Neither left nor right, neither official nor wholly independent of officialdom, these border-crossers and armchair travelers, these nationalists and internationalists—and almost everything between—sought to break with tradition and to upend the status quo. Sometimes, they proceeded with passion, but perhaps more often with caution.

If the mediators examined here promoted forms of Franco-German cooperation, it is essential to point out that they did not always share the same conceptions of cooperation, or of France or Germany. The vocabulary of cooperation ranged broadly. Cooperation is used here as an umbrella term to encapsulate any number of ideas, from the tentativeness of rapprochement to the liberality of reconciliation, from the rather benign understanding, to the damning scholarly term collaborationism. It may refer to

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<sup>18</sup>Whereas Ory and Sirinelli believe that if ideas resonate among the public then they are important, this dissertation operates under the assumption that a minority belief is not only a legitimate object of study but can illuminate aspects of society hitherto obscured by the dominant narrative. c.f. Ory and Sirinelli, 71-74.

reconciliation, collaboration, collaborationism (that is, ideological collaboration), moral, intellectual, or spiritual disarmament, rapprochement, entente, friendship, befriending, understanding, comprehension, alliance, peace, or openness. Contemporaries and scholars alike often invoked these terms indiscriminately. Indeed, with the exception of collaborationism, these terms could be coded as positive or negative, dependent on the context. In a telling example from 1947, a French Communist official in occupied Germany (on the heels of French purges of “collabos” and in the midst of denazification efforts in Germany) referred—matter-of-factly, without bitterness or irony—to one group’s task “to collaborate in the spiritual and moral rapprochement of populations.”<sup>19</sup> I call attention to these many terms in the attempt to impose some consistency on their use. Here, the word “cooperation” is always intended as value-neutral.

Exploring this Franco-German milieu means that we will be shifting our gaze geographically, at times focusing on one country more than the other, at times spotlighting their capitals or their borderlands. It also means that the very notion of what is “French” and what is “German” will not remain stable over the course of this investigation. Some groups relied upon linguistic frontiers; for them, the Franco-German community comprised Austria, Luxembourg, even perhaps Morocco. Others adjusted their scope to a much more limited field, for example, by directing their efforts to border regions or occupied zones, where the French-German problem loomed particularly large.

Conspicuously absent from this account of French-German relations is East Germany, whose relations with France tell a different, if interrelated story, one analyzed

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<sup>19</sup>AOFAA Bade 118 No. 5246/PR. Confidential Letter from Administrateur de 4e classe Robert, délégué pour le G.M du cercle (Offenburg) to Délégué Supérieur pour le Gouvernement Militaire de Bade, Cabinet, Fribourg (10 Sept. 1947). He referred to BILD, the *Bureau International de Liaison et de Documentation*, discussed here in chapter six.

authoritatively by Ulrich Pfeil. On the political level, East German relations with the French in this period were deeply implicated with Soviet policy. On a cultural level, intellectuals and other mediators in France and the GDR often drew on the unifying legacy of Marxist or anti-fascist narratives. Those who subscribed to such messages came from different circles from those under investigation here, and what brought them together was often more ideological than it was specifically Franco-German (though it may have found expression in that realm). On the level of civil society, French-East German friendship societies did not take hold until the birth of *Échanges franco-allemands* in 1958.<sup>20</sup> In other words, no comparable groups existed in the GDR within the timeframe of this project.

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The relationship between France and Germany has most often been characterized as one of “hereditary enemies” until an abrupt reversal after the Second World War. During the last sixty-odd years, then, the two nations maintained a “privileged partnership,” acted as the “motor of Europe,” and even took pride in being castigated as the heart of “Old Europe” on the march to America’s war with Iraq. Both crude generalizations belie a more subtle, if intuitive truth: both before and after 1945, hatred and love, fear and hope coexisted. During the era most marked by a French-German

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<sup>20</sup>Despite his title, Pfeil probes the complexities of the triangular relationship among the GDR, the FRG, and France. Indeed, he contends that one should not, as so many others have before, separate out histories of East and West Germany. His argument is compelling, especially for such a comprehensive look at post-1949 French-German political and cultural relations as his. For this study, which is focused on a more specific milieu, and which follows (for the most part) individuals who began their work in the 1920s—or who built on their foundations—the case for including East Germany is less self-evident. Ulrich Pfeil, *Die “anderen” deutsch-französischen Beziehungen: Die DDR und Frankreich, 1949-1990* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2004), 22-24, 34, 174-290. An East German association named the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft was founded in 1962. See Pfeil, 300-310.



antagonism, mediators fumbled for something healthier. More recently, in an age of the “Franco-German motor,” vestiges of distrust linger.

While French-German attempts at cultural understanding since World War II—and especially since the 1960s—have been evaluated as positive desires to acquire education, cosmopolitanism, and peace, similar interwar programs, institutions, and informal exchanges between France and Germany tend to be analyzed by historians teleologically, as insidious precursors to collaborationism, or, at best, as misguided, doomed attempts at rapprochement.<sup>21</sup> The idealist visions embraced by many on each side of the Rhine, however, must be examined as hopeful desires for the future of Europe. These groups carried out an array of activities, some of which we would find benign, perhaps even noble, others unsympathetic, perhaps even repugnant. But it is important to recognize that within a difficult and often changing context, these activists saw themselves as serving their nation’s interests, the objective of Franco-German cooperation, and the cause for peace. Thus, though these efforts at cooperation may have shifted between almost Panglossian optimism and rank opportunism, between hopeful realism and dubious idealism, there nonetheless existed intellectual affinities,

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<sup>21</sup>For glowing assessments of post-1945 efforts, see, for example, Alice Ackermann, “Reconciliation as a Peace-Building Process in Postwar Europe: The Franco-German Case,” *Peace & Change* 19, no. 3 (July 1994): 229-250; John E. Farquharson and Stephen C. Holt, *Europe from Below: An Assessment of Franco-German Popular Contacts* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975); Joseph V. Montville, “The Arrow and the Olive Branch: A Case for Track Two Diplomacy,” in *The Psychodynamics of International Relationships. Volume II: Unofficial Diplomacy at Work*, ed. Vamik D. Volkan et al. (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1991), 161-175, especially 171-175. For an interpretation that suggests interwar efforts as a prelude to collaborationism, see, for example Rita Thalmann, “Du Cercle de Sohlberg au Comité France-Allemagne: Une évolution ambiguë de la coopération franco-allemande,” in *Entre Locarno et Vichy: Les relations culturelles franco-allemandes dans les années 1930*, ed. Hans Manfred Bock, Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, and Michel Trebitsch (Paris: CNRS, 1993), 67-86. For an example that stresses the naïveté of interwar efforts, see, Jacques Le Rider, “La Revue d’Allemagne: les germanistes français, témoins et interprètes de la crise de la République de Weimar et du nazisme,” in *Entre Locarno et Vichy*, ed. Bock, et al., 363-374.

commonalities of purpose, and overlapping memberships that necessitate studying such groups as much for their continuities as for their differences.

By surveying facets of dedicated activism on behalf of Franco-German rapprochement during the interwar era, this dissertation seeks to chip away at the notion of the 1920s as an “age of illusions,” an impression that has remained in the forefront of the public imagination despite Jon Jacobson’s dismissal of it some 25 years ago.<sup>22</sup> Many scholars have claimed that Locarno-era efforts toward understanding bore little fruit, did not stave off the rise of nationalism, or at most served as models for cooperation after the Second World War. Such arguments underestimate the resilience of joint French and German attempts at rapprochement in the face of the prevalent nationalist spirit in both nations. Civic debates about Franco-German cooperation in the Locarno years resonated throughout the 1930s and beyond. In vastly different ways, these early efforts at cooperation shaped both the notorious collaboration of the Second World War as well as the post-1945 push for reconciliation. If we are to take seriously the ideas of this small, but dedicated core, we must focus on the myriad (re)incarnations of their efforts beyond the ruptures of 1933 and 1945.

At the chronological center of our investigation, the Second World War—and with it the German occupation of much of France—serves as a fulcrum. It would be impossible to underestimate how thoroughly historians have plumbed the murky depths of the war and the occupation. But surprisingly, little of the scholarship (particularly in English) on the occupation period pursues in a sustained fashion the ways in which the French and the Germans interacted before the second war was unleashed. Just as an older

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<sup>22</sup>Jon Jacobson, “Is There a New International History of the 1920s?” *The American Historical Review* 88, no. 3 (June 1983): 621.

tradition put Vichy “in parenthesis” within French history, and an even older tradition placed the Nazi years in parenthesis within German history, so, too, have most historians viewed collaboration(ism) not as part of a larger trend of French-German attempts at cooperation, but rather as an immediate response to the circumstances of war and occupation.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, a common assumption suggests that the occupation of France brought about an entirely new relationship between the French and the Germans. If it perhaps represents an extreme formulation of this perspective, Richard Cobb’s statement spells out the implications of such an argument quite clearly:

At whatever level, whether timid, flirtatious or brassily calculated, run-of-the-mill technical and administrative, cultural or repressive, ideologically convinced or brutally cynical, collaboration and collaborationism would normally remain a temporary and largely accidental relationship, imposed by quite exceptional circumstances, for which there was no recent precedent, as well as by unique opportunities...and confined within a time space of four years and one month . . . .

Collaboration and resistance are both eminently personal stances that have no past, whether familial or historical . . .<sup>24</sup>

Cobb’s position makes far more sense from a moral perspective than a historical one. If the positioning of oneself with regard to a conqueror and the contingencies of war were new, that is not to say that “there was no recent precedent.” By reframing the questions, we can unearth rather substantial continuities both before and after those four years and

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<sup>23</sup>Certainly, scholars have considered individual biographies and how they bridged these apparent ruptures, but this study focuses on an evolution of networks and ideas centered on French-German cooperation. For examples of such biographies, see Barbara Lambauer, *Otto Abetz et les français ou l’envers de la collaboration* (Paris: Fayard, 2001); Corinna Franz, *Fernand de Brinon und die deutsch-französischen Beziehungen 1918-1945* (Bonn: Bouvier, 2000); Geraldine Lillian Alden, “The Road to Collaboration: The Life and Times of Jean Luchaire” (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1998).

<sup>24</sup>Richard Cobb, *French and Germans, Germans and French: A Personal Interpretation of France under Two Occupations 1914-1918/ 1940-1944*, Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry. (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1983): 72-73.

one month. Instead of looking to gradations of guilt, we examine networks and institutions of Franco-German cooperation extant before the war; these not only involved people who might be predisposed to cooperation during wartime, but also had laid a foundation upon which the so-called “collabos” could build.

If it is important to determine why collaboration during the occupation worked, it is necessary to look at prewar mechanisms of cooperation. By looking at continuity, we can avoid the trap of wholly placing “Vichy in parentheses.”<sup>25</sup> Most historians suggest the war marked a tremendous shift in the conduct of Franco-German relations because cooperation could only ensue on different terms: it could no longer be conciliation but collaboration.<sup>26</sup> By separating examinations of interwar rapprochement from Occupation-era collaborationism, this genre of scholarship has risked drawing an artificial line between them.<sup>27</sup> Viewing this moment as a radical break implies a total novelty of structures and habits of Franco-German cultural encounters with the onset of the Occupation. Such assumptions lead to overly critical interpretations of French

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<sup>25</sup>I am borrowing this phrase, though not its significance, from Gérard Noiriel. See Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity*, trans. Geoffroy de Laforcade (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1996).

<sup>26</sup>This idea is more implied by the periodization of many books, which with the exceptions of Richard Cobb’s comparative history of two occupations and a slew of biographies, deals solely with pre-war or the 1939-1945 era. Important exceptions include Julian Jackson, *France The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944*, 2d ed. (New York: Columbia, 1982). A short list of books on the Occupation that do not delve into preexisting structures in any depth would include: Eberhard Jäckel, *Frankreich in Hitlers Europa: Die Deutsche Frankreichpolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1966); Jean-Pierre Azéma, *From Munich to the Liberation, 1938-1944*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, *Histoire de l’art, Paris 1940-1944* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1986); Philippe Burrin, *France under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: The New Press, 1996); and Bertram M. Gordon, *Collaborationism in France during the Second World War* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1980).

<sup>27</sup>Rita Thalmann, “Du Cercle de Sohlberg,” and Claude Lévy, “Autour du Jean Luchaire: le cercle éclaté de Notre Temps,” in *Entre Locarno et Vichy*, ed. Bock, et al (1993), 67-86; 120-130.

acceptance of German high culture during the Occupation.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, unmoored from the context of Franco-German relations, these narratives suggest a novelty to postwar institutions that belies their earlier incarnations.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the war period remains in many ways part of a Franco-German continuum.

Such continuities, however, do not mean that the origins of French collaborationism lay in Locarno-era efforts for cooperation. Henry Rousso at best scratched the surface when he described the Mayrisch Komitee of the late Weimar years as a “sort of Comité France-Allemagne, but before Hitler’s seizure of power.”<sup>30</sup> Although the Comité France-Allemagne, which studiously nurtured French ties to Nazi Germany included former members of the Mayrisch Komitee in its ranks, the organization should not be deemed a mere successor to a group born under the star of Locarno. Overlaps cannot be denied, but a conflation of the two organizations’ work would not only be simplistic, but teleological. Instead, a more complex story, full of intriguing connections and meaningful twists, will be told.

After the war, when Franco-German collaboration was condemned, Franco-German mediators faced new challenges; again, there was no simple progression toward cooperation. The memory of the Second World War weighed heavily on both French and German minds, a situation rendered yet more complex by France’s postwar occupation of parts of Western Germany. The war bequeathed a difficult legacy and created a complicated present; it deeply shaded efforts at cooperation and French-German relations

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<sup>28</sup>For an unnuanced history of the Occupation, see David Pryce-Jones, *Paris in the Third Reich: A History of the German Occupation, 1940-1944* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981).

<sup>29</sup>See, for example, Farquharson and Holt, *Europe from Below*.

<sup>30</sup>Henry Rousso, *Un Château en Allemagne: La France de Pétain en exil: Sigmaringen, 1944-1945* (Paris: Éditions Ramsay, 1980), 215.

more broadly as well as hopes for a new European order. Yet even in this context, as both the French and Germans worked to reconstruct their devastated landscapes, activists urged a moral reconstruction of Franco-German relations. These mediators drew on examples from the past.

While many of the groups here have been studied in isolation before, they have not been brought together in this way. This project seeks to enrich our understanding of the organizations that others have so carefully researched by placing this work in new contexts. We therefore owe a considerable debt to Hans Manfred Bock, who has spent much of his career documenting Franco-German civil society in the interwar years and who has helped shape a burgeoning field of Franco-German history in Europe.<sup>31</sup> A number of other scholars' tightly focused individual case studies—whether in the shape of painstaking monograph or short article—have likewise been of great use.<sup>32</sup> While

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<sup>31</sup>See, for example, Hans Manfred Bock, "Transnationale Begegnung im Zeitalter des Nationalismus: Der Lebensweg Otto Grautoffs (1876-1937) zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich," in *Sept décennies de relations franco-allemandes: Hommage à Joseph Rovin*, ed. Gilbert Krebs (Asnières: Publications de l'Institut d'Allemand d'Asnières, 1989), 57-79; "Die Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft 1926 bis 1934: Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte der deutsch-französischen Beziehungen der Zwischenkriegszeit," *Francia* 17/3 (1990): 57-101; "Les associations de germanistes français. L'exemple de la Ligue d'études germaniques (LEG)," in *Les études germaniques (1900-1970)*, ed. Michel Espagne and Michael Werner (Paris: CNRS, 1994), 267-285; "Initiatives socio-culturelles et contraintes politiques dans les relations universitaires entre la France et l'Allemagne dans l'Entre-Deux-Guerres," *Revue d'Allemagne et des Pays de Langue Allemande* 34, no. 3 (2002): 297-310.

<sup>32</sup>Examples of monographs include Ina Belitz, *Befreundung mit dem Fremden: Die Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft in den deutsch-französischen Kultur- und Gesellschaftsbeziehungen der Locarno-Ära: Programme und Protagonisten der transnationalen Verständigung zwischen Pragmatismus und Idealismus*, Europäische Hochschulschriften: Geschichte und Ihre Hilfswissenschaften (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1997); Béatrice Pellissier, "Un dialogue franco-allemand de l'entre deux-guerres: la *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* (janvier 1928-juin 1933) et la *Revue d'Allemagne* (novembre 1927-décembre 1933)" (Ph.D. diss., Université de Paris IV-Paris Sorbonne, 1991-1992). Barbara Unteutsch and Martin Strickmann have a wider scope. Unteutsch focuses on three groups from the 1930s and war years; Strickmann looks to intellectuals (some of whom were affiliated with such organizations) in the late 1940s. See Barbara Unteutsch, *Vom Sohlbergkreis zur Gruppe Collaboration. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutsch-französischen Beziehungen anhand der Cahiers Franco-Allemands/ Deutsch-Französische Monatshefte, 1931-1944*, Münsterische Beiträge zur romanischen Philologie, ed. Wolfgang Babilas, et al. (Münster: Kleinheinrich Verlag, 1990); Martin Strickmann, *L'Allemagne nouvelle contre l'Allemagne éternelle: Die französischen Intellektuellen und die deutsch-französische Verständigung 1944-1950. Diskurse, Initiativen, Biografien* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004). For articles, see, for example, the following collected volumes:

these works have delved deep into the particularities of one or two Franco-German organizations or journals, they do not address longer-term trends or the big picture.

These small-scale studies speak to interesting questions, but, even taken together, they make for a remarkably fragmented (and fragmentary) view of French-German relations, as well as of 20<sup>th</sup> century European history more broadly. Radical breaks—in the form of regime changes, wars, and occupations—have kept scholars from seeing continuities, whether of ideas or actors, that transcend these ruptures. These seemingly impassable divides have relegated an essential strand of European history to the realm of the incidental. Scholars have laid tiles, but have yet to grout between them, much less step back to view the whole mosaic. Therefore, I seek to determine how the pieces fit together, how individuals bridged and tried to overcome dramatic upheavals. Indeed, it is my contention that we cannot understand these ruptures in the European past without exploring the continuities that lay beneath them.

By exploring the continuities—as well as the discontinuities—of Franco-German cultural cooperation, this dissertation mines three scholarly veins. Like the above-referenced scholarship, this project highlights the importance of civil society and its influences on transnational relations in both France and Germany; indeed, this dissertation goes a step further to underscore the variety, vibrancy, and durability of civic activism in both nations. In so doing, it also demonstrates the limits to the study of diplomatic relations as a means to understand relations between Germany and France. Diplomatic historians have typically emphasized Franco-German political conflict,

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Hans Manfred Bock, Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, and Michel Trebitsch, eds, *Entre Locarno et Vichy: Les relations culturelles franco-allemandes dans les années 1930*, 2 vols. (Paris: CNRS, 1993); Bock and Krebs, eds. *Échanges culturels*.

thereby slighting any cooperation that occurred in the cultural realm. Finally, this project places collaborationism during World War II in an extended historical context. Thus, it subsumes Vichy-era collaboration, which historians have otherwise treated as a discrete unit, into the long-term development of Franco-German relations.

By examining the attempts toward French-German cooperation, this dissertation sheds light on both the national histories of France and Germany as well as on transnational history itself. In a recent invaluable essay, Allan Mitchell contended that the history of Third Republic France was inextricably linked with the history of Germany, that it would be, in fact, impossible to understand France at that time without taking into account its formidable neighbor. Throughout his career, Mitchell has helped illuminate Germany's influence on France, from the army to the government to the church to social welfare.<sup>33</sup> We know, too, that France has had a significant impact on the course of German history.<sup>34</sup> Why not therefore take Mitchell's argument about the history of France a step further? Neither the history of modern France nor the history of modern Germany can be told in its entirety without reference to the other. Indeed, Sorbonne Germanist Henri Lichtenberger said as much in 1929, near the start of the period under investigation here: "The two nations are inextricably linked to each other by the fatalities

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<sup>33</sup>Mitchell's recent essay is *A Stranger in Paris: Germany's Role in Republican France, 1870-1940* (Berghahn, 2006). Other French-German works by Mitchell in this vein include *The German Influence in France after 1870: The Formation of the French Republic* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1979); *Victors and Vanquished: The German Influence on Army and Church in France after 1870* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1984); *The Divided Path: The German Influence on Social Reform in France after 1870* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1991).

<sup>34</sup>Both David Blackbourn and Thomas Nipperdey, for example, open their classic 19<sup>th</sup> century German textbooks with reference to France. Here, in particular, we see revolutionary ideals transferred across the border. See, David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918* (1997), 70-79; Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1800-1866: Bürgerwelt und starker Staat* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1983), 1-5. French influence has notably been apparent in German art as well.



of neighborhood, probably also by racial affinities. Between their cultures there exists a tight interdependence since [the Gauls].”<sup>35</sup>

Because this study lays stress on the interdependence of the two nations, it shifts Mitchell’s timeframe from one defined by the conventions of French history—the duration of the Third Republic—to one of equal importance to both France and Germany. Two diplomatic settlements bookend this study, the 1925 Treaty of Locarno and the 1954 Paris Accords. Together, they provide a framework of symbolic moments for the quest for cooperation. These dates, whose significance is typically grounded in the political content of diplomatic pacts, will instead be deployed here as symbolic cultural markers: these dates were invoked by the activists themselves as they narrated their own visions of the history of cooperation. Franco-German mediators frequently invoked the Treaty of Locarno, relevant for its recognition of the 1919 border between France and Germany, as the emblematic foundational moment of their quest, and the “spirit of Locarno” became their rallying cry. The 1954 Paris Accords, which most notably placed West Germany on equal footing with other European nations almost a decade after the war, provided equally clear (and in retrospect, more enduring) proof of mutual goodwill. Shortly after the failure of the European Defense Community, France and Germany would become the backbone of the European project.<sup>36</sup> With the signature of these accords, Adenauer hailed

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<sup>35</sup>Henri Lichtenberger, “Psychologie du rapprochement franco-allemand,” *Revue d’Allemagne* no. 23 (Sept. 1929): 769-783, see pp.773-774.

<sup>36</sup>On Locarno, see Jon Jacobson, *Locarno Diplomacy: Germany and the West, 1925-1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972). On the Paris Accords, see Georges-Henri Soutou, “Les Accords de Paris. Une étape diplomatique traduisant les mutations européennes des années cinquante,” in *Wandel und Integration: Deutsch-französische Annäherungen der fünfziger Jahre/ Mutations et intégration: Les rapprochements franco-allemands dans les années cinquante*, ed. Hélène Miard-Delacroix and Rainer Hudemann (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2005): 41-52.

“the day of reconciliation with France.”<sup>37</sup> On a narrower level, it was in 1954 that the *Arbeitskreis der privaten Institutionen für internationale Begegnung und Bildungsarbeit* united a variety of groups interested in the French-German relationship for the first time under one umbrella.<sup>38</sup>

With 1925 and 1954 as our chronological frame, then, we will pursue a number of case studies of French-German cooperation. The organizations under investigation here were by no means the only groups interested in French-German cooperation during this period. This dissertation, for instance, does not take as its subject political parties with transnational ties or agendas such as the Communists or Christian Democrats (in fact, I expressly look at groups claiming to be independent of party politics). Nor does it focus on other organizations interested in French-German cooperation that were nonetheless primarily oriented toward another cause, such as pacifist groups and international organizations affiliated with the League of Nations, the United Nations, or the European movement. In similar fashion, it does not place the spotlight on French and German institutes—the Institut français de Berlin, the Deutsche Institut in Paris, much less institutes with a more global mandate such as the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD), Goethe Institute, or Alliance française. Each of these, of course, served as an important locus and agent of international exchange and cultural transfer, but these institutes were precisely that, neither directed toward French-German cooperation *per se*,

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<sup>37</sup>Sherill Brown Wells, *Pioneers of European Integration and Peace, 1945-1963: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford St. Martin's, 2007): 19.

<sup>38</sup>Hans Manfred Bock and Ulrich Pfeil, “Kulturelle Akteure und die deutsch-französische Zusammenarbeit: Formen, Ziele, Einfluss,” in *Der Elysee-Vertrag und die deutsch-französischen Beziehungen 1945-1963-2003*, ed. Corine Defrance and Ulrich Pfeil. Pariser Historische Studien, vol. 71. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005), 223.

nor the products of civic activism. On a more narrow level, the dissertation does not cover local book clubs, conversation groups, or foreign language circles.

Rather, the selected cases share an agenda aimed first and foremost at improving French-German relations. Unlike many local clubs, these organizations possessed some combination of political influence, cultural capital, and the economic wherewithal to promote their ideas within their own society and meet their counterparts across the border. All worked to reshape the public mindset through the press, public lecture tours, or other publications. Most enjoyed at least some degree of support from the state(s); certainly, both the French and German governments took notice of each organization under review.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, all left an imprint on future incarnations of such friendship societies. Tellingly, many of the same people found themselves gravitating toward these organizations in their varied iterations. Together, these cases illustrate the common scope—as well as the kaleidoscopic variations—of the quest for cooperation.

Part One, “Intellectual Demobilization and the Problem of Understanding, 1925-1933,” considers three very different Franco-German associations during the Locarno era. Chapter one analyzes the *Mayrisch Komitee*, predominantly composed of well-known businessmen and intellectuals. The Komitee lent legitimacy to the notion of Franco-German cooperation, lobbied to curtail chauvinist propaganda in the press, and helped define the rhetoric and methods of future associations devoted to cooperation. Chapter two explores the *Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft*, a broad-based organization that sought to educate the French and German reading publics about the complementary natures of French and German culture and established exchanges to foster mutual

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<sup>39</sup>Indeed, much of the sourcebase for this project comes from government archives.

understanding. Chapter three examines the *Sohlbergkreis*, devoted to creating a Franco-German community through youth “encounters” that trumpeted common interests over national divisions.

Part Two, “Maintaining a Franco-German Community, 1933-1944,” centers on the tensions confronting Franco-German friendship societies—as well as the inducements to join them—in the Nazi-era. Chapter four investigates the second incarnation of the *Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft*, an amalgam of the earlier groups stamped with a Nazi-influenced agenda, along with its French analog the *Comité France-Allemagne*. Chapter five follows the wartime *Groupe Collaboration*, which by promulgating Franco-German entente and the idea of a Europe united under the Germans, explicitly aimed at sustaining the politics of Montoire.

Part Three, “Reconciliation and Redemption, 1945-1954,” explores the moral universe of postwar cooperation. Chapter six looks at the Catholic-oriented *Bureau International de Liaison et de Documentation*, which immediately sought reconciliation after the war. Chapter seven focuses on the *Comité français d'échanges avec l'Allemagne Nouvelle*, which called attention to the negative legacy of collaboration and insisted on a new form of Franco-German cooperation. In this way, the Comité underlined the legacy of the war and the need to purge both societies to achieve renewal.

In a meticulous history of interwar French and German diplomatic relations, Franz Knipping vehemently argued that the Franco-German opposition continued even “behind the façade” of rapprochement during the heady Locarno years.<sup>40</sup> This dissertation takes the reverse tack. Rather than pointing out the ubiquitous tensions in the French-

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<sup>40</sup>Franz Knipping, *Deutschland, Frankreich und das Ende der Locarno-Ära 1928-1931. Studien zur internationalen Politik in der Anfangsphase der Weltwirtschaftskrise* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1987), see especially p. 220.

German relationship, obvious to contemporary witnesses and historians alike, it looks to a different, equally complex continuity. If, as Knipping rightly contends, French-German tensions endured even during moments of attempted conciliation, so too, did the quest for cooperation persist even during the most marked periods of hostility. I therefore privilege the smaller, less familiar story of cooperation over the far grander saga of hate. In this way, we can zoom in on those struggling to keep cooperation afloat despite the overwhelming tide of animosity. And, as we look to those cultivators of friendship, reaching out during the darkest hours, we will see that for many, their work toward cooperation was no mere act or façade, but a matter of profound conviction, firm commitment, and the essential key to a future European peace.

## PART ONE

### Intellectual Demobilization and the Problem of Understanding, 1925-1933

Three enormous questions loomed over Franco-German relations after the First World War: reparations, war guilt, and security. These issues pervaded international summits throughout the 1920s and were at the root of mutual French and German anxieties. The post-Versailles occupation of the Rhineland and the invasion of the Ruhr did little to assuage the French public and only inflamed German public opinion against the French, whom the Germans saw as poachers of their economy and stealthily expansionist abusers of the postwar order. In this hostile atmosphere, the two most celebrated proponents of rapprochement, Gustav Stresemann and Aristide Briand, hammered out the Locarno accords to ensure stability. At the same time, the efforts of concerned activists who had urged Franco-German cooperation found greater resonance once the two governments explicitly sanctioned a policy of *détente*.

Before Locarno, a number of international groups considered the easing of French-German tensions as a subset of their broader platform. Some form of Franco-German cooperation was often folded into the agendas of, for example, Catholic and Protestant associations, international organizations affiliated with the League of Nations such as the Carnegie Foundation, and transnational political parties such as the Communists. Socialists, too, saw in cooperation a worthy goal, one effectively captured a few years later in the G.W. Pabst film *Kameradschaft*. This joint Franco-German

production based on the 1906 Courrières mining disaster yoked a message of Franco-German cooperation to a socialist trope: French and German workers would unite against their oppressors. But it was above all pacifists who led the charge for Franco-German entente in the 1920s. The tensions between France and Germany—and attempts to resolve them—drew worldwide attention when, for two years in a row, a Frenchman and a German shared the Nobel Peace Prize: Stresemann and Briand in 1926 and Ludwig Quidde and Ferdinand Buisson, leaders in the pacifist movement, in 1927.

Scholars on both sides of the Rhine have argued that a bona fide politics of cooperation in the 1920s was doomed to failure.<sup>41</sup> But, if cooperation was certain to fail, what compelled its advocates to work so hard for a lost cause? Rather than looking to diplomatic instances of cooperation: Locarno, Germany's entrance into the League of Nations (1926), the end of interallied control over the Rhineland (1927), the Franco-German Treaty of Commerce (1927), and the Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928), the next three chapters examine the ways in which determined activists sought to engage in a Franco-German dialogue, almost inconceivable after the war.

These largely independent cultural efforts differed remarkably from the official cultural diplomacy of the time. After the signing of the peace, the two governments, thoroughly preoccupied with each other and fumbling for some sort of *modus vivendi*, were torn between projecting an image of national power and seeking rapprochement. Under the purview of the Foreign Ministry, the *Services des Oeuvres françaises à l'étranger* worked to spread French cultural influence abroad. The German government

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<sup>41</sup>Hermann Hagspiel, *Verständigung zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich? Die deutsch-französische Aussenpolitik der zwanziger Jahre im innenpolitischen Kräftefeld beider Länder*. Pariser Historische Studien, ed. Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris, vol. 24. (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid Verlag, 1987), 3-4.

responded in kind to counter French efforts and to promote German culture in its stead. Thus when the French erected cultural institutes in, for example, Prague, Riga, and Warsaw, the Germans followed suit in Barcelona, Madrid, and Budapest; this was a battle on neutral ground. The *Office National des Universités et Écoles Françaises* (ONUEF) and the *Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst* (DAAD) similarly worked to promote their respective nation's culture and scientific research abroad. But it was not until 1929 that the ONUEF extended its exchanges to Germany or until 1930 that the DAAD opened an office in Paris.<sup>42</sup> At the official level, French-German cultural interaction after the war by and large was reduced to French efforts in the occupied Rhineland, namely the *Centre d'Études Germaniques* founded in Mainz in 1921 and a series of French schools in the occupied zone.

The following year, the Sorbonne Germanist Henri Lichtenberger hinted that intellectual power was being exploited to serve a nationalist cause. In his *L'Allemagne d'aujourd'hui*, reissued and translated several times over the next decade, Lichtenberger argued that intellectuals and their output had been hijacked since the eve of the Great War. Even those long dead—most markedly Nietzsche—had been conscripted into the war effort to perform “the agonal function of intelligence.” Now the time had come, he explained, for what he alternately dubbed “intellectual demobilization” and the

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<sup>42</sup>Johann Chapoutot, “‘La discipline et la force massive’ contre ‘l’intelligence française’: L’Office National des Universités et Ecoles Françaises (ONUEF) face à l’Allemagne (1910-1939),” *Francia* 28, no. 3 (2001): 15-34; Antoine Marès, “Puissance et présence culturelle de la France: L’exemple du Service des Oeuvres françaises à l’Étranger dans les années 30,” *Relations Internationales* no. 33 (Spring 1983): 65-80; Hans Manfred Bock, “Initiatives socio-culturelles et contraintes politiques dans les relations universitaires entre la France et l’Allemagne dans l’Entre-Deux-Guerres,” *Revue d’Allemagne et des Pays de Langue Allemande* 34, no. 3 (2002): 297-310.



“demobilization of *esprits*” that had not proceeded apace with military demobilization.<sup>43</sup>

The phrase played upon the notion of “moral disarmament” which first surfaced after 1919 among French military circles and was later picked up by, among others, French schoolteachers.<sup>44</sup> According to Lichtenberger, intellectuals needed to shoulder the duty to lead the public to mutual understanding, the bedrock of his proposal. By placing the burden on intellectuals to illuminate the public, Lichtenberger—one of the most vigorous proponents of cooperation of the 1920s and one of the very few active members of both the Mayrisch Komitee and the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft—embraced a philosophy that neatly bridged the two groups.

If demobilization and disarmament represented a first step, understanding was the second, more difficult, challenge. French and German activists struggled to find a proper vocabulary of cooperation. At its most basic level, this can be seen in the question of whether understanding represented a process or a goal. It likewise proved difficult to hammer out, much less stick to, one philosophy of understanding—even a loose one. Activists also had to determine what forms such understanding could take, and ultimately, how far they could push their demands. As they wrestled with these issues, proponents of cooperation found themselves hemmed in: bitterness about the war and its aftermath left many hostile toward the nation across the Rhine, nationalist groups stridently proclaimed very different goals and needs, and the two governments, the press, and an array of public figures in both nations preached constant vigilance.

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<sup>43</sup>Henri Lichtenberger, *L'Allemagne d'aujourd'hui dans ses relations avec la France*. Le Nouveau Monde politique, économique et social. Enquetes du Musée social. (Paris: Editions de Crès, 1922), 266-272.

<sup>44</sup>Andrew Barros, “Disarmament as a Weapon: Anglo-French Relations and the Problem of Enforcing German Disarmament, 1919-1928,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 29 (April 2006): 302. On teachers, see Mona L. Siegel, *The Moral Disarmament of France: Education, Pacifism, and Patriotism, 1914-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Unlike official endeavors, the organizations analyzed in this section neither served as a form of “cultural penetration” nor were they limited to the zone of occupation. Above all, they were joint Franco-German efforts, which sought to overcome stereotypes and misinformation. Chapter one, which focuses on the Mayrisch Komitee, shows how intellectuals and industrialists in both nations strived to work together to sanitize the French and German press and thereby begin to reshape public opinion. The Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft (DFG), the subject of chapter two, reached out both east and west of the Rhine and sought, not penetration, but mutual understanding. Chapter three explores the ways in which the Sohlbergkreis, a group that brought together French and German youth, tried to thrust rapprochement from the realm of ideas into the realm of practice and everyday life.

Historians have rightly indicated that these groups were a political failure in that they did not in themselves reshape, or even appreciably influence, the international landscape. Not only is this verdict unfair—the expectation that they could is somewhat ridiculous—but this assessment also fails to recognize the important effects these organizations did have.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Mayrisch Komitee

The very fact that in Franco-German relations there is virtually no connection between the question asked and the answer aimed at, that the truth about Germany does not fit into the ideological frame we have made to receive it: that is perhaps the essence of the whole Franco-German problem. Even in the purely political sphere, where question and answer seem to bear on the same realities, the two countries are unconsciously talking to themselves. —Pierre Viénot<sup>45</sup>

One could almost say (pardon my mathematical formula): Franco-German entente is the necessary and sufficient condition for European peace.—Régis de Vibraye<sup>46</sup>

This study is about France and Germany, and yet it commences neither with a Frenchman nor a German, but a Luxembourger. Émile Mayrisch (1862-1928), whose position between France and Germany is embodied in the alternate spellings of his given name as Émile or Emil, was an industrial baron of the turn of the century and the Great War. Through his steel concern ARBED, he directed one of the central bases of the war industry. At his magnificent, sprawling chateau at Colpach, he and his wife, the translator Aline de Saint-Hubert, presided over one of the foremost salons of the era. Thus placed at the center of both elite economic and intellectual circles that included both the French and Germans, the bilingual Mayrisch wielded a particular influence over oft-separated communities.

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<sup>45</sup>Pierre Viénot, *Is Germany Finished?* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1932), 14.

<sup>46</sup>Régis de Vibraye, *Allemagne 1930* (Bordeaux: Feret et Fils, 1930), 13.

As early as his 1911 merger of three steel factories into ARBED, Mayrisch met frequently with French and German industrial magnates to discuss the formation of transnational cartels and customs unions. When the re-erection of trade barriers with Germany after Versailles threatened business, Mayrisch spearheaded more concrete efforts to create a customs union for Luxembourg, Belgian, French, and German heavy industry—namely coal and steel.<sup>47</sup> As a Luxembourg representative at the 1922 Genoa Conference, Mayrisch had made his official entrée into the realm of 1920s international summits. Appointed head of the International Steel Entente in 1926, he became an even more prominent champion of transnational economic negotiations by promoting the cartel as a means to economic protectionism, and as a byproduct, toward international harmony. Without being his primary goal, Franco-German cooperation was a requisite accompaniment to his vision of a stable steel market that would tap the resources of Luxembourg and Belgium, Lorraine and the Saar. His network of personal connections and professional interests ideally situated Mayrisch to forge multi-national European cooperation.

Mayrisch's personal network also extended into the highest intellectual circles of the Continent. Aline, as a translator of André Gide, invited him, along with numerous other writers from Thomas Mann to André Malraux to Colpach. A steady contributor (both financial and intellectual)<sup>48</sup> to the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, the premier French literary review of the century, Aline maintained strong ties to the literary scene in France

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<sup>47</sup>Mayrisch moved from “neutral” relations with Germany during the war when he maintained trade with the Germans to (by necessity) more pro-French relations at the war's end. See Guido Müller, “Der Luxemburgische Stahlkonzern Arbed nach dem ersten Weltkrieg: Zum Problem der deutsch-französischen Verständigung durch Wirtschaftsverflechtung,” *Revue d'Allemagne* 25, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1993): 538-540.

<sup>48</sup>Jeannine Wurth-Rentier, “Émile et Aline Mayrisch: Un couple luxembourgeois prestigieux de l'entre-deux-guerres,” *Revue des Deux Mondes* 10 (1984): 86.

and Germany, and often brought writers and critics from the two nations together for sustained literary conversations at Colpach. In particular, critics Jean Schlumberger of the *NRF* and Ernst Robert Curtius regularly visited. Other intellectuals included the philosopher Karl Jaspers and Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, the apostle of Paneuropa.

Early in 1926 Émile Mayrisch tapped a number of businessmen and intellectuals to join an organization to promote Franco-German understanding, the *Deutsch-Französische Studienkomitee* [Franco-German Study Group] or the *Comité franco-allemand d'information et de documentation* [Franco-German Committee for Information and Documentation] (henceforth known for simplicity's sake as the Mayrisch Komitee, its shorter, common designation). Although scholars have generally discussed the Mayrisch Komitee in an economic context,<sup>49</sup> I argue that the Komitee was important above all for its influence on the culture of Franco-German cooperation. As one of the earliest organizations to that end founded after Versailles, the Mayrisch Komitee helped establish a rhetoric of mutual understanding and lent a certain weight to the goal of rapprochement. By looking to improve Franco-German relations and stamp out stereotypes, the Mayrisch Komitee adopted a positive agenda. Its gradualist approach, however, revealed a more anxious perspective. Steeped in the memory of a bitter war and the contentious peace that followed, these advocates of cooperation feared the accusation that they were betraying national interests. Their pragmatic, guarded approach provided a space for the “spirit of Locarno” in the civic sphere yet subverted this spirit by eschewing pacifism and internationalism as castles in the air and by putting the brakes on a political

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<sup>49</sup>Jacques Bariéty, “Industriels allemands et industriels français à l'époque de la République de Weimar,” *Revue d'Allemagne* 4, no. 2 (April-June 1974): 1-16; Guido Müller, “Der Luxemburgische Stahlkonzern,” 535-544. For a similar analysis by a contemporary, see Otto Abetz, *Histoire d'une politique franco-allemande, 1930-1950. Mémoires d'un Ambassadeur* (Paris: Librairie Stock, 1953), 59-60.

program for a United States of Europe. At once part of the spirit of Locarno and critical of it, the Mayrisch Komitee counters the prevailing notions of the late 1920s as an era of sunny idealism, even within some of the more progressive spheres.

In relegating the Mayrisch Komitee to the economic sphere, historians have been driven to conclude that the group's rather negligible impact on the economy demonstrates its minor role in interwar society.<sup>50</sup> But in this case, economic and cultural history cannot be so easily disentangled; the example of the Mayrisch Komitee perfectly illustrates the nexus of diplomatic, economic, and cultural efforts for cooperation. By looking at the Komitee from a cultural perspective, we can see that the purely economic (or economic-diplomatic) argument underestimates the broader influence of the Komitee, which was not limited to that sphere. Scholars have pointed to the elite backgrounds of the committee members as evidence of the seriousness of the group, but have also argued that these elites merely debated and networked behind closed doors. Yet, while the committee members did belong to the highest circles of the business and intellectual worlds, it was exactly their distinction that lent legitimacy to the organization and its ideas on cooperation. Prestige helped carve out a space to negotiate ideas on Europe and Franco-German cooperation that did not smack of quixotism. And by discussing these ideas, members helped define the rhetoric and methods of future associations devoted to entente. Moreover, the Komitee built a network of those pledged to Franco-German cooperation. Members' encounters would sustain these channels of communication as

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<sup>50</sup>Jacques Bariéty, "Industriels allemands et industriels français," 1-16; Guido Müller, "Der Luxemburgische Stahlkonzern," 535-544. While Barbara Unteutsch does consider the Mayrisch Komitee as a cultural-intellectual group in passing, she hesitates to judge its impact without further research. See Barbara Unteutsch, *Vom Sohlbergkreis zur Gruppe Collaboration. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutsch-französischen Beziehungen anhand der Cahiers Franco-Allemands/ Deutsch-Französische Monatshefte, 1931-1944*, Münsterische Beiträge zur romanischen Philologie, ed. Wolfgang Babilas, et al. (Münster: Kleinheinrich Verlag, 1990), 37-39.

well as this creed, including among some of its more minor players who would consistently enlist in subsequent efforts toward Franco-German cooperation in the many years to come. Finally, the Mayrisch Komitee represents a way for us to see how very revolutionary the idea of cooperation itself was after the war. The fears, second-guessing, and pushes for gradualism demonstrate to what degree the idea was not mainstream.

### *The Formation of the Mayrisch Komitee*

In the aftermath of the Great War, fraternization between the French and Germans materialized as a phenomenon of the far left. Among pacifists, for example, efforts toward reconciliation can be traced back as early as 1921, and they multiplied during the Ruhr crisis.<sup>51</sup> Among the majority of the French and German populations, however, distrust and resentment between the two nations ran high. Reparations and the “war guilt” clause, among other points in the Treaty of Versailles, as well as the 1923 occupation of the Ruhr exacerbated this on the political level. Formal scientific relations did not resume until 1926, and economic relations did not normalize until the Commercial Treaty of 1927.<sup>52</sup> University relations between Germany and France remained non-existent until 1928. In general, strong nationalist feelings in France and Germany kept citizens on their own side of the border. In this pervasive mood of nationalism, bringing together French and German citizens who were not on the left posed an enormous challenge.

Mayrisch was the ideal figure to undertake this task. First, he knew many individuals from both business and intellectual circles to recruit. Not surprisingly, once

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<sup>51</sup>Ilde Gorguet, *Les mouvements pacifistes et la réconciliation franco-allemande dans les années vingt (1919-1931)*. Convergences, vol. 14 (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999), 22, 40.

<sup>52</sup>The boycott on German academics’ participation in international conferences ceased in 1925.

he had enlisted some, it became easier to draft more members. His status as a neutral third party of course helped bring the former enemies together with fewer suspicions. Finally, Mayrisch provided the original idea—one that appealed at once to prospective members’ economic self-interest and their sense of constituting a vanguard of the elite.

If Mayrisch at multiple levels enabled the various members of the eponymous committee to meet, he was neither an intellectual visionary for the group nor a nuts and bolts organizer. Mayrisch’s future son-in-law, Pierre Viénot (1897-1944), a political writer, composed the ideological and structural recommendations for the group before its initial gathering; it was he who drafted its eventual statutes. Moreover, the able son-in-law ran the Berlin office of the Komitee until 1930 when his involvement tapered off and he entered French parliamentary politics. Hans Manfred Bock has rightly pegged him as a “man of action.”<sup>53</sup> We will return more fully to Viénot’s place in the Mayrisch Komitee; for now, we will examine his role in framing its project.

Viénot had analyzed the “Franco-German problem,” in an article in *Germania* (reprinted in French papers) in August 1925, a couple of months before the Locarno meetings. He explained,

The more one studies the Franco-German *problem*, the more one is led to believe that its true particulars are of a psychological order and that the Franco-German *conflict*, in its material form—political or economic—is only a result and not a cause [*italics in original*]. If France and Germany think they have different interests, if they find themselves in conflict because of these interests, it is not because they are irreconcilable. It is that, on all sides, the routine imagination of the public only represents Franco-German relations in the form of conflict and it accepts this as a fundamental theme of national life.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Pierre Viénot, *Ungewisses Deutschland: Zur Krise seiner bürgerlichen Kultur*, with a foreword by Hans Manfred Bock. *Réflexions sur l'Allemagne au 20e siècle/ Reflexionen über Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris (Bonn: Bouvier, 1999), 75.

<sup>54</sup>AN 411/AP/1, dossier 7. Unmarked press clipping. Pierre Viénot, “Le problème franco-allemand,” 2 Aug. 1925.



For Viénot, the Franco-German problem was thus a lack of imagination. If the public could only conceive of Franco-German rapprochement, then it could eventually take shape. Rather than approaching the issue through the tangled avenues of diplomacy, as would the Locarno meetings which reconsidered the Treaty of Versailles, or through controversial trade negotiations, as Mayrisch had long been advocating, Viénot wanted to address the problem head-on: by re-mapping the French and German psyches.

According to Viénot, the Franco-German animosity persisted due to the distorting effects of long-held stereotypes, a strong memory of conflict, persistently negative portrayals of Franco-German relations, and the rumor mill. For Viénot, this filter of false information served to reinforce a cycle of distrust. Politicians and their parties played on the perceived concerns and fears of their constituents. The press transmitted these anxieties to a broader populace out of party loyalty and a desire to sell copy.<sup>55</sup> Such heightened tensions among the populace, in turn, fueled politicians' use of negative imagery, thereby kicking off a new cycle. For Viénot, reshaping Franco-German relations meant ending this vicious circle; in particular, it meant reorienting public opinion. Doing so would allow politicians to pursue new, more productive economic and diplomatic policies, ones not burdened by the lodestone of popular Franco-German hostility. A shift in mentalities, therefore, would remedy the governments' and economic interests' "powerlessness" even to begin to address the problem.<sup>56</sup> Resolution to the Franco-

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<sup>55</sup>PA-AA DBP 702a. Pierre Viénot, "Vorschläge zur Errichtung eines deutsch-französischen Informierungsausschusses," 8.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 7-8.

German acrimony thus could not be attained through governmental or economic channels because they led to the symptoms rather than the disease.

To address these problems, Viénot drafted a proposal for a Franco-German “information committee” to act as a private initiative by citizens of the two nations working in their own national interests. This group would bring together the “leading circles” of the two countries and establish an office in each capital.<sup>57</sup> These offices would scour the press clean of stereotypes and misinformation, while promoting those newspapers that presented a more positive view of the other nation. Finally, the offices would act as gathering places to make contacts, facilitate youth exchanges, and provide documents and publications the better to educate visitors.

Viénot’s idea to reform the press—and thereby cultivate public opinion—was at once the mainstay of his vision and its most controversial aspect. His initial proposal involved an office in Berlin to be directed by a French member with a German assistant; they would read the French press. In parallel fashion, the Komitee would establish an office in Paris to be directed by a German member with a French assistant; the Paris office would read the German press. Each representative would send out corrections and supplemental information accordingly to the papers. Indeed, the committee would be sure to assist foreign correspondents whose mistakes, according to Viénot, often could be traced to the fact that they were underpaid.

While the fundamental idea of a press oversight committee seemed useful, the German ambassador in Paris could not stomach the details. First, he questioned the viability of reviewing the press before publication, since newspapers revolved around

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

quick dispensation of information. Moreover, the newspapers themselves had no motivation to submit to independent examination. He painted such an effort skeptically: the representative would “study newspapers arriving from the home country with two days delay and then make the different organs notice their errors, with the obvious result that the organs would soon decline his critique, just as the correspondents of the newspapers in question would not put up with the director of the Information Bureau meddling with their reporting.”<sup>58</sup> Finally, Ambassador Hoesch questioned the oddity of “no longer making propaganda abroad for one’s country, rather on the contrary, controlling one’s own national press upon its introduction into the other country.”<sup>59</sup> This self-censorship, of course, was to be the truly revolutionary thrust of Viénot’s organization, if it could only work.<sup>60</sup>

The resistance of the German diplomats to the private initiative revealed their notion that politics, and by implication, politicians, determined events. The Mayrisch Komitee, founded on the principle that public opinion could be independent from government, parties, and special interests, and that a non-partisan committee could reconcile France and Germany, violated the assumptions of those in the German Foreign Office who believed that “public opinion is always a function of the situation brought about by cabinets, parties, and the economy.” According to one German diplomat, since

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<sup>58</sup>PA-AA DBP 702a No. A289a. Letter from Hoesch to Legationsrat Hempel, 10 Feb. 1926.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Robert R. Kuczynski’s *Correspondance économique franco-allemande/Deutsch-französische Wirtschaftskorrespondenz*, which lasted from 1922-24, worked against misinformation in the press with the broader aim to reconcile the French and Germans. Though similar in its emphasis on the press, this journal provided no outlet for associational life. Moreover, from 1924 onward, it operated only in Germany. In other words, the journal no longer had a transnational foundation. For information about Kuczynski’s paper, see Gorguet, 47-48.

Locarno already existed, and politics shape public opinion, there was no point in doubling up with a new organization.<sup>61</sup> Thus, from the Foreign Office's perspective, by bringing about the Locarno treaties, these politicians and diplomats had influenced public opinion, resulting in the spirit of Locarno. Interference from private individuals—regardless of how respected—would at best be redundant. These early struggles with the Foreign Office revealed the tension between the forces of official and private efforts for cooperation.

In response to the many criticisms by the German Foreign Office,<sup>62</sup> the committee issued a report emending its plans. While this report reinforced some of Viénot's original recommendations, including the emphasis on youth contacts, it also promoted less formal, "tactful interventions" in the press rather than explicit control.<sup>63</sup> The private emphasis of the Komitee would remain, if nothing else, to address questions "the government has not yet asked."<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, though former government officials—primarily ex-ambassadors—joined the organization, the private nature of the committee would be reinforced by its policy of excluding any politicians currently in service. Finally, the group would not ally itself with any political party.

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<sup>61</sup>PA-AA DBP 702a. Kuhn to Hoesch (25 Nov. 1925).

<sup>62</sup>I have found no reports from the Quai d'Orsay about the planning stages of the Komitee. Both the French and German Foreign Offices helped fund the organization once it was established. Viénot was inducted into the French Legion of Honor for his efforts toward cooperation.

<sup>63</sup>PA-AA DBP 702a. Note über die Beziehungen der Institute zur Presse. Unsigned, undated (c. Feb./March 1926).

<sup>64</sup>Jean Schlumberger, "Pierre Viénot (11 septembre 1944)," in *Oeuvres. Tome VII (1944-1961)* (Mayenne: Gallimard, 1961), 37.

### *The Mayrisch Komitee in Action*

The founding members of the committee consisted of twenty French and nineteen German members presided over by Émile Mayrisch. These members included the leaders of banks and magnates from heavy industry, as well as from chemical and electrical concerns such as Krupp and I.G. Farben, many of whom sought tariff reductions and open markets. Others were former ambassadors and government ministers along with a handful of prominent intellectuals and publishers like Franz von Papen and Lucien Romier. After a couple of months, the numbers expanded to thirty members from each nation, including two bishops. The French contingent tended to include a few more intellectuals than the German delegation, but in overall numbers, the membership balance sheet varied at most by one or two. On the German side, many hailed from the border regions of the Rhineland, in the industrial heartland. On the French side, however, most members resided in Paris.

All members had been carefully selected from the highest echelons of business, society, the academy, and the press. Their status bolstered the reputation of the organization, shielded members from the rebuke that they were embracing the hereditary enemy, and placed members on a comfortable footing for socializing. Indeed, the Komitee was imbued with an elitist ethos. Writer Wladimir d'Ormesson (1888-1973) explained, "the elites, upon whom falls the responsibility of shaping the thought of their compatriots, must at all costs work hard at getting to know each other better and understanding each other [se pénétrer]."<sup>65</sup> For these privileged few, prestige furnished a call to lay down arms, fraternize, and discover shared interests.

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<sup>65</sup>Wladimir Comte d'Ormesson, "Deutsch-Französischer Austausch: Antwort auf unsere Umfrage," *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* 1, No. 6 (1928): 519.

In addition to showing distinction in their respective fields, members needed to exhibit a clear sense of patriotism. Due to the prevailing spirit of nationalism in both countries—and within the Mayrisch Komitee itself—members did not want their loyalties placed under suspicion. Many were veterans; one asserted that the bullet in his kidney gave him “the right to work for peace and to research, in security and national dignity, the practical modalities of a better entente between my conquering country and its former adversary.”<sup>66</sup> Some French members had worked for the Occupation authority or in the newly liberated zones. Ernest Mercier, for example, helped apply sanctions against Germany when working for the Minister of Liberated Zones; thereafter, with the Military Control Commission, he supervised industry in the Rhineland.<sup>67</sup> Jacques Seydoux had helped orchestrate the blockade of Germany and then worked at the Quai d’Orsay on reparations and debt questions.<sup>68</sup> Fritz Thyssen had likewise worn his loyalties on his sleeve; during the Ruhr crisis, his resistance to French policies had led to his arrest.<sup>69</sup> New members faced intense scrutiny. In one instance, Prince Solms-Braunfels, whom the German Ambassador had floated as a potential member, was deemed too risky: others might see him as not German enough since he had married an Italian. Solms-Braunfels’ candidacy further came into question because he leaned suspiciously close to pacifism.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>From Maurice Schumann’s speech at his induction to the Académie Française to replace d’Ormesson (30 January 1975, Palais de l’Institut, Paris). Schumann cited Wladimir d’Ormesson’s motivations in February 1931. See [http://www.academie-francaise.fr/immortels/discours\\_reception/schumann.html](http://www.academie-francaise.fr/immortels/discours_reception/schumann.html)

<sup>67</sup>Richard F. Kuisel, *Ernest Mercier French Technocrat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 7.

<sup>68</sup>Nicole Jordan, “The Reorientation of French Diplomacy in the mid-1920s: the Role of Jacques Seydoux,” *English Historical Review* 117, no. 473 (Sept. 2002): 867-868.

<sup>69</sup>Conan Fischer, *The Ruhr Crisis, 1923-24* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 53-56, 64, 67-71.

<sup>70</sup>See correspondence between Hoesch and Nostitz and Hoesch and Solms-Braunfels from 1929-1930 in PA-AA DBP 702b. Solms-Braunfels turned down the Komitee’s eventual offer, much to Nostitz’s surprise.

If binational contacts were to be deemed useful, it was only the case in circumscribed conditions: the patriotism of individual members had to be beyond reproach.

A brief biographical sketch of the two office managers, Viénot and Gustav Krukenberg (1888-1980), will help show how those with the most active daily involvement in committee affairs differed from the average member of the committee. Viénot had long observed Germany, first as a youth staying for two summers before the war near Koblenz, then, after 1923, in Bonn, Heidelberg, and Berlin where he lived through the end of the decade. Viénot had developed a certain technique of studying other cultures through his postwar work in Morocco alongside Marshall Lyautey, his mentor. Viénot understood a healthy respect for local customs and reliance on local leaders as elemental to his service in Morocco. In this way, Viénot was more open to honoring foreign customs than many of his contemporaries. Viénot, it has been argued elsewhere, brought these methods of analyzing foreign cultures on their own terms to postwar Germany.<sup>71</sup> Leaving his unofficial post in the occupation of the Rhineland after only four weeks, Viénot used his connections to land a post at the university in Heidelberg, where he wrote and lectured about Germany until he moved to Berlin for his work with the Mayrisch Komitee. Through his many contacts with German sociologists, politicians, and business leaders, Viénot had a particularly privileged vantage point from which to view developments in modern Germany.

Viénot's pioneering views originated in an unusual mix of conservatism and cosmopolitanism. Raised in a conservative Catholic family, Viénot's early life was

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<sup>71</sup>Pierre Viénot, "France: Les leçons du Maroc," *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue de Genève* (July-Dec. 1925): 1897-1908; Pierre Viénot, *Ungewisses Deutschland*; Hans Manfred Bock, "'Connaître l'Allemagne et la reconnaître.' Zu Entstehung und Zusammenhang der Deutschland-Analyse von Pierre Viénot 1922 bis 1932," *Lendemains*, no. 66 (1992): 27-48.

dominated by right-wing values. He had volunteered for the war at age 17 and voted for the conservative *Bloc National* in 1919. Working in Morocco and traveling throughout much of Europe broadened Viénot's perspective. Poincaré's Rhineland policies and his invasion of the Ruhr frustrated him and turned him away from the French right. At the same time, however, he did not support Herriot's *Cartel des Gauches* because of its *attentisme* [wait and see policy] in regard to the German question. Both official French policies dissatisfied Viénot as they did many members of the Komitee. He therefore, like much of the Komitee, chose to recast the terms of the debate from the geopolitical standpoint to the cultural, and in so doing actively pursue cooperation.

If Viénot, as the shaper of the Mayrisch Komitee, son-in-law of its founder, and long-time resident and analyst of Germany, was a natural candidate for the Berlin Office, his German counterpart in Paris was selected for entirely different reasons. Gustav Krukenberg,<sup>72</sup> a well-connected war veteran like Viénot, stood out for his varied career, always in the service of someone eminent. He held a law degree, had belonged to the General Staff in the war, had been the secretary to the German Foreign Minister, and had worked for the National Confederation of German Industry [*Reichsverband der Deutschen Industrie*]. Both at the Foreign Ministry and the National Confederation of German Industry, Krukenberg had directly served future members of the Mayrisch Komitee. Until his nomination, he had neither lived nor worked in France; thus his qualifications were not knowledge of France and connections to it, but familiarity with the broader interests of Komitee members, well-connected German friends, and a discreet

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<sup>72</sup>Krukenberg, it should be noted, was the second choice candidate. The first choice, from both the German and French perspectives was Legationsrat Dr. Hempel, who withdrew his nomination.



personality.<sup>73</sup> Krukenberg at least knew the French language, since he had earned his degree in Lausanne, and had experience working abroad—most recently in Amsterdam. The fox to Viénot's hedgehog, Krukenberg was not deeply sensitive to the culture of the country under his watch as was his French counterpart.

Both Viénot and Krukenberg were veterans of the Great War.<sup>74</sup> Both representatives' battlefield service demonstrated their firm commitment to their respective homelands and was consistent with the experiences of many members. At the same time, though responsible for the daily administration of the committee, these two men were both younger and less prominent than their fellow members. If Viénot was the idealist and Krukenberg the realist, both tried to shape the group from the inside; the other members largely contributed to the committee by their communications with the outside.

The Berlin and Paris offices, directed by Viénot and Krukenberg respectively, consisted of meeting spaces and libraries. The libraries contained the most important works on France in Germany, along with large collections of newspapers and magazines. In addition, the libraries housed an archive of press clippings. The Berlin library held about 400 volumes organized according to the following themes: France, Germany, "the Franco-German problem," the war, and international issues (i.e. the League of Nations). The libraries evinced the group's commitment to remain "above parties" through contents running the political gamut from pacifist Alain to Action Française founder Charles Maurras on the French side and from Prince Karl Anton Rohan of the European Cultural

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<sup>73</sup>PA-AA DBP 702a. Bruhn to Rieth (31 Aug. 1926).

<sup>74</sup>Viénot had been seriously wounded in the neck on the front. See the obituary by Jean Schlumberger, a fellow Mayrisch Komitee member. Jean Schlumberger, "Pierre Viénot (11 septembre 1944)," in *Oeuvres*, 14-17.

Union [Europäischer Kulturbund/ Fédération internationale des unions intellectuelles] to Hitler on the German side. The libraries' commitment to diversity meant that they housed not only tracts in favor of Franco-German rapprochement, but also, for example, works by the prominent historian Jacques Bainville who turned anti-German polemic into an art form. Readings covered politics, social movements, religion, science, art, the empire, and the economy of each nation. Moreover, the libraries possessed practical collections of guidebooks for those planning to travel abroad. Not surprisingly, the libraries contained many books by Mayrisch Komitee members such as Viénot, Wladimir d'Ormesson, and Régis de Vibraye as well as E. R. Curtius, Arnold Bergstraesser and Max Clauss.<sup>75</sup>

While the organization's mission to the public was embodied by its distribution of information through its libraries and its work with the press, the Mayrisch Komitee retained a private sensibility when it came to its meetings. The semiannual meetings alternated among France, Germany, and Luxembourg and included all members. Before these plenary sessions, however, the French and German delegations would each gather in their respective capitals to discuss the agenda and address the national concerns of the larger group. Thus, even as it bridged the national divide, the Mayrisch Komitee in no way ignored national distinctions. Members deemed arbitration as beneficial to both parties but preferred to exchange points-of-view first within the confines of their own national faction before negotiating with the other side. Negotiation and dialogue, whether in the general assembly or at its soirees, was essential to the organization.

The Komitee adhered to one of the fundamental principles of the post-Locarno push for Franco-German cooperation: reciprocity. Reciprocity ensured that each measure

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<sup>75</sup>For a library catalog of the Berlin office, see *Bibliothek und Archiv im Bureau Matthäikirchstr. 12; Deutsch-Französisches Studienkomitee, Berliner Bureau* (Berlin, 1932).

toward entente taken in one country would be mirrored in form, content, and degree in the other; therefore, the group was careful to take parallel actions on either side of the Rhine. Its notions of balance were so rigorous that the group remarkably claimed that “both peoples face a common danger and bear the same responsibility.”<sup>76</sup> By thus linking national interests with equal blame for the past, the Mayrisch Komitee wove together a blank past and a joint future for France and Germany. On this clean slate, the organization could draft a new balance sheet of settled accounts.

In addition to an ideological reciprocity, the organization followed a balanced design. Yet the strict notions of reciprocity inherent in the structures of the Mayrisch Komitee—from the office locations in the two capitals, to the binational staff of each office, to the balanced membership roster—still occasionally threatened to be insufficient. As early as the May 1926 meeting, when a slew of German members were too ill to attend, the German Foreign Office made its fears known that the French might take control of the committee. Similarly, French members mistrusted the motives of the Germans; even dedicated member Wladimir d’Ormesson pointed out,

The marked conciliatory intentions of France should not make our neighbors lose sight of the fact that the French—even those most convinced of the opportunity of Franco-German rapprochement—are not at all disposed to be the dupes of a politics that consists of transforming the sketch of a bilateral and fruitful peace into a unilateral bargaining chip to the profit of the German nationalists.<sup>77</sup>

In general, members feared allegations that the Komitee was not in balance—that the actions in one country were stronger—and even felt the need to fend off accusations that

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<sup>76</sup>PA-AA DBP 702b. “Deutsch-Französisches Studienkomitee. Zur gefl. Veröffentlichung.” (15 June 1931).

<sup>77</sup>Wladimir d’Ormesson, *Le Temps*, “La crise allemande et la politique européenne,” 28 Dec. 1926.

the employees were paid “with enemy money.”<sup>78</sup> Thus, they assumed that the representatives in the Berlin and Paris offices would be taken for spies.

The tentative nature of the Mayrisch Komitee surfaced in additional ways. Meetings were closed to the public, though some social events were open to those with invitations. On the one hand, this meant members could be more explicit at meetings than they would be before the public; on the other hand, it revealed the underlying fear that transparency would result in public condemnation. In addition, a 1927 proposal added guided discussions on particular themes to their sessions that already consisted of successful lectures. These point/counterpoint themes would be circulated before the meetings.<sup>79</sup> By issuing advance notice for discussions, the group encouraged its members to think through what they were going to say and even research the topics at-hand. This new strategy buttressed the academic aspects of the Komitee, but it also revealed the fragile faith of its members that they could not get along without checks. It was a way to avoid spontaneous emotional outbursts and ensure a more controlled dialogue.

Notwithstanding its guardedness, the Mayrisch Komitee created a specific network of people on both sides of the Rhine interested in cooperation through the regularity of its sessions and social events. By bringing together big business interests and intellectuals around the Franco-German question, the organization forged ties among those who would not otherwise share much common ground. In addition, by actively lobbying journalists, the Mayrisch Komitee incorporated some of these powerful voices

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<sup>78</sup>Employees of the Komitee were to be paid by their own national office to avoid charges of being paid with enemy money. See PA-AA DBP 702a. “Deutsch-Französischer Studien- und Informationsausschuss. Versammlung der Comité in Luxemburg am 29.5.” (29 May 1926).

<sup>79</sup>PA-AA DBP 702a. “An die Herren Mitglieder des Executivsausschusses des Deutsch-Französisches Studienkomitees.” Signed Mayrisch (25 May 1927).

into the Franco-German network. Former Secretary of State Alfred von Nostitz-Wallwitz, the leader of the German half of the group, deemed “the personal element” the most important aspect of the Komitee’s work; according to him, interpersonal relationships fostered by the organization effectively began to counter the negative influence of the press.<sup>80</sup> As will be demonstrated throughout the following chapters, the foundation created by the Mayrisch Komitee stayed in place through the 1940s and even into the 1950s when a new generation began to build on the extant structures.

The Franco-German network around the Mayrisch Komitee would come to define a range of strategies in the effort toward cooperation for the coming years. While the Komitee did not actually arrange any formal student exchanges, it put forward the idea—an unpopular one in the aftermath of war when official university exchanges were in hibernation.<sup>81</sup> If such exchanges were not entirely new, they had been a phenomenon of the left, particularly among pacifist organizations. Members’ public, non-partisan endorsements of exchanges may have prepared the way for others to provide them as well. More centrally, the Mayrisch Komitee acted as a pressure group on the press to initiate the first, concerted anti-smear campaign of the enemy of old. In a further precedent, the Mayrisch Komitee established regular meetings and conferences on the Franco-German question. While religious and academic circles, for example, had held conventions with similar themes, these tended to be one-time or infrequent and they were truly worldwide in scope, such as those sponsored by Marc Sangnier. Moreover, such organizations dedicated themselves first and foremost to other goals within which

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<sup>80</sup>A. v. Nostitz-Wallwitz, “Die Pariser Tagung des Deutsch-französischen Studienkomitees,” *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* 2, No. 3 (1929): 219-221.

<sup>81</sup>Chapoutot, 15-34.

Franco-German cooperation could be subsumed. The Franco-German cause was not the *raison d'être* of any of these circles; thus, most actions in this arena had remained circumscribed and sporadic at best. In contrast, regular gatherings on the part of the Mayrisch Komitee created and helped sustain new, exclusively Franco-German channels of communication.

*A New Language of Understanding: Between Enlightenment and Self-Interest*

In creating networks of people interested in entente and by defining strategies to work toward that understanding, the Mayrisch Komitee crafted, in embryonic form, a new discourse of cooperation. Though this matrix of ideas did not always cohere into a clear doctrine for the Komitee, it did furnish the beginnings of a new vocabulary and new positions by which future Franco-German mediators could orient themselves. Whether focusing on the economy, politics, or culture, that is to say, an emphasis on psychology and representation, committee members developed assorted arguments with which to bolster the cause of cooperation. Although this range of arenas for action deprived the group of an ideological center, it helped foster new alliances and spawn a breeding ground for new ideas.

Members considered their patriotism as a *sine qua non* of the group's existence. At the heart of the organization's credo lay the idea that Franco-German cooperation was in the national interest and transcended party differences. Even before the Mayrisch Komitee was launched, Viénot insisted that "above all the Franco-German problem requires a solution that appears on all sides to conform to the most pressing 'national'

interest, around which both men of the right and men of the left can rally.”<sup>82</sup> This appeal to national sentiments aimed to bridge the sharp left/right division within each country. Furthermore, it highlighted the organization’s “realistic foundation in contrast to all the other similar works that pursue moral or philanthropic goals.”<sup>83</sup> In large part, this declaration acted as a direct jab at the pacifist movement, but it also underscored members’ assurance that cooperation was essential for national security and advantageous to the national economy.

Although the Mayrisch Komitee did not recast the European economic situation, economic concerns lay at its heart. Economic interest existed both as a personal incentive to join and as a subset of the idea of working for the welfare of the nation. Members from big business adopted a position that bridged economic self-interest and an idealism that they could achieve what the government could not. For members, ensuring healthy relations with the neighboring state served alongside other forms of planning like rationalization and management-training to reinvigorate and modernize production and distribution to new markets.<sup>84</sup>

In this way, several French activists were expanding their sense of the need to revitalize the Third Republic through technocratic planning—a program they nurtured in the movement *Redressement Français*—to the broader European sphere. One year before the foundation of the Mayrisch Komitee, Ernest Mercier (1878-1955) had launched

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<sup>82</sup>AN 411/AP/1, dossier 7. Unmarked press clipping. Pierre Viénot, “Le problème franco-allemand,” (2 Aug. 1925).

<sup>83</sup>PA-AA DBP 702a. Pierre Viénot, “Vorschläge zur Errichtung eines deutsch-französischen Informationsausschusses,” 7.

<sup>84</sup>Pierre Lyautey, “Les échanges franco-allemands,” in *France et Allemagne* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1928), 73-84; 82-84.

Redressement Français, whose pragmatic, future-oriented doctrine had French modernization at heart. Mercier, along with several members of Redressement Français eagerly joined the Mayrisch Komitee with economic integration in mind.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, the two groups overlapped in their appeal to elite experts to facilitate international stability. Redressement Français Member Etienne Fougère (1871-1944), founder of the International Silk Federation, president of the *Association nationale d'expansion économique*, parliamentarian for the Democratic Alliance, explained his position in his own journal *L'Européen*. "In the present state of things," he wrote,

the individualism of the European nations makes each of them a tributary of continents better favored by nature and whose social development has been greater. Let this individualism give way to the idea of entente and cooperation, and Europe will soon be seen to free itself from all financial and economic dependence and so become once more the pilot of human civilization.<sup>86</sup>

For Fougère cooperation expressly stood for uniting European economic interests in the face of competition from the Soviet Union and the United States; it also involved a moral purpose. Cooperation thus represented a form of enlightened self-interest.

Émile Mayrisch melded a similar belief in the importance of economic self-interest with a more cultural understanding of the Franco-German antagonism. Mayrisch's faith in economic entente materialized with the *Entente Internationale de l'Acier*, an accord among the top steel producers in France, Germany, Luxembourg, and Belgium ratified by Théodore Laurent, Ernst Poensgen, and Mayrisch, all members of the

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<sup>85</sup>On Redressement Français, see Richard F. Kuisel, *Ernest Mercier French Technocrat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); for its international aspects, see especially, pp.72-74.

<sup>86</sup>From Etienne Fougère, "Quel devrait être la politique de l'Europe," *L'Européen*, 10 Sept. 1930 as quoted in Etienne Deschamps, "*L'Européen* (1929-1940): A Cultural Review at the Heart of the Debate on European Identity," *European Review of History--Revue européenne d'histoire* 9, no. 1 (2002): 89.



Komitee.<sup>87</sup> According to Mayrisch, international economic ententes served to unite all interests to bring about peace. He noted that international (by which he meant European) economic cartels “could reinforce and spread this confidence and constitute an important factor for peace and reconciliation. But it is also quite certain that a minimum of preliminary political confidence is necessary as a foundation for such pacts.”<sup>88</sup> In the end, such resolve remained a matter of the imagination. A culture of confidence among producers—when trickled down to consumers, according to Mayrisch, could allay any short-term political exigencies. Thus, for the steel magnate, economics had the power to trump politics, but it was the imagination that drove the two. Just as with Viénot, trust and cooperation first had to be believed in by the public; economics alone would not resolve the Franco-German crisis.

If economic interests motivated many of the members, the main actions taken by the group lay in the cultural realm. Emphasizing the roles of psychology and representation as the root of the Franco-German problem, Viénot saw resolution only via new ways of thinking. As we have seen, Viénot’s vision called for the liberation from preconceptions whether based in stereotype or historical memory. For Viénot, it was a moral imperative “to leave the self” [sortir de soi] to achieve understanding.<sup>89</sup> While he

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<sup>87</sup>See texts of “Convention de l’Entente Internationale de l’Acier” (30 Sept. 1926) and “Convention d’association pour l’exécution de l’Entente Internationale de l’Acier” (1 Jan. 1927), reprinted in Centre de Recherches Européennes, *Émile Mayrisch Précurseur de la construction de l’Europe* (Lausanne: Centre de Recherches Européennes, 1967), 55-64.

<sup>88</sup>Émile Mayrisch, “Les ententes économiques internationales et la paix” in Centre de Recherches Européennes, *Émile Mayrisch*, 53.

<sup>89</sup>“Sortir de soi,” in fact was the title of a chapter of Viénot’s *Incertitudes Allemandes*. The English rendering of this chapter title in the 1931 translation read “a detached view,” and in the 1932 German edition, “empathy” [Einfühlung], rather nearer the spirit of the original. Incidentally, the titles of the book in the respective languages also differed: German Uncertainties [French], Is Germany Finished? [English], and Uncertain Germany [German]. The ensuing discussion of Viénot’s ideas on identity by and large comes from his *Incertitudes Allemandes*.

accomplished this leaving of the self quite literally by living abroad, he was advocating in particular the temporary emancipation from the trappings of national identity. If this represented an unattainable goal, it was the path toward this ideal that mattered.

Leaving the self, according to Viénot, required first self-awareness and second a differentiated view of the other. He postulated that judgments about other nations typically said more about one's own culture than about the reality of the other country.<sup>90</sup> Thus, it was essential to analyze the objective natures of each culture before coming to any conclusions. As such, Viénot described and dissected what he called the "national psychologies" of individual nations. While it was important to recognize these distinct identities, it was equally essential to imagine them as flexible. In this way, Viénot aimed to avoid the trap of stereotypes as well as the reifying concept of national character that locked nations into certain paths and excluded minority voices. Viénot, for example, was very careful to point out various internal divisions within Germany that demonstrated the existence of multiple Germanies: urban, rural, Catholic, Protestant, *Bürger*, worker, Socialist, Communist, National Socialist, and so forth.<sup>91</sup> To this end, another member of the Komitee penned a travelogue of Germany that detailed his encounters with Germans from an array of parties, confessions, regions, professions, and generations.<sup>92</sup> An awareness of diversity would thus help minimize stereotypes.

Viénot's theory involved acknowledging the existence of difference both within Germany and in comparison to Germany. Indeed, his notion of national psychologies

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<sup>90</sup>Guido Müller, "Pierre Viénot: Schöpfer des Deutsch-Französisches Studienkomitees (1926-1938) und Europäer der ersten Nachkriegszeit," *The Journal of European Integration History* 4, no. 1 (1998): 9.

<sup>91</sup>Pierre Viénot, *Is Germany Finished?*.

<sup>92</sup>Régis de Vibraye, *Allemagne*.

unequivocally highlighted national difference. For Viénot, it was more important to value national difference than to try to erase it.<sup>93</sup> His motto in Morocco allegedly was: “Say different, but don’t say inferior.”<sup>94</sup> This slogan similarly applied to his years on the Mayrisch Komitee. Coming to terms with difference could serve as the basis for a Franco-German understanding premised on the idea that the two cultures were complementary. Thus, Viénot pushed for comprehension and tolerance rather than assimilation into some larger European identity.

In arguing for French and German citizens to embrace national difference and leave the self, Viénot was advocating a psychological rapprochement between the two enemy peoples. This psychological rapprochement entailed a conscious untangling of preconceptions in order to prepare the two parties for dialogue. In the end, for Viénot, leaving the self entailed a complete change of perspective: a deliberate effort to step into the shoes of the Germans. He argued, “From what angle, then, are we to study Germany? From the German angle. More than any other people, the Germans examine and observe themselves. They have a morbid genius for national introspection. Let us follow them on this track.”<sup>95</sup> In effect, this included imagining the Treaty of Versailles from the loser’s perspective and acknowledging the suffering of the Germans through the inflation; the onus of leaving the self fell to the victor. This radical idea thoroughly undermined the nationalist agenda of Poincaré and his followers.

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<sup>93</sup>Müller, “Pierre Viénot: Schöpfer,” 12-13.

<sup>94</sup>Ina Belitz, *Befreundung mit dem Fremden: Die Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft in den deutsch-französischen Kultur- und Gesellschaftsbeziehungen der Locarno-Ära: Programme und Protagonisten der transnationalen Verständigung zwischen Pragmatismus und Idealismus*, Europäische Hochschulschriften: Geschichte und Ihre Hilfswissenschaften (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1997), 191; Hans Manfred Bock, “‘Connaître l’Allemagne et la reconnaître,’” 29.

<sup>95</sup>Viénot, *Is Germany Finished?*, 17.

The intellectual kernel of the Mayrisch Komitee—which along with Viénot, included Félix de Vogüé, Wladimir d’Ormesson, and Jean Schlumberger<sup>96</sup>—often crafted careful articles on the importance of psychological rapprochement. D’Ormesson, a journalist and active member of the group, underscored the psychological underpinnings of the Franco-German antagonism. For him, damaging fantasies of the other nation were further exaggerated by images of the war.<sup>97</sup> Thus, it was not so much experience, but memory filtered through propaganda that fostered enmity.

The burden of memory lent a troubling cast to any future potential for Franco-German cooperation. Pacifists, for example, aimed to bring the two nations closer by demonstrating their common interest in renouncing war. But for Mayrisch Komitee members, another basis for dialogue needed to be found to replace this loaded legacy of combat. According to Viénot, Franco-German rapprochement risked becoming an outmoded concept because its current form was based on the war experience. He pleaded,

Inspired still, above all, by the memory of war, the politics of Franco-German rapprochement only expresses at the current hour a confidence effort made by the two governments to combat the remains of the war psychosis in the two countries. It is clear that if it is to keep this negative character, it will quickly lose all value. We cannot forget that in ten years, men from twenty to forty years old will already belong to the generations that were not in the war. It thus appears to clairvoyant spirits that it is becoming urgent to give the politics of Franco-German rapprochement a more positive character.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>Viénot sent these three men a copy of his recommendations to establish the Komitee so that he could get their approval before he forwarded it to other potential members. See Müller, “Pierre Viénot: Schöpfer,” 24.

<sup>97</sup>“La Confiance en l’Allemagne,” *La Revue d’Allemagne* 1, No. 7 (1928): 664-665.

<sup>98</sup>Pierre Viénot as quoted by the son of the Mayrisch Komitee treasurer Aloyse Meyer. See, Robert Meyer, “Colpach” in Centre de Recherches Européennes, *Émile Mayrisch*, 36.

Germanist Henri Lichtenberger agreed that this emphasis on the past needed to be replaced with a focus on the future. He argued not only for moving beyond the legacy of war, but beyond historical judgment altogether. He explained, “I cannot see how a real improvement in Franco-German relations could be produced if you expect that before renewing intellectual cooperation the Germans recognize themselves as responsible for the war, or inversely that the French confess that the Treaty of Versailles was a crime against the rights of nations.” According to Lichtenberger, the two nations needed to steer away from big questions like respective guilt and instead address smaller, more practical issues. For him, the forging of scholarly contacts at an individual level and the exchange of publications—a transnational republic of letters—would gradually chip away at Franco-German grudges without risking going too far or too fast for public opinion.<sup>99</sup>

Reticence on the part of Komitee members to go too far stemmed from fears of their efforts being deemed propaganda. German officials, for example, protested against Alfred Kerr and Thomas Mann speaking at the Sorbonne within the same month for fear of accusations of an invasion of German propaganda in the French capital.<sup>100</sup> Ironically, the Komitee felt the need to tread very carefully to preclude being indicted as propaganda, when indoctrination was precisely what they aimed to combat. Régis de Vibraye, who joined the group in 1930, addressed the dilemma directly: “two errors are to be avoided. The first is to go too far and to envision solutions that could weaken our

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<sup>99</sup>Henri Lichtenberger, “Le rétablissement de la coopération franco-allemande,” *Scientia* (April 1927): 275-284.

<sup>100</sup>PA-AA DBP 542b. Telegram Hoesch to Heilbron (6 Jan. 1926). Indeed, the Action Française did stage protests. Planners took care to try to avoid major disturbances by, for example, selecting who would be in attendance. See, more generally, PA-AA DBP 542b.

country; the second is not to go far enough and to refuse reasonable and necessary solutions due to an excess of patriotic sensibilities.”<sup>101</sup>

Gustav Krukenberg advocated a particularly guarded approach. His distaste for words like “rapprochement” and “economic confederation” spoke to his doubts that, despite Locarno, much of the French and German publics were ready to let go the old prejudices. Although he noted with approbation that the Komitee treaded with care, Krukenberg worried that without adequate “factual and psychological preparation” of the populace, enthusiasts for cooperation might press their luck. Krukenberg’s anxieties on this count extended to his fears regarding the common shorthand (particularly among teachers) for the long-winded, yet carefully chosen official title of his group: “Verständigungskomitee” or “Comité de Rapprochement” [Understanding Committee or Committee for Rapprochement]. Both nicknames, he believed, could put the Komitee’s success in danger.<sup>102</sup>

To invoke a positive basis for dialogue without imposing radical views or propaganda on the public, the Komitee championed objective reporting and unlimited information about the nation across the border. More accurate analysis of the other country would position the French and the Germans better toward cooperation. Krukenberg particularly emphasized the informational aspects of the committee, corresponding to its official name in French: *Comité franco-allemand d’information et de documentation*. The press would act as the main instrument for improved information, and the committee itself would document events and trends in each nation. As early as

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<sup>101</sup>Régis de Vibraye, *Allemagne 1930*, 5.

<sup>102</sup>PA-AA R70550 II Fr. 275(27) Bericht über die Tätigkeit in Paris in den Monaten November und Dezember 1926. Signed Krukenberg (27 Dec. 1926).

the spring of 1926, at the organization's general assembly meeting in Luxembourg, members already agreed that without better communications between the two nations, the promise of the Locarno treaties "threaten[ed] to remain illusory."<sup>103</sup> The main target would be public opinion.

The Komitee recognized the immense power of the press in the formation of public opinion in the modern age. Member Lucien Romier, the editor-in-chief of *Figaro*, explained in direct terms, "The press is no longer a little girl you put to sleep with songs and satisfy with a toy. It is a formidable industry that in certain countries disposes of an apparatus, personnel, capital . . . and means of penetration or pressure superior to any other industry."<sup>104</sup> For this reason, the Komitee considered the press a potential force for both good and evil, and it tried to harness it for good. D'Ormesson contended that the press had a "salutary mission" but was plagued by the

crushing responsibility . . . if one measures the consequences that the news can engender when it is erroneous, when information is tendentious, when only passion inflames campaigns, or when only interest finances them. The press is the daily intermediary by which nations communicate with one another, thanks to which they . . . get to know each other. It can be the great centrifugal force that draws people nearer but it also can just as easily constitute the principle obstacle to this rapprochement.<sup>105</sup>

If it were to edify public opinion, the Komitee would have to woo the press.

Expunging tabloid journalism, prejudice, and error from the press and replacing it with more generously-minded coverage proved a challenge. Even the well-meaning, who

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<sup>103</sup>PA-AA DBP 702a. "Deutsch-Französischer Studien- und Informationsausschuss. Versammlung der Comité in Luxemburg am 29.5." (29 May 1926).

<sup>104</sup>Lucien Romier as cited in Wladimir d'Ormesson, "Améliorons l'information internationale," *Revue d'Allemagne* 2, No. 15 (Jan. 1929): 1-12; 4.

<sup>105</sup>Wladimir d'Ormesson, "Améliorons l'information internationale" *Revue d'Allemagne* 2, No. 15 (Jan. 1929): 1-12; 2.

were actively engaged in efforts toward Franco-German cooperation, could retain some biases or be misunderstood by readers. Jacques Seydoux, while a member of the committee, penned an article on disarmament that was interpreted as critical of Germany. Both Viénot and Krukenberg chastised him for publishing the article, so that Seydoux wrote a subsequent, more tempered article to clarify his argument, which he felt had been misinterpreted. Krukenberg mourned the fact that an ally's work "add[ed] grist to the mill for those outside our committee who say that our efforts are wrong because the French side will never give Germany any rest."<sup>106</sup> Seydoux continued to print allegedly anti-German articles, in particular for *Le Parisien*, and was thus eventually forced out of the Mayrisch Komitee for the sake of his "health."<sup>107</sup> Yet even once he left the Mayrisch Komitee, the Germans wished to keep him from turning to truly anti-German sentiments and especially from becoming a mouthpiece for such beliefs.

Another way the Komitee as a whole feared it would be damaged in the eyes of the public was by being associated with the three overlapping specters of "pacifism," "internationalism," and "Europe" (in the general sense of the two previous words). Members insisted that the agenda remain Franco-German but expressly not European.<sup>108</sup> A European program implied organized pacifism, which, to Mayrisch Komitee members, suggested illusory utopianism. By strictly drawing the line between their platform and the so-called "European" program, they hoped to stymie any accusations of utopianism. At

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<sup>106</sup>PA-AA DBP 702a. "An die Herren Mitglieder der deutschen Gruppe des Deutsch-Französischen Studienkomitees," signed Krukenberg (29 Nov. 1927). See also Jacques Seydoux, *Pax* (25 Nov. 1927) and "Encore le désarmement," *Pax* (2 Dec. 1927).

<sup>107</sup>PA-AA DBP 702b. Krukenberg to Hoesch (1 March 1929); Hoesch to Nostitz (12 March 1929).

<sup>108</sup>PA-AA DBP 702 a. "Deutsch-Französischer Studien- und Informationsausschuss." Versammlung der Comité in Luxemburg am 29.5.



the same time, pacifism, internationalism, and Europe were concepts that the group found easier to dismiss outright than to challenge point-by-point.

Although most members loudly voiced their opposition to pacifism, and many to a Europe-oriented platform, individual members adopted a range of positions in regard to Europe. As we have seen, the business contingent of the Komitee pursued the integration of European markets. Several members from the more intellectual cohort stressed that Europeans shared a common “Western” heritage. This loose faith in a shared Franco-German language of Europeanness was particularly in evidence with the idea that the offices should be staffed by “French and German personnel used to speaking as it were the intellectual, sentimental, and moral language of the two countries.”<sup>109</sup> In part because members brought different assumptions to bear in regard to Europe, and in part because “Europe” at that time was typically associated at the time with Coudenhove-Kalergi’s political vision, the Mayrisch Komitee tried to distance itself from such discussions.

### *New Directions*

From 1929-1933, the Mayrisch Komitee endured a series of ordeals. This topsy-turvy period for the Komitee has often been mistaken as the prelude to its last breath. Instead, these years should be understood as the transitional era of the organization when the departure of several members and the enlistment of several others signaled a shift in the group’s outlook.

If the notion that the Mayrisch Komitee dissolved around 1930 is incorrect, that is not to say it thrived at that moment. Some have ascribed the end of the committee to

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<sup>109</sup> AN 411/AP/1, dossier 7. Unmarked press clipping. Viénot, “Le problème franco-allemand,” 2 Aug. 1925.

Mayrisch's death in a car accident in 1928; according to this line, Mayrisch's robust personality had held the group together and without him only descended into petty arguments.<sup>110</sup> Certainly, his leadership was important to the group, but this argument underestimates the resilience of the committee's ideology and the dedication of the group to its creed. The Mayrisch Komitee was more than the man after whom it was named.

An extension of that argument, that Mayrisch's neutrality as a Luxembourger lent a certain, necessary balance to the group is more convincing, especially in light of the internecine disputes a year after Mayrisch's death. In the spring of 1929, the French half of the group virtually collapsed due to personality conflicts and financial strain. By June of that year, the French contingent actually voted for the closure of the offices altogether.<sup>111</sup> To offset this decision, the French half concomitantly voted to broaden the committee membership. If conflicts split the group, no one wanted it to disappear completely. Mayrisch may have helped ease tensions either due to his character or his status as arbiter; his death indeed revealed tensions that had lain beneath the surface. The committee, however, was able to weather its storms without him.

When the French half of the committee voted to close the two offices, it acted on the idea that the necessary improvements in Franco-German relations had already been achieved.<sup>112</sup> While the notion that cooperation had been attained seems almost ridiculous in hindsight, even then it was at best a questionable assumption. From the German

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<sup>110</sup>Centre de Recherches Européennes, *Émile Mayrisch*; Bariéty, "Industriels allemands et industriels français," 13.

<sup>111</sup>PA-AA DBP 702b. Aufzeichnung über meinen Besuch bei Herr Charles Laurent am 17. Juni 1929, 4 Uhr nachm." Signed Krukenberg (17 June 1929). See subsequent correspondence in the file on this issue as well.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*

perspective, it certainly made little sense; France still occupied the Rhineland.<sup>113</sup>

Moreover, even if relations had warmed between the two nations, cultural relations had barely resumed. The international scientific community's boycott of Germany persisted until 1926 and even then, Germans only reinserted themselves into the international scientific community by fits and starts, in part due to their own official counter-boycott.<sup>114</sup> Official visits by the cultural heroes of the day began with Thomas Mann's famous visit to Paris in 1926, but even he earned a mixed reception at the Sorbonne by those who still understood the Germans to be the hereditary enemy. To anyone reading a newspaper, it would have been clear that there was still much distrust on the part of the French and the Germans toward each another. Finally, to dissolve the offices with the understanding that harmony had been achieved would belie the group's long-term goals of safeguarding and reinforcing any détente.

Closing the offices in fact stemmed from financial strain and personality conflicts. Both offices were low on funds, and it was the French position of dissolving its office in Berlin that made the dissolution of the German office in Paris thinkable.<sup>115</sup> Yet many in the Komitee wanted to save it. In response to the budget issues, Krukenberg offered to resign so that a cheaper replacement could be hired. Furthermore, the concurrent decision for a healthy extension of the membership list and a few minor amendments to the procedures demonstrate that the group anticipated its revitalization. In the end, the

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<sup>113</sup>Krukenberg, for one, pointed this out. See PA-AA DBP 702b. Krukenberg to Herr Staatsminister [Nostitz-Wallwitz] (17 June 1929).

<sup>114</sup>On scientific relations, see Brigitte Schroeder-Gudehus, "La science ignore-t-elle vraiment les frontières? Les relations franco-allemandes dans le domaine des sciences," in *Entre Locarno et Vichy*, ed. Bock, et al., 393-403. For an attempt to renew these ties, see Henri Lichtenberger, "Le rétablissement de la coopération intellectuelle franco-allemande," *Scientia* (April 1927), 275-284.

<sup>115</sup>PA-AA DBP 702b. Aufzeichnung. Vertraulich! (7 Oct. 1929). Probably von Nostitz.

committee voted to dissolve the two offices and replace them with a new center in Paris, named for Mayrisch and run by two secretaries-general. Although having only one office meant that the committee would sacrifice some of its reciprocity, the group chose Paris due to France's centralization. Germans in France, they considered, always flocked to Paris—and in increasing numbers—whereas French visitors to Germany did not all share the same destination.<sup>116</sup> Yet after all of the fuss about closing both offices to create a new, combined center in Paris, the committee returned to the old format, with the exception that the representatives swapped offices. Ultimately, the divisions about the office simply rehashed the original dispute over who should head each office. The tensions around 1929, therefore, were neither new nor particularly serious.

In May 1930, the Mayrisch Komitee did experience a shake-up, with three of its French members resigning (including the head of the French contingent, former Ambassador Charles Laurent) and nine new members added to the roster. At this juncture, the group began to lean toward a new agenda about Europe. Originally, as we have seen, Mayrisch Komitee members steered clear of the idea of Europe, largely because it reeked to them of pacifism. Yet, with the influx of new members in 1930, and an increasingly widespread interest in a federated Europe, the committee began “to consider these [Franco-German] problems in a European framework and put as its order of the day the question of re-organizing Europe on the economic and moral levels.”<sup>117</sup> By adjusting its scope from the Franco-German axis to the European sphere, the Mayrisch Komitee expanded its purview without altering its strategy.

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<sup>116</sup>PA-AA DBP 702b. “Projet de création a Paris d’un centre franco-allemand d’information et de réunion: ‘Centre Émile Mayrisch.’” Signed Krukenberg (14 Oct. 1929).

<sup>117</sup>PA-AA DBP 702b. Press clipping. “Au Comité Franco-Allemand,” *Havas* (20 May 1930).

Even as the Komitee opened the door to new members and new ideas on Europe, its course only changed subtly. Member Daniel Serruys gave a presentation on the economic foundations of the United States of Europe, an especially provocative topic in 1930, after Briand's proposal for a United States of Europe had been released; the previously skittish Mayrisch Komitee immediately formed a subcommittee to research the question.<sup>118</sup> Nonetheless, Serruys himself considered a customs union utopian and pushed instead for gradual tariff reductions.<sup>119</sup> The Komitee likewise did not wholeheartedly embrace European tendencies at this point; the 1930 assembly took place in Heidelberg, in part because it feared being associated with the Paneuropa Congress that was meeting simultaneously in Berlin.<sup>120</sup> Coudenhove-Kalergi's Paneuropa still remained too idealistic for them.

Some of the new members of the committee with European interests quickly obtained central positions. Two new secretaries-general joined the group in 1930; Max Clauss (1901-1988) replaced Pierre Viénot in Berlin, and Régis de Vibraye (b. 1882) took over the Paris office from Gustav Krukenberg. Clauss wrote regularly for the *Europäische Revue* and de Vibraye had just written a book on contemporary Germany. Both proponents of the "European" agenda, Clauss and de Vibraye would come to represent the new face of the Mayrisch Komitee in the coming years.

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<sup>118</sup>PA-AA DBP 702b. Krukenberg to Ministerialdirektor Köpke (Heidelberg, 9 May 1930); Krukenberg to Riesser (19 May 1930); "Heidelberger Tagung vom 16/18 Mai 1930. Anlagen zum Rundschreiben vom 30. Mai."

<sup>119</sup>Alexander Gutfeld, "Serruys über Deutsch-französische Zusammenarbeit," *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* 4, No. 12 (1931): 1009-1013.

<sup>120</sup>Circular from Nostitz "An die Herren Mitglieder der deutschen Gruppe des Deutsch-Französischen Studienkomitees" (30 May 1930).

Max Clauss had befriended Viénot in 1925 Heidelberg, where Clauss studied under the sociologist Arnold Bergstraesser and Ernst Robert Curtius, both future Komitee members. Viénot had helped his German friend arrange a study trip to Paris, where Clauss worked at the *École Normale* under André Siegfried, yet another future member of the Komitee. Although Clauss did not join the Komitee until 1930, his avid interest in the Franco-German problem was evident in his capacity as secretary for the European Cultural Union and as a writer for its journal, the *Europäische Revue*.<sup>121</sup> Clauss likewise began participating in 1930 in the Franco-German youth movement, the *Sohlbergkreis*, to be discussed in Chapter 3.

If Clauss had been a friend of Viénot, de Vibraye shared many of his intellectual interests. In *Allemagne 1930*, de Vibraye averred the importance of the “persistence of *patries*,” which fostered cultural diversity and creativity. For de Vibraye, nationalism expressed a shocking and egotistical defining of the self in opposition to or in ignorance of others. Patriotism, in contrast, represented a noble combination of reason and sentiment that respected the same in others and wished for peace.<sup>122</sup> Like Viénot and other Komitee members, de Vibraye respected patriotism but considered nationalism to be based in ignorance. De Vibraye not only championed patriotism in France but in any nation or region. Cultural diversity, de Vibraye argued, was a fundamental human value and the basis for all progress. In blunt terms he explained,

A humanity in which all members thought or felt the same would be closer to a tribe of Papuans than to humanity at the height of civilization. The

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<sup>121</sup>Müller, “Pierre Viénot: Schöpfer,” 21; Guido Müller, “‘Mitarbeit in der Kulisse . . . ’ Der Publizist Max Clauss in den deutsch-französischen Beziehungen von den Weimarer Republik zum ‘neuen Europa’ (1924-1943),” *Lendemains*, no. 86/87 (1997): 20-48.

<sup>122</sup>Régis de Vibraye, *Allemagne 1930*, 6-10.

persistence of *patries* is an excellent factor of differentiation, thus of originality, and thus of personal and cultural development.<sup>123</sup>

On the whole, this plea for diversity closely resembled Viénot's convictions—with the exception that de Vibraye here fleetingly revealed his sense that some cultures could be superior to others. He would articulate this sentiment more directly a few years down the line.<sup>124</sup>

In 1930, de Vibraye's philosophy largely reflected that of Viénot. In parallel fashion, for example, de Vibraye boldly called upon his French readers "to make the effort to reason as if they were good German patriots, having experienced the war and its consequences."<sup>125</sup> Like Viénot, whose notion of leaving the self underscored national identity, de Vibraye championed empathy—an identity based on humanity as a whole. In addition, though de Vibraye called for peace, he, like Viénot and other Komitee members, saw himself as a realist, not a pacifist.<sup>126</sup> Both peace and entente represented France's interests and indeed those of Germany. Finally, de Vibraye similarly blamed the Franco-German antagonism on national psychologies: Germany was plagued by its sense of weakness, whereas France was haunted by "too much memory."<sup>127</sup>

Yet de Vibraye went a step further than Viénot by invoking the need for a federated Europe. Once the Franco-German axis was solidified, England, and eventually Central Europe, Scandinavia and the rest of Western Europe would join this political

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<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>124</sup>De Vibraye clearly supported France's *mission civilisatrice* in the colonies. Indeed he believed that all colonial powers had assumed a similar moral mission. See de Vibraye, 158. Viénot in contrast had served in France's colonies, but tried to remain true to his slogan, "Say different, don't say inferior."

<sup>125</sup>De Vibraye, *Allemagne 1930*, 95.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., 155.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 97.

entity.<sup>128</sup> Not only did de Vibraye wish to promote a united Europe to further the cause of peace and security, but also to ensure a balance of powers within Europe. Reaching out to Germany represented a pragmatic strategy. He clarified, “Let us not be outrun; let us not allow present day Europe to center itself on Germany to our own detriment.”<sup>129</sup> In other words, in 1930 de Vibraye imagined a peaceful, federated Europe dominated by none.

Changes in the Mayrisch Komitee ensued not only from within but from without, in particular from the strengthening of the far right. By 1931, its German contingent leaned toward the right, as evidenced by its new focus on the Eastern borders and the customs union with Austria; this stance marked a shift from its earlier push for a customs union with France, Belgium, and Luxembourg.<sup>130</sup> If the first concept of a customs union was rooted in a liberal notion of international free trade, the second incarnation bespoke a pan-German ethos. Both positions reflected the larger situation—the earlier resonance of Briandism and the subsequent predominance of nationalistic sentiments. That such a swing even infiltrated transnational spheres promoting greater understanding indicates the seismic shift underway in Europe.

By 1932, the German Komitee representatives in Paris began keeping more copious notes on French policy and remitting them to the Foreign Office. This greater attention to local developments, not surprisingly, only increased once the Nazis gained power in Germany. The intensification of communications between the German Foreign Office and the German section of the Komitee reveals the increasing pressures the

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<sup>128</sup>Russia, not surprisingly, remained the big question mark.

<sup>129</sup>De Vibraye, *Allemagne 1930*, 158.

<sup>130</sup>PA-AA 702b. Jahrestagung des Deutsch-Französischen Studienkomitees in Paris vom 12.-14. Juni 1931. Protokoll.”



German authorities placed on members. In the initial transition after the Nazi seizure of power, however, the Mayrisch Komitee reduced its activities. To duck a backlash by the French, the organization opted for a brief period of hibernation, thereby temporarily avoiding being brought into the Nazi line [*gleichgeschaltet*].<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, German members urged caution because they were convinced their correspondence was read by the French political police.<sup>132</sup> Once relations between France and the new regime across the Rhine were more relaxed, the German Foreign Office figured the Mayrisch Komitee could be coordinated like other German associations.

Although the German section of the Mayrisch Komitee was neither immediately *gleichgeschaltet* nor flooded by new Nazi members, the group made some quiet, but fundamental changes. First, it made the decision, long in the works, to cease having a French representative based in Berlin. While this had long been under discussion for financial considerations, the timing of the decision clearly had more to do with the anti-Nazi leanings of the current French representative, the student Paul Ravoux. The group opted not to replace Ravoux because it was shrinking its realm of activity. Instead, it decided to dispatch de Vibraye, a more accommodating French member, to Berlin more regularly. In effect, these changes signaled a subtle self-coordination with the new regime: with Ravoux sacked, the Berlin office's activities would be greatly reduced while the Paris office would continue running. At this juncture, the Mayrisch Komitee's

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<sup>131</sup>PA-AA 702b. Letter from Aschmann to Nostitz (18 April 1933).

<sup>132</sup>PA-AA 702b No. A 1600. Auszug aus einem Brief des Herrn A.v. Nostitz an Herrn Rümelin vom 1.5.33 durch Kurier als Beilage zu einem Privatbrief Rintelen-Forster hierher gelangt und an Herrn Rümelin weitergeleitet. The French political police were actually keeping tabs on foreigners in Paris—especially German students at this time.

founding principle of reciprocity was utterly violated. The Germans could thus run a propaganda-like office in Paris with no such French bureau in Berlin to counterbalance it.

The French section did not vote for dissolution in 1933. Rather, the French members operated on the assumption that the Nazis were doomed to fall soon, though they differed on their explanations of why the Party's dominance could not last.<sup>133</sup> They carried on in the hopes of tempering Nazi aggression and reinforcing cordial relations between the two nations in the meantime. For some, this *attentiste* policy expressed a desire to avoid war at any cost. De Vibraye, for example, who had encouraged a federated Europe with carefully balanced powers, began to yield on the question of reciprocity. His wish for peace and understanding, as iterated in *Allemagne 1930* increasingly placed the onus of rapprochement on the shoulders of the French. He wrote,

Today the call for entente is made loudly [by Hitler] before the crowds. If we refuse contact, the German people will be justified in believing that it is we French, whether because of politics or the desire to keep Germany in its current state of weakness, who refuse to organize for peace.<sup>134</sup>

Although de Vibraye acknowledged many faults of the Nazis, as early as 1934 he began to blame the French for German rearmament.<sup>135</sup> In this way, he pushed his earlier idea to imagine the perspective of the German patriot to the extreme.

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<sup>133</sup>PA-AA DBP 702b. Rümelin to Nostitz (26 May 1933) as forwarded to Riesser (29 May 1933). See in particular the arguments offered by Edmond Vermeil and René Duchemin.

<sup>134</sup>PA-AA DBP 702c No. DBP A 03908. Comité Franco-Allemand d'Information et de Documentation. Rapport sur la Situation Actuelle en Allemagne. Signed Régis de Vibraye (8 Nov. 1933).

<sup>135</sup>PA-AA DBP 702c. Comité Franco-Allemand d'Information et de Documentation. Rapport du Secrétaire général sur la situation en Allemagne. Signed Régis de Vibraye (13 March 1934).

## *Looking Forward*

The Mayrisch Komitee created both an intellectual and organizational framework—exclusively dedicated to facilitating cooperation between France and Germany—on which future champions of cooperation would rely. Inspired by Locarno, with a defining mission to address the Franco-German “problem,” this private effort bolstered diplomatic initiatives. Civic activists had adopted a diplomatic function (though not always with official approbation). Though not alone on this path, Komitee members were among the most prominent to seek to bring the spirit of Locarno from the high halls of diplomacy to the often posh salons of industrial barons, intellectual elites, and media figures. In this way, they provided a legitimizing function for rapprochement as well as some of the conceptual tools with which to discuss it.

Within the literature on Franco-German relations, the Mayrisch Komitee is often cursorily mentioned as one of several ephemeral organizations for Franco-German cooperation in the 1920s. By most accounts, which rely on an early study by Fernand L’Huillier, the Mayrisch Komitee faded away in 1933.<sup>136</sup> Yet, as Ina Belitz has pointed out, the Komitee continued to exist until 1938.<sup>137</sup> She explains the error made by many historians as due to sources that were unavailable to L’Huillier. Moreover, L’Huillier had excused himself for any gaps in research due to closed files and lack of time in Germany.<sup>138</sup> For Belitz, the false periodization of the organization is simply an issue of “technical mistakes and inexactitudes”—problems to be resolved for the antiquarian.

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<sup>136</sup>Fernand L’Huillier, *Dialogues Franco-Allemands, 1925-1933* (Strasbourg: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l’Université de Strasbourg, 1971). See also Unteutsch, 38-39.

<sup>137</sup>Ina Belitz, *Befreundung mit dem Fremden*, 187.

<sup>138</sup>Curiously, a file exists in the same series in the Politisches Archiv des Auswärtiges Amt as a few of the other files that L’Huillier seems to have examined that follows the Mayrisch Komitee into the late 1930s.

It is, however, essential to mark the Mayrisch Komitee's existence well into the Nazi period because it sheds light on the choices made by each of its members. Moreover, this oversight has served to underestimate not only the longevity of the group and its ideas, but also to overlook the numerous connections between the Mayrisch Komitee and subsequent associations for Franco-German cooperation. Finally, the imbrication of the Komitee and Nazi-era groups reveals more than has previously been discussed about these later societies, namely the roots of the *Comité France-Allemagne* and the Nazi-era *Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft*. By examining the resonance of 1920s ideas of cooperation into the late 1930s, we can trace the ways in which Locarno-era mediators persisted in staking a claim for their beliefs despite the changed environment. In so doing, we can examine both how these mediators continued to exert an influence on Franco-German relations during the Nazi era, and how they were compelled to adapt their visions of cooperation to mesh with the new order.

The itineraries of Mayrisch Komitee members would diverge sharply over the course of the next decade, leading some toward Resistance and others toward Nazism. United around a vague belief in entente in the late 1920s, members adopted a multiplicity of stances toward cooperation once Germany became increasingly identified with the Nazis, and eventually became the occupier of France. Viénot, whose participation in the Mayrisch Komitee was waning as early as 1930, entered Parliament as a Socialist, then became part of Léon Blum's cabinet, and ultimately served as a member of the

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Belitz likewise does not make use of this file. In addition, L'Huillier heavily relied on the private correspondence of Wladimir d'Ormesson whose participation in the Komitee dwindled during the Komitee's transitional period.

Resistance.<sup>139</sup> Ironically, Viénot entered Jean Giraudoux's Propaganda Ministry at the start of the war, while Krukenberg worked for the German Propaganda Ministry; when push came to shove, these two men, who had spent several years combating propaganda, enlisted in the national cause. Krukenberg then reembarked on his military career, once again demonstrating an interest in France, as evidenced by his command of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Charlemagne Division of the SS. Most other members, however, would continue to participate in future associations for Franco-German cooperation; the names de Vibraye, Clauss, and Schlumberger, to name a few, will continue to surface through our narrative.

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<sup>139</sup>Viénot died in London in 1944.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft

I am persuaded that a Franco-German entente will be born spontaneously from reciprocal knowledge [connaissance] and that the most sure means by which to realize this is to express oneself in an entirely good faith.—Maurice Boucher<sup>140</sup>

Reciprocity in the relations between the Germans and the French should not have as a goal the leveling of the national characteristics of each country so as to produce a Franco-German unity brew from both cultures. Rather [it should] awaken the neighbor's understanding of the other's character through the protection of the national [volklichen] peculiarities of each country through the method of rational objectivity.—Otto Grautoff<sup>141</sup>

As the Mayrisch Komitee battled against forces seeking to drive the wedge between France and Germany deeper, so too did it challenge a fellow organization for cooperation, the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft [DFG], launched on the heels of the Komitee's foundation. If anything, the two organizations were more similar than different; therein lay the root of their rivalry.<sup>142</sup> In fact, membership of the two organizations eventually overlapped. The Mayrisch Komitee feared the DFG would splinter the effort for understanding and thereby strengthen the already dominant nationalist cause. If the Gesellschaft in many ways reflected the means and aims of the

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<sup>140</sup>PA-AA R70550 No. II Fr 5490. Maurice Boucher to Otto Grautoff (27 Nov. 1926).

<sup>141</sup>Otto Grautoff, "Gegenseitigkeit der deutsch-französischen Beziehungen," *DFR* 3, no. 5 (1930): 381.

<sup>142</sup>See PA-AA R70550; R70551; R70552 in particular for a look at Grautoff's long struggles against Mayrisch Komitee members, for funding and for "moral" support—both private and official.

Komitee, it also threatened its uniqueness and vulgarized the task of cooperation by opening it to the broader educated reading public. Both groups, moreover, clamored for the attention—and funds—of the French and German foreign ministries and of powerful private donors. Their fierce rivalry makes clear there was more than one approach to the question of cooperation at the beginning of the Locarno era.

Like the Mayrisch Komitee, the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft took root thanks to the Spirit of Locarno. While the DFG similarly tapped into the surge of interest in cooperation born of Locarno, it channeled these energies into creating a better informed and more civically engaged public. Its more expansive view of who could (and should) effect rapprochement meant that it developed into a broad-based organization in a way the Mayrisch Komitee never would.

The handiwork of art critic Otto Grautoff, the DFG developed into an active community of Germans interested in learning about France and the ways in which the two countries were similar or complemented each other. The DFG arranged talks by French and German intellectuals and artists, screened films, sponsored educational trips, managed student exchanges, and matched up young pen pals. With a focus on sociability as well as on knowledge, the association proved an active and ambitious forum for mutual understanding. Its associated journals, the *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* (*DFR*) and the *Revue d'Allemagne*, reinforced and expanded this community by reaching out to a diverse binational readership of male and female teachers, lawyers, students, businessmen, and journalists.

The larger DFG project involved a new form of diplomacy that, though it relied on traditional diplomatic channels and on national governments, bypassed the

conventions of diplomacy in favor of a less formal cross-border conversation. Like that of a diplomat, however, the organization's perspective remained grounded in the national. It revolved around the concept of "understanding": learning about the other culture while maintaining a strong connection with one's own. DFG activists, like the more moderate elements of the *Mayrisch Komitee*, did not believe in shedding national identity or "leaving the self" as advocated by Viénot. Instead they opened the door to interaction and face-to-face contact with their neighbors, as equals.

By trying to foster understanding, the DFG and its reviews took on an explicitly political function. To advocate understanding—even at the height of the Locarno era—was itself profoundly political and surprisingly controversial. Key factions within the political leadership, the intellectual world, and the broader public viscerally opposed a Franco-German rapprochement of the Stresemann-Briand variety. DFG members, in this sense, became political and civic activists, eager to immerse others in the quest for cooperation. To dispute the usual rhetoric of antagonism in a seemingly neutral way, they adopted a strict stance of nonpartisanship. Both the DFG and its reviews brandished their nonpartisanship as a badge of honor, and the dispassionate tone and zeal for balance in the reviews underlined the organization's refusal to take sides.

If (French) academics, as Johann Chapoutot has convincingly argued, were trying to put the brakes on Briand and Stresemann's attempts at rapprochement, DFG activists were seeking to accelerate the two Foreign Ministries' progress. What is more, they hoped to lay out more lasting models of cooperation—structurally, by setting up cross-border contacts, and conceptually, by recasting French and German ways of perceiving each other.



## Origins

In 1925, art historian Otto Grautoff (1876-1937) embarked upon his arduous crusade to create a German-language journal dedicated to the idea of “getting to know” the society and culture of contemporary France. A range of constraints—from the ever-present need for funding and the corresponding need to please any patrons to the interventions of the foreign ministries in both countries—gradually shaped the project into a set of journals: the *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau*, a German-language review about France and the *Revue d’Allemagne*, a French-language review about Germany. To oversee the German publication, Grautoff created an association, the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft, that would eventually lie at the heart of his endeavor. Funded by membership dues and magazine sales—along with substantial contributions from the Foreign Offices of both countries and some wealthy German businessmen—the DFG and its affiliated structures never knew financial security, despite a financial committee headed by leading personalities of Germany’s big banks and businesses and its honorary committee consisting of a range of distinguished politicians and intellectuals, including Konrad Adenauer and Albert Einstein.<sup>143</sup>

Initially, Grautoff imagined creating a German-language review to be entitled *Frankreich: Monatshefte für das französische Geistesleben der Gegenwart* [France: Monthly Review of Today’s French Intellectual Life] as a counterpart to the *Revue Germanique*, a French academic journal founded in 1905. The stroke of genius that elevated what was to be a fairly typical intellectual-literary review into a unique and

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<sup>143</sup>Whereas the financial interests played an active role in the DFG, the members of the honorary committee did not seem to participate in the DFG’s decision-making process. Instead, they seem to have lent their names for prestige and some vague approval of the cause of Franco-German understanding.

vastly more ambitious two-pronged project came from the German Foreign Office's press bureau.<sup>144</sup> By encouraging Grautoff to think more broadly and develop a French-language review, German officials converted Grautoff's cultural-educational project into one that would better serve the ends of the German state by promoting German culture abroad. *Rayonnement culturel* was not the exclusive domain of the French. Like German cultural institutes in Barcelona (1923) and Madrid (1925) as well as the DAAD (1926), a French-language review could help spread Germany's influence.<sup>145</sup> And taken as a pair, the reviews would help, in the words of a Foreign Office representative, "lay the ground for Franco-German understanding," a goal that reflected that Office's own objectives of peacefully negotiating further revisions of Versailles and reclaiming equal footing with France.<sup>146</sup>

Because of the recent turn toward diplomatic conciliation as embodied in Locarno, Grautoff had great expectations of the active support and participation of major politicians on both sides of the Rhine including Foreign Ministers Stresemann and Briand as well as Minister of War Paul Painlevé<sup>147</sup> and Ambassador Leopold von Hoesch. Indeed, early drafts of his proposals sent to the German Foreign Ministry named these

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<sup>144</sup>PA-AA R70550 No. II Fr 4411<sup>26</sup> Draft Prospectus of issue 1 "Frankreich: Monatshefte für das französische Geistesleben der Gegenwart" Juli 1926; PA-AA R70550 No. AA II Fr. 4309 "Aufzeichnung über den Plan einer Zeitschrift für Frankreich und Deutschlandstudium," signed Schwendemann (21 Sept. 1926).

<sup>145</sup>The Paris branch of the DAAD did not open until 1930. Hans Manfred Bock, "Initiatives socio-culturelles et contraintes politiques dans les relations universitaires entre la France et l'Allemagne dans l'Entre-Deux-Guerres," *Revue d'Allemagne et des Pays de Langue Allemande* 34, no. 3 (2002): 299-300.

<sup>146</sup>PA-AA R70550 No. II Fr.4715<sup>26</sup> Draft Letter AA to Grautoff (27 Oct. 1926).

<sup>147</sup>Painlevé's lack of involvement was subsequently underscored by his refusal to participate in a *DFR* poll about cultural exchange. According to his response published in the *DFR*, the Minister of War was honored to have been contacted, but had no time to respond. See "Deutsch-französischer Austausch," *DFR* 1, no. 6 (June 1928), 516-536.

politicians and other luminaries as board members before they had consented, much less been contacted about the creation of such an organization. Grautoff's audacity, whether a misguided strategy by which to gain official support and the eventual adherence of leading lights or a simple act of overconfidence, did not go undetected. The German Foreign Office noticed his presumption, a characteristic that would haunt Grautoff's relations with allies and rivals alike over the ensuing years (and which some attributed to his guile and others to his denseness).<sup>148</sup> German officials in the Foreign Office in fact showed little enthusiasm for a new journal that would showcase France to the German public.

German officials, however, were excited about the prospect of a French-language review promoting German culture to the French public. In the hope of furthering the French-language review, the German Foreign Office sent Grautoff to France to enlist prominent Frenchmen in his project. Although Grautoff succeeded in gaining the support of the Quai d'Orsay along with the collaboration of a number of Germanists, those whom he met cautioned him on a number of fronts. All suggested he court conservatives rather than merely falling back upon the usual suspects. Instead of naming members of the Mayrisch Komitee, pacifists, socialists, or others predisposed to a project for French and German understanding, Radical Senator Anatole de Monzie recommended tapping

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<sup>148</sup>The frequency of such incidents is rather baffling. Pierre Bertaux called him a "swindler" and a "crook" and otherwise criticized and mocked him in various letters to his parents. Representatives of the German Foreign Office noted his clumsiness, tactlessness, and lack of business acumen. French officials had similar complaints. Even Boucher considered him "hopeless." See comments sprinkled throughout the diplomatic correspondence; Pierre Bertaux, *Un normalien à Berlin. Lettres franco-allemandes (1927-1933)*, ed. Hans Manfred Bock, Gilbert Krebs, and Hansgerd Schulte (Asnières: PIA, 2001), 106, 131, 134, 209, 302-303; Béatrice Pellissier, "Un dialogue franco-allemand de l'entre deux-guerres: la *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* (janvier 1928-juin 1933) et la *Revue d'Allemagne* (novembre 1927-décembre 1933)" (Ph.D. diss., Université de Paris IV-Paris Sorbonne, 1991-1992), 28-30. Historian Hans Manfred Bock, in contrast, has praised Grautoff for his "aplomb." See Hans Manfred Bock, "Die Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft 1926 bis 1934: Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte der deutsch-französischen Beziehungen der Zwischenkriegszeit," *Francia* 17 no. 3 (1990): 65.

prominent nationalists like historian Jacques Bainville, a rabid Germanophobe associated with the *Action française*, the conservative writer and anti-Dreyfusard Paul Bourget, and philosopher Henri Bergson as well as the leading Jesuits of France.<sup>149</sup> Such conservative nationalists would help the *Revue d'Allemagne* cast its net more widely. Their names, moreover, would in theory also lend credibility to the project of rapprochement and help reclaim the notion from the extreme left. Such a plan went unexecuted.

From Lille in the North to Bordeaux in the South, Germanists signed on to Grautoff's project, even as they tried to temper Grautoff's expectations. Readily pledging to participate, Germanist Henri Lichtenberger nonetheless warned Grautoff that the French did not tend to cultivate an interest in foreign peoples, German or otherwise. Most potential readers of the *Revue d'Allemagne*, he added, would gravitate to it out of "fear and curiosity" of Germany, a comment clearly geared toward moderating Grautoff's hopes that interest would stem from more noble sentiments.<sup>150</sup> Lichtenberger's assessment reflected a larger pattern of interwar French culture, as seen, for example, in the study of the German language as a way to "know the enemy" rather than as a sign of admiration or a symbol of reconciliation.<sup>151</sup> Indeed, the French academic community's

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<sup>149</sup>See PA-AA R70550 No. II Fr 5490 Bericht. Grautoff to AA (Stamped 17 Dec. 1926). Bergson was not as counterintuitive a choice as de Monzie implied. Beginning in 1926, Bergson headed the Commission for Intellectual Cooperation at the League of Nations.

<sup>150</sup>PA-AA R70550 No. II Fr 5490 Bericht. Grautoff to AA (Stamped 17 Dec. 1926).

<sup>151</sup>On learning the German language during the interwar period, see Corine Defrance, "Le Centre d'Études Germaniques: Mayence, Strasbourg, Clermont-Ferrand, 1921-1939," *Revue d'Allemagne* 29, no. 1 (1997): 113-132; Monique Mombert, "L'Enseignement de l'allemand en France et du français en Allemagne après 1871, 1918, et 1945," in *Nachkriegsgesellschaften in Deutschland und Frankreich im 20. Jahrhundert/Sociétés d'après-guerre en France et en Allemagne au 20e siècle*, ed. Ilja Mieck and Pierre Guillen (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998).

marked hostility toward Germany meant that Grautoff's enlistment of so many Germanists to his project marked quite a coup.<sup>152</sup>

Lichtenberger's circumspection notwithstanding, Grautoff managed to lay the basis for the French review by landing editors, a publisher, and prospective donors in the space of a few weeks. Oswald Hesnard, who had participated in the major diplomatic summits of the 1920s at Briand's side, heard about the project and contacted Grautoff to commend him for advancing the work of Stresemann and his own mentor Briand. He explained to Grautoff: "You are, without a doubt, convinced like me, that the economic accords that are talked about so much—and talked about so much with good reason—whether of potash, steel, chemicals, or textiles—can only create an 'atmosphere' between our two countries if the representatives of the mind [Esprit] bring the incomparable weight of their authority and their irreplaceable support to the work of rapprochement."<sup>153</sup> The French Foreign Ministry likewise saw an ally in Grautoff. When publisher Georges Crès backed out, the Quai d'Orsay quickly helped find a substitute in Emile Paul. The *Revue franco-allemande*, more aptly renamed the *Revue d'Allemagne* before its first issue in November 1927, appeared at a time when the fate of its German twin was still in question.

Whereas Grautoff helped launch the *Revue d'Allemagne* in France without major incident, he met strong resistance in Germany to the *Rundschau* from an unlikely source. Initial opposition came not from ardent nationalists but rather from the very groups Grautoff was tapping for financial support: those individuals who had recently expressed

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<sup>152</sup>On interwar antipathy and suspicion toward Germany in French academia, see Chapoutot, 15-34.

<sup>153</sup>PA-AA R70550 No. II Fr 4605. O. Hesnard to Grautoff (15 Oct. 1926).

interest in the Franco-German problem by enlisting in the Mayrisch Komitee. While Mayrisch Komitee members Lichtenberger and Ernst Robert Curtius, the esteemed scholar of French literature, agreed to join the editorial boards, their encouragement proved the exception rather than the rule.<sup>154</sup> Most of the Komitee—above all the constituents from big business—actively obstructed Grautoff’s efforts. Grautoff claimed to have seen a note—sent from the Mayrisch Komitee address to German authorities and signed by a certain “Dr. K.,” presumably Gustav Krukenberg—that denounced his nascent organization as a Communist cell.<sup>155</sup> It is, in any case, clear from internal Mayrisch Komitee reports that Krukenberg convinced German members of his organization to refrain from helping the DFG and to block its expansion whenever possible. Soon thereafter, the German and French halves of the Mayrisch Komitee together decided in a closed meeting that promoting the DFG did not lie in their interest.<sup>156</sup> For the next few years, the Mayrisch Komitee would use its considerable prestige and influence to try to undermine the DFG’s relations with the German administration and to alienate its prospective donors.

German officials hesitated to give their full support to the *Rundschau*, though they were bound to the larger project by the strictures of reciprocity. Reciprocity had informally governed Franco-German cultural politics since Locarno; it implied a partnership of equals, relative openness, and shared political risk. A pledge of support to

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<sup>154</sup>Lichtenberger served on the boards of both journals, Curtius on the *Revue d’Allemagne*.

<sup>155</sup>For the story of Dr. K., see Pellisier, 28-29. I have not found this denunciation in the files.

<sup>156</sup>PA-AA DBP 702a Bericht über die Tagung des Deutsch-Französischen Studien-Komitees vom 6.-8. Februar 1927 in Berlin (18 Feb. 1927); PA-AA DBP 702a Bericht über die Sitzungen des Executiv-Ausschusses des Deutsch-Französischen Studien-Komitees am 6. und 8. Februar 1927 in Berlin (18 Feb. 1927).

the DFG from the French—both financial and “moral”—was contingent upon a comparable guarantee from the Germans. German officials expected the same from the French before they would make a declaration in favor of Grautoff’s project. Therefore, Grautoff was caught in an impasse. A series of negotiations between Grautoff and the two governments took the better part of a year.

Yet even as Grautoff was stranded in the post-Locarno game of reciprocity, the rules of reciprocity gave him a slight edge over the two governments. At times, Grautoff used this to his advantage. He reminded German officials of their “European duty” to contribute a share equal to that provided by the French. It would, he feared, lead to “a highly painful political effect” were he to tell the French Foreign Ministry that Germany was not interested in participating.<sup>157</sup> Failure to meet the French half-way, Grautoff warned German officials, could lead to dangerous repercussions. There was no need to spell out these possibilities. Grautoff used a similar bargaining strategy the following year when the *Rundschau* needed additional funds to stay afloat. If the *Rundschau* sank, it would drag down its French corollary with it. Grautoff therefore asked the German Foreign Office to drum up donations from representatives of some of Germany’s foremost businesses—Deutsche Bank, Knorr-Bremse, Dresdener Bank—or, with the disappearance of the *Rundschau*, risk feeding France’s “mistrust toward Germany” and “strengthen[ing] all hostile tendencies anew.”<sup>158</sup>

Reciprocity also had a bearing on the internal structure of the DFG and its reviews. The logic of balance, for example, compelled Maurice Boucher, the chief editor

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<sup>157</sup>PA AA R70550 No. AA II Fr 1360. Report from Grautoff to Ministerialdirektor (30 March 1927).

<sup>158</sup>PA AA R70552 No. AA II Fr 4097. Grautoff and Stern-Rubarth to Köpke (8 Oct. 1928).

of the *Revue d'Allemagne*, to serve on the editorial board of the *Rundschau*, just as his *DFR* counterpart Otto Grautoff sat on the editorial board of the *Revue*; in this way, they could respectively safeguard French and German interests.<sup>159</sup> Each review, moreover, published contributions from French and German authors. The reviews, both monthlies, were to address similar themes and maintain similar print-runs.

The notion of balance became such an integral part of the DFG that it quickly began to color its self-image. Only a few months after the DFG's foundation, DFG General Secretary, *Rundschau* editor, and editor-in-chief of the news agency Wolffs Telegraphisches Büro Edgar Stern-Rubarth explained that the initiative for the DFG came "at the same time from Paris and Berlin."<sup>160</sup> Stern-Rubarth's romanticization of the DFG origins, which could have been more fittingly idealized as the uphill battle of the lonely (German) pioneer, fostered a sense of the simultaneous and equivalent desires of the two nations for rapprochement. It also stressed to the *DFR*'s German readers that the French, under the sway of Briand, were equally committed to the project of understanding.

Although the notion of reciprocity governed Grautoff's project, in practice, its strictures were not fulfilled. If the two journals did not "resemble each other like eggs," that was never the editors' intention.<sup>161</sup> More significantly, the two Foreign Offices constantly questioned the legitimacy of the twinned journals, the *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* and the *Revue d'Allemagne*, precisely because they were not in true balance. Complications regularly ensued when one country learned its subsidies outweighed those

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<sup>159</sup>PA-AA R70550 No. II Fr 5490. Report from Grautoff to AA (Stamped 17 Dec. 1926).

<sup>160</sup>Edgar Stern-Rubarth, "Chronik: Die Verständigungsorganisationen in Frankreich," *DFR* 1, no. 4 (1928): 323.

<sup>161</sup>Otto Grautoff, "Gegenseitigkeit der deutsch-französischen Beziehungen," *DFR* 3, no. 5 (1930): 381.



of the other. Worse still, the German review was affiliated with the DFG, whereas the French review had no parallel association to advocate for Germany. Insisting on true reciprocity, the German Foreign Office threatened to cut funds to the *Rundschau* altogether unless its French counterpart immediately developed a Franco-German Society. Yet, even when the *Revue d'Allemagne* began to list its affiliation to the already extant Ligues d'Études Germaniques, the official German response was that reciprocity had not been achieved. The associations in each nation had to be founded at the same time, with the same structure and goals, and a similar caliber of members to attain reciprocity—and thus be entitled to support from the German government. After all, why should the German government assist an organization that promoted France, unless there were a corresponding group that championed Germany to the French?

Once the first issue of the *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* appeared in January 1928—astonishingly only two months after the first issue of the *Revue d'Allemagne*—the two journals settled into an easy rhythm, appearing once a month largely without incident. These first years corresponded to the apogee of the Locarno era,<sup>162</sup> by which time the notion of rapprochement had become acceptable in broader circles. In 1928, even Raymond Poincaré played the part of a long-time rapprochement devotee, twice repudiating German war guilt, purporting that an aggressive cabinet had forced his hand in the Ruhr, and boasting that he personally had conceived the 1926 Briand-Stresemann meeting at Thoiry.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup>Knipping, 2-4, 219.

<sup>163</sup>Jon Jacobson and John T. Walker, "The Impulse for a Franco-German Entente: The Origins of the Thoiry Conference," *Journal of Contemporary History* 10, no. 1 (Jan. 1975): 170-172.

In France, it was common to refer to the two Germanies—a militaristic, bureaucratic “Prussian” Germany of Bismarck and the Romantic, musical, “good” Germany of Schiller. This genre of dualism was matched in Germany by the tensions between imagining the France of “liberté, égalité, fraternité” and the France of superficiality, immorality, decay. During the First World War, Grautoff readily subscribed to this dualistic view of France. Ina Belitz has contended that, rather than looking to his personal experiences across almost a decade’s residence in prewar Paris, Grautoff fell back upon clichés about France he had gleaned from art and literature. His 1915 article “Das Doppelantlitz Frankreichs” [“The Two Faces of France”] blamed revanchist France for the war. Grautoff would prove to be a fervent German patriot, a “Liberal-national,” and allied with “bourgeois center-right party” sensibilities.<sup>164</sup> Yet he dedicated his career to studying France. His views toward that country were ambivalent and in flux.

Grautoff’s relations with France stretched back to the beginning of his career as an art critic. In fact, he preferred to trace his French connection back even further, to his mother’s Huguenot ancestors. Born in 1876 to a Protestant family in the northern city of Lübeck and named after Bismarck, Grautoff was, however, firmly ensconced in the German *Bildungsbürgertum*. Though he initially followed in his father’s footsteps to

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<sup>164</sup>Belitz, 34-57; Hans Manfred Bock, “Transnationale Begegnung im Zeitalter des Nationalismus: Der Lebensweg Otto Grautoffs (1876-1937) zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich,” in *Sept décennies de relations franco-allemandes: Hommage à Joseph Rovin*, ed. Gilbert Krebs (Asnières: Publications de l’Institut d’Allemand d’Asnières, 1989), 75. This centrist tendency is not only clear from Grautoff’s writings, but also from a series of talks he gave to various branches of the Center Party in 1930—but not to any other parties. See PA-AA R 70554. Others have interpreted the *DFR* differently: a lengthy, undated Foreign Office report from mid-1933 lambasted the journal as dominated by “pacifist left-oriented” personalities (and Jews). See PA-AA R 70555. “Die Tätigkeit der DFG, dargestellt an Hand von Zitaten aus der *DFR* dem Organ der Gesellschaft aus den Jahrgängen 1931, 1932 und 1933.”

apprentice as a bookseller, with the encouragement of his closest childhood friend Thomas Mann, Grautoff shifted gears and began to study art history in Munich, then Paris. As an art historian and critic, Grautoff focused on French Classicism, namely Poussin, but he also wrote the first German monograph on Rodin as well as books on Impressionism, Lübeck, and the Munich art scene. In concert with Frantz Jourdain, he organized a Bavarian arts-and-crafts component to the French Salon d'Automne of 1910, an instance of French-German cooperation on an organizational level but also noteworthy for placing German crafts on par with French paintings.<sup>165</sup> In Paris, Grautoff and his wife Erna ran a salon for many years, attended by the likes of Apollinaire, Jean Jaurès, and Stefan Zweig. Erna, with the help of her husband, translated pacifist writer (and Nobel laureate) Romain Rolland's vast oeuvre, including his 10-volume novel cycle *Jean-Christophe*; Rolland, too, frequented the Grautoff salon.

Grautoff's intimate connections with France and the French proved useful, but at times placed him in a suspicious light both in France and in Germany. In 1914, Grautoff closed the doors to his salon, left Paris, and contacted the German Foreign Office to volunteer his services as a potential informant. Shortly thereafter, he began to work for the *Zentralstelle Auslandsdienst*, a new office in Berlin devoted to war propaganda; his duties over the course of the war included reporting on the influence of the Pan-German League in France, translation work, censorship, and propagandizing. In a public relations

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<sup>165</sup>Sabine Beneke, "Otto Grautoff, Frantz Jourdain und die Ausstellung Bayerischen Kunstgewerbes im 'Salon d'Automne' von 1910," in *Distanz und Aneignung. Kunstbeziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich 1870-1945. Relations Artistiques entre la France et l'Allemagne 1870-1945*, ed. Alexandre Kostka and Françoise Lucbert (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004), 119-138. After the war, it would take almost 10 years for Germans to be allowed once again to show their art at the Salon d'Automne. See Alexandre Kostka, "Une crise allemande des arts français? Les beaux-arts entre diplomatie et propagande," in *Échanges culturels et relations diplomatiques: Présences françaises à Berlin au temps de la République de Weimar*, ed. Hans Manfred Bock and Gilbert Krebs (Paris: Publications de l'Institut Allemand, Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2004), 243-262.

capacity, Grautoff addressed French grievances about damage to their cultural patrimony, and, as the war drew to a close, he looked for ways to keep German art from the hands of the Allies.<sup>166</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the war, Grautoff found himself mistrusted on both sides of the border. Shunned by the French for his propagandizing, yet considered too close to the French for German comfort, the art historian withdrew into a quieter, more isolated lifestyle and distanced himself from both French and German intellectuals of his acquaintance. But he continued to put pen to paper, writing *Zur Psychologie Frankreichs* (1922) and *Die Maske und das Gesicht Frankreichs in Denken, Kunst, und Dichtung* (1923) as well as numerous essays and articles, before he embarked on the project that would shape the rest of his life.

Years later, Grautoff identified a moment in 1920—when he returned to Paris to collect his belongings from the apartment he had left so hurriedly at the start of war—as his epiphany. Both local authorities and his former neighbors took him for a spy; that evening, in frustration at his inability to pick up his Parisian life where he had left it off, Grautoff vowed to work for French-German understanding.<sup>167</sup> His resolution seems to have remained latent for several years. Aside from trying to renew some old contacts, he took no concrete steps until 1924 when cooperation with France had become less controversial. It was not until Locarno or thereabouts that Grautoff's conversion became apparent.

By around 1925, Grautoff's attraction to things French transformed into a full-blown obsession with French-German cooperation. According to his wife Erna, Grautoff

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<sup>166</sup>Belitz, 67-76; Nicola Lambourne, "Production versus Destruction: Art, World War I and Art History," *Art History* 22, no. 3 (Sept.1999): 360.

<sup>167</sup>Pellisier, 24.

passed his DFG years with “no personal life . . . no relaxation . . . no Sundays, no family life.” Daughter Christiane, whom they sent to reform school, agreed wholeheartedly, so much that she later painted a picture of emotional neglect. Her father, “at once friendly and curt” to his three children, was always busy “writing books, writing and giving talks” and otherwise furthering the DFG. Her parents only visited her a couple of times once they had her institutionalized for alleged petty theft. Erna put a more positive spin on her husband’s single-minded devotion: “. . . the DFG is identical with the labor, the energy, the tenacity of its founder and leader. They cannot be separated.”<sup>168</sup> But if the DFG owed both its existence and its survival to Grautoff, surely others would have objected to calling it his enterprise alone.

Maurice Boucher (1885-1977), almost a decade younger than Grautoff, was serving as music editor for the Parisian daily *L’Avenir*, teaching at the lycées Chaptal and Louis-le-Grand, and working toward his doctorate in German literature when he was tapped for the editorship of the *Revue d’Allemagne*. Henri Lichtenberger, Boucher’s adviser at the Sorbonne, recommended him for the position. Grautoff proceeded to court Boucher for his linguistic skills and knowledge of Germany; he found him “active, reliable, earnest, and independent.” A product of France’s finest schools (the lycées Janson-de-Sailly, Henri IV, and Louis-le-Grand as well as the École Normale), Boucher possessed an impeccable background. His diverse interests—he was trained in both German and law and was an amateur composer and violinist—would, moreover, serve a cultural journal well. Upon Lichtenberger’s retirement in 1935, both Boucher and

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<sup>168</sup>PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr 3855. Erna Grautoff to Ministerialdirektor (22 Nov. 1932); Werner Fuld and Albert Ostmaier, ed. *Die Göttin und Ihr Sozialist: Christiane Grautoff und Ihr Leben mit Ernst Toller* (Bonn: Weidle Verlag, 1996), 10-16.

Germanist Edmond Vermeil, an occasional contributor to the *Revue* and member of the Mayrisch Komitee, joined the faculty at the Sorbonne.<sup>169</sup>

Like Grautoff, Boucher had a complicated relationship with the nation he studied. His father, General Arthur Boucher, had penned pamphlets on the pre-war Franco-German antagonism and against German nationalism; during the war, the General continued this genre of writing with a booklet on the French war effort. Like his father, the younger Boucher served heroically in the war; he was wounded four times by Germans. After the war, Boucher worked for the Mission Nollet, the Inter-Allied Military Control Commission to disarm Germany, first in Berlin and then in the Ruhr. Grautoff depicted his French colleague as a mirror image of his ideal self: Boucher was “no sentimental pacifist, no conscientious objector on principle, but a Frenchman who is deeply anchored in his nation, who wants to see the greatness of France safeguarded, who carries in himself much Latindom, yet for all that, a Germanist who profoundly feels the Franco-German problem in itself and for his country to its fullest extent, to its deepest depth, in its labyrinthine confusion.”<sup>170</sup>

Boucher’s credentials proved controversial. German officials raised a number of objections against Boucher’s candidacy, all revolving around his stint in the disarmament commission. They feared above all that Germans would associate him with the Rhenish separatist movement. Such qualms about Boucher did not solely come from Germany. The French board of the Institut Français de Berlin later passed over Boucher’s 1932

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<sup>169</sup>For some biographical details on Boucher, see Christophe Charle, *Les Professeurs de la Faculté des Lettres de Paris, 1809-1939: Dictionnaire Biographique* vol. 2 (Paris: CNRS, 1985).

<sup>170</sup>Otto Grautoff, *Franzosen Sehen Deutschland: Begegnungen, Gespräche, Bekenntnisse* (Leipzig: Wolfgang Richard Lindner Verlag, 1931), 32-35; “Deutsch-Französisches Gespräch über Liberalismus” *Vossische Zeitung* (6 Jan. 1933) clipped in PA-AA R70554.

candidacy for the directorship for fear that Germans, remembering Boucher's involvement in the Occupation of the Ruhr, would assume the elite academic research institute had a political, indeed propagandistic agenda.<sup>171</sup> In the end, Boucher was approved to lead the *Revue d'Allemagne* because of Grautoff's advocacy, because his links to the separatist movement were tenuous at best, because it was too late to find a replacement of his caliber, and because French officials made clear that they could just as easily object to Grautoff's history with the *Zentralstelle Auslandsdienst*.<sup>172</sup>

Although Grautoff did not hesitate to appoint Boucher as editor of the *Revue d'Allemagne*, their friendship seems never to have gotten off the ground. Indeed, their relationship is perhaps best characterized by its conspicuous lack of communication. Boucher's letters often went unanswered for months, even when he made clear how urgently he needed Grautoff's answer on a matter of business.<sup>173</sup> Their infrequent contacts kept them from developing joint strategies by which to further their project and to raise much needed funds. Grautoff's silence ensured the bonds between Paris and Berlin remained weak; moreover it belied the organization's mandate to unite the French and the Germans into one "working community." Instead, it reinforced the national orientation of the journals. For his part, Grautoff ultimately blamed the French editorial staff—namely Boucher—and its lack of "courage" and "organizational abilities" for the

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<sup>171</sup>AN AJ16 6945. Comité de l'Institut Français de Berlin. Séance du 10 novembre 1932.

<sup>172</sup>PA-AA R70551 Telegram 682 Bülow to Paris (21 June 1927); PA-AA No. AA II Fr 2925 Kühn to AA (12 July 1927).

<sup>173</sup>For one example see, PA-AA R70552 Abschrift from Boucher and Emile Paul to Grautoff (3 Oct. 1928), telegram from Emile Paul and Boucher to Grautoff (11 Nov. 1928), Kuhn to Bassenheim (23 Nov. 1928).

failure to erect a French associational counterpart to the DFG.<sup>174</sup> But as we will see, Boucher, like Grautoff, would spend the rest of his career studying and trying to effect an understanding with the nation across the Rhine.

### *The Reviews*

Covering classic and contemporary French literature, philosophy, music, art, politics, and the economy as well as Franco-German relations, the *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* aimed to “avoid sentimental pacifism” in favor of pursuing “mutual enlightenment and rational understanding.”<sup>175</sup> An announcements section in each issue of the *DFR* illuminated the many connections between France and Germany springing up from community to community, person to person. These announcements not only listed items of importance to the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft, such as donations and new members, but also extended to a much broader range of French-German points of contact. These ranged from exhibitions and exchanges to more symbolic triumphs, such as Oleander, the first German horse to race at Longchamps since the war.<sup>176</sup> In this sense, the *Rundschau* served as a clearinghouse for the myriad, often ephemeral, Franco-German initiatives after Locarno.

The *DFR*’s French-language counterpart, the *Revue d’Allemagne* aimed to spread and deepen knowledge about contemporary Germany to its French readership. From its

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<sup>174</sup>PA-AA R70554 Abschrift zu II Fr 2603. “Die Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft” Grautoff [unsigned ] to Reichskanzlei (28 July 1932). Publicly, he blamed the nationalist press, see Grautoff, *Franzosen Sehen Deutschland*, 40.

<sup>175</sup>PA-AA R70550 zu No. II Fr 4411<sup>26</sup> Prospectus. “Deutsch-Französische Rundschau” signed Grautoff (29 Sept. 1926).

<sup>176</sup>“Deutsch-Französische Veranstaltungen in Frankreich,” *DFR* 1, no. 11 (1928): 968.



first issue in 1927, the editors of the *Revue d'Allemagne* proclaimed they were neither conformists nor swayed by high politics. By not overtly aligning themselves with rapprochement politics or party politics more generally, the editors established their independence and credibility in three principal ways. First, the journal's neutrality implied that it was scientific and unbiased; however, at the same time, the *Revue d'Allemagne* provided an alternative to the academic, less accessible *Revue Germanique*. Second, it appealed to readers of all political and social backgrounds who might hold an interest in Germany, whether from hatred or fascination or pacifist tendencies. In similar fashion, it attracted contributing writers from an array of political stances. Finally, it seemed to be about culture, a potentially less divisive subject than politics. In this way, the *Revue d'Allemagne* created a lieu de rapprochement—a space in which Franco-German relations could be negotiated and a certain idea of Germany (or even multiple visions of Germany) mapped out for French readers, just as the *DFR* did for its German audience with regard to France.

Although the *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* and the *Revue d'Allemagne* by and large operated independently of each other, with separate budgets, distinct if overlapping editorial boards, and different publishers, they maintained a similar scope. Both, moreover, emphasized contemporary issues. They rarely, however, published the same articles, and when they did, these generally were on Franco-German relations per se.<sup>177</sup> Slightly more often, articles on the same theme appeared in each journal, but regarding the particular national context, such as “Le Sport en Allemagne” (*Revue d'Allemagne* Feb. & March 1928) and “Sport in Frankreich” (*DFR* March 1928)—both,

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<sup>177</sup>See, for example, Edgar Stern-Rubarth's article on Franco-German cartels, which appeared as both “Der Stand der deutsch-französischen Kartelle,” *DFR* 3 (March 1928) and “Les Cartels franco-allemands,” *Revue d'Allemagne* no. 6 (Apr. 1928).

in this case, by Marcel Berger. Unlike the *Rundschau*, which reported on the doings of the DFG, as well as other Franco-German exchanges and conferences at some length, the *Revue d'Allemagne* devoted little attention to Franco-German gatherings. If the *Revue* sometimes listed events, it provided few articles on the sociability aspects of Franco-German relations. And, as Béatrice Pellissier has charted, the *Revue d'Allemagne* paid far more attention to literature than did the *Rundschau*, which favored articles on “civilization” instead.

The reviews relied upon a variety of authors and perspectives for content; only a fraction served as regular contributors.<sup>178</sup> Contributors ranged from celebrated authors—Colette and Paul Valéry, Thomas Mann and Alfred Döblin—to publishers, artists, journalists, and educators. There were travelogues and theater reviews, economic reports and political chronicles, even the rare article on sports. Rather generously, the reviews published Mayrisch Komitee accounts of their latest meetings, despite the fact that the Komitee had cast the DFG as a rival and interloper. The two reviews’ sheer volume—thousands upon thousands of pages each over more than half a decade—attests to their ambition as well as to a certain exuberance. Their heft announced the import of their project to skeptics who considered cultural relations frivolous. To dedicated readers, their comprehensiveness provided a creditable guide to the neighboring land.

It would be impossible to pinpoint one political outlook for either of the reviews. Because of their structure as forums, the two reviews presented remarkably diverse portrayals of French and German culture and society. Indeed, an early proposal for the *Revue* contended that the quantity of contributions mattered more than their quality; the

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<sup>178</sup> According to Pellissier, only 15% of the contributors to the *Revue d'Allemagne* and 10% of those to the *DFR* regularly wrote for the journals. Pellissier, 12.

more perspectives, the more exact impression of contemporary Germany French readers could glean from the review.<sup>179</sup> Although the journals avoided blanket condemnations and generalizations, their articles varied widely in tone from gloomy assessments of the political situation to unfailingly sunny reports. And, with articles like “Germany—France as Gastronomic Problem,” the journals revealed a sense of humor about the challenges of rapprochement.

Because new members of the DFG were printed in nearly every issue of the *DFR* and membership in the association included a subscription to the *Rundschau*, we have a clear sense of who received the journal. Almost 3000 readers subscribed. Some had clear professional ties to France, or, like Mayrisch Komitee member Max Clauss, demonstrated their interest in France in other ways. A stolidly middle class membership—largely lawyers, educators, doctors, and businessmen—comprised the DFG roster. Hans Manfred Bock has determined that 17.2% came from “intellectual professions” such as education, journalism, and the arts; 16.3% held administrative positions in the public sector such as law and diplomacy; and 12.8% were in business.<sup>180</sup>

Unlike the purely male domain of the Mayrisch Komitee, the broader base of the DFG incorporated women, who represented approximately one quarter of its total membership. Some, like teacher Josy Schäfer, spearheaded projects that operated under the purview of the DFG, such as Schäfer’s youth program based in Nuremberg. Similarly Hélène Leroi, a French women’s rights activist residing in Heidelberg, belonged to the DFG and also headed an exchange program. Others included women from prominent

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<sup>179</sup>PA-AA R70550 No. II Fr 124 <sup>27</sup> “Revue franco-allemande. Buts de publication.” Unsigned, undated but sent by Grautoff on 4 Jan. 1927.

<sup>180</sup>Bock, “Die Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft,” 81-82, 101.

families like Frau Maximilian von Harden, Frau von Falkenhayn, Frau Minister Koester, and Frau Else Rathenau. All told, the DFG ranked over 700 women among its 2775 total members.<sup>181</sup>

Subscribers to the *Rundschau* were scattered throughout Germany, although over half (1610) were concentrated in Berlin alone. Successful DFG branches in Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Breslau, Mannheim, and Nuremberg ensured sizeable local readerships in each of these cities. Hamburg, Cologne, and Leipzig saw more modest figures, while Munich was home to a mere 10 subscribers. Indeed, aside from Nuremberg's 57 members, Bavaria represented only a small slice of the *DFR*'s readership.<sup>182</sup> In contrast, a high concentration of readers hailed from the border regions near France. Whereas 178 subscribers (including 130 from Stuttgart) hailed from the region of Württemberg and 122 from Baden (including 77 from Mannheim), only seven came from the Palatinate and five from the Saar. These trifling figures mirrored those in the most distant reaches of Germany from France, in Upper Silesia (4), West Prussia (3), and East Prussia (4), where locals tended to fix their attention on other, nearer borders. Along the French border, many (76) even came from the various Allied occupied zones of the Rhineland—along with 21 from the recently French-occupied Ruhr. Subscribers also came from abroad,

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<sup>181</sup>I count 724 female members, as well as 83 members whose gender cannot be determined definitively because listed by last name or initials and 57 corporate/organizational memberships of schools, businesses, libraries, etc. out of a total of 2775. In addition the Privatlehrerverein of Würzburg had a group membership to the DFG. c.f. Bock, "Die Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft," 81. Bock has a slightly different total figure and ignores the question of women.

<sup>182</sup>Bavarians' relative lack of involvement in the project for cooperation with France would persist.

with 58 in France and 20 in Austria, small numbers trickling in from Switzerland to Czechoslovakia, and even one lone reader in Siam.<sup>183</sup>

The lack of a corresponding French association, the constant sore spot of both the DFG and German officialdom, has left us with little record of who specifically read the *Revue d'Allemagne*. After its first year, Lichtenberger reported that the *Revue* had approximately 300 subscribers and sent newsstands and bookstores an additional 600 copies each month to put up for sale. One thousand copies—thus 100 more than the highest possible number of paying French readers—were shipped to Germany for distribution.<sup>184</sup> Such low numbers—especially relative to the number of readers of the *Rundschau*—suggest, above all, the impact of an association on subscription levels. But they also point to a larger, longstanding pattern: a traditionally greater awareness of and appreciation for French culture among the *Bildungsbürgertum* than for German culture within educated French circles.<sup>185</sup> To be sure, the *Rundschau* only expected to have 850 subscribers by the end of its first year.<sup>186</sup> But the *Revue* continued to have fewer readers in France than did the *Rundschau* in Germany. Each journal was able to maintain a print run of around 3000. Additional copies of the *Revue* were sent to libraries throughout

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<sup>183</sup>Subscriber statistics have been compiled from lists of new members published in each issue of the *DFR*. The Berlin figure does not include another 33 readers from the Brandenburg region. The figure for the Ruhr does not include towns that fell outside the French occupation like Barmen and Elberfeld.

<sup>184</sup>PA-AA R70552. Kühn to Bassenheim (23 Nov. 1928). The numbers remained stable after June 1928, although then there were 1700 copies available for sale, see PA-AA R70552 No. A 1884 Kühn to AA (22 June 1928). Boucher (happily) reported that about 1000 copies of the *Revue* were sold each month after one year. PA-AA R70552 No. AA II Fr 4102 Abschrift from Boucher and Emile Paul to Grautoff (3 Oct. 1928), as forwarded by Grautoff to Bassenheim, Köpke, and Graf Saurma (8 Oct. 1928).

<sup>185</sup>See, for example, Kostka, *Distanz*, 5-8; Belitz, 50. Of course, there are all manner of exceptions to this pattern, most notably with music, philosophy, and science. cf. Christopher E. Forth, "Nietzsche, Decadence, and Regeneration in France, 1891-95," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54, no. 1 (Jan. 1993): 97-117.

<sup>186</sup>PA-AA R70552 No. AA II Fr 4097. Grautoff and Stern-Rubarth to Köpke (8 Oct. 1928).

Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas, sometimes unsolicited.<sup>187</sup> A German consul in Bordeaux could summon to mind only two potential readers of the *Revue d'Allemagne* in town: a professor of German literature—Robert Pitrou, who had recently contributed a short piece to the *Rundschau*—and an attorney-general at the court of appeals.<sup>188</sup> In contrast, German officials remarked upon the ubiquity of the *Revue d'Allemagne* in kiosks and bookstores in Paris, where the *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* could hardly be found and was overpriced to boot.<sup>189</sup>

The best articles (and DFG talks) not only proved informative but also, perhaps more importantly, modeled a set of conceptual tools with which to study or come to terms with the nation across the Rhine. The reviews, in this sense, criticized popular culture by setting an example of prose that was concrete and straining to be devoid of bias, that neither pandered nor condemned, that never resorted to simple Francophilia or Germanophilia, much less Francophobia or Germanophobia. Most typically, the journals relied upon plain reportage and dry analysis as a means to get at the “truth” of the other nation. Some articles more generously addressed the most positive aspects of the other culture. Two of the more subtle approaches, dismantling stereotypes and audience-flattery, deserve a closer look.

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<sup>187</sup>For the fractional list of addresses, including about 40 individuals, see PA-AA DBP 2147 No. zu B 169. Frau Bartsch to DBP (4 Oct. 1934). For a spate of letters from confused recipients of the *Revue* (some complimentary), also see PA-AA DBP 2147.

<sup>188</sup>PA-AA R70552. Grubert to AA (12 Dec. 1928).

<sup>189</sup>PA-AA R70552 No. A 1884. Kühn to AA (22 June 1928). In France, the cover price of the *Revue d'Allemagne* was 5 francs, the *DFR* 15 francs. For the French, an annual subscription to the *DFR* cost more than the most expensive French journals like the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, which came out twice per month. See PA-AA R70552 No. AA II Fr 2193. DBP to Bassenheim [unsigned, but presumably Kühn] (5 July 1929).

The overall content of the journals, Grautoff contended, served to undermine stereotypes. He explained how this strategy functioned in the *Rundschau*: “We would like to lay out the French reality against the prejudices that still persist in Germany. They say that France is a decadent country. You will see in this review examples of French idealism and heroism.” In similar fashion, he invoked articles on transportation networks and department stores that challenged the stereotype of French “incapability of being organizers” and articles on family life that countered the notion of France as “libertine.”<sup>190</sup> At the inaugural festivities for the DFG branch in Stuttgart, Henri Jourdan, soon to be named the director of the Institut Français de Berlin, deployed a similar strategy by describing the typical French woman, not as a cigarette-smoking, powdered new woman straight out of Victor Margueritte, but as “domestic, bourgeois, capable” [bürgerlich tüchtig].<sup>191</sup>

The reviews, and the DFG more generally, also tried to warm up their audience to the notion of understanding by relating how very much the other country cared about them. Most consistently, this method surfaced as listings of events devoted to the other culture. In 1931, Grautoff revealed this strategy a bit more directly in his *Franzosen Sehen Deutschland*. Here, from its first page onward, he emphasized to his German audience how very much the French were interested in Germany. This was mediation by flattery, a way to tame the idea of France and the French for German readers. These ideas echoed those articulated by the ENS student Pierre Bertaux—an avid observer of Weimar-era Berlin—in a private letter to his parents a few years earlier. According to

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<sup>190</sup>PA-AA R70552 AA II Fr 1571. Draft copy of Grautoff’s speech for the Quai d’Orsay, with the corrections of the DBP.

<sup>191</sup>“DFG: Oeffentliche Diskussionsabend und Gründungsversammlung in Stuttgart,” *Stuttgarter Neues Tageblatt* (17 Jan. 1930).

Bertaux, it was important to stroke the egos of national-thinking Germans to open them toward the French; this would serve as Bertaux's mantra over the next few years he lived on-again, off-again in Berlin.<sup>192</sup> Grautoff pursued this genre of flattering the Germans the following year in an appearance on the Berlin radio, in which he stressed the "spontaneous, voluntary tributes to the German *Geist* in the French provinces" in honor of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Goethe's death.<sup>193</sup> The French, it seems, celebrated Goethe more than any other country, and they did so without the need for prompting from either French or German officialdom. This kind of flattery, then, served as another tool with which to open skeptical readers' (and listeners') hearts and minds gradually to the nation across the Rhine. A simple willingness to engage with the other culture would help lay the groundwork for the more formidable goal of mutual understanding.

### *The Credo of Understanding*

At the center of Grautoff's edifice was the rather elusive, if encompassing notion of understanding. Understanding, both linguistically and conceptually, proved a slippery term. Activists constantly employed the word, but often in very different ways. The task of understanding also represented an enormous challenge: How could one both reach out to the other and remain rooted in the self?

The first issue of the *Rundschau* proclaimed "understanding between Germany and France" as its objective.<sup>194</sup> Elsewhere, *DFR* editor Edgar Stern-Rubarth described

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<sup>192</sup>Bertaux, 104-105.

<sup>193</sup>PA-AA R70554 No. zu II Fr 3039. "Im Goethejahr durch Frankreich von Otto Grautoff." Broadcast on 17 Aug. 1932.

<sup>194</sup>"Wille und Ziel," *DFR* 1, no.1 (1928): 2.



understanding as a process rather than as a condition or goal,<sup>195</sup> thereby implying that France and Germany had a constant task ahead of them. DFG activists regularly invoked the term “understand” in all its forms: as objective and process, as noun, adjective, and verb. Along with a sense of empathy, understanding entailed the two major components of knowing—knowing information and knowing people—a distinction we do not make in English, but learn as the difference between *savoir* and *connaître*, *wissen* and *kennen*.

If the *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* and the *Revue d'Allemagne* primarily aimed to expand knowledge about the other culture, their task was predicated upon the assumption that France and Germany were, in fact, different from one another. Contributors to the journals generally believed in national difference and celebrated these differences as virtues. In an early DFG speech in Frankfurt, Grautoff carefully emphasized the importance of being anchored in one's own nationality while having an awareness of the other culture.<sup>196</sup> Whereas nationalists typically elaborated upon national difference to impugn those who did not belong, the DFG credo—as much as there was one—suggested that national difference energized nations. The task of understanding, in fact, called for celebrating difference. Grautoff, for one, pointedly argued that his project did not entail the dissolution of difference or assimilation; he did not believe in a “Franco-German unity brew.”<sup>197</sup>

One way to picture the advantages of French and German distinctiveness was to paint their cultures as complementary. Although they were inherently different, together

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<sup>195</sup>Edgar Stern-Rubarth, “In Pertinacem,” *DFR* 1, no. 7 (1928): 582-585.

<sup>196</sup>As discussed in “Mitteilungen der Deutsch-Französischen Gesellschaft: Elie Faure in Berlin,” *DFR* 1, no. 7 (1928): 631.

<sup>197</sup>Otto Grautoff, “Gegenseitigkeit der deutsch-französischen Beziehungen,” *DFR* 3, no. 5 (1930): 381.

they created a more perfect whole. In this way, too, they balanced each other's deficiencies. Grautoff described Europe as a balancing act between the oppositional characteristics of France and Germany. The two nations' complementary natures yielded a tempered middle-ground. Accordingly, neither was satisfactory by itself and each needed the other to thrive.<sup>198</sup> Activists readily fell back upon the notion of complementarity as an explanatory device. Edmond Jaloux, an editor of the *Revue d'Allemagne*, for example, later traced his interest in literature of Germany, Russia, and Scandinavia to his origins in sunny Marseilles; as a Mediterranean type, he needed literature of the North to "complete" him.<sup>199</sup>

Others, like Henri Lichtenberger, stressed that differences between the two nations were minor, and that understanding would best be achieved by focusing on their commonalities. His philosophy is worth quoting at length:

It is in any case my profound conviction that confidence can only be reborn between France and Germany if each of the two peoples understands and admits the right of the other to exist *such as it is*, with its specific traits and its own individuality . . . . Neither the German nor the Frenchman should deny his own individuality, his national genius. The problem is not to pretend to erase the undeniable and likely irreducible innate differences but to know how to tolerate each other despite clear divergences. The problem is to sense that despite the differences that separate us, the French and the Germans are not two heterogeneous species sworn to eternal antagonism, but that there is much common ground, that the same elements mixed according to different proportions led without a doubt to differentiation, but that at the heart of the matter nothing that is German is completely foreign to the Frenchman and, in turn, nothing which is French is completely foreign to the German.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup>Grautoff, *Franzosen Sehen Deutschland*, 9-10.

<sup>199</sup>J. Kolbert, "Edmond Jaloux as a Popularizer of English Literature," *The French Review* 34, no. 5 (April 1961): 432-433.

<sup>200</sup>Henri Lichtenberger, "Psychologie du Rapprochement Franco-Allemand," *Revue d'Allemagne*, no. 23 (Sept. 1929): 782-783. This article is falsely attributed to a Henri Lohlenberg. The same article as translated by Hella Koenigsberger appears in the *DFR* 2, no.5 (1929), one of the only articles printed in both journals.

Although Lichtenberger, like Grautoff, did accept that there was such a thing as difference, he believed a surer path to understanding lay in bearing in mind the imbrication of the two cultures.

Some instead believed understanding involved a dialectical process. Paul Ravoux, a French student in Berlin, wrote in the *Revue d'Allemagne* about his frustrations at a DFG-sponsored debate, which he generally enjoyed. “This Franco-German dialogue,” he argued, “was nothing more at heart than successive accounts of two points-of-view, the French and the German. One did not see the concrete line where the two positions could meet.”<sup>201</sup> For Ravoux, understanding meant more than being informed; it necessitated give-and-take and synthesis. While Ravoux expressed one view of understanding, the DFG speakers he criticized seemed to have had another.

Thus, if activists in the DFG—even those at its helm—agreed on the importance of understanding, they did not all agree on what that meant. Generally, the DFG and Grautoff insisted upon the importance of patriotism and of maintaining one’s national identity. But, at times, articles in the two journals, talks at the DFG, and even Grautoff’s own rhetoric left that sense of cultural rootedness behind; on these occasions, the DFG resembled Viénot’s ideal of “leaving the self” more than a little. In a 1929 interview on French radio, for example, Grautoff reiterated his faith in the virtues of national difference, arguing “Germany and France do not need to disavow their originality to understand one another.” But, in his very next sentence, Grautoff switched gears. “To

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These words appear again, without attribution, in Richard Oehlert, “Frankreichwoche der Ortsgruppe Frankfurt a.M. der Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft,” *DFR* 2, no. 11 (1929): 980.

<sup>201</sup>P. Ravoux, “Un dialogue franco-allemand à Berlin,” *Revue d'Allemagne* no. 37 (Nov. 1930): 1040.

understand,” he said, “is to put oneself in the other’s place, to forget oneself, to make the jump into the unknown and isn’t that to feel the profound motives of a people in a flash of lightening.”<sup>202</sup>

It was not understanding as knowledge and education alone that mattered to the DFG. Understanding included another, less cerebral, more social component: getting to know individuals from across the Rhine. Boucher explained the need for cultural exchanges of all sorts—teachers, laborers, journalists, children. For the editor of the *Revue d’Allemagne*, “It is in multiplying points of contact that one perceives that allegedly irreducible psychological differences are reduced most often to differences without essential importance that rely more on historical and superficial conditions than on ethnic character.”<sup>203</sup> Personal contact, in other words, helped combat stereotype and essentialism.

Sociability, moreover, seemed dynamic and modern; certainly, it represented a clear rupture from the past decade of silence before Locarno. Rather than looking to dusty books or heavy theory, Gottfried Salomon of the Frankfurt DFG branch preferred an active approach to understanding at the “banal” level. For Salomon, understanding was not the stuff of books, but of conversation, not talks but movies, not articles but classes. Understanding, thus, was about movement [Verkehr] and about ordinary people. “Therefore it is a mistake,” wrote Salomon, “to expect understanding from theater or concerts, from extravagant artists and illusionary arts.”<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup>PA-AA R70552 AA II Fr. 1571 Transcript. Radio Paris. Grautoff interviewed by Hauchecorne (23 May 1929); Max Fuchs, “Bericht über die Studienfahrt der DFG,” *DFR* 2, no. 7 (1929): 586-590.

<sup>203</sup>“Deutsch-französischer Austausch. Antworten auf unsere Umfrage,” *DFR* 1, no. 6 (1928): 516-536. For Boucher’s response, see pp. 517-518.

<sup>204</sup>Gottfried Salomon, “Zur deutsch-französischen Verständigung,” *DFR* 2, no. 1 (1929): 6-9.

In light of Salomon's comment about the importance of "ordinary people," we must turn to the question, understanding for whom? The DFG was a relatively inclusive group, especially when compared to its contemporary, the Mayrisch Komitee. Unlike the Komitee, women played an important role. Women wrote for the reviews, gave public lectures, organized exchanges, held memberships, and a few even sat on the DFG board. Significantly, they were rarely singled out as a category for particular activities or statistical purposes as the DFG did by age or profession; women were simply part and parcel of the project for understanding. Salomon strongly believed that workers needed to be part of it too, and as a New Year's resolution in 1930, the *Rundschau* pledged to create worker exchanges. In his regular *Rundschau* column on the economy, however, Alexander Gutfeld argued that practically speaking, the DFG, due to its methods, goals, and bourgeois ethos, would never find broad appeal among the "proletariat."<sup>205</sup> Indeed, workers never had a palpable presence in the DFG.

The notion of understanding did not go uncontested. A tongue-in-cheek *DFR* article by one Jean R. Kuchenberg led one German newspaper to rage about to "what extremes a politics of understanding at any price can lead." The *DFR* article argued that recent French literary depictions of Germany—showing its seamy and fun-loving side whether through portraits of Berlin prostitutes or carnival in Mainz—helped overturn stereotypes of dour Prussians. In this way, writers helped the cause of rapprochement "more than all of the professors' trips." A critic from *Tag* thoroughly misinterpreted the *DFR* article as an ode to sin, and strung together a series of quotations taken out of context to create a different story about an erotic Berlin, whose "whore bars and sleazy

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<sup>205</sup>"Deutsch-Französische Neujahrswünsche," *DFR* 3, no. 1 (1930): 1-3; Alexander Gutfeld, "Sinn und Grenzen der Verständigung zwischen Nationen," *DFR* 3, no. 6 (1930): 487.

hotel districts” showed affinities with Parisian haunts. According to *Tag*, the *DFR* author maintained that a convergence in German and French morals served as a form of rapprochement “more important than all of the professors’ trips.” *Tag* responded indignantly, “We renounce [such] an understanding in a cesspool!”<sup>206</sup>

Because of the heterogeneity of the organization, activists sometimes embraced unique perspectives, in some cases, adopting a pointed stance that did not reflect the DFG perspective, in others, muddying the waters or simply digressing. At times, DFG representatives tucked their mission into a broader, inchoate vision of Western Civilization. Grautoff explained, “the two great wings of Western Civilization, the French and the German, must rise together...the harmony of their flight can alone permit a European entente.”<sup>207</sup> More specific invocations of Western Civilization, the Occident [Abendland], and even of Europe—except in the sense of a European peace—were, however, erratic at best. None of these represented the broader vision of the DFG. If individual members championed a European customs union, expressed their sympathies with the pacifist movement, or invoked a desire for an ill-defined European unity, their attitudes were emblematic of the DFG’s diverse base and democratic outlook, not indicative of a DFG stance.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>206</sup>Jean R. Kuckenburg, “Deutsch-Französische Annäherung unter dem Strich,” *DFR* 3, no. 8 (1930): 683-686; W.F., “Merkwürdige Verständigungspolitik,” *Tag* (3 Oct. 1930).

<sup>207</sup>Raymond Léonard, “Brillante réception aux Amitiés internationales en l’honneur de la Société franco-allemande,” *L’Ère nouvelle* (25 May 1929).

<sup>208</sup>Some *DFR* authors favored some sort of European unity and believed that the DFG worked toward that goal by making the two peoples increasingly intertwined. As Hans Manfred Bock has shown with the examples of Arnold Zweig and Walter Bloem, however, some came at the European idea from the pacifist left, others from the nationalist right. In other words, desires for European unity could overlap with the DFG position on understanding, but they were neither consistent nor omnipresent. On Zweig and Bloem, see Hans Manfred Bock, “Otto Grautoff et la Société Franco-Allemande de Berlin,” in *Échanges culturels*, eds. Bock and Krebs, 85-87.

While some deemed a cultural project for understanding insubstantial relative to the heavy-lifting of diplomatic summits and trade negotiations, proponents of understanding cast their work as both more permanent and more far-reaching. In this view, cultural understanding could build up into something solid and durable, whereas diplomatic relations were always contingent and susceptible to reversals. If detached from politics and allowed to adopt their own rhythm, intellectual and social relations could gain enough momentum that they would carry on regardless of the “momentary fluctuations” of diplomacy.<sup>209</sup> The “long view” of understanding—which applied equally to improving baseline knowledge and to fostering contacts—acknowledged there would be no easy victories. As one *DFR* contributor explained, “the centuries-old wall that stands between the two peoples cannot be overrun, but has to be eroded stone by stone.”<sup>210</sup> The long-lasting resolution to a longstanding problem would be slow-going.

### *Membership and Associational Life*

Although Grautoff’s original proposal only called for an association as a shell through which to raise money for his German-language review, the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft quickly developed into one of the most important components of Grautoff’s project. The Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft formally registered as an association in January 1928, the same month the *Rundschau* first appeared. According to its statutes, the association aimed to:

increase and deepen understanding for France in Germany. By taking stock of French intellectual output [Geistesguter], through profound

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<sup>209</sup>Stefan Zweig, “Nach einem Jahr,” *DFR* 2, no. 1 (1929): 1-5.

<sup>210</sup>Egon Larsen, “Das Locarno der Jugend: Aus deutsch-französischen Schülerbriefen,” *DFR* 2, no. 5 (1929): 499.

awareness of our neighbors, it wants to contribute to a détente between both countries and build bridges between France and Germany while maintaining one's own sense of nationality [Staatsgefühls]. Its goal is to join together Germans and French from all circles and areas into a working community, to serve these creative peoples of occidental Europe through the exchange of ideas.<sup>211</sup>

Basic membership, which included a subscription to the *DFR*, cost 20RM, representing a few marks off the cover price for a year. Within its first months, a branch in Vienna opened, and branches in Frankfurt, Mannheim, Cologne, Stuttgart, Breslau, and Nuremberg followed over the course of the next couple of years. In addition, a few local groups already in existence, like the year-old Deutsch-Französische Gruppe in Hamburg and Hélène Leroi's Franco-German student exchange organization (the Deutsch-Französische Schüleraustauschkomitee), begun in February 1926, joined forces with the DFG without themselves disbanding.

DFG board members hailed from a variety of backgrounds and included businessmen, writers, and politicians. Grautoff as DFG President and Stern-Rubarth as General Secretary duly noted board members' levels of involvement. Some, like Cologne mayor Konrad Adenauer, they considered "active" and Nuremberg mayor Heinrich Luppe was even "very active," whereas Gertrud Bäumer of the *Bund Neues Frauen* "never does anything" and artist Otto Dix "concerns himself with nothing." Former Education Minister Emile Honnorat, in contrast, they deemed important for exchanges. Others still seem to have been selected for their qualities as figureheads more than

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<sup>211</sup>"Mitteilungen der Deutsch-Franzoesische Gesellschaft," *DFR* 1, no. 2 (1928): 174; PA-AA R70554 Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft e.V. Satzung (12 Jan. 1928). Grautoff first registered an association under a different name in October 1926, but this, along with a committee created to help design the overall project, did not go anywhere. See Bock, "Otto Grautoff," in *Échanges culturels*, eds. Bock and Krebs, 77.



anything else, among them André Gide and Albert Einstein.<sup>212</sup> Ordinary members, as we have seen, largely hailed from the professional classes.

Grautoff sent letters to government officials and other prominent citizens to solicit new members. Appealing to the desire for peace, Grautoff suggested that the “core of the European problem” resided in French-German relations; he therefore called upon “men and women whose feelings of responsibility for Europe were toughened over the difficult years, whose youth passionately strives for long-range goals for humanity, whose opinion derives from truth without bias, whose will for a peaceful solution to European tensions is drawn from moral integrity.”<sup>213</sup> Such appeals helped launch the various DFG branches, which Grautoff created with the support of local mayors. Though initiated from Berlin, many of these branches quickly developed their own programs and contacts with France.<sup>214</sup>

Like the reviews, the association pursued rational discussion. According to Grautoff, “The association which I founded and to which I devote myself entirely is hardly composed of sentimentalists. We do not want to embrace each other, pour out our hearts, and spill tears. We want to summon up all of our intellect to understand events by researching the multiple causes and dispelling misunderstandings. Franco-German entente, if it is really to endure, must avoid the murkiness of feelings.”<sup>215</sup> This insistence

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<sup>212</sup>PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr. 3403. Präsidium DFG (8 October 1932).

<sup>213</sup>For Grautoff’s form letter to solicit members see, Stadt Karlsruhe Hauptregistratur. Deutsch-französische Gesellschaft Karlsruhe, e.V. 1929-1965. Nr. 300.208. Grautoff to Oberbürgermeister Dr. Dr. J. Finter (31 May 1929); PA-AA R70553 No. AA II Fr 3606 Grautoff to Köpke (8 Nov. 1929); PA-AA R70553 No. AA II Fr 3504 Grautoff to von Bülow (8 Nov. 1929).

<sup>214</sup>Belitz, 166-167.

<sup>215</sup>PA-AA R70552 AA II Fr. 1571 Transcript. Radio Paris. Grautoff interviewed by Hauchecorne (23 May 1929); Max Fuchs, “Bericht über die Studienfahrt der DFG,” *DFR* 2, no. 7 (1929): 586-590.

on sober analysis paralleled the comportment of the Mayrisch Komitee but would contrast strongly with another Franco-German group, the Sohlbergkreis, founded the following year (and the subject of chapter three).

Although the DFG continued to grow—with new memberships peaking in 1930—the association’s successes were never paralleled in France. Always seeking to boost Germany’s image abroad, German officials pushed hard to create a French corollary to the DFG. To this end, they invoked the notion of reciprocity, but to no avail. Grautoff likewise pressured Boucher into launching a French association, but Boucher refused because he was already overworked and believed an additional obligation would detract from his capacity to direct the *Revue*. Above all, Boucher argued that associations and clubs—though beloved in Germany—did not fit within the French national tradition. If Boucher’s argument erased a long line of French clubs and associations since the Revolution, it resonated; others would repeat this argument to justify the lack of a French association. To overcome this limitation, a representative from the German Embassy suggested founding a French corollary that adhered more closely to French traditions. In his view, ambitious and moneyed women would relish the opportunity to run such a group, presumably along the lines of a salon, though possibly more as a *société de bienfaisance*. The ideal according to this German official, then, was for a French association to provide a “decorative” function for events, not to serve as the driving force of the organization.<sup>216</sup>

To placate frustrated proponents of reciprocity, the Gesellschaft began to cite an affiliation with the *Ligue des Études Germaniques* (LEG). Like the DFG, the French LEG promoted understanding and French-German contact. *Se Connaître*, the Ligue’s

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<sup>216</sup>PA-AA R70553 No. AA II Fr. 3782. Kühn to Bassenheim (5 Dec. 1929).

bulletin, explicitly invoked the notion of understanding in its title, roughly translated as “Getting to Know Each Other.” But the Ligue was a fundamentally different organization from the DFG. Founded in the spring of 1928 as an alliance for German-language teachers in France, the Ligue sought to boost interest in learning German. German teachers had seen losses of almost 50% in their secondary school classrooms since 1913, as French students turned to English or Spanish rather than the language of the “boche.” To attract students and to hold onto their jobs, Ligue teachers explored new pedagogical strategies, promoted exchanges, and encouraged student German clubs. The Ligue—as a decentralized alliance of small groups throughout France (and French North Africa) held together largely by a 10-page bulletin—did not maintain substantive ties with the DFG. Given the autonomy of the Ligue’s own branches, its independence from the German association is not surprising. If the *Rundschau* and the *Revue* recounted the Ligue’s goings-on, such reportage was part and parcel of the reviews’ chronicling of Franco-German events. Henri Lichtenberger sat on the LEG’s honorary board, but he played a role in all French-German groups of any importance. Otherwise, the DFG-LEG connection served only as a useful source of contacts when arranging travel or exchanges.<sup>217</sup> For the DFG, association with the Ligue was largely a marriage of convenience, based on their similar age and purviews, and geared toward keeping up appearances.

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<sup>217</sup>*Se Connaitre* was first entitled *Spes*. On the LEG, see *Se Connaitre*, regular reports in the *DFR*, and Hans Manfred Bock, “Les associations de germanistes français. L’exemple de la Ligue d’études germaniques (LEG),” in *Les études germaniques (1900-1970)*, ed. Michel Espagne and Michael Werner (Paris: CNRS, 1994), 267-285; Hans Manfred Bock, “Otto Grautoff,” in *Échanges culturels*, eds. Bock and Krebs, 91-92. In his article on the LEG, Bock argues that LEG leaders in fact had fundamental philosophical differences with the DFG.

If the *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* and the *Revue d'Allemagne* aimed to expand knowledge, the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft centered on the notion of understanding as embodied in face-to-face contact. To this end, the DFG arranged trips, exchange programs, talks, and miscellaneous events. These activities helped establish personal contacts and set in place organizational structures that proponents of cooperation would turn to in the decades to come.

On the first DFG trip to France in 1929—a whirlwind week-long tour through Paris and its environs—the 33 Germans squeezed in as many destinations and meetings as they could to ensure they would come away with the most thorough overview of contemporary France possible. On Monday, for example, they went to the Montmartre Cemetery, visited the Chamber of Deputies, took a boat ride down the Seine, toured the Sèvres porcelain factory, and enjoyed an evening reception at city hall. They later toured newspapers and factories in addition to attending receptions at the German Embassy and the Quai d'Orsay. Remarkably similar trips to Paris became an annual event for the DFG; the DFG also lent a hand to the Ligue as it planned its annual German tour, alternately to Berlin or throughout Germany.

From their first tour, the DFG visitors not only played the role of observers—as they did at a Paneuropa Union meeting—but also actively took part in political (and politicized) ceremonies that catered to both the French and German publics. The press in both countries was particularly taken with what it variously described as a symbolic hug or kiss of reconciliation between Grautoff and Colonel Yves Picot of the disabled veterans' organization *Gueules Cassées* at a function hosted by the group *Amitiés*

*Internationales*.<sup>218</sup> The following day, Grautoff led his group in a wreath-laying ceremony at the graves of German soldiers at Bagneux. As he laid the black, red, and gold wreath, Grautoff reminded the travelers of their duty to future peace: “The sacrifice they made for us should unite us in an oath to exert all of our strength toward an ethic of peace, so that the notion of international reconciliation [Volkerversöhnung] will be set in stone for the coming generations.”<sup>219</sup> The German ceremony at Bagneux, on the heels of the embrace between the French veterans’ leader and the former German propagandist, was a step toward the joint Franco-German commemorations that would take hold in the 1930s and most famously resume in 1984 with the embrace of Helmut Kohl and François Mitterand at Verdun.

In addition to arranging such study-trips for adults, the DFG facilitated programs for youth, who could carry on the message of cooperation to future generations. On occasion, the DFG helped match families with student au-pairs or helped place children in summer camps.<sup>220</sup> More centrally, the DFG coordinated a pen pal program and student exchanges.

The *Zentralstelle für Schülerbriefwechsel*, led by Dr. Max Bäcker, paired up 1000 pen pals in its first six months; in its first five years, it laid claim to matching 15,000.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>218</sup>H.S., “Pour l’amitié franco-allemande” *L’Oeuvre* (25 May 1929); “Die DFG in Paris.” Unsigned, *Neue Pariser Zeitung* (1 June 1929); Casarguene, “Die Besuchsreise der DFG” *Pariser Journal* (1 June 1929). The following year, the DFG took an almost identical trip. See PA-AA R70553 Program. “Osterreise der DFG 16.-26 April” 1930.

<sup>219</sup>Max Fuchs, “Bericht über die Studienfahrt der Deutsch-Französischen Gesellschaft,” *DFR* 2, no. 7 (1929): 586-590.

<sup>220</sup>On au pairs, see occasional ads in the reviews. On camps, see for example, PA-AA R70552 No. AA II Fr 2151 DFG to Köpke and Bülow (3 July 1929).

<sup>221</sup>PA-AA R70552 No. AA II Fr 2151. DFG to Köpke, Bülow (3 July 1929); PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr. 4229 Zusammenfassender Bericht von 1932, Grautoff to Köpke (20 Dec. 1932).

Supported in part by the Prussian Ministry for Art, Science, and Education and the French Ministry for Public Instruction,<sup>222</sup> Bäcker's center had an educational mission but was also anchored to the traditions of the international pacifist movement and more recent international initiatives like the League of Nations.<sup>223</sup> Such international (and even internationalist) antecedents notwithstanding, the DFG aligned its youth programs with its overarching agenda by emphasizing the apolitical pursuit of knowledge and understanding under a mantle of patriotism. "From letter to letter," Grautoff explained, "the correspondents understand each other better, and soon—with the girls faster, the boys somewhat slower—they are on the best and most cordial, comradely terms; even invitations for vacations are earnestly proposed. There is nothing to read about politics in the letters; nowhere are any of the customary national prejudices to be found. But with every opportunity they show pride in the homeland and seek to give their friend an idea of the cultural level of the fatherland with as impressive facts as possible."<sup>224</sup>

The DFG also took on the more ambitious task of student exchanges through two offices, the *Mittelstelle für Schüleraustausch* aimed at schoolchildren, and the *Mittelstelle für Studentenaustausch*, geared toward college students. Both offices had started independently—the effort for schoolchildren by Hélène Leroi in Heidelberg, the effort for college students by Josy Schäfer in Nuremberg—but then became part of the DFG enterprise. If the numbers of students sent on exchanges and homestays appears slight by today's standards, the total was impressive in the interwar context, in which hardly anyone crossed the Rhine to study, certainly not as part of an organized group. Aspiring

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<sup>222</sup>PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr. 4229 Grautoff to Köpke (20 Dec. 1932).

<sup>223</sup>Max Bäcker, "Der internationale Schülerbriefwechsel (Zur Konferenz des Institut de Coopération Intellectuelle in Paris am 27. und 28. Mai 1929)," *DFR* 2, no. 7 (1929): 590-594.

<sup>224</sup>Otto Grautoff, *Franzosen Sehen Deutschland*, 21-22.

Germanist Pierre Bertaux was widely pegged in 1928—as well as years later—to have been the first French university student in Berlin since the war. And though he occasionally encountered a French student in Berlin and knew of others before him, Bertaux himself slipped into the habit of naming himself the first.<sup>225</sup> There were not enough others to dispute the claim. Each year, the DFG helped send a few hundred youth abroad, which vastly increased the opportunities for young people to meet and befriend *boches* or *Erbfeinde*. Such exchanges, which the Mayrisch Komitee supported but neither developed nor participated in, would help set into motion a rising tide of French-German exchange. No longer would a French student in Berlin prove such a spectacle. At the end of 1932, Grautoff reported that the *Mittelstellen* had facilitated 1225 exchanges for schoolchildren and several hundred for college students under the DFG aegis.<sup>226</sup>

But even among those French and Germans who supported the quest for understanding, the benefits of cultural exchange were not a given. In 1918, the head of the French organization devoted to academic exchanges proclaimed the “moral impossibility” of sending students to Germany.<sup>227</sup> Ten years later, in a *DFR* survey in which most extolled the virtues of exchange, some still urged caution. A number of government officials in both France and Germany deemed the issue of cultural exchange so controversial that they refused to contribute a public statement; the French Embassy counseled the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister to avoid the survey, just as a representative of the German Foreign Office advised a secretary of state for the

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<sup>225</sup>See Brigitte B. Fischer, *My European Heritage: Life among Great Men of Letters*, trans. Harry Zohn (Boston: Branden, 1986) and Bertaux, 22.

<sup>226</sup>PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr. 4229 “Zusammenfassender Bericht von 1932” Grautoff to Köpke (20 Dec. 1932).

<sup>227</sup>Charles Petit-Dutaillis as quoted in Chapoutot, 22.

Chancellery to do the same.<sup>228</sup> For educator L. Rivaud, the memory of war left his countrymen with such bitterness that he felt it would be dangerous to bring large numbers of Germans into France: “Today’s attempts to produce ‘rapprochement’ gradually, though supported by the entire French government with the utmost energy and tenacity,” he argued, “dog the masses with mixed feelings: hope and also mistrust.” In Rivaud’s mind, “the beginnings of a future Franco-German friendship should stay small and barely noticeable; mass undertakings would provoke a stir and mistrust . . . Too much haste and go-ahead spirit would perhaps have a bad effect.” Paul Dubray, one of the DFG’s earliest members, believed exchanges needed to be tightly controlled because few could be trusted to take on the task diplomatically: journalists, with their prejudices, would be hopeless and those “very young [and] inexperienced” “would damage more than be of use.”<sup>229</sup> Some Germans likewise opposed exchanges and urged disengagement with the French altogether until a resolution in the Rhineland; they believed that exchanges, even cultural, acted as an implicit acceptance of an unacceptable occupation.<sup>230</sup>

Lectures by experts from across the Rhine became a mainstay of DFG life, particularly in Berlin, but had likewise proved controversial. This genre of intellectual relations only resumed in the mid-1920s, and even then led to vigorous nationalist opposition, especially in Paris. In early 1926, *Action Française* members provoked a skirmish at a Paris talk by Elisabeth Rotten of the German branch of the League of Human Rights; subsequent talks by Alfred Kerr, Thomas Mann, and Hermann Keyserling

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<sup>228</sup>PA-AA R70551 No. zu II Fr 1224 Bassenheim to Hagemann (1 May 1928).

<sup>229</sup>“Deutsch-Französischer Austausch. Antworten auf unsere Umfrage” *DFR* 1, no. 6 (1928): 516-536. For Rivaud’s response, see pp. 520-522; for Dubray’s response, see pp. 518-519.

<sup>230</sup>“Deutsch-Französischer Austausch,” *DFR* 1, no. 7 (1928): 605-611, see especially, 610-611.



were hardly publicized out of fear of further violence. Edouard Herriot himself admitted that the potential threat of the reactionary league the *Camelots du Roi*, a youth organization affiliated with the *Action française*, hindered efforts for intellectual rapprochement in Paris.<sup>231</sup> German officials echoed such pessimism. According to Ambassador Leopold von Hoesch, though “intellectual cooperation” provided a popular catchphrase since the war, and many claimed to work in its name, it was in reality not widespread. He posited that the French tended to spurn German culture, with the exception of Goethe, Heine and music—but, he added slyly, in the cases of the composers, the French “stamped them as Austrian to make them more palatable.”<sup>232</sup>

Lectures sponsored by the DFG thus underscored its willingness to face opposition, its commitment to represent authentic contemporary voices to the public, and its characteristic independence from officialdom. Its first talks—a lecture tour on Napoleon by French writer Elie Faure—made clear that DFG events would not all be adulation and smooth talk. If Faure’s first speech in Berlin’s Herrenhaus on the topic of “Napoleon and a New World” brought the over 800 in attendance to applause, a subsequent talk in Marburg, in which Faure argued that Germany owed its idea of unity to the French Emperor, was met with less enthusiasm (though the audience still appreciated his “warmth” toward Germany).<sup>233</sup> Talks occasionally not only failed to charm audiences, but also displeased authorities. A 1930 DFG talk by Henri Torrès, an

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<sup>231</sup>PA-AA DBP 542b No. 913. Telegram from Hoesch to AA (20 August 1927).

<sup>232</sup>PA-AA DBP 542b No. 353. “‘Geistige Zusammenarbeit’ Alfred Kerr und Thomas Mann in Paris” signed Hoesch. (6 Feb. 1926); PA-AA DBP 542b No. A555. “Geistige Zusammenarbeit zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich” Hoesch to AA (15 Feb. 1927).

<sup>233</sup>“Mitteilungen der Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft: Elie Faure in Berlin,” *DFR* 1, no. 7 (1928): 631-633.

editor and more importantly a socialist lawyer known for defending Communists, went forward without the imprimatur of Foreign Minister Julius Curtius.<sup>234</sup> Public talks, debates, and conferences remained a regular feature of DFG life, with hundreds, sometimes over a thousand in attendance; in 1932 Berlin alone, the DFG held about 30 public lectures.<sup>235</sup>

Additional activities, like concerts, teas, soirées, an annual charity ball, and bimonthly French-German lunches in Berlin likewise brought together those interested in mutual understanding; they often involved notable guest speakers or performers. The DFG screened movies as well, although Grautoff's ambition on this front was thwarted by his overreach. On a personal level, Grautoff frowned upon the cinema. His daughter, film actress Christiane Grautoff, later described her father as having nothing about him of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—he only bothered with the cinema when it served the cause of the DFG.<sup>236</sup> In this case, movies could help shed light on French culture to German audiences, attract new blood to the DFG, and provide a convenient way to make money for the financially-straitened organization. Grautoff thus dreamed up a DFG house, complete with movie theater, as a new meeting place for the association, a venue for French events in Berlin, and a public home for his private library of several thousand books, periodicals, and art slides. French officials, who had in mind an institute that would demonstrate German commitment to a politics of understanding, were

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<sup>234</sup>PA-AA R70552 No. AA II Fr 3914. Grautoff to Curtius (18 Dec. 1929); PA-AA R70552. Note signed Bassenheim (29 Dec. 1929).

<sup>235</sup>PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr. 4229 "Zusammenfassender Bericht von 1932" Grautoff to Köpke (20 Dec. 1932). Also see event listings in each month's *DFR*.

<sup>236</sup>See Christiane Grautoff's memoirs, published as Fuld and Ostmaier, ed. *Die Göttin und Ihr Sozialist*, 27.

supportive.<sup>237</sup> Yet due to the group's budgetary woes as well as to Grautoff's typically inappropriate way of asking his Foreign Ministry for aid, his movie theater was never erected, and the DFG house, too, remained a pipedream.<sup>238</sup>

Although the DFG fixed its gaze upon the present, Grautoff was well aware of the degree to which memory shaped the contemporary world. Therefore, in addition to his work illuminating the past in articles in the *Rundschau* and the *Revue* and talks given at the various DFG branches, Grautoff staged two interventions geared toward transforming collective memory. In the first instance, Grautoff targeted youth, the key to a future peace; in the second, he addressed the culture of memorialization.

First, Grautoff sought to break the pattern of indoctrinating French youth with Germanophobia. Like many (pacifist-leaning) teachers in France, Grautoff hoped a new narrative of European history—one that refused to perpetuate nationalist clichés or glorify war—could lay the basis for a future peace. In the interest of preventing another war, French schoolteachers had recently launched what Mona Siegel has called “nothing less than a textbook war” against the use of rabidly nationalist books in the public schools. Although German teachers were slow to enlist in this battle—joint French-German efforts to revise textbooks began so late that the Nazi takeover put them on hold before they had even gotten off the ground—Grautoff, in his own way, joined the French teachers' crusade. In 1930, once the most egregiously offensive textbooks had been

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<sup>237</sup>PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr 3039 Aufzeichnung über die DFG. Grautoff to Köpke (7 Sept. 1932).

<sup>238</sup>Inappropriate in this case, by making it clear that the DFG house would also serve as a residence for his family. Grautoff was well-known in the German Foreign Office and German Embassy circles as being “tactless.” Another incident, retold at length by Béatrice Pellissier, involved Grautoff sending a telegram to Gustav Stresemann at home late at night and awakening the whole Stresemann family. In that case, too, Grautoff was aiming to gain the financial support of the Foreign Office. See Pellissier, 28-30. For the fatal telegram, sent at 10:15 PM, see PA-AA R70551 Unsigned Telegram to Stresemann (1 June 1927).

amended or excised from public school classrooms across France, but before bilateral reforms were under discussion, Grautoff came upon what he deemed an offensive and “embarrassing” history text used in French Catholic schools. He therefore issued a direct plea to the author, a professor at the University of Besançon and the editor-in-chief of the Catholic daily *La Croix*, to purge references to blind German aggression and German crimes in the Great War from future editions. Criticizing the historian’s means of instilling patriotism, Grautoff contended, “If it is a question of teaching your children love for France, I admit that I do not see the necessity to inculcate them with hatred of Germany in the same stroke.” Grautoff, moreover, appealed to the author as a Catholic, presumably more interested in fostering peace than stirring up hatred. Finally, Grautoff wrote the historian that “it serves nothing to be hypnotized by the past;” what is essential is to prepare a path to a harmonious future. Surprisingly, the historian was persuaded.<sup>239</sup> Yet Grautoff’s remarkable victory proved his only entrée into the battle of the books. If French terrain had by and large been freed of these so-called “bellicose” books, Grautoff never steered the fight to his own homefront.

In another albeit less successful intervention, Grautoff addressed overt nationalist symbolism in the landscape. Specifically, Grautoff discovered the series of anti-German plaques and memorials at the forest of Compiègne, where the Armistice had been signed. The most egregious read, “Here succumbed on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 1918 the criminal

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<sup>239</sup>PA-AA R70553. Correspondence between Grautoff and Jean Giraud, March/April 1930. Giraud notes, in addition to his appreciation for Grautoff’s arguments, his recent attendance at a Franco-German Conference for Catholics that helped him revise his attitude toward Germany. An excerpt of Giraud’s reply was reprinted in the *DFR* as “J. Guiraud über seine Histoire de France,” *DFR* 3, no. 6 (1930): 488. Hermann Hagspiel has argued that Marc Sangnier’s 1926 meeting at Bierville marked a turning-point in *La Croix*’s anti-German stance, see Hagspiel, 367-368. This may be the case, but Giraud’s offending volume was the 1928 edition. On the re-writing of French textbooks more generally (though not specifically on Grautoff or Giraud), see Siegel, especially chapter four.

pride of the German Empire, vanquished by the free peoples whom it wished to subjugate.”<sup>240</sup> Grautoff worked to change the wording as a way to begin cleansing the official record—this was, after all, a state-administered site—of a Germanophobia that defied his efforts for understanding. The promise of Locarno (and the potential of his own project) could never be realized in the face of such flagrant violations of its spirit. And the public, accosted by such visible reminders of mutual animosity, would never bow to Locarno’s mandate. Ultimately, Grautoff’s object in Compiègne was not realized until 1940 when the offending memorial was removed in quite a different spirit by his countrymen.

### *Unfettered but Bound*

There was ambivalence on the part of both the French and German administrations toward the DFG and its reviews. Though neither administration controlled the organization, both sought to influence it. On the one hand, officials did so in a positive sense by helping fund the project; on the other hand, they constantly meddled in small affairs to sort out issues of reciprocity. Government officials also worried about the journals’ content and wanted to use the journals for their own ends. From the DFG perspective, while it refrained from pursuing one nation’s cultural agenda, still, it relied on both governments. It thus maintained a complicated relationship with officialdom and with the notion of propaganda.

The German Foreign Ministry, like the French Foreign Ministry, helped subsidize both reviews to varying degrees. Grautoff, whether due to incredible foresight or to serial

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<sup>240</sup>PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr 3492. Correspondence between Grautoff and von Blücher (22 and 23 Dec. 1930).

bungling, managed to play the two foreign ministries off each other to gain the support of each, especially by appealing to reciprocity. He let drop to German officials various numbers under discussion with the French as if they were guaranteed subsidies and vice-versa. Officials on both sides of the Rhine had a hard time deciding if this was a deliberate (often successful) strategy to up the ante, or more likely, symptomatic of Grautoff's lack of subtlety. The editors of the *Revue d'Allemagne* determined that "without the principle of reciprocity [their] work would be impossible," and the *Rundschau* editors agreed.<sup>241</sup>

Although the journals remained a private enterprise, they were often assumed to be propaganda. If it is unlikely that subscribers believed this to be the case, it is clear that employees of the German Foreign Office were at odds over the journals' status. Although the German Foreign Office expressed support for the *Rundschau*, notably by extending a greeting from Stresemann to readers in the first issue, officials in the Foreign Office's press bureau considered the *DFR* a form of "foreign propaganda in Germany." Tolerated as a necessary corollary to the *Revue d'Allemagne*, the *Rundschau*, according to such officials, would nonetheless be foolish to underwrite.<sup>242</sup> Legation Councilor Bülow rushed to correct the misguided press bureau; instead of each journal operating as one-sided propaganda, he explained, they worked together for "understanding and rapprochement."<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>241</sup>PA-AA R70552 No. AA II Fr 4097. Grautoff and Stern-Rubarth to Köpke (8 Oct. 1928).

<sup>242</sup>See, for example, PA-AA R70551 Aufzeichnung signed Bassenheim, (14 June 1927). Not surprisingly, the Press Bureau also believed the DFG operated as French propaganda. See PA-AA R70552 Bassenheim to Kühn (28 Dec. 1928).

<sup>243</sup>PA-AA R70551 No. zu AA II Fr. 360 Anlage. AA/Presseabteilung to Abt. II Fr. (23 Feb. 1928); Bülow to Abt. I (3 April 1928).

Suspensions of propaganda extended beyond the confines of the Berlin office. A German consular official in Antwerp bemoaned the fact that such “otherwise excellent” German propaganda as the *Revue d’Allemagne* appeared in French, a language which would alienate the local Flemish population; marginalia on this letter indicate the Foreign Ministry’s impatience with this point-of-view, presumably in part because even its own employees fell back on this interpretation of the *Revue d’Allemagne*.<sup>244</sup> A German consul in Bordeaux warned that there was such a thing as too much propaganda. “In view of the political attitude of local educated circles, who stand under the intellectual influence of the nothing less than German-friendly press,” he argued, “German propaganda efforts should only proceed here with great caution because each step that is recognized as an attempt at publicizing [Werbetätigkeit] or could be meant as such will be met with mistrust and opposition.”<sup>245</sup>

For some in the German Foreign Ministry even the *Revue d’Allemagne* caused concerns. Their fear of the *Revue* turning into an instrument of French propaganda so persisted that even after it agreed to help fund the journal, some wary officials insisted on monthly installment payments rather than an annual contribution.<sup>246</sup> In this way, the Foreign Office could exert tighter control, not in the form of direct censorship, but through the potential to withhold funds.

On occasion, Grautoff used such suspicions to his advantage; they proved especially helpful in alternately gaining support from the two Foreign Ministries. A fundraising advantage lay in the fact that the *DFR* could be touted as French cultural

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<sup>244</sup>PA-AA R70552. Hellwig to AA (25 June 1928).

<sup>245</sup>PA-AA R70552. Grubert to AA (12 Dec. 1928).

<sup>246</sup>PA-AA R70550 Letter from L.R. Graf Bassenheim to DBP (14 March 1927).

propaganda—just as the *Revue d'Allemagne* could be hyped as German cultural propaganda. When trying to win Stresemann over to his budding project, for example, Grautoff described the *Revue d'Allemagne* as German cultural propaganda that even the French advocated: “In the history of Franco-German relations,” he explained, “it is the first time that official France financially and morally supports a magazine that ultimately serves as German cultural propaganda.”<sup>247</sup> Rarer still, Grautoff—or even one of the foreign ministries—tried to court certain wealthy potential patrons by trumpeting one of the journals as propaganda in service of the nation; this rather misleading route implied that understanding only served as the ostensible purpose of the organization.

These (often contradictory) accusations of government propagandizing aside, the DFG and its journals sometimes took steps that seriously conflicted with official positions. Otto Grautoff was particularly prone to gaffes, as everyone he met seemed to note. But more serious infractions revolved around activists who publicly took a stand on hot-button political issues like reparations or the Saar. Yet neither the journals nor DFG talks remained entirely devoid of politically contentious issues. In Paris, Grautoff gave a speech (excerpted in the *Rundschau*), in which he argued that the French needed to give up their pretensions to the Saar and revise their stance on the Polish corridor.<sup>248</sup> Grautoff took a strong position, but it was the German position, and German officials did not

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<sup>247</sup>PA-AA R70550 No. AA II Fr 124 <sup>27</sup> Grautoff to Stresemann (4 Jan. 1927). Otto Abetz later made the same argument to the German Foreign Ministry about the *Deutsch-Französische Monatshefte* and his mid-1930s association also known as the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft. See chapter four.

<sup>248</sup> Alfred Schirmer, “Die Osterreise der Deutsch-Französischen Gesellschaft nach Paris,” *DFR* 3, no. 6 (1930): 502.



complain. Edgar Stern-Rubarth wrote of the “disastrous effect” of the Rhineland occupation, by no means a neutral position, without comment from officialdom.<sup>249</sup>

In general, the DFG and its journals exercised great liberties to say and do as they wished. When given the chance, however, the German Foreign Office tried to preempt or soften Grautoff’s frequent gaffes. In a draft of his Hôtel de Ville speech to be given during the DFG’s first group trip to Paris, for example, Grautoff concluded with the wish that the French community in Berlin would grow, and asserted with an authority he did not wield, “Send us many of your co-citizens.” The Foreign Office suggested he supply a different context to his invitation; rather than welcome the French as immigrants, welcome them as travelers.<sup>250</sup>

Grautoff wanted to serve his country well (and, to be sure he relied on government funding); this translated into regular attempts to cozy up to German authorities or seek their approval. Grautoff, for example, submitted the draft of his Hôtel de Ville speech for approval without having been asked to do so. A more troubling incident helps shed light on Grautoff’s eagerness to serve his government, even at the risk of impinging upon his organization’s transnational mission and independence. In the fall of 1930, Grautoff forwarded to the German Foreign Ministry a private letter from Boucher that denounced the Nazis as thugs.<sup>251</sup> He tattled on his counterpart at the *Revue d’Allemagne* and thus acted, unbidden, as an informant to the German authorities more than two years before Hitler’s takeover. Grautoff’s loyalties, then, lay more with the

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<sup>249</sup>Edgar Stern-Rubarth, “Chronik: Locarno-quand même!” *DFR* 2, no. 1 (1929): 48.

<sup>250</sup>PA-AA R70552 No. AA II Fr 1571. Draft copy of Grautoff speech, with corrections of DBP; Kühn to Bassenheim (10 May 1929).

<sup>251</sup>PA-AA R70553 No. e.o. AA II Fr 3029 Abschrift from von Blücher to Grautoff (8 Nov. 1930).

German state than with his French colleague. This was, in other words, a firm expression of the DFG credo that it served the interests of Germany without partisanship. Here was a testament to Grautoff's status as an upstanding German citizen precisely *because* he worked together with the French.

### *The End of Locarno?*

By 1930, the DFG was well-established, playing host to a constant stream of events and harboring a strong core of activists; indeed, three new branches were created in that year, and new subscriptions to the *DFR* poured in during the early months of 1930 at record pace.<sup>252</sup> This stability and growth peaked *after* what Hermann Hagspiel termed the major ruptures that brought *Verständigungspolitik* to its end: 1929 when the death of Stresemann, the depression, resurgent nationalism, and increased French intransigence in the Rhineland together signaled the end of an era. The DFG's moment of triumph—when more new members than ever staked an interest in the project for understanding and the number of French-German events multiplied—took place, moreover, when the Locarno Era, according to Franz Knipping, was entering its penultimate stage of collapse.<sup>253</sup> Evidently, while the death knells of Locarno were tolling, there was still a ready market for its message.

In the midst of DFG successes and rising political tensions, the German Foreign Office once again acknowledged the organization's importance. For a skeptic in the Press Bureau, the strengthening of the DFG meant the need was all the more pressing to create

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<sup>252</sup>PA-AA R70553 No. zu AA II Fr 1394. Notes to meeting of Köpke, Terdenge, von Blücher, von Plessen, Dr. Norden, and Grautoff (23 June 1930).

<sup>253</sup>On the end of Locarno, see Hagspiel, 4-5. The DFG's zenith occurred during Knipping's third and fourth stages (of five) of Locarno's process of passing away, see Knipping, especially pages 221-222.

a French corollary to advocate for Germany. A powerful DFG, without a French counterweight to balance it, was dangerous. Others in the Foreign Ministry argued, however, that in the face of mounting nationalist opposition to France, a strong DFG was needed more than ever.<sup>254</sup>

It was precisely at this point, when the base of the DFG was rapidly expanding and the political situation was deteriorating, that the organization began to face unusually severe fiscal problems. The DFG had never performed well financially; indeed, the *DFR* had itself been 30,000 Marks in debt in 1929. For the *Rundschau* in particular, such financial difficulties had been the rule rather than the exception. By the end of its first year of operation, both allies and rivals expressed concerns about the financial stability of the *DFR*. Boucher, whose *Revue* had firmer financial footing, sent regular missives to Grautoff to check on the *Rundschau*'s future solvency; the end of the *Rundschau* would bode badly for his own enterprise. Boucher's concerns were shared by some at the German Foreign Office. In fact, some officials suggested that the *Rundschau* would be better off in the hands of the rival Mayrisch Komitee, whose deeper pockets could resuscitate it. Although such a proposal was never realized, and the Mayrisch Komitee still disapproved of Grautoff, the Komitee did, in a goodwill gesture, give a token donation to the DFG at the end of its first year.<sup>255</sup> Several wealthy businessmen also stepped in to cover the *Rundschau*'s debts.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>254</sup>PA-AA R70553 No. II Fr 3782 Bassenheim to Kühn (29 March 1930); PA-AA R70553 No. e.o. II Fr. 2986 Circular to Köpke, Gesandten Meyer, Konsul Eckel, (4 Nov. 1930).

<sup>255</sup>PA-AA R70552 No. AA II Fr 4640. Gutmann to von Bülow (22 Nov. 1928); PA-AA R70552 No. AA II Fr 4824 Köpke to Goldschmidt (6 Dec. 1928). See also an earlier draft of this letter that reported an unconfirmed rumor about 2,000 Marks.

<sup>256</sup>On early financial troubles, see the extensive reports, proposals, and correspondence from the fall/winter of 1928 in PA-AA R70552.

The economic crisis hit the DFG and its reviews hard; no longer could it count on official subsidies and generous private donations to sustain it. In light of broad-spectrum budget cuts, both the French and German Foreign Ministries slashed their subsidies to the organization, though, significantly, neither ceased sending aid altogether. The economic crisis also meant that some members lagged in paying dues and that most large donors decreased their contributions dramatically for the following year (1931). Walther Rothschild, DFG treasurer and publisher of the *Rundschau* as well as publisher of an array of trade magazines, more than once covered publishing costs from his own pocket and in 1931 cancelled 18,000 Marks of *DFR* debt altogether.<sup>257</sup> Grautoff and his wife Erna would later devote much of their personal savings to keeping the entire organization afloat.

In 1930, when budgetary problems began to jeopardize the DFG, another, more insidious force began to rear its head. Intermittently, the DFG's political—and at times barely political—views came under fire from German officialdom. Criticisms from the administration made clear that, at least for the German Foreign Ministry's French department, the end of Locarno had arrived. Even the splash of blue, white, and red in the corner of a DFG poster proved controversial in 1930 Germany.<sup>258</sup> Grautoff could only describe his work at this point, as “an exhausting back-and-forth between disappointments and hopes.”<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>257</sup>On problems with membership dues and Rothschild's generosity, see PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr 470. Grautoff to Koepke (11 Feb. 1931). On big donations, compare “Spenden 1930” to “Spenden 1931” PA-AA R70554 zu II Fr 1656.

<sup>258</sup>PA-AA R70553 No. e.o. II Fr. 3077 Circular to Köpke, Dirigenten von Friedberg, Gesandten Meyer, Konsul Eckel (13 Nov. 1930).

<sup>259</sup>PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr. 1003. Grautoff to Langwerth von Simmern, (26 March 1931).

A 1930 *DFR* article on the evacuation of the Rhineland led to a firm dressing down of Grautoff by the German Foreign Office, which deemed his criticism “inappropriate.”<sup>260</sup> Although the journal’s mission explicitly revolved around informing readers about contemporary France and Franco-German relations, the German Foreign Office had resolved from the outset that its support for the journal was conditional upon its avoidance of contemporary bones of contention, notably the issues of war guilt and the occupied Rhineland.<sup>261</sup> Grautoff not only broached the controversial subject, but he also implied that Germans should thank the French for withdrawing from the Rhineland earlier than expected. The German Foreign Office took the time to compile ten pages worth of crib sheets and talking points—including a lengthy list of grievances against the French in the Rhineland—for an official meeting with Grautoff, in which ministry officials would try to convince him of the *DFR*’s misguided assessment of French actions in the Rhineland.<sup>262</sup> If the German Foreign Office also threatened to suspend financial support to the *DFR* as a consequence of this article, the newspaper *Tag* presented its harsh assessment to the public. “If both peoples should reach out their hands in reconciliation, one should not forget how each faces the other enormously differently. France, conscious of its victory, proud of [its] acquired supremacy, with all possibilities for expansion fitting a free, armed [wehrhaft] people. In contrast, impoverished Germany,

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<sup>260</sup>See series of internal reports and letters within the German Foreign Office from 14 October to 28 November 1930 in PA-AA R70553.

<sup>261</sup>PA-AA R70550. Aufzeichnung signed Köpke (13 Jan. 1927).

<sup>262</sup>PA-AA R 70553 No. zu II Fr 2828 “Zu der Frage einer Geste an die Afresse [sic] Frankreichs aus Anlass der Rheinlandräumung,” (12 Oct. 1930); Aufzeichnung für die Besprechung mit Dr. Grautoff betr. Flugpläne im besetzten Gebiet. (13 Oct. 1930); “Stichwörter für die Unterredung mit Herrn Grautoff,” Forster to Votr. Legationsrat von Blücher, undated. Grautoff took responsibility for the article, but made sure to note Edgar Stern-Rubarth, who had close ties to the Foreign Office, had edited it. The offending article appeared as Otto Grautoff, “Chronik: Nach der Rheinlandräumung,” *DFR* 3, no. 8 (1930): 657-661.

without weapons, dismembered, a people without colonies, a people whose children still in later generations will bear the burden of tribute . . . . In a word, if we have equal rights with other peoples, only then will the moment have arrived when thoughts of understanding can really grow effectively.”<sup>263</sup>

Grautoff’s response to Ministry criticism was to ask for more guidelines from that office. In fact, he chastised the Foreign Office for having left his organization, once in place, largely to its own devices. Through the turmoil of the late Weimar years, the DFG would seek to please the successive German administrations. Certainly neither the *Rundschau* nor the *Revue d’Allemagne* articles always conformed with official policy; indeed, both reviews maintained their diversity of perspectives throughout their existence, and as Beatrice Pellissier has pointed out the *Revue d’Allemagne* even increased its coverage of politics after 1930.<sup>264</sup> Nonetheless, Grautoff went out of his way to ask the Foreign Ministry for guidelines repeatedly without prompting from on high. Due to “changed political conditions,” in September 1932, he even requested guidelines for the DFG’s winter series of talks from Franz von Papen’s government, though that administration leaned significantly to the right of Grautoff’s usual Center sensibilities.<sup>265</sup>

Political and economic conflicts became intertwined. In 1931, the DFG faced increasing financial troubles as official support dwindled. The amount of government subsidies was constantly in question and often arrived months later than promised despite repeated pledges that the DFG and its reviews served the interests of the state. In the summer of 1931, the German Embassy in Paris begged off from hosting its usual

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<sup>263</sup>W.F., “Merkwürdige Verständigungspolitik,” *Tag* (3 Oct. 1930).

<sup>264</sup>Pellissier, 616-617.

<sup>265</sup>PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr 3039. Aufzeichnung über die DFG. Grautoff to Köpke (7 Sept. 1932).

reception for visiting DFG members, and French officials, too, declined to participate, as if, one newspaper remarked, “they no longer considered a reception for an association for Franco-German understanding opportune.”<sup>266</sup> Nonetheless, the German Embassy continued to stress the importance of sustaining the *Revue d’Allemagne*, so that intellectuals would not interpret its failure as a “disquieting symptom” of a sharp turn in foreign policy.<sup>267</sup>

While the German Foreign Office was encouraging potential patrons to donate to the DFG or lend their names to its leadership to promote its standing, and while Grautoff was scrambling to reorganize the structure of his venture altogether,<sup>268</sup> the association’s financial situation worsened. Grautoff complained that, whereas his journal hardly received any money from the Quai d’Orsay, Boucher’s *Revue* received substantial support from the German Foreign Ministry. He therefore told German officials they needed either to convince the Quai to increase French aid to the *Rundschau*, or to take some of their own funds away from Boucher to help the *Rundschau*.<sup>269</sup> In Grautoff’s myopic view, financial exigency entitled him to attempt to save his own journal at the risk of undercutting both.

Erna Grautoff took a more sympathetic, if melodramatic approach on behalf of the organization. In desperation, she begged the Foreign Office to help sustain the DFG.

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<sup>266</sup>“Stimmungsumschwung in Paris” *12 Uhr Blatt* (8 July 1931).

<sup>267</sup>PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr. 709 Kühn to von Friedberg (26 Feb. 1932).

<sup>268</sup>The board toyed with the idea, for example, of detaching the association from the reviews as a way to keep their budgets separate. The Foreign Office and Grautoff also tried unsuccessfully to recruit a new President of the board, whose standing on the political right would inspire hefty donations and a new treasurer, who unlike *DFR* publisher Rothschild, would be independent of operations.

<sup>269</sup>PA-AA DBP 2147. Kühn to Saurma (11 June 1931).

Her husband, she explained, had taken no pay in five months, her own assets were depleted, and their household debts—for the children’s school, for groceries—could no longer go unpaid. Moreover, her husband needed his work for the DFG. She entreated them: “I know there are many tragedies in Germany. But they perhaps do not always concern a man whose work has such a scope and affects the future as much as Grautoff, [they] do not always have as their focus an intellectual community here and in France, whose life and efforts have a value and who can be credited with destroying the [foul] atmosphere of an entire country.”<sup>270</sup>

It was not the Grautoffs alone who were on the brink of financial ruin. The *Rundschau* had not paid its contributors for several months, and that eventually precluded it from commissioning future articles. Moreover, the *Rundschau*’s financial situation was sapping the foundations of the DFG. By the fall of 1932, the DFG’s financial outlook had become, in Grautoff’s words, “catastrophic,” but he also believed that liquidation “would be a blow to all the French people who have been working for us in their country.”<sup>271</sup> The last three months of 1932, the DFG sponsored no events in order to cobble together the savings to put toward the *Rundschau*. Rothschild again stepped in to cover the *DFR*’s debts in December 1932. That year, memberships started to taper off as well.

Hoping to breathe new life into his organization and build a sturdier structure for it, an exhausted Grautoff, with the support of the German Foreign Office, made a dramatic declaration to the board in December 1932. He called for the liquidation of the group so that the board would not be financially liable for his poor management. He

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<sup>270</sup>PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr. 3855. Erna Grautoff to Ministerialdirektor (22 Nov. 1932).

<sup>271</sup>PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr 3039. “Aufzeichnung über die DFG.” Grautoff to Köpke (7 Sept. 1932); PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr 3891 Grautoff to Köpke (21 Nov. 1932).



would, moreover, relinquish his rights to the DFG, a representative of the Foreign Ministry would become its president, and the Ministry itself would cover DFG debts. New leadership would, in this view, repair the damage wrought by Grautoff's lack of business savvy. Every member of the board, furious at Grautoff for the suggestion, refused to vote for liquidation; Rothschild initially walked out, though he was eventually convinced to return. The official slated to take the reins called the meeting, which lasted several hours, "grotesque."<sup>272</sup>

When the board instead quietly decided to cut costs by shrinking each issue of the *DFR* by 40% beginning with the January 1933 issue, angry DFG activists lambasted Grautoff. Aside from setting the DFG on a certain path to a decline in membership, the decision to shorten the *Rundschau*, contended the indignant leader of the branch in Württemberg and occasional contributor to the *DFR* Erich Benz, was a sign of Grautoff's betrayal. Benz accused Grautoff of at best caving in to the fascists, at worst doing their dirty work. A crisis in broader Franco-German relations and the spike in expressions of nationalism signaled the need to multiply efforts, not to cave, or worse, go gently into the night. Benz particularly emphasized the import of the DFG in connecting Germans outside of Berlin—whether in cities or the countryside—in common cause, and the degree to which subscribers in the regions read each issue of the *Rundschau* "with rapt attention." For Gottfried Salomon, head of the Frankfurt branch and similarly shocked at the decision, the reduction of the *DFR* to a "mere bulletin" spelled the association's doom. If Benz was angry, Salomon was bewildered that reductions would take place in

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<sup>272</sup>See PA-AA R70554, in particular, No. AA II Fr. 17 Deutelmoser to von Friedberg (30 Dec. 1932); Abschrift der Anlage zu II Fr. 4303/32 17 Ang. II. Bericht. Vorstandssitzung am 29. Dezember 1932; Grautoff to Deutelmoser (30 Dec. 1932).

the broader context of political crisis, when readers were eagerly turning to the pages of the *Rundschau*.<sup>273</sup>

The DFG's financial problems did not reflect a diminishment in ardor among activists, though to be sure, the DFG began to see a notable decrease in members. Beyond the stubborn persistence of the board, the fury of Benz in Württemberg, and the disappointment of Salomon in Frankfurt, interest in the project of understanding had not abated. Robert Bosch, the Stuttgart industrialist, chose this moment to write Grautoff of his wish to launch a new organization for understanding in light of recent popularity, particularly in France, for the cause.<sup>274</sup>

#### *On Death (Before Resurrection)*

On 12 January 1933, Maurice Boucher gave a talk at the Hotel Esplanade in Berlin on "The Death and Resurrection of Liberalism;" at the same event, Fritz Kern of the University of Bonn spoke about the "Crisis of Liberalism;" by the end of that month, Hitler was Chancellor.<sup>275</sup> For some, the end of Liberalism and democracy signaled the end of the quest for understanding; for others, it did not.

The Nazi administration did not cut off ties to the DFG, but instead both blunted official support of the group and began to work toward bringing it in line with the new regime; together, these changes—on top of their preexisting troubles—brought the *Rundschau* and the DFG to an end. In March 1933, the German Foreign Ministry reduced

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<sup>273</sup>PA-AA R70554 No II Fr. 3874. E. Benz to Grautoff (12 Nov. 1932); PA-AA R70554 No. II Fr. 3875 Gottfried von Salomon to Grautoff (14 Nov. 1932).

<sup>274</sup>PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr. 3987. Abschrift des Briefes von Herrn Robert Bosch an Herrn Dr. Grautoff (30 Nov. 1932).

<sup>275</sup>PA-AA R70554 Invitation. Deutsch-Französische Aussprache.

its subsidy to the DFG to a paltry four-month subscription of ten copies of the *Rundschau*. Ostensibly, the Ministry cuts related to the “financial situation,” but its lack of enthusiasm for the DFG in fact stemmed from the organization’s failure to follow Foreign Ministry recommendations about reorganization; significantly, this intransigence on the part of the DFG seemed to grate on the new administration’s nerves more than the DFG’s internationally-oriented agenda.<sup>276</sup> At the same time the Foreign Ministry was subtracting funds, it was helping to reshape the *DFR*. The March issue of the *Rundschau* listed several new editors on the cover; some editors’ names, in turn, disappeared altogether. The April edition showed more changes; by then, the only editors from before that spring were Grautoff and Stern-Rubarth, along with the French editors.<sup>277</sup> The *Rundschau* only survived another two months before it ceased publication with its June 1933 issue; that spring, Grautoff left Germany for Paris. Apparently, there were limits to his allegiance to the state.

That June, Eugen Bolz, the president of the region of Württemberg and a longtime member of the DFG, was arrested. Bolz’s arrest set off alarms in France, largely because of the explanation provided in the German press: “Bolz was always the committed adversary of all national aspirations. The fact that he belonged to the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft is known.” Havas-Berlin put it even more directly, stating that local officials turned to Bolz’s membership in the DFG as “proof of a lack of national

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<sup>276</sup> Compare PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr. 968. Rintelen to DFG (30 March 1933) to PA-AA R70554 No. zu II Fr. 968. Abschrift des Vermerks von VLR von Friedberg (27 March 1933) and PA-AA R70554 No. zu AA II Fr. 1916. Aufzeichnung. Rintelen to Köpke, Legationssekretär Freiherrn von Marschall, and Abt. Presse (30 June 1933).

<sup>277</sup> In addition to the reviews themselves, and for an acknowledgement of the new editors as “strawmen,” see PA-AA R70555 “Die Tätigkeit der DFG, dargestellt an Hand von Zitaten aus der *DFR* dem Organ der Gesellschaft aus den Jahrgängen 1931, 1932, und 1933.” Undated report from 1934, signed Bruno Reit [illeg].

convictions” [nationaler Gesinnung]. Regardless of the more significant reasons for Bolz’s arrest, news reports spread an unambiguous message about the new footing of the DFG. French Ambassador André François-Poncet immediately demanded clarification from the German Foreign Office: Was Bolz’s arrest a local matter, indicating a misunderstanding on the part of Württemberg police, or was it a sign that the new regime’s policy toward France—despite recent assurances to the contrary—no longer comprised a “spirit of harmony and peace?”<sup>278</sup> Was the DFG, previously supported by the German government, now off-limits? More broadly, did expressing an interest in France now constitute a treasonable offense?

Grautoff belatedly dashed off a few lines to Boucher to inform his French counterpart of the *Rundschau*’s demise,<sup>279</sup> but neither this news, nor the anxiety of the French Embassy, sealed the French review’s fate. Indeed, the *Revue d’Allemagne* continued to appear and, notably, continued to receive subsidies from the German Foreign Ministry.<sup>280</sup> The new regime was not averse to promoting Germany abroad, and Boucher proved open both to Reich suggestions and money. Boucher told the German Foreign Ministry, “Without thinking of a full-scale *Gleichschaltung* that would take away all value from the review, and to which I personally would not consent, I think that we could bring to our collection an exact representation of everything that is the official

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<sup>278</sup>PA-AA R70554 No. AA II Fr. 1916. Note Verbale. François-Poncet to the AA (21 June 1933), marked urgent; PA-AA R 70554 No. zu AA II Fr. 1916. Aufzeichnung. Rintelen to Köpke, Legationssekretär Freiherrn von Marschall, and Abt. Presse (30 June 1933). See also “Press Review” and press clippings in PA-AA R70554. François-Poncet, ambassador since 1931, and his predecessor Pierre de Margerie had both regularly taken part in DFG events in Berlin and frequently hosted the receptions thereafter.

<sup>279</sup>PA-AA DBP 2147 No. DBP B 2162. Boucher to Kühn (26 July 1933).

<sup>280</sup>The Foreign Ministry was still sending installment payments, to the tune of 5000RM a year. PA-AA DBP 2147 No. zu B1356. Forster to AA (10 May 1933); PA-AA DBP 2147 No. E.o.B. 2954. Forster to AA (6 Oct. 1933).

point-of-view.” The French editor therefore proclaimed his willingness to publish any official Nazi statement as well as his right to bracket such articles off as exactly that. Boucher took it upon himself to translate these official contributions for the *Revue*.<sup>281</sup>

Boucher’s striking stance operated on two levels, each consistent (in its own way) with the longstanding ethos of the DFG enterprise. First, it reiterated the *Revue*’s “academic” neutrality; the *Revue d’Allemagne* would continue to teach about Germany without censuring its government or resorting to partisan barbs. Second, the *Revue* would trust its educated readers to draw their own conclusions straight from Nazi sources. As early as its first issue in 1927, the *Revue* trumpeted the value of primary sources.<sup>282</sup> In light of the blatant hostility toward the other nation common to the press—the very problem being tackled by the Mayrisch Komitee—the *Revue* (like the *DFR*) found merit in giving readers direct access to the other nation, without the distractions of editorializing. For much of the French audience, the radical nature of official Nazi propaganda (labeled accordingly) may have been more damaging than no reportage at all.

The DFG did not collapse because *Verständigungspolitik* stopped attracting devotees. Poor management, combined with the indiscriminate blow of the financial crisis, smothered the organization though not its heart. If new measures—even before Hitler’s ascent to the Chancellorship—ensured the German Foreign Office was keeping closer tabs on the DFG, the group still managed to carry on for awhile; for some, its mission became even more relevant than before. But the new regime dealt the DFG a

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<sup>281</sup>PA-AA DBP 2147 No. zu B 1665. Boucher to Gerth (1 July 1933) as well as miscellaneous correspondence in this file between Boucher and German authorities involving requests for articles and thanks upon their receipt.

<sup>282</sup>“A Nos Lecteurs,” *Revue d’Allemagne* 1, no. 1 (Nov. 1927): 2.

final, soft blow. For Grautoff, 1933 was the end, but for others, 1933 only spurred them to work harder. Understanding had not been achieved.

The group's demise should not be equated with group's failure. The DFG's emphasis on understanding provided an important reconceptualization of French-German relations. Its coordination of exchange programs and routinization of events dedicated to the Franco-German question made available new models of cooperation. The DFG, moreover, helped set into place thousands of French-German contacts; many of these individuals would keep in touch long after the organization disappeared. Finally, the group helped attract a relatively sizeable base to the cause of cooperation; their interest in resolving the Franco-German problem likewise did not die with the group. All told, the DFG's structures and ideas would have a significant impact, in the short-term on another organization named the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft, and in the long-term on organizations born after 1945.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Sohlbergkreis

Our existence is based on similar experiences. The weight of the past oppresses us less than the old generation. Instead, the painful tests have brought us to a stronger sense of our responsibilities to our times and to our future. Never has youth felt so morally obliged to seize the meaning of the present world and the reality of life and to collaborate in their reconstruction.—Friedrich Bentmann<sup>283</sup>

I will not speak ill of diplomacy. But diplomacy often implies lies, and often also disguise, even more often dissimulation. At Sohlberg, we did not conduct diplomacy. We did not lie, we did not disguise ourselves, we hid nothing. We made a very grand and very spontaneous effort toward total good faith thanks to which we not only succeeded in getting to know our partners well, but equally to know ourselves better. With joy, with profit, we practiced intellectual and sentimental nudism.—Jean Luchaire<sup>284</sup>

In 1930, teacher Dr. Friedrich Bentmann proclaimed, “In no other era has youth better experienced how powerful is the link that unites the individual to the national community and how much, on the other hand, the fate of a nation is bound up with that of supranational groupings.”<sup>285</sup> Bentmann rallied youth to cure the myopia of their elders by embracing a common Franco-German heritage that rose above the boundaries of the nation-state. Echoing such wishes, journalist Jean Luchaire pointedly asserted, “One day,

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<sup>283</sup>“Discours du Dr. Friedrich Bentmann sur les ressemblances et dissemblances de la vie spirituelle en Allemagne et en France,” *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930. Talk given on 28 July 1930.

<sup>284</sup>“Discours final de Jean Luchaire,” *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930. Talk given on 3 Aug. 1930.

<sup>285</sup>“Discours du Dr. Friedrich Bentmann sur les ressemblances et dissemblances de la vie spirituelle en Allemagne et en France,” *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930. Talk given on 28 July 1930.

the Franco-German union will be complete and, with it, the European union.”<sup>286</sup> Their group, the *Sohlbergkreis* [Sohlberg Circle],<sup>287</sup> sought to harness the energy of youth to the cause of French-German cooperation. In this way, it intended to build upon the rush of diplomatic efforts at conciliation that began with Locarno while redressing their shortcomings. Cooperation would not only be forged through the cold calculations and deal-making of politicians, but also—and more enduringly—through the bonds of cross-border camaraderie. Participants looked to their elders—the front generation—for a model by and against which to create generational solidarity.

Conceived by Otto Abetz, president of the coalition of youth groups in Karlsruhe, and organized by Abetz and journalist Jean Luchaire, the 1930 Sohlberg Congress aimed to bring together over one hundred French and German youth of all professions, classes, political orientations, and religious affiliations. In one week of lectures and co-habitation, participants would learn about each other’s culture and discuss their differences, similarities, and shared responsibilities. Luchaire explained that the encounter served as “vast and honest examination of the conscience.”<sup>288</sup> Such meetings continued for the next few years, alternating locations from Germany to France, beginning with Sohlberg, a peak in the Black Forest. Around the campfire, in the woods, on ski slopes, under tents, and in hostels, youth not only discussed cultural difference but also practiced

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<sup>286</sup>“Discours final de Jean Luchaire,” *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930. Talk given on 3 Aug. 1930.

<sup>287</sup>It was not called the Sohlbergkreis until October 1930; its French half was called the Comité d’entente de la jeunesse française beginning in 1931. Following convention, I refer here to the entire circle as the Sohlbergkreis; this would also become the name of its bulletin.

<sup>288</sup>PA-AA R98888. Jean Luchaire, “Une expérience franco-allemande: Au camp de Sohlberg,” *La Volonté*, 8 Aug. 1930.



rapprochement. This was a small-scale experiment in integration designed (ideally) to leave a lasting imprint on participants.

The message of the Sohlbergkreis reverberated beyond the confines of the meetings. Through Luchaire, the group maintained close ties to the Briandist newspaper *Notre Temps*, and after the first two conferences, Abetz launched a review entitled *Sohlbergkreis*.<sup>289</sup> Both periodicals covered the Sohlbergkreis in detail. After the first conference at Sohlberg, moreover, the group moved away from targeting individual young people in favor of tapping into existing networks of youths that covered a wider geographic, socioeconomic, and ideological swath. Subsequent conferences included leaders of the major youth organizations—political, confessional, student-oriented—in each country. In this way, though the meetings themselves remained small, Sohlbergkreis participants could report on the results to the groups they represented and thereby amplify the impact of each encounter.

The Sohlbergkreis found an echo in both the short and long-term. In similar fashion to the Mayrisch Komitee and the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft, the Sohlbergkreis built up a network of activists for cooperation and established a model by which to achieve it. Then, in the mid-1930s, a resuscitated Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft and its partner the Comité France-Allemagne built on the vestiges of the Sohlbergkreis. The coming decades would witness other new groups cherry-picking elements of the Sohlbergkreis they found most to their tastes, just as they would from its

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<sup>289</sup>In 1930, the circulation of *Notre Temps* ran about 5,000 copies, though the paper claimed it was 20,000. Cf. Claude Lévy, “Autour du Jean Luchaire: le cercle éclaté de *Notre Temps*,” in *Entre Locarno et Vichy*, ed. Bock et al., 124; “‘Notre Temps’ hebdomadaire,” *Notre Temps*, 15 June 1930. The print run of *Sohlbergkreis* is unknown but was certainly modest.

Locarno-era contemporaries. Thus, though the endeavor did not survive long as the Sohlbergkreis, neither was it a mere flash in the pan.

The circle's succession of meetings became increasingly fraught with tensions, as German nationalists became a more active and vocal element. While some French participants found this development disquieting, others found themselves attracted to the new dynamism they observed. The debates within the group point to the greater splits among those disposed to Franco-German cooperation during the 1930s as the Nazis gained a tighter grip on Germany. Participants began to ask themselves to what extent a late-1920s Briandist-style cooperation now made sense. But, for many, the growing power of the National Socialists, both in the Sohlbergkreis and in Germany more broadly, sounded the alarm to intensify their campaign for entente.

Because the Sohlbergkreis included a number of figures later closely (and infamously) linked to the Nazis—Otto Abetz, Jean Luchaire, Bertrand de Jouvenel, to name a few—judgments of the group tend toward the heated. Both scholars and former participants have often read the Sohlbergkreis through the lens of the war and occupation. For many historians, the Sohlbergkreis paved the way to collaborationism. To lend support to this view, they have paid close attention to the involvement of those who later became Nazis or Nazi sympathizers and have highlighted “volkisch” or other radical elements of the meetings that conform to their understanding of Nazi culture.<sup>290</sup> Such a focus comes at the expense of the reformist and internationalist principles that lay behind the group's origins. A cruder version of this argument casts Sohlbergkreis participants as

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<sup>290</sup>The most explicit use of this approach can be found in Thalmann, “Du Cercle de Sohlberg,” *Entre Locarno et Vichy*, ed. Bock et al., 67-86.

early (and dangerous) appeasers.<sup>291</sup> Sohlbergkreis alumni, in contrast, have tended to place their activism in the context of the history of European integration.<sup>292</sup> Their engagement offered proof of their early devotion to European cooperation, and perhaps also, a testament to their having been taken in by Nazi rhetoric. This perspective clearly privileges the Sohlbergkreis' reform-minded and European goals. At the same time, it excuses entanglement with the Nazis in one of two ways. It suggests that they had tried to moderate Nazi views and attenuate their influence. Alternatively, it claims ignorance of the Nazi-inspired nationalist thrust that grew to dominate the group, implying that those true believers in a European peace had been hoodwinked by the outwardly international rhetoric of the group.

These standpoints underestimate the initial ideological diversity of the Sohlbergkreis and view cooperation itself in an overly simplified light. In fact, the Sohlbergkreis revealed some of the same ambivalences about cooperation as did its contemporaries, the Mayrisch Komitee and the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft. Just as with the Mayrisch Komitee and the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft, we can see with the Sohlbergkreis that cooperation could be rooted as much in patriotic (and national) principles as in pacifism or other international ideals. Moreover, in cooperation (some) internationalists and nationalists, left-wingers and right-wingers could find

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<sup>291</sup> Although the Sohlbergkreis is not well-known among the public today, it is occasionally alluded to in scurrilous debates as shorthand for certain forms of appeasement, and more particularly, as an example of what not to do. A Google search, for example, yielded the following argument: "For the best possible situation, that is, an armed peace or armed truce, the Western powers have to stay out of the conflict between Israel and the Arabs. We don't need any Sohlberg-Black Forest get togethers [sic] for Franco-German understanding like those run by Otto Abetz before WW2 which prepared the way for the German occupation of France." <http://www.jihadwatch.org/archives/011924.php> (Last accessed 2 June 2008).

<sup>292</sup> See, for example, Abetz, *Histoire*, 24-40; Maurice Garçon, ed., *Compte Rendu Stenographique. Les procès de collaboration: Fernand de Brinon, Joseph Darnand, Jean Luchaire*, Collection des grands procès contemporains (Paris: Albin Michel, 1948); Otto Weise, "Deutsch-Französisches Jugendtreffen in Rethel, August 1931," *Jahrbuch des Archivs der deutschen Jugendbewegung* 8 (1976): 63.

common cause. Finally, because so many meanings could be ascribed to it, cooperation could stand for divergent objectives as signaled by the disparate forces it seemed to unite. Rather than focusing attention on the moral value of the Sohlbergkreis, this chapter (along with Part Two) demonstrates the need to examine the quest for cooperation in all its facets. The following chapters therefore serve as a reminder that grassroots activism and even cooperation itself are not inherently good and that the push for peace and cooperation was neither straightforward nor unambiguous.

Before turning our attention to the case of the Sohlbergkreis, two questions must be addressed. First, did the Sohlbergkreis experience transpire in a bubble? The answer is both a qualified no and a qualified yes. Each summit was small; interim reunions were even smaller. The most extensive write-ups of the encounters appeared in journals like *Notre Temps*, the *DFR*, the *Revue d'Allemagne*, and the group's own *Sohlbergkreis*, for audiences much larger than their own, but an echo chamber nonetheless. While participants forged strong ties to one another, and often worked to transform the opinions of their colleagues back home, they nonetheless found their efforts limited by the political and ideological concerns represented by their diverse backgrounds.

Why then look to Sohlberg at all? Numerous accounts indicate that, on a personal level, the experience was meaningful. Indeed, both Abetz and Luchaire considered the Sohlberg Congress as the foundational moment for their careers: here they channeled their ideals of Franco-German rapprochement into practice. In this sense, the Sohlberg Circle played an important role in the history of collaboration. In fact, it was at these encounters that some of the most infamous collaborators first mingled with the likes of Abetz, including Bertrand de Jouvenel, Alfred Fabre-Luce, and Pierre Drieu la Rochelle.

At the same time, however, the Sohlbergkreis also featured in the lives of well-known resisters including socialist martyr Pierre Brossolette (1903-1944), attorney and European activist André Weil-Curiel (1910-1988), and Social-Democrat Hermann Maass (1897-1944), executed as a member of the *Kreisauer Kreis*. Finally, the Sohlbergkreis serves as a microcosm of the evolving relationship between the French and Germans in the turbulence of the early 1930s; its fraying reveals not only the deterioration of Franco-German relations, but ideological fracturing within the French camp.

### *Origins*

The Sohlbergkreis began at the initiative of art teacher Otto Abetz (1903-1958), then also head of the umbrella organization for youth groups in Karlsruhe, the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Karlsruher Jugendbünde*. Four and a half years after Locarno, Abetz sought out the young press magnate Jean Luchaire (1901-1946) at his Paris office. Moved by Luchaire's book of the previous year, *Une Génération réaliste*, which portrayed both the anxieties that plagued his generation and the reformist spirit that guided it, Abetz believed he had found in Luchaire a kindred spirit. Accordingly, Abetz, accompanied by his close friend (and future brother-in-law) Friedrich Bentmann, proposed holding a joint summit, wherein youth from the two nations could discuss the possibility of leading the nations away from tensions and toward some form of coexistence.

Abetz had spent the last ten months mapping out a plan and floating his ideas to his local constituents, who represented a diverse political, social, and religious base. Bearing the marks of the war and yet enjoying historic ties to the French, the citizenry of Karlsruhe, Abetz believed, could serve as the ideal guinea pigs for an experiment in cooperation. The 1916 bombardment and the postwar occupation had stirred up local

resentments, and because France was a close neighbor, the stakes were high. If an area so directly affected by the war proved willing to open the door to France, it could provide a useful model to the rest of Germany. Abetz's bold plan sought to cut across both national and ideological boundaries at a time when neither was easily bridged.

Abetz had lately become an avid francophile, a taste he had developed in art school and nurtured in an informal book club led by literary scholar Adolf von Grolmann (1888-1973), who would later speak at Sohlbergkreis events.<sup>293</sup> Abetz's biographer Barbara Lambauer has dated this interest in things French to around the time that Stresemann and Briand shared the Nobel Prize in 1926.<sup>294</sup> Yet alongside his fascination with French culture, Abetz described having harbored much resentment at the nation which had shelled his town and imposed on his nation the Treaty of Versailles. "To the France of Force, I dedicated all of my hate," he recalled, "to the France of the Mind [Esprit], all of my love."<sup>295</sup> Scholars have often fallen back upon Abetz's own description of his "Janus-faced" view of France as a way to account for his seemingly contradictory actions, one moment fawning, the next vindictive, when he served as German Ambassador during the Second World War. At different moments, and to different audiences, Abetz presented himself in vastly different ways, which has made it difficult to pinpoint his character and motives. Consequently, he has been painted as a

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<sup>293</sup>Roland Ray, *Annäherung an Frankreich im Dienste Hitlers? Otto Abetz und die deutsche Frankreichpolitik 1930-1942*. Studien zur Zeitgeschichte, ed. Institut für Zeitgeschichte, vol. 59 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2000), 31.

<sup>294</sup>Lambauer, *Otto Abetz*, 23-24.

<sup>295</sup>Otto Abetz, *Histoire*, 22. Roland Ray has taken these post-1945 recollections (and others) at face value. But of course, Abetz stood to gain from casting the French as aggressors as well as the Germans. In writing this memoir (as well as his earlier prison memoirs), Abetz attempted to clear his name after the war; they are thus extraordinarily self-serving, down to the invocation of his admiration for Romain Rolland's book on Gandhi. Nonetheless, it is clear that Abetz's self-portrait as an ardent francophile holds true.

misunderstood idealist, a disarmingly charming war criminal, an ambitious climber, and a shifty fraud.

Successive layers of re-telling his own past have obscured Abetz's actual point-of-view. It is not even clear, once we peel away the layers, if there would be anything there at all. Some have, in this sense, portrayed Abetz as the ultimate accommodator, taking on whatever ideology (and personal associations) that would feed his insatiable ambition. This view, while more than plausible once the National Socialists were in power (though, to be sure, Abetz took some false steps), does not account for Abetz's initial efforts to spearhead the Sohlbergkreis. There were surer ways to win points with the Weimar government, much less find his way to the hearts of the citizenry of Karlsruhe or the national leadership of Germany's youth groups.

The German youth movement had left a deep imprint on Abetz, above all by demonstrating the power of camaraderie. Abetz had spent over a decade in the *Wandervogel*, which fed his love of nature and likely fostered his ability to rely on his wits. Before he enrolled in art school—when he unhappily served as an apprentice at a bookstore—Abetz disappeared on a backpacking tour through Switzerland and Italy for several months. This rough and ready persona stayed with him. The young Radical journalist and Sohlbergkreis activist Bertrand de Jouvenel later recalled that Abetz had walked to the Rethel summit from Karlsruhe, with just a backpack on his shoulders; to the conference he led, Abetz wore a “two-piece gymnastics uniform in a rough blue flannel.”<sup>296</sup> French members of the Sohlbergkreis evidently teased him for looking like a

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<sup>296</sup>Bertrand de Jouvenel, *Un voyageur dans le siècle 1903-1945* (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 1979), 200.

“badly licked bear.”<sup>297</sup> More outdoorsy than bookish, more enamored with the arts than business, politic without being political (at least early on), and thoroughly unconcerned with appearances, Abetz was well-suited to stand at the head of all Karlsruhe youth groups.

From all reports, Luchaire, in contrast, was dazzling and precocious. He wrote for several major newspapers and claimed that the French left-wing press owed the majority of its international coverage to him by 1925.<sup>298</sup> Certainly, by the age of 24, Luchaire had at minimum established himself as a commanding presence in the realm of the press. He compressed a full life into his short years: by 25, he had four children, heavy personal debt, and a ubiquitous presence in Radical circles. Though not formally a member of the Radical Socialist Party, Luchaire was affiliated with the Radical press, became involved in groups close to the party (namely, the *Fédération des jeunesses laïques et républicaines*), and maintained close connections with party pillars Aristide Briand, Joseph Caillaux, and Édouard Herriot. His star rose so high that, in 1940, he was named head of the French press syndicate, which led to the later sobriquet “Führer of the French press.” Six years later, he faced the firing squad.

As a teenager living in Italy, Luchaire had worked hard for French-Italian cooperation. From the age of thirteen to eighteen, Luchaire lived and studied in Italy, his birthplace, where his father Julien Luchaire was Director of the French Institute of Florence, Milan, and Naples. His illustrious father (for a time married to the editor of *Nord und Süd* Antonina Vallentin, a friend of Stresemann) later became the director of

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<sup>297</sup>Friedrich Bentmann, “Über Otto Abetz,” *Jahrbuch des Archivs der deutschen Jugendbewegung* 8 (1976): 58.

<sup>298</sup>Alden, 43.



the International Institute of Cooperation of the League of Nations. At thirteen, the younger Luchaire and his friend Gabriel Monod-Herzen began their own bilingual newspaper, *Jeunes Auteurs* (later renamed *Vita latina*, then *Vita*), which covered international affairs and attracted the notice of the French daily *Le Matin*, the Comité France-Italie, and the Latin Youth League. At the Latin Youth League, Luchaire advocated French-Italian cooperation—a *Union latine*—as the key to peace and an eventual European unity.<sup>299</sup> It was 1917, and, though he had not experienced the horrors of the battlefield, Luchaire had seen plenty of blood as a volunteer at military hospitals in France and Italy.

Luchaire harbored a particular animus against Mussolini, which surely played no small part in his turn away from notions of French-Italian and toward French-German cooperation. Swapping Italy for Germany, however, did not mean abandoning his dream of a united Europe. Throughout the 1920s, Luchaire pursued ideas of European-wide cooperation, whether by advocating Germany's inclusion in the League of Nations in *Le Petit Parisien*, launching two journals devoted to the idea of Europe—the unsuccessful *La jeune Europe* and the far more influential *Notre Temps*, or attending Coudenhove-Kalergi's first Pan-European Congress alongside Yvon Delbos. In a 1932 article, Luchaire did not so much explicate his personal and much earlier transition away from the French-Italian to the French-German cause as he spelled out the implications of entente with each (as well as the attendant concessions) and the fact that working with the Germans risked little of any bearing to the French. Mussolini's "violent" language signaled the need to tread carefully to avoid alarmism or aggravating the Italians.

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<sup>299</sup> Alden, 24-30. Alden has argued his parents' divorce led to Luchaire's lifelong "deep need for union." Alden, 17.

Nonetheless, Luchaire dismissed what he called the French nationalist argument about Italy as a “Latin sister,” an idea he had avidly embraced a few years earlier, albeit from the left.<sup>300</sup> Instead, he argued, the key to peace, European unity, and the maintenance of empire was entente with Germany.<sup>301</sup> It therefore comes as no surprise that Luchaire, as a proponent of European unity and a champion of closer relations with Germany, readily acceded to Abetz’s plan.

The meeting between Abetz and Luchaire led to a broader effort to recruit youth to attend a conference slated for late July and early August of 1930, just a few short weeks after the last French troops left the Rhineland. Promoting the encounter in Germany fell to Abetz and several of his friends, while in France, the task was shared by Luchaire and Cécil Mardrus, head of the recently founded *Groupe universitaire franco-allemand* (Gufa), an association tied to the Sorbonne. The first congress drew approximately 120 French and German “youth” under age 35. The term was used loosely to identify those from about eighteen to those in their early 30s; these were not adolescents, but students and other young people near the start of their careers. Though perhaps too self-indulgent for working class youth,<sup>302</sup> Sohlberg brought together numerous strands of French and German political thought and social experience. On the German side, they came from Karlsruhe youth groups under Abetz’s umbrella. An equal

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<sup>300</sup>Indeed, in 1927, the *Action Française* adopted this position. See Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The First Wave, 1924-1933* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 226-227.

<sup>301</sup>Jean Luchaire, “Ein Bündnis Frankreich-Italien oder Frankreich-Deutschland,” *DFR* 5, no. 10 (1932): 689-697.

<sup>302</sup>Sohlbergkreis organizers were savvy enough to recognize that, despite the group’s diversity, it represented elites. That said, at least one participant at the Rethel Congress was identified in *Notre Temps* as unemployed, the German “socialist-communist” M. Gopfrich, who spoke in “Black Forest patois.” See Jean Luchaire, “Discours de Jean Luchaire sur les aspects sociaux et politiques en France du problème de l’Union européenne,” *Notre Temps*, 16-23 Aug. 1931. Talk delivered 6 Aug. 1931.

number hailed from the young Social Democrats as from the young nationalists.<sup>303</sup> Most of the French participants at Sohlberg were students at the Sorbonne; about thirty belonged to Cécil Mardrus' *Gufa*.<sup>304</sup> Some were readers of Luchaire's *Notre Temps*, who had seen the announcements in the paper.

German organizers lobbied in vain for governmental funds, until a last-minute fundamental reframing of the conference agenda by Karlsruhe teacher Gustav Mittelstrass brought satisfaction. Mittelstrass explained that the congress had nothing to do with "fraternization with random French people" but in fact had national interests at its core. It would bring together patriotic—in his words "national feeling"—groups from France and Germany "in the spirit of the leagues." Mittelstrass' canny pitch is the first indication we have that some Sohlbergkreis planners had come to the project from oblique angles or were simply willing to adjust their stated aims to find favor with officialdom. With this new platform in mind, the German contingent managed to secure a negligible amount of funding from the German Ministry of the Interior as well as from Baden's Ministry of Culture and Education; in addition, it received a token pledge of support of the German Foreign Ministry in the form of waived visa fees for the French visitors.<sup>305</sup>

The French government acted with even more caution than the German. Reticence to provoke controversy helps explain why French officials denied the group permission to hold its first Franco-German congress—with its provocative central themes

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<sup>303</sup>"Deux Jeunesses en Présence," *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930.

<sup>304</sup>PA-AA R98888 Telegram 1759. Zimmermann [AA] to Gesandten Freytag (19 July 1930).

<sup>305</sup>Cf. Lambauer, 26-27; Dieter Tiemann, *Deutsch-französische Jugendbeziehungen der Zwischenkriegszeit*, *Pariser Historische Studien* vol. 28, ed. Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris (Bonn: Bouvier, 1989), 117; Unteutsch, 52, 249.

on borders and identities—in recently recovered Strasbourg.<sup>306</sup> Coming out of the storm of the 1928 trials of Alsatian autonomists, the region was not ready for another divisive episode.<sup>307</sup> This decision shielded the Alsatian city from political protests or other turmoil, just as much as it protected participants from any trouble. The first gathering therefore took place on a remote mountain on the German side of the frontier, about 30 kilometers from Strasbourg. In this way, the French government held much of the responsibility for lending the encounter not only its name, but also its rustic character, close in spirit to the German nature movement. The choice to hold the first meeting away from all distractions and societal influences, moreover, was instrumental to its success; alone in the wilderness, participants were not held captive to the prejudices around them and were able to enjoy a remarkable sense of intimacy.

A couple of months after Sohlberg, some participants from Karlsruhe created the *Kreis der Freunde der Sohlberg-Camp* [Circle of Friends of Camp Sohlberg], a subgroup of Abetz's Karlsruhe umbrella organization, soon renamed the Sohlbergkreis and extended to all of Germany. A year after the first conference, French participants followed suit and founded a group with the unwieldy title, the *Comité d'entente de la jeunesse française pour le rapprochement franco-allemand* [Entente Committee of French Youth for Franco-German Rapprochement], presided over by Luchaire. Developed to make up for the insufficiencies of Versailles at shaping a future peace,<sup>308</sup> it acted as an organizational counterweight to the Sohlbergkreis. In theory, the Comité

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<sup>306</sup>Lambauer, 25.

<sup>307</sup>Christopher J. Fischer, "Alsace to the Alsatians? Visions and Divisions of Alsatian Regionalism, 1890-1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 2003), 339-358.

<sup>308</sup>Comité d'entente de la jeunesse française pour le rapprochement franco-allemand, "Déclaration," *Revue d'Allemagne* no. 46 (Aug. 1931): 753-755.

d'entente incorporated about 270,000 members because it united many of the leading (not explicitly nationalist) youth groups of France including the Association Catholique de la Jeunesse française, Jeunesses Laïques et Républicaines, Fédérations des Associations Chrétiennes d'Étudiants, Foyer International des Étudiantes de Paris, Étudiants Jeunes-Républicains, and Jeunesses Démocrates Populaires.<sup>309</sup> It comes as little surprise, however, that these 270,000 individuals did not fundamentally change their stance toward Germany because of their notional ties to the Sohlbergkreis.

Subsequent Sohlbergkreis meetings at Rethel and Mainz brought together members of an even broader range of youth groups. From France, participants came from Marc Sangnier's Catholic Jeune République, the Radical Socialists, and the Second and Third International on the left and the nationalist Action Française and Jeunesses Patriotes on the right. While at the first meeting at Sohlberg, the Germans largely hailed from Karlsruhe, subsequent congresses saw them representing a variety of youth groups from throughout Germany from the socialist to National Socialist. After Hitler's rise to power, meetings saw the German contingent winnowed down to those sympathetic to National Socialism.

Between its major summits, a multitude of small gatherings and reunions took place. Immediately after Sohlberg, for example, a number of French participants traveled together through Germany. Their trip acted as its own form of public relations, as the group wrote up its happy impressions for the French press. A mixed French-German contingent met in the Black Forest after the second meeting at Rethel in order to continue their conversation, particularly on such matters as the youth movement. And each winter,

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<sup>309</sup>PA-AA DBP 1050/1 Abschrift. Unsigned, undated report attached to No. DBP 2151 Kühn to AA "Französischer Jugendausschuss für die deutsch-französische Verständigung" (18 July 1931); Unteutsch, 58-59.

Sohlbergkreis veterans from both sides of the Rhine met at a Black Forest ski lodge for a week; there, they could reconnect and ensure that, as according to Luchaire's wishes, they would not consign the Sohlberg experience to the realm of memory but instead internalize its message until the next round.

For those who subscribed to its agenda, the Sohlbergkreis' non-partisanship and readiness to draw from all quarters held tremendous appeal. Amid the political turmoil and fragmentation of both the Weimar Republic<sup>310</sup> and the late Third Republic, a call to unity both across party lines and across national lines stood out as unconventional and even inspiring. Francophobia ran rampant in the German youth movement, and French young people were not exactly flocking to Germany in droves.<sup>311</sup> Sohlbergkreis participants, in contrast, sought to liberate themselves from complacency, fatalism, and negativity; as a grassroots movement, the Sohlbergkreis would take charge and guard against the slide into another war. Here they could move "beyond government conferences and the League of Nations" and instead "take their fate in their own hands."<sup>312</sup>

### *Sohlberg*

Participants in the 1930 meeting at Sohlberg were convinced that the primary category of social identification was generation, a category that transcended identities of class, race, gender, and most importantly, national belonging. In this view, youth from

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<sup>310</sup>Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany* (New York: Oxford, 1990), 178.

<sup>311</sup>Tiemann, 96-97.

<sup>312</sup>Hans Hartmann, "Die Jugend baut Brücken! Das dritte deutsch-französische Jugendtreffen auf der Mainzer Zitadelle," *DFR* 5, no. 5 (1932): 367.

France and Germany had more in common than did either the citizenry of France or of Germany. This understanding of the importance of generation, of course, had dominated among the so-called “front generation” that had fought in the Great War. But most attendees at Sohlberg were in their twenties, and were thus too young to have served on the battlefield. Because their childhoods had been scarred by the war, however, they, too, shared a common experience and understanding of the war. Jean Luchaire dubbed them the “realist generation” in a book of that name he wrote in 1929.<sup>313</sup> These youth held the keys to a peaceful future and, in the words of one of the Sohlberg speakers, harbored “the sense that it must create something new, a goal worthy of its life.”<sup>314</sup> Such a goal expressed the desire to sacrifice as much as had their forebears, the front generation, but with a more peaceful end in sight.

The talks at Sohlberg were larded with the language of sacrifice. Marked by their reading of Henri Barbusse and especially Erich Maria Remarque—the Lewis Milestone film of Remarque’s bestseller *All Quiet on the Western Front* had just been released in May<sup>315</sup>—Sohlberg speakers recalled the service of veterans to their nations, while trying to determine an equally committed form of service for the next generation. Their sacrifice, however, would not be physical but emotional.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>313</sup>Jean Luchaire, *Une Génération réaliste* (Paris: Librairie Valois, 1929). In hindsight, Karl Epting, later closely tied to Abetz, called theirs the “middle generation” because they missed serving in both world wars. See Karl Epting, *Generation der Mitte* (Bonn: Bonner Universitäts-Buchdruckerei, 1953).

<sup>314</sup>“Discours du Pr. Dahnhardt sur les tendances politiques allemandes,” *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930. Talk given 2 Aug. 1930.

<sup>315</sup>Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989), 298. By December 1930, the film was banned in Germany.

<sup>316</sup>Alden, 54.

Their outlook was less *All Quiet or Under Fire* (and even less *Storm of Steel*) than it was Ernst Glaeser's 1928 novel *Jahrgang 1902*: "The war, that's our parents."<sup>317</sup> Abetz was eleven at the outbreak of war; Luchaire, barely thirteen. In Luchaire's newspaper *Notre Temps*, launched in 1927 and, like Sohlberg, devoted to the "new European generations," the editors contended that the war had created a "gulf" between those "who lived before" and "those coming after." The plight of the younger generation, according to *Notre Temps*, was to "search anxiously" for the kind of solidarity shared by their elders that had been forged in the trenches.<sup>318</sup> At Sohlberg, Luchaire described more particularly the ways in which the war had shaped the individual experiences of the entire group:

We who knew nothing of life, we saw rise near us the abominable image of death, of that death that struck our fathers and our older brothers. We who played with tin soldiers, we discovered the bloody game of true soldiers. We had never dreamed of the world—and the world was revealed to our eyes in complete dislocation. We had not yet dreamed of examining the house in which we seemed compelled to live when that house collapsed with a crash. This disappearance scarcely touched us. But at an age when childish amusement and school works constitute the only preoccupations, we were brought to preoccupy ourselves with what could be our house of tomorrow, that which peace could bring us.<sup>319</sup>

Their shared experience had defined them, but it could also grant them a sense of purpose.

Sohlberg leaders borrowed some of the epic grandeur of war and applied it to the project of moral and intellectual demobilization. Key was to cast peace-making in a heroic mold. From solemn ceremonies to the level of basic rhetoric, the leaders of these encounters pitched their mission as noble, comradely, and even a touch soldierly. At the

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<sup>317</sup>Quoted in Horst Möller, "Frankreich in der Deutsche Kultur der 1920er Jahre," *Revue d'Allemagne* 21, no. 2 (1989): 218.

<sup>318</sup>Jean Luchaire and Emile Roche, "Présentation," *Notre Temps*, 20 July 1927.

<sup>319</sup>"Discours de Jean Luchaire sur les tendances politiques de la nouvelle génération française," *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930. Talk given on 2 Aug. 1930, with quotation based on his *Génération réaliste*.



first meeting of Gufa, where he promoted the French group and the upcoming encounter at Sohlberg, Cécil Mardrus used the language of war to add a sense of urgency (and a dash of romance) to the venture: “We must have the power to discuss [the war] among ourselves, not grudgingly like diplomats, but as powerful people, with all our being. Youth has an immense need to educate itself. We must marshal the forces that will aid it in vanquishing the past, and this law of the eternal return.”<sup>320</sup> Later meetings at Rethel and Mainz included pilgrimages to memorials and cemeteries to pay homage to soldiers of war, and in the case of a monument to Gustav Stresemann, soldiers of peace.

Sohlberg participants found the experience of the encounter at least as meaningful as the content of their discussions.<sup>321</sup> For many, sociability, in informal morning exercises, on afternoon hikes, around the evening campfire, in the hostels or tents (staying in tents cost participants a bit less) at night, provided an impetus to join the group and later served as a warm reminder of the experience.<sup>322</sup> Singing and dancing lent an informal air to the proceedings and encouraged mingling, especially for those unable to speak the language of the other.<sup>323</sup> Luchaire described French and German participants play[ing] together like children.”<sup>324</sup> One participant remembered the experience as a sort

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<sup>320</sup>“Groupe universitaire franco-allemand,” *DFR* 3, no. 6 (1930): 518-519.

<sup>321</sup>Hans Steinthal, “Deutsch-französisches Jugendtreffen auf dem Sohlberg,” *DFR* 3, no. 9 (1930): 760-765.

<sup>322</sup>Simple curiosity, of course, also played a part in attracting participants.

<sup>323</sup>Most (if not all) of the Germans in attendance should have had some French in school; in the 1920s (and indeed into the mid-1930s), French remained the most common modern language in German schools. See Horst Möller, 221-224. School French, of course, did not guarantee the ability to follow intense political conversations, much less songs around the campfire. While the contingent from Gufa likely spoke at least some German, in general, German-language learning in France had seen a downturn after the First World War. See Mombert, 166. More particularly, Abetz initially needed a translator to compensate for his clunky school French; soon, however, Abetz mastered the language.

<sup>324</sup>PA-AA R98888 Press clipping. Jean Luchaire, “Une expérience franco-allemande: Au camp de Sohlberg,” *La Volonté*, 8 Aug. 1930.

of high: “The discovery of friends from the other side of the border was intoxicating. We were moved, many of us were changed for life,” he explained.<sup>325</sup> Bentmann felt a “prickly excitement.”<sup>326</sup> And Abetz recalled that “private relations were not neglected, and more than one Yvonne or a François met a Heinz or a Hilda on the solitary footpaths of the Black Forest.”<sup>327</sup>

Unfortunately, Abetz’s lone statement remains one of the only traces we have of relations between the sexes at Sohlberg or any of the circle’s later conferences. Suzanne de Bruyker, Luchaire’s secretary—and after 1932, Abetz’s wife—may be the only woman we know by name present at Sohlbergkreis encounters. No women gave talks at any of these summits. By the second conference, women representing the *Foyer International des Étudiantes* [International Women Students’ Foyer] and the *Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit* [Women’s League for Peace and Freedom] were in attendance, and it is clear from both brief descriptions of dancing at Sohlberg and a group sketch in *Notre Temps* that at least some women were in attendance already at Sohlberg. This represented a change from the typical outings of German youth groups, separated by gender. But nothing in the record—from primary or secondary sources—sheds light on young women’s perspectives of the Sohlbergkreis.

Informed by the youth movement, the nature movement, and a certain admiration for the Romantic movement—Luchaire himself drew the comparison between the youth of 1930 and those of 1830<sup>328</sup>—the Sohlbergkreis emphasized the culture and élan of

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<sup>325</sup>Weise, 61.

<sup>326</sup>Bentmann, “Über Otto Abetz,” 57.

<sup>327</sup>Abetz, *Histoire*, 27.

<sup>328</sup>Jean Luchaire, “Deux jeunesses en présence,” *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930.

youth as well as the mystique of the land. First-hand accounts of the conference wax rhapsodic about the verdant hills, the vastness of the Rhenish plane, and the majestic spire of the Strasbourg cathedral on the horizon line. On these points, the sky, the grass, the trees, there is little variation. The borderland setting and its spectacular beauty seem to have underscored the resemblance between the two nations to participants. No records indicate that this similarity enabled revisionist fantasies of this area united under one rule, whether German or French. The symbolism of a manufactured (and imperceptible) border, however, echoed widely.

Although the Sohlbergkreis drew on elements of the Wandervogel movement and the Romantic movement, it by and large used them to enliven the week rather than as its main focus. The emphasis was less on physical culture than on coexistence and learning. If there were hikes (and some chose to do morning exercises before the discussions began at nine), some of the excursions were more social and cultural in focus. At the invitation of the DFG-branch in Stuttgart, for example, Sohlberg participants toured the city and lunched with locals interested in France.

Indeed, a closer look reveals that the Sohlbergkreis melded a variety of traditions. At first glimpse, the woodcuts and line-illustrations in *Notre Temps* and later the *Sohlbergkreis* reflected a notion of primitivism. More careful observation, however, divulges how these depictions of the Sohlbergkreis also celebrated the modern. Electric lights are interspersed with trees, a ship and a plane cross a globe, and a deco car streaks through the night; the image could easily grace the cover of *The Great Gatsby*. On an outing from the wilds of Sohlberg, the group toured and admired the Weissenhof

settlement in Stuttgart, at the cutting edge of urban planning and architectural design.<sup>329</sup> Above all, a vaguely pagan ritual around the campfire stands out as an expression of Sohlberg's eclecticism. In this ceremony, a German pastor threw a crown into the flames "to pay homage to our valiant French and German brothers." All then seized hands, and he cried, "We swear to hear the heralds of liberty: in the assault, we will defend the sacred mountains. Humanity will be saved by the union of free and brotherly men. Then the earth will be truly free and happy!"<sup>330</sup> Led by a German pastor who invoked the fire of both Prometheus and Henri Barbusse—as well as the fire he saw at the Chemin des Dames—the fire ceremony ended with spirited (and apparently spontaneous) renditions of the *Marseillaise* and the *Deutschlandlied*, as well as, for some, the *Internationale*.<sup>331</sup> This patriotic and internationalist, Christian and earthly, ancient and modern mash-up jumbled a variety of cultural traditions; it did not, as a passing glance might suggest, reflect a return to a mythical past.

Although it is tempting to consider the Sohlbergkreis as part of a turn against the modern, this would be a serious distortion of the group's forward-looking ethos. The Sohlbergkreis was clearly neither a back-to-nature movement nor an anti-modern project. The revisiting of the past—especially the medieval heritage (according to Friedrich Bentmann, a "common heritage")—came balanced with a modern twist. Art historian Kurt Martin, for example, spoke at once to the shared past and the promise of working together in the future in his discussion of the "fruitfulness" of French-German contact in

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<sup>329</sup>“Die Teilnehmer des deutsch-französischen Jugendtreffens in Stuttgart,” *DFR* 3, no. 10 (1930): 877-878.

<sup>330</sup>“Discours du Pasteur Kappes,” *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930. Address given on 2 Aug. 1930.

<sup>331</sup>Some of the German contingent followed the fire ceremony with their version of Georg Kaiser's "Die Bürger von Calais" ("The Citizens of Calais"), an anti-nationalist, pacifist play from 1914. Abetz misattributed the play to Romain Rolland in his memoirs, as did Friedrich Bentmann in his reminiscences over Abetz. See Abetz, *Histoire*, 28; Bentmann, "Über Otto Abetz," 59.

the medieval era, with its most obvious product, Gothic art and architecture. The focus on young generations represented only the most obvious of these future-oriented impulses. Talks concentrated on contemporary France and Germany, whether in the realm of the arts, religion, or social welfare. The theme invoked by Bentmann to open the conference—the inevitability of supranationalism—likewise became a major topic of conversation.<sup>332</sup>

Scholars have focused on the sociability and experience of Sohlberg to the loss of the content of the meeting.<sup>333</sup> But the talks mattered, too. They represented a variety of views and offered serious, thoughtful accounts of French and German culture and society. At Sohlberg, participants discussed not so much short-term political conflicts, but broader cultural and social trends. The idea was to determine points of convergence between the French and the Germans. They thus steered around political minefields, often dodging the white elephant in the Black Forest.

At the conference, young scholars and journalists gave paired talks on a given theme, to be followed by group discussion. Arnold Bergsträsser (1896-1964) of the University of Heidelberg (and the Mayrisch Komitee and the DFG) and the student Cécil Mardrus, for example, spoke about social issues in their respective nations, while Guy Crouzet of *Notre Temps* and the Karlsruhe writer Adolf von Grolmann lectured on contemporary literature. Theology professor Otto Piper (1891-1976) and Jacques

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<sup>332</sup>“Discours du Dr. Friedrich Bentmann sur les ressemblances et dissemblances de la vie spirituelle en Allemagne et en France,” *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930. Talk given on 28 July 1930; “Discours du Pr Kurt Martin sur l’art moderne allemand,” *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930. Talk given 29 July 1930.

<sup>333</sup>Barbara Unteutsch, for one, explains she will not discuss the content of Sohlberg discussions, though she does not justify this choice. See Unteutsch, 56. More generally, her book is heavy on information and lists (i.e. titles of talks and articles) and lighter on analysis. Karl Epting (formerly of the German Institute in Paris) made the same choice in a paper he gave in 1976, see Epting, “Das Schicksal der briandistischen Generation—Der Sohlbergkreis und seine Freunde,” *Jahrbuch des Archivs der deutschen Jugendbewegung* 8 (1976): 17.

Chabannes, editor of *Notre Temps*, each offered thoughts on the role of religion in recent years. Other sessions covered art, architecture, and politics. Participants hammered out how youth from the two countries could lead the nations away from tensions and toward some form of toleration or collaboration. They spoke of the promise of youth, the future, and Europe, just as they berated older, misguided generations and their heavy ideological baggage.

A focus on transcending national boundaries did not mean that thinking in national categories was taboo. Lectures by and large retained firm boundaries of national identity because they aimed to illuminate the peculiarities of national life; in so doing, clichés emerged. Although these stereotypes were not offensive, they reinforced a strong sense of difference at a congress for youth from both countries. While the apparatus of the encounter was clearly balanced and the speakers addressed the same topics, many of the lectures relied on capsule portraits of the speakers' homeland. Kurt Martin, for example, focused largely on the "German spirit" visible in German art, from Grünewald to Grosz; in so doing, he fell back upon reified German national characteristics about depth, angst, and irrationality.<sup>334</sup> Friedrich Bentmann managed to shade some of the conference's black-and-white thinking by pointing to areas where the two nations overlapped and shared a "common heritage"; ironically, he explained, the seemingly French phenomenon of "integral nationalism," for example, stemmed from German antecedents, namely Nietzsche and Fichte.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>334</sup>Invoking Grünewald, whose Isenheim altarpiece was returned from safekeeping in Bavaria to (French) Alsace after the war, was especially political. At the time, Grünewald was often used as a stand-in for Germanness. See Ann Stieglitz, "The Reproduction of Agony: Toward a Reception-History of Grünewald's Isenheim Altar after the First World War," *Oxford Art Journal* 12, no. 2 (1989): 87-103.

<sup>335</sup>"Discours du Dr. Friedrich Bentmann sur les ressemblances et dissemblances de la vie spirituelle en Allemagne et en France," *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930. Talk given on 28 July 1930.

The initiators of Sohlberg believed in national difference—but they saw in the French and the Germans more similarities than differences. They were not heralding a worldwide community—even England remained, to their minds, much different. But France and Germany together represented the first step toward Luchaire’s longer-term goal, a United States of Europe. Nationalism was condemned as a fixture of the past, but, nations were not. Luchaire spoke of a “mutual spirit of tolerance” that indicated a belief that identities would remain separate, though the French and the German would live and work together in a “new order.”<sup>336</sup>

Speakers had perhaps taken to heart the words of Gustav Stresemann’s Nobel lecture, where he confronted what he saw as the simplistic notion that “national solidarity” and “international cooperation” were opposites. Instead, Stresemann contended that great men “break the bonds which bind them to their own nations, yet they are great only because their inspiration is so firmly rooted in their own countries. National culture can act as a bridge, instead of an obstacle, to mutual spiritual and intellectual understanding.”<sup>337</sup> At Sohlberg, participants concentrated on the congruence of the individual, the nation, and supranationalism.

But it was Aristide Briand who played the role of absent star at Sohlbergkreis events—just as he did for Luchaire’s *Notre Temps*, which his office helped subsidize. Although having elder statesman Briand serve as mascot for the youth-oriented Sohlbergkreis may seem incongruous, Briand represented the spirit of cooperation for his work alongside Stresemann and most recently, as the originator of the proposal for a

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<sup>336</sup>“Discours final de Jean Luchaire,” *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930. Talk given on 3 Aug. 1930.

<sup>337</sup>Gustav Stresemann, “Nobel Lecture,” (29 June 1927). Available at [http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1926/stresemann-lecture.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1926/stresemann-lecture.html)

“United States of Europe.”<sup>338</sup> If Stresemann’s imprint was less visible, his recent passing surely weighed heavily on the group. The relative quiet surrounding Stresemann, moreover, can be attributed to Luchaire’s virtual hold on the initial image of the group through the mouthpiece of *Notre Temps*. Abetz, then later his friend Friedrich “Fritz” Bran (1904-1994), another Karlsruhe teacher, would eventually gain the upper hand with the release of the review entitled *Sohlbergkreis* (and then the *Deutsch-Französische Monatshefte/ Cahiers franco-allemands*).<sup>339</sup> For the first meeting of the Sohlbergkreis, however, Luchaire crafted its public image, one that mirrored the Briandist face of *Notre Temps*.

The pages of *Notre Temps* bled the editors’ admiration for Briand, above all his project for a United States of Europe. Across the continent, debates raged around how to construct such an entity: the relative merits of an economic versus a political union, the place of Britain and the Soviet Union as well as the place of European colonies, the advantages (and drawbacks) of defining this Europe specifically against the power of the United States and/or the Soviet Union, the problem of sovereignty, and basic administrative questions. Poincaré had faulted Briand for his imprecision in describing such a Europe, whether “European group, federative organization of Europe, European cooperation, coordination of European activities, federal link between European states, best arrangement of a simplified Europe, regime of a federal Europe, and the rest.” The vagaries, according to Poincaré, were not merely an issue of vocabulary, but extended to

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<sup>338</sup>Wim Roobol, “Aristide Briand’s Plan: The Seed of European Unification,” in *Ideas of Europe since 1914: The Legacy of the First World War*, ed. Menno Spiering and Michael Wintle (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 32-46.

<sup>339</sup>These reviews were published by G. Braun Verlag, run by Bran’s father, also named Friedrich Bran.



the entire project itself.<sup>340</sup> Luchaire brought this already inchoate vision of a united Europe to the Sohlbergkreis though he had elsewhere elaborated precise arguments. Talks at Sohlberg, however, aimed to avoid alienating listeners and bring them closer together. Sweeping, even fuzzy statements left more room for consensus.

Sohlbergkreis leaders did not discount the importance of what Jean-Baptiste Duroselle has called the “pactomania” of the 1920s,<sup>341</sup> but they saw their effort as the flipside of the coin. In addition to political rapprochement, there needed to be a meeting of the two peoples. As much as he lauded Briand in *Notre Temps*, Luchaire stressed a very different sort of cooperation from such diplomacy at Sohlberg. Here, he proclaimed the triumph not of rapprochement but of “intellectual and sentimental nudism.”<sup>342</sup> Such figurative “nudism” referred to naked truths—to a liberation from the social conventions of national biases, a state where national identity did not override individual free will, and a democratic ethos wherein all were equal. Sohlberg participants were to bare their feelings and attain what they saw as an authentic brotherhood. *Notre Temps* took as its main lesson from Sohlberg that the “surest way to rapprochement” was through individuals.

Sohlbergkreis leaders were more than happy to align themselves with Briandist politics in *Notre Temps*. Only at the meetings themselves did they dissociate themselves from political efforts. This distancing was tied, on the one hand, to the desire to differentiate youth from their elders, and on the other, to celebrate the openness

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<sup>340</sup>PA-AA DBP 705a Press clipping. Raymond Poincaré, “Au chevet de l’Europe souffrante,” *Excelsior*, 30 May 1930. For a sense of contemporary debates more generally, see PA-AA DBP 705a and 705b.

<sup>341</sup>J. B. Duroselle, “The Spirit of Locarno: Illusions of Pactomania,” *Foreign Affairs* 50, no. 4 (July 1972): 752-764.

<sup>342</sup>“Discours Final de Jean Luchaire,” *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930. Talk delivered 3 Aug. 1930.

associated with the youth movement (and for that matter, the nudist movement). Here was the difference between the rapprochement of politicians' guile and a genuine work for understanding. It also marked the space between mere words and action. Luchaire explained, "we barely spoke of rapprochement—but rapprochement happened hour by hour in our most spiritual intimacy."<sup>343</sup>

Cécil Mardrus placed more emphasis on words and discussion to come closer to an understanding.<sup>344</sup> But, he and other leaders of Sohlberg as well as subsequent meetings agreed that what mattered was the working toward synthesis, not achieving some sort of verdict. At all of the meetings, participants purposively avoided issuing resolutions, formulating joint declarations, or establishing committees. Instead, they cared about the slow, steady work of adjusting attitudes. More than negotiations, the Sohlbergkreis provided a space for youth to improvise their way toward rapprochement. By taking the reins, youth could control the course of the future; their grassroots activism could pave the way to societal reform.

Unlike those who felt that postwar camaraderie would strengthen their own nation and accelerate the demise of the French Third Republic or the Weimar Republic they despised, members of the Sohlbergkreis, French and German alike, saw in comradeship the potential for peace. For them, group solidarity did not so much offer a chance to lash out against outsiders—as was the case in many nationalist and paramilitary organizations in both countries at the time—but instead provided an opportunity to make friends on the other side of the border. Their generation's search for community, they hoped, would

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<sup>343</sup>“Discours Final de Jean Luchaire,” *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930. Talk delivered 3 Aug. 1930.

<sup>344</sup>“Discours de C. Mardrus sur les aspects fondamentaux de la vie sociale en France,” *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930. Talk given on 30 July 1930.

extend beyond the realm of the national.<sup>345</sup> The international thrust behind the first Sohlberg Congress therefore serves as an important reminder that the youth movement in Germany was not exclusively inward-looking, *volkisch*, and reactionary.

Moreover, unlike those German youth groups whose international outreach only extended to activities to promote and strengthen the Germanness of German minority populations abroad, the Sohlbergkreis' international work revolved around transcending national difference. In the 1920s, the bulk of youth groups' international efforts revolved around *Volkstumsarbeit* in central Europe, the Baltic, and other regions with significant German populations. The West, and France in particular, were not simply off their radar, but considered objectionable. In 1929, for example, only 12 out of the 1640 members of the *Freischar* movement who traveled abroad that year visited France.<sup>346</sup> At Sohlberg, in contrast, participants from each country arrived ready to learn about life in the other.

The conference at Sohlberg did not so much turn the nationalist instruments of the youth movement on their head, by exploiting them for the purpose of encouraging international friendship, as it overturns our own assumptions about the nationalist character of the nature and youth movements. Living together in the wilderness worked to build camaraderie, whether for the typically nation-based youth groups or the motley crew that was the Sohlbergkreis. Indeed, the spirit of comradeship was strong enough at Sohlberg that there was no need for the uniforms, badges, or flags associated with youth

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<sup>345</sup>For the view of postwar camaraderie in Germany as aggressively nationalist, see, for example, George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), especially p. 167-169. For a look at contemporary French movements opposed to the Third Republic, see Soucy, *French Fascism: The First Wave*.

<sup>346</sup>Walter Z. Laqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 1962), 238-239; Tiemann, 96-97.

activism of all political persuasions; to be sure, participants at times hardly wore any clothes at all.<sup>347</sup>

A telling irony, pointed out years ago by Aline Coutrot about youth movements more generally, relates to the way in which such groups withdrew from the very society that they hoped to improve.<sup>348</sup> In the case of the Sohlbergkreis, of course, this isolation from the real world and the political crises, myths, and stereotypes that shaped it, was the clearest way in which a civil conversation could be had—and, moreover, in which the two peoples could most easily see their affinities and ability to get along. Free from the conventions of everyday life—out in the wild, removed from familiar circles of family and friends, even in a kind of limbo between France and Germany—these youth could try to work out their differences (and determine their similarities) and see whether it was possible to erect some sort of ideal society, where they could live side-by-side, at least far removed from the everyday pressures of national life. But conducting a conversation in the safety of a “lab” environment was quite different from replicating these conditions elsewhere.

### *Rethel*

Participants soon learned the impossibility of inhabiting a space outside of political reality and cultural preconceptions. They brought more of their prior assumptions and political frustrations to the Sohlbergkreis’ second major summit, held in

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<sup>347</sup>On the trappings of the youth movement, see Aline Coutrot, “Youth Movements in France in the 1930s,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 1 (1970): 23-35, see especially 31-32. Even Marc Sangnier’s *Volontaires de la Paix*, launched in 1929 as part of his “youth crusade for peace,” wore uniforms. See Gilbert Krebs, “La paix par la jeunesse: Aspects du pacifisme en France et en Allemagne entre les deux guerres mondiales,” in *Sept décennies de relations franco-allemandes: Hommage à Joseph Rovin*, ed. Gilbert Krebs (Asnières: Institut d’Allemand d’Asnières, 1989), 173-178. At Sohlberg events, some participants wore swimsuits and/or were otherwise bare-chested.

<sup>348</sup> Coutrot, 32.

the summer of 1931 at Rethel. Here, amid the battlefields of the Ardennes—about halfway between Sedan and Reims—national preoccupations, often filtered through national stereotypes, rose to the surface. At Rethel, the edges of the Sohlbergkreis began to fray, with some French participants decrying the mounting nationalism they observed in their German peers. If nationalist suspicions infiltrated even their own circle, surely they represented an escalating threat. Yet, for those at its center, such tensions signified the need to step up their efforts for cooperation.

Much of the congress proceeded like the last. French and German speakers gave twinned talks on a variety of contemporary issues. The overriding theme, “German Youth and French Youth Face the European Duty,” echoed the discussions from the previous year. Participants paid homage to the war dead, in this case by conducting a requiem service and laying wreaths at both French and German cemeteries. As at Sohlberg, the Rethel group hiked, sang, and mused over the resemblance between the French and German landscapes. They met, moreover, with gracious locals who, unlike DFG-Stuttgart branch members, had little reason to welcome their former foes to the still pockmarked, run-down region.<sup>349</sup>

Participants arrived at Rethel as envoys from various youth groups. Some, like Max Clauss, came from specifically Franco-German organizations like the Mayrisch Komité or the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft. Most attendees from France belonged to left-leaning (non-Communist) youth groups or confessional organizations; by and large, these organizations fell under the mantle of Luchaire’s new Comité d’entente. On the German side, an even wider array of associations, leagues, and clubs for young people came to the table. Moreover, Secretary General of the *Reichsausschuss Deutscher*

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<sup>349</sup>“Rethel,” *Sohlbergkreis* 1 (Sept. 1931): 3-6.

*Jugendverbände* Hermann Maass, who could claim to speak on behalf of four million constituents in over 100 youth groups, took part. Some Germans announced their affiliations by their uniforms, absent the year before at Sohlberg.<sup>350</sup>

Once participants no longer claimed autonomy as at Sohlberg, but instead served as spokespeople for various causes and ideologies, the struggle for resolution became much more difficult. Bringing in representatives of such groups may have expanded the impact of the Sohlbergkreis, but it came at the cost of achieving any synthesis. If the first encounter at Sohlberg aimed for the rapprochement of ordinary French and German people—a dialectical exchange of ideas along with the promotion of the social, emotional, and physical bonds of fellowship—the terms of later meetings made it much harder for the two peoples to meet each other halfway. As representatives of organizations and parties, participants at Rethel and later at Mainz had little space to negotiate.

The tense political and economic climate did not help matters. Anxieties about the economy (global and local) and the future direction of the German state, both in terms of Nazi electoral gains and plans for a German-Austrian customs union, suffused the conference. German speakers were clearly haunted by the economic crisis at home, though they also were surprised to see traces of destruction across the French landscape, from the fields to the towns; the region around Rethel looked particularly depressed. In fact, the recognition that both sides suffered proved one of the most important glimmers of hope for the conference.<sup>351</sup> Meanwhile, the French worried about the rising specter of

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<sup>350</sup>Weise, 61.

<sup>351</sup>Not only did it point to common ground, but French destitution had particular resonance in the context of reparations payments, which Germans found excessive, even untenable. At Rethel, some German

nationalism on the other side of the Rhine. The elections of the previous September and the *Grossdeutsch* pretensions of the projected customs union were the most telltale signs of a growing problem, which, as they recognized, would only deteriorate with continued economic woes.

At Rethel, several speakers exposed a certain defensiveness, as they tried to explain the legitimacy of their nation's perspectives. There were attempts to tamp it down, and some peacemaker types like Pierre Viénot (and for that matter Luchaire), worked hard to call attention to common ground. But this defensive posturing characterized many of the sessions and frustrated listeners almost as much as the arguments themselves. In his discussion of the economic dimension of Europe, Max Clauss of the Mayrisch Komitee, for example, urged the audience to recognize that German destitution lay behind his country's unwillingness to embrace the European union put forward by Briand. More generally, blame was placed at the feet of Versailles for encouraging the rise of the extreme right in Germany. Participants did not hide behind niceties: Germans resentfully called reparations "tribute payments," and the French denounced what they considered the entire German worldview of *Volk*.

Without a doubt, the sharpest disconnects accompanied discussions of the concept of *Volk*. French attendees could not seem to wrap their heads around the notion, at least not to the satisfaction of their German counterparts. Certainly, *Volk* seemed an alien concept at a summit based on building a new social community beyond the national; French speakers deplored the parochialism and retrogression of peering at the world through the lens of the *Volk*, whether the *Volkspartei*, *Volksgemeinschaft*, or *Volksstaat*.

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participants claimed they would return home with explanations of how the French actually needed that money. This represented a serious victory for the French.

Many Germans, in turn, were offended by such direct attacks on their cultural touchstones.

Cynicism flowed in both directions at Rethel. Germans suspected that the French pursuit of a federated Europe cloaked national ambitions, a perspective privately shared by the German Foreign Ministry. In this view, the French and the Briand Plan more particularly used the language of cooperation to try to achieve French political goals.<sup>352</sup> In Germany more broadly, conservatives tended to see French aspirations for Europe-wide hegemony embedded in various European projects, even Austro-Hungarian Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi's Paneuropa.<sup>353</sup> Of course, these precise accusations would come back to bite the Germans once the Nazis came to power. Skeptics on each side thus would see the other nation erecting a smokescreen out of the rhetoric of Europe.

Some attempts at finding common ground simply misfired. Radical journalist Bertrand de Jouvenel (1903-1987), later famous for his 1936 interview of Hitler and his attempts to win court with the Nazis, showed himself eager to please the Germans at Rethel.<sup>354</sup> As a way to kill two birds with one stone, Jouvenel suggested the Germans solve their *Lebensraum* problem through resettlement in French colonies in Africa; such a move, he contended, would also work toward the goal of Franco-German

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<sup>352</sup>PA-AA DBP 705a No. AA Vbd. 1611 Report signed [Julius] Curtius to German embassies (London, Paris, Rome, Vatican, Moscow, Madrid, Ankara) and 23 Legations/Consulates (10 June 1930). Marked "Vertraulich!" Based in Paris, Ambassador Hoesch, an instrumental force behind the Locarno negotiations, found the Berlin view of the French a bit exaggerated, see PA-AA DBP 705a No. A2166 Leopold von Hoesch, "Das Problem des europäischen Zusammenschlusses" (20 June 1930).

<sup>353</sup>Daniel C. Villanueva, "Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi's 'Pan-Europa' as the 'Elusive Object of Longing,'" *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 59, no. 2 (2005): 69.

<sup>354</sup>Jouvenel is in fact well-known for many reasons. A renowned political economist after the war, Jouvenel distanced himself from his Nazi ties. In a highly publicized 1983 case, Jouvenel sued scholar Zeev Sternhell for defamation for having called him a fascist. On the controversy, see Robert Wohl, "French Fascism, Both Right and Left: Reflections on the Sternhell Controversy," *The Journal of Modern History* 63, no. 1 (March 1991): 91-98.



understanding.<sup>355</sup> Here was a baffling proposal neither they, nor the French, would approve.

Luchaire diagnosed the problem at Rethel as, on the one hand, the German fixation with *Volk*, and, on the other hand, the French obsession with the “realization of Europe according to the French ideal.”<sup>356</sup> This butting of heads was particularly apparent throughout the twinned talks by Walter Reusch and Pierre Brossolette on foreign policy. Reusch, speaking as a “right-wing intellectual” on behalf of the National Socialists, outlined in careful, calm language a thoroughly revisionist argument, addressing the issues of reparations, German minorities, and the Polish corridor/Eastern Europe. Socialist Brossolette, who wrote for *Notre Temps*, in contrast, used his platform at Rethel to discuss the possibilities for a European Union and the threat to such opportunities posed by the “theory of the *Volk*.”<sup>357</sup>

Yet the ensuing clash of opinions did not simply break down along national lines. A German “socialist-communist” railed against Reusch’s platform, and was duly and enthusiastically applauded. Conversely, the left-leaning *Notre Temps*, likely in a bid to make Germans look less aggressive to French readers, made sure to point out that Reusch came across as “sympathetic and practical.” Here was one instance, to be repeated at future gatherings, of the ideological faultlines revealing themselves as deeper than the national. (Of course, this indicated, too, that cracks were appearing everywhere.)

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<sup>355</sup>Erich Benz, “Deutsch-französisches Jugendtreffen in Frankreich: Der Kongress von Rethel, 2.-9. August 1931,” *DFR* 4, no. 9 (1931): 784-785; John Hellman, *The Communitarian Third Way: Alexandre Marc’s Ordre Nouveau, 1930-2000* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 39.

<sup>356</sup>“Discours final de Jean Luchaire,” *Notre Temps*, 16-23 Aug. 1931. Talk delivered 9 Aug. 1931.

<sup>357</sup>Cf. “Discours de Walter Reusch sur les revendications nationales allemandes,” *Notre Temps*, 16-23 Aug. 1931. Talk delivered 7 Aug. 1931; “Discours de Pierre Brossolette sur les aspects diplomatiques de l’Union européenne,” *Notre Temps*, 16-23 Aug. 1931. Talk delivered 7 Aug. 1931.

Reusch's shrewd placement of radically nationalist arguments within a European frame did not fool many. Contending that "our thoughts relative to the autonomy of minorities and the Anschluss are truly European conceptions," was rather transparent, but it clearly seems to have lent the argument a necessary veneer of respectability; Reusch's speech at Mainz the following year would prove even more divisive, particularly along national lines.

Perhaps the oddest meeting of the minds, witnessed with great enthusiasm by Luchaire as a significant break with the past, involved the friendly relations between young French and German nationalists at Rethel. When Luchaire saw members of the *Jeunesses Patriotes* "conversing cordially" with young Nazis, he realized, in his words, the "immense resource of peace in our initiative because it succeeded in uniting in a mutual effort of comprehension young men, whom political logic would seem only to have designated to meet perhaps with arms in hand on a bloody field of barbed wire."<sup>358</sup> There is no question the Nazis and the French nationalist paramilitary organization, whose leader Pierre Taittinger had decried Locarno, attacked the notion of allowing Germany into the League of Nations, and insulted Briand, made for strange bedfellows. By 1930, however, Taittinger's escalating anti-Communism led to the Soviet Union's displacement of Germany as enemy number one; then, too, the *Jeunesses Patriotes* enjoyed a brief period of relative restraint, until the left returned to power in 1932. Some conference-goers, to be sure, wondered what either group was doing at Rethel in the first place when both had made a habit of showing up to leftist meetings only to brawl. This

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<sup>358</sup>"Discours final de Jean Luchaire," *Notre Temps*, 16-23 Aug., 1931. Speech given 9 Aug. 1931.

can perhaps in part be explained by Taittinger's fascination with Hitler<sup>359</sup> as well as general curiosity to see how the Germans were responding to the crisis of Weimar democracy. For their part, the Nazis and other German nationalists saw the Sohlbergkreis as an opportunity to advocate revisionism.

As some participants beat a path to the right, others pushed in a new direction and parted company with the Sohlbergkreis. Frustrations at Rethel led the delegation from the "third way" *Ordre Nouveau*, the journal *Plans*, and their sympathizers to break off from the Sohlbergkreis to stage their own meetings geared toward fighting capitalism, nationalism, and more specifically Hitlerism. At Rethel, they declared a new *Front unique de la jeunesse européenne*. This revolutionary front not only battled the forces of the right, but also squared off against Briandism and what they saw (at best) as the ineffectual pacifism of the left. Shortly before the third Sohlbergkreis summit, these defectors, including Alexandre Marc, Philippe Lamour, and Harro Schulze-Boysen, held a conference for European youth in Frankfurt, with the aim of constructing a European New Order.<sup>360</sup>

*Notre Temps* did not try to sugarcoat what happened at Rethel, though surely it tried to offer hope. Even at the conference itself, Luchaire acknowledged the possibility that participants "were maladroit in the choice of our words, that something in our reciprocal intentions was lost in translation, or even that we did not know exactly how to express what we felt because our sensations, being still often confused in us and too fresh to be made precise, were difficult to express to ourselves." Miscommunication had

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<sup>359</sup>Soucy, *French Fascism: The First Wave*, 82-86, 201, 209-212.

<sup>360</sup>Hellman, *The Communitarian*, 37-50; Thalmann, 70.

impeded the discovery of the “common denominator of French and German youth.”<sup>361</sup>

Erich Benz of the DFG saw a stark “want of confidence” among French attendees, similar to what their compatriots had exhibited after the war.<sup>362</sup> From this perspective, the two sides did not even attempt to achieve commensurability.

One eager participant of the Sohlbergkreis left Rethel deeply disappointed. In his twelve-column letter to Jean Luchaire published in *Notre Temps* in three installments, François Berge (also of *Notre Temps*) lamented that Rethel had consisted of an “exchange of monologues” rather than true dialogue. Conversations had not always been productive, and a number of important topics were never broached. Berge resorted to praising trifles: The songs, the prayer service for the war dead, and an auspicious rainbow moved the entire group. Berge described this as a “mirage,” whose “power was stronger than any thought, any word. In an instant, we were all standing at the windows, mute. The marvel of nature had again renewed our common soul. At that moment also we felt that we loved each other, we felt this human vibration, which for resolute hearts is the most irreproachable stimulant to work and to understanding.” Berge meant, not that a week of talk had been for naught, but that, in fact, there was still room for hope.<sup>363</sup> Reading between the lines, we can see that participants were still struck by the symbolism of what they were trying to achieve and captivated by their own daring. There, too, lay a certain force for change.

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<sup>361</sup>“Discours final de Jean Luchaire,” *Notre Temps*, 16-23 Aug. 1931. Talk delivered 9 Aug. 1931.

<sup>362</sup>Erich Benz, “Deutsch-französisches Jugendtreffen in Frankreich: Der Kongress von Rethel, 2.-9. August 1931,” *DFR* 4, no. 9 (1931): 783.

<sup>363</sup>François Berge, “Après le Congrès de Rethel. Français et Allemands face à face. Nationalité, Volkstum, Union européenne,” *Notre Temps*, 13 Sept. 1931, 20 Sept. 1931, 27 Sept. 1931. Berge would later take an ill Luchaire’s place as head of the French contingent at the Mainz encounter.

In spite of the conflicts at Rethel, some still found merit in the experience of coexistence. As part of a group of French travelers that met with a rump contingent from the Sohlbergkreis (fresh from Rethel) in the Black Forest resort village of Kniebis, the young French journalist Claude Bellanger (1910-1978) wrote to the editors of *Sohlbergkreis* in praise of their project. The simplicity of his comments is striking:

French and Germans found ourselves together, living and chatting together. We sat at the same table and discussed current problems of great importance. No one minced words. Was this not more instructive than reading the sometimes quite contradictory news in the almost always tendentious newspapers? Here we could get to know each other through personal contacts and at the same time become conversant with the most disparate opinions because each of us is free to have different convictions. But mustn't knowing each other [Sichkennen] soon turn into understanding each other [Sichverstehen]?<sup>364</sup>

As much as cracks snaked across the surface of the encounter at Rethel, alliances still formed and personal relationships developed, sometimes in surprising places.

The signal achievement of Rethel—viewed as a retreat by scholars and most participants—was to address points of contention head-on. Above all, this meant that discussions hewed to (or sometimes simply reverted to) the problems of Versailles. Although youth at Sohlberg had not ignored questions of reparations and war guilt, borders and prejudice, they worked together to try to come to terms with the other point-of-view. At Rethel, in contrast, participants were eager to show they were not soft-pedaling the issues, that they were not naïve dreamers who achieved little.

Sohlberg and Rethel, then, represented two very different steps in the integration process. As a social experiment, Sohlberg gathered youth from both nations to live, play, and learn together. There, speakers focused on legitimating the contributions of both nations, participants worked to appreciate the other's point-of-view, and all tried to

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<sup>364</sup>Excerpt of letter from Claude Bellanger, published in *Sohlbergkreis* 2 (Dec. 1931): 13.

identify points of commonality. At Rethel, participants moved to confront the problems that menaced French-German relations. Not surprisingly, this yielded a bumpier ride.

In the face of tensions at Rethel, Luchaire gave ground. For Luchaire, French-German cooperation was an essential condition for European cooperation. Under pressure, however, he admitted the need to play down his longer-term goal in recognition that participants—much less, Europeans more generally—were not yet ready for a European federation. Luchaire therefore placed his cherished United States of Europe alongside a range of “false absolutes” such as “mythomania, megalomania,” and the dreaded *Volk*. Those seeking entente needed to throw aside dogma and try harder to meet each other halfway. Above all, heightened tensions meant a need for increased engagement. “All other roads would lead us,” Luchaire explained, “to the cemeteries that marked the limits of our friendly walks.”<sup>365</sup>

Years later, Abetz wrote that Rethel ended in a “big question mark.” For Abetz, the questions were multiple: “Could a good German renounce equality of rights for his people? A good Frenchman abandon his right to security? Or would there not be enough place in Europe for the development of two states, powerful and conscious of themselves, both in full economic prosperity?”<sup>366</sup> All of these questions, of course, led back to Versailles and rehashed the same doubts, fears, and debates that had cast their shadow over the last decade.

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<sup>365</sup>“Discours final de Jean Luchaire,” *Notre Temps*, 16-23 Aug. 1931. Talk delivered 9 Aug. 1931.

<sup>366</sup>Abetz, *Histoire*, 30.

## Mainz

A giant poster calling, in French, “for the disarmament of nations” hung over the main hall of the citadel in Mainz for the third summit of the Sohlbergkreis in March of 1932. Jean Carlu’s iconic photomontage of an enormous shell hurtling toward a shocked woman cradling a screaming baby did not sit well with all attendees.<sup>367</sup> Some French participants had brought the poster, recently created on behalf of Carlu’s own Office of Graphic Propaganda for Peace and the Action Committee for the League of Nations, to the Franco-German congress. Its pacifist and universalist message—the heads of the mother and child were superimposed on a globe—clashed with the overall tone of the conference. Indeed, the citadel itself proved a more appropriate symbol of the conference, as the French and Germans each drew back toward their own camps to defend their national positions.

Barbara Lambauer suggests that one of the markers that “Sohlberg’s time had passed” by the encounter at Mainz related to the shift to an urban setting.<sup>368</sup> While there is no doubt that, by 1932, the character of the Sohlbergkreis had transformed, the choice of locale mattered for quite a different reason than Lambauer has suggested. Her argument risks implying that Sohlberg had originally been anti-urban or even anti-modern, which, as we have seen, it was decidedly not. The more germane issue regarding a change in venue relates to the fact that the third summit was originally slated for Aachen, not Mainz; we do not know why this plan altered. All sites considered for the Sohlbergkreis—Mainz’s citadel, Aachen, Strasbourg, Rethel, and to a lesser extent

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<sup>367</sup>In his memoirs, Abetz attributed the poster to Paul Colin; Barbara Unteutsch followed suit. See Abetz, *Histoire*, 3; Unteutsch, 75. Descriptions in the *Sohlbergkreis* as well as in Abetz’s book, however, surely match the famed 1932 Carlu poster.

<sup>368</sup>Lambauer, 39.

Sohlberg itself—proved symbolically charged. French occupying forces had used the Mainz citadel as their base until they left the Rhineland in 1930.<sup>369</sup> In the best light, the citadel represented the potential for equality and the end of dominance by one side over the other. A more cynical perspective would attribute the choice of Mainz's citadel—then home to the Institut für Völkerpädagogik—as an assertion of bald-faced nationalism, especially when contrasted to traditional connotations of Aachen as a capital of Europeanness and French-German unity.<sup>370</sup>

At Mainz, the Sohlbergkreis became a venue for asserting national differences and staking out national interests. Accordingly, from the perspective of cooperation, what mattered at Mainz was not so much the content of the arguments made—they were not particularly innovative and tended to replicate standard national or party stances—but the ways in which conference-goers debated. Though some conference-goers looked for openings to bring the two nations closer, many stubbornly proclaimed their nationally-grounded arguments and held that line, leaving no room for maneuver. Tempers sometimes flared, leaving hope in the ashes. Participants hewed more to the spirit of Rethel than Sohlberg, and quite clearly had fallen sway to Gustav Mittelstrass' idea of the group's national agenda. The meeting at Mainz involved more representatives of the extreme right—notably the addition of members of the Hitler Youth and Gustave Hervé's National Socialist Youth—which without doubt shaped the sometimes-hostile climate.

Indeed, attendees at Mainz violated the informal compact that had governed at Sohlberg: generational solidarity and the rapprochement of peoples. Although they paid

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<sup>369</sup> After the Second World War, the citadel served as headquarters for the French High Commission's Cultural Bureau.

<sup>370</sup> Tiemann, 125.



lip service to some of the ideas of Sohlberg, such as the “collective consciousness of youth” and “collective responsibility” for “Franco-German relations,” the language and the attitudes at Mainz showed a marked difference from the first encounter, above all through the hardening into national camps. Merely the emphasis on “relations” rather than solidarity (much less intellectual nudism) offered striking evidence of a sharper turn toward national sensibilities than at Rethel. The *Sohlbergkreis* issue devoted to Mainz opened with an expression of German national unity: “We felt in Mainz—from those on the right to those on the left—as the youth of one *Volk* and had therefore undertaken together the encounter with the other nation.”<sup>371</sup> Even after enjoying concerts, attendees at Mainz resorted to discussing the place of the nation: was music universal such that there could be “international comprehension” or in fact was there “an absolute national stance” in musical composition?<sup>372</sup> National solidarity seemed to trump international cooperation; the two were no longer mutually reinforcing.

At Mainz, organizers had tried to balance the cultural and political. As at Rethel, discussions revolved around the most controversial issues of the day, including Versailles, reparations, and borders. But they also had incorporated more cultural events—from mounting a book fair and both French and German art exhibits to attending the Goethe anniversary festivities in Frankfurt. Planners had hoped these cultural activities, along with a passing fancy to restructure the meeting into small group discussions, might help avoid friction. But, in the end, the entire Sohlbergkreis gathered together to listen to talks on a variety of subjects and then argue over them.

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<sup>371</sup>“Die dritte deutsch-französische Begegnung,” *Sohlbergkreis* 3-4 (May 1932): 4. Although Abetz’s name alone appeared on the *Sohlbergkreis*, Fritz Bran explained in a 1985 interview with Barbara Unteutsch that the articles were a collective enterprise. Unteutsch, 78, 266.

<sup>372</sup>“Die Musik,” *Sohlbergkreis* 3-4 (May 1932): 26.

The idea of rapprochement, however loosely used, fell to the wayside. Briand had passed away just a couple of weeks before the encounter, but the Sohlbergkreis held no memorial for him at Mainz. Luchaire's absence due to a severe cold likely accounts for some of the lack of deference paid to the hero of Locarno, but the overriding atmosphere would not have been conducive to honoring Briand in any case. Rather than uniting the group, a pilgrimage to a monument to Stresemann had highlighted internal divisions (in this case ideological) when only left-leaning participants from both nations took part. Now, not only were they not talking about rapprochement as at Sohlberg, they were not practicing it either.

The summit's tone veered from hostile to courteous to conciliatory. A talk on German unemployment and poverty by socialist pastor Heinz Kappes, who had led the fire ceremony at Sohlberg, moved the French audience. A visit to a local work camp then consolidated sympathies for the German plight.<sup>373</sup> Kappes' efforts likely played more of a role in persuading some of the French to concede points on the reparations issue than did one German's more vituperative rant that the Germans no longer wanted to be a "tributary slave people" to the French. Another German sharply accused the French of having launched an economic "war" against his people, then faulted the French for German suffering.<sup>374</sup>

Representing the Nazi German Student League, Walter Reusch, who had touched off arguments at Rethel, managed to alienate even those French most inclined to mediate. Reusch proclaimed the need for the revision of Versailles, a new order, and *Lebensraum*,

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<sup>373</sup>Hans Hartmann, "Die Jugend baut Brücken! Das dritte deutsch-französische Jugendtreffen auf der Mainzer Zitadelle," *DFR* 5, no. 5 (1932): 367-368.

<sup>374</sup>"Reparationen," *Sohlbergkreis* 3-4 (May 1932): 20; "Weltwirtschaft und soziale Krise," *Sohlbergkreis* 3-4 (May 1932): 12.

but it was his contentions about Alsace that most aggravated French listeners. Reusch argued that Locarno had settled the Alsatian question on a political level, but that the French still had to give in on a cultural level so Alsations could enjoy their place within the “German *Kulturgemeinschaft*.” Up in arms, the French retorted that Alsace was an issue of domestic politics only. In an artful understatement, one Frenchman pointed out that he thought he detected a note of pan-Germanism (in French eyes, an atrocity) in Reusch’s talk. In vain, German writer Hans Hartmann tried to find a solution amenable to all.<sup>375</sup>

Angry outbursts were thus matched by attempts at negotiating and even understanding. François Berge, a lecturer at the University of Heidelberg who led the French contingent in Luchaire’s place, sought to rectify some of the problems he had rued at Rethel. To help avoid misunderstandings, for example, he advocated more rhetorical precision. To a similar end, the group proposed a concrete project to develop a specialized French-German dictionary of abstract, thorny concepts important for the issues of the day, including “Volkstum, Zivilisation, Heimat, sécurité.”<sup>376</sup> With such a dictionary in hand, relations between the two nations, whether within the framework of the Sohlbergkreis or more broadly, would be easier to navigate. Some participants envisioned more elaborate plans, such the slow path to disarmament, or notably, a European army. Even Abetz showed qualified support for such a European army, but for him, the Germans first needed to secure equal rights with other states. Germans,

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<sup>375</sup>“Die Revision der Friedensverträge,” *Sohlbergkreis* 3-4 (May 1932): 16-19.

<sup>376</sup>“Krise,” *Sohlbergkreis* 3-4 (May 1932): 5; “Das Schrifttum,” *Sohlbergkreis* 3-4 (May 1932): 23.

including Abetz, showed themselves to be revisionists, interested in overturning Versailles, though he surely came across as more moderate than most.<sup>377</sup>

Without doubt, divisions in the Sohlbergkreis had deepened. The extreme right had not hijacked the organization, but these voices tended to drown out those seeking compromise. To be fair, two representatives of Hervé's National Socialist Youth tried to show that some of the French population remained open to conciliation; they played a conspicuous role in accepting the bulk of the German nationalist platform. German nationalists, however, undercut the work of the Sohlbergkreis by their insistent demands and their refusal to negotiate. Notwithstanding such discord, plenty in the group still believed the effort worthwhile and earnestly strived to find common ground. Hans Hartmann, for one, thought that certain discussions on reparations and the revision of Versailles had yielded important compromises; due to participants' political connections and their broader influence among youth in both nations, the Sohlbergkreis might wield the power to change the future. Moreover, both sides had learned much about the other's culture in those few days at Mainz.<sup>378</sup> In addition, living together side-by-side still held value. The tolerance Luchaire had championed since the first meeting at Sohlberg went a long way toward keeping the minds of some participants open, even as some came to the conference at Mainz already convinced of the superiority of their national perspective.

### *1933: A Time to Adjust?*

The 1933 Nazi takeover of Germany would lead to the further fragmentation of the Sohlbergkreis on the French side, and its consolidation on the German. For French

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<sup>377</sup>It may be, as Ray argues, that in fact Abetz *was* more moderate than many in attendance at Mainz. Ray, 70.

<sup>378</sup>Hartmann, *Jugend*, 369.

proponents of cooperation, the nagging question beloved by their adversaries—should we seek cooperation with our dangerous foe?—now suddenly seemed appropriate to ask. In an article in one of the last issues of the *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau*, Bertrand de Jouvenel made the choice look easy: “Democratic Germany is dead. Do we still want the French-German accord? We must do it with nationalist Germany. Is it easy? No. Is it possible? Yes.”<sup>379</sup> But not everyone saw the merit in upholding the principles for which they had been fighting under these new circumstances.

Doubts about the venture struck even the Sohlbergkreis’ most diehard proponents. Secretary General of the Comité d’Entente André Weil-Curiel recalled telling his close friend Abetz—who was contemplating not only dropping the initiative but emigrating to France—that he needed to help the group stay the course:

It’s not at the moment when Franco-German relations threaten to get spoiled that we should abandon our work, I told him. We don’t need another émigré here [in France], but men like you who can explain to your compatriots that the French are not all ogres who want to devour Germany, that we are happy to work for the redressing of the most glaring injustices Germany is complaining about and that cleared the way for Hitler. If we obtain satisfaction for you, we can hope to see your crisis of nationalism fade and the measures of defiance that Hitler is taking right now against the Jews (because he has nothing better to sink his teeth into) could without a doubt be rescinded. If you feel the courage to work in this way, it’s necessary that you stay.<sup>380</sup>

Weil-Curiel’s advice did not go unheeded. Soon Abetz resumed arranging the next Sohlbergkreis conference, and he did not look backward.

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<sup>379</sup>Bertrand de Jouvenel, “Mort de l’Allemagne démocratique,” *DFR* 6, no. 4 (April 1933): 218. Jouvenel was referring the revision of Versailles in general and, more specifically to Mussolini’s proposal for a four-power pact, a proposal backed by, among others, Jouvenel’s father Henry de Jouvenel, the French ambassador to Italy. See Raymond Poidevin and Jacques Bariéty, *Les relations franco-allemandes, 1815-1975* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1977), 289.

<sup>380</sup>André Weil-Curiel, *Éclipse en France. Le Temps de la Honte*, vol. 2 (Paris: Éditions du Myrte, 1946), 125.

In short order, Abetz seemed to have forgotten his reluctance to continue the Sohlbergkreis and instead sought to expand it with the new regime's stamp of approval. His ties to France had raised red flags with the Nazi administration, which presumed him to be a spy. Moreover, on 5 March 1933, Abetz was stripped of his duties as head of the confederation of Karlsruhe youth groups, in keeping with the regime's nationwide absorption of most youth groups.<sup>381</sup> Abetz accordingly moved quickly to assert his national loyalties, in particular by inquiring about the possibility of opening up the Sohlbergkreis to Belgians.<sup>382</sup> The expansion of the enterprise to Belgium might assuage concerns that its (and his own) special relationship to France signified a dangerous connection to notions of liberty, equality, and fraternity, anathema to the new German regime. Furthermore, though seemingly paradoxically, lending the Sohlbergkreis a more European air would make it appear more geared toward a German nationalist project. Belgium was a particularly smart choice in light of Germany's revisionist goals in Eupen-Malmédy.

That spring, Abetz joined officials at the German Foreign Ministry and the Paris Embassy for a complex dance to determine the fate of the Sohlbergkreis. Abetz did not know what to expect from the new regime, which had yet to establish its strategies for foreign policy.<sup>383</sup> In these first weeks therefore, the Sohlbergkreis' place in the new order (if any) remained entirely unclear. It was Abetz who took the initiative to enlist support from Nazi officialdom, which conflicts, not surprisingly, with the account in his

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<sup>381</sup>Michael H. Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 19-28.

<sup>382</sup>Lambauer, 59-60.

<sup>383</sup>The Nazi administration first turned its focus to domestic affairs. Gerhard L. Weinberg, *The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany: Diplomatic Revolution in Europe 1933-36* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970; Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1994) 12, 29, 32-33.

memoirs.<sup>384</sup> Although the Sohlbergkreis had scheduled an Easter encounter for Paris, German officials counseled Abetz to let the meeting drop because the timing was “inopportune;” moreover, they feared German participants might betray (unwittingly or not) a degree of dissension with regard to the new regime. Abetz, however, managed to convince the authorities that canceling with the French altogether might set off “alarm bells” that the Nazi regime wanted to put a stop to Weimar’s *Verständigungspolitik*. As Abetz played it, Germans had major public relations work ahead to show “the true character of the Hitler movement” and “today’s Germany” to the world.<sup>385</sup> Together, officials and Abetz reached a compromise in delaying the Sohlbergkreis summit until the fall, and in the interim, holding a more intimate encounter in Paris in April.

When it came to organizing the Paris meeting, Abetz went out of his way to please the Nazi administration. He quickly informed the German Embassy of his plan, one that pledged to forward official policy. “To avoid any misunderstandings” at the April Sohlbergkreis meeting, Abetz would personally select a crew of about ten Germans who “stand strongly behind the new regime.” These, Abetz assured the authorities, he would apprise of government guidelines prior to the meeting so there could be the appearance of a united German front. This small team would address a larger French contingent, made up of journalists, editors, and writers able to influence public opinion; in this way, Abetz hoped to forestall a smear campaign in the French press. These included a handful from *Notre Temps* as well as individuals such as Alfred Fabre-Luce (1899-1983), Pierre Drieu la Rochelle (1893-1945), and Bertrand de Jouvenel. In the

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<sup>384</sup>Cf. Abetz, *Histoire*, 34-36; PA-AA DBP 1050/1 No. DBP B 624 Abetz to Köster (23 Feb. 1933—though incorrectly marked as 23 March 1933) and, more generally, Thalmann, 67-86.

<sup>385</sup>PA-AA DBP 1050/1 zu B. 795, Ang. 2 Aktenvermerk, signed Forster (21 March 1933).

interest of maintaining “valuable connections to young France,”<sup>386</sup> the Paris meeting also included French representatives of a variety of left-leaning or confessional youth groups—among them the French University Group for the League of Nations, Marc Sangnier’s Sillon, and the Ligue d’Action Universitaire Républicaine et Socialiste (Republican and Socialist League of University Action, LAURS). In addition, two members of Gustave Hervé’s National Socialist Youth took part.

At the Paris meeting of the Sohlbergkreis, both the French and the Germans seemed on the surface amenable to new perspectives. The French side listened to information and corrections about the new regime “furnished” by the German contingent; the German side acknowledged the status of Alsace-Lorraine as French, stating that the new regime, like the old, accepted the Locarno accords.<sup>387</sup> This Sohlbergkreis event unfolded as a (closed doors) press conference. Though it did not resemble the bilateral encounters of the past, the question and answer session served French attendees’ needs of the day. All present wanted to know what was transpiring across the Rhine, and why young Germans had turned to Nazism.

The meeting in Paris demonstrated the degree to which Abetz and the German contingent had adopted the Nazi line wholesale. The information they spouted to their French counterparts—on rearmament, minorities and borderlands—clearly replicated the party line without apology. They made clear the regime’s aspirations to unite the German people in Austria, Danzig and the Polish Corridor, the Saar, and Upper Silesia into one state. They even explained resentment against Jews as a function of their association with

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<sup>386</sup>PA-AA DBP 1050/1 B 1044 Abetz to Forster (2 April 1933); PA-AA DBP 1050/1 No. DBP B 1141 Abetz to Botschaftsrat Dr. Forster (9 April 1933).

<sup>387</sup>PA-AA DBP 1050/1 B 1221/25 Pressecommuniqué (April 1933).



the “system of 1918-1933” seen as “an instrument of execution by the victorious powers of 1918.” But they also played up their peaceful intentions toward Europe (bashing pacifists—who made up a chunk of the French contingent—all the while). In the course of spinning the new regime to their French audience, the Germans took care to contextualize it with reference to the French revolutionary tradition; in the German case, however, revolution had been humane, “legal and bloodless.”<sup>388</sup>

Abetz reported the Paris meeting as a success to the German administration. The French, he explained, listened carefully and seemed open to German ideas. What is more, the Sohlbergkreis could serve as a useful means by which to influence the French press in the future, whether via existing personal contacts, letters, or talks.<sup>389</sup> In this way, he opened up the Sohlbergkreis to its instrumentalization.

It is difficult to judge why Abetz drew the attention of Nazi officialdom to the Sohlbergkreis and its potential utility for the new regime. Was it a way to ensure the life of the project to which he had devoted the last few years of his life? Did he hope to serve the Nazi regime as effectively as possible? Or had he in fact always considered the Sohlbergkreis as a vehicle for promoting the German image abroad? In all probability, it was a combination of these factors; they need not be considered incompatible. Whereas there is no real evidence pointing to Abetz as a devotee of Nazism at that point, there is no doubt he chose to work alongside the Nazi administration from an early date. Where we see this as a momentous decision, he likely did not.

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<sup>388</sup>PA-AA DBP 1050/1 B 138433 Denkschrift des Sohlbergkreises zur Pariser Aussprache vom 21./22. April 1933. Signed Otto Abetz.

<sup>389</sup>Ibid.

Abetz had likewise made clear to the Weimar administration his desire to serve German interests. In a private conversation which began as a quest for funds, the leaders of the German contingent revealed a purpose behind the Sohlbergkreis that would have stunned its French constituents. A couple of months before Rethel, Abetz sent a report to several government offices explaining that the Sohlbergkreis acted as a “false front” [Blendwerk] to mask its advocacy of German interests. The Sohlbergkreis therefore took on a public relations function in the West reminiscent of the *Volkstumsarbeit* other youth groups undertook in the East, whether in Central Europe, the Balkans, or the Baltic. The Sohlbergkreis would help present the German point-of-view to the French.<sup>390</sup> Abetz thereby built on the precedent of Gustav Mittelstrass in trying to curry favor with the Weimar administration, at least when in search of monetary support. In similar fashion, Fritz Bran made sure to welcome the new German ambassador in Paris in 1932 with a letter introducing the work of the Sohlbergkreis. As he explained, the Sohlbergkreis did not follow “some formula for understanding” but worked “without illusions” for the two peoples to get to know one another. Bran spelled out the group’s utility, most particularly for the German government: “Our goal is the objective, sober instruction of young Germany for the reality of foreign affairs. It would be our pleasure to be of use to your great diplomatic mission.”<sup>391</sup>

By the summit at Rethel, the organizers of the Sohlbergkreis had shown their adeptness at making cooperation palatable to wholly different groups. The leaders of Sohlberg did a masterful job creating a community around the notion of generational

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<sup>390</sup>For a discussion of this memo from 30 April 1931, see Tiemann, 117-118. The Deutsche Akademie, which promoted the German language abroad, had a similar goal at the time. See Eckard Michels, “Deutsch als Weltsprache? Franz Thierfelder, the Deutsche Akademie in Munich, and the Promotion of the German Language Abroad, 1923-1945,” *German History* 22, no. 2 (2004): 218.

<sup>391</sup>PA-AA DBP 1050/1 No. DBP B3691 Fritz A. Bran to Roland Köster (25 Nov. 1932).

solidarity to defeat Franco-German enmity. But they also managed to gain the nominal support of first the Weimar, then the Nazi authorities. A complex game of doubletalk did not preclude Sohlbergkreis organizers from being devout proponents of cooperation. Ties to both German regimes—and the wish to further national interests must not be seen as undercutting Abetz’s dedication to the Sohlbergkreis or better relations with the French. Abetz was and had been firmly committed to the revision of Versailles, the solidarity of the “realist generation,” and the potential for France and Germany to work together toward a better European future.<sup>392</sup>

Though scholars disagree on their overall evaluation of Abetz, they agree upon his political acuity and diplomatic panache. His flair for calibrating his language and actions to suit his interlocutors veil when, how quickly, (and, for some, if at all) Abetz turned into an avid supporter of the Nazi regime. But it is clear that, in France, those who began to object to the Sohlbergkreis in 1933 did not have Abetz in mind. To those who quickly made their case against the Sohlbergkreis public like Victor Basch, head of the French League of Human Rights, the problem with the organization lay in its openness to all voices from Germany, including the National Socialists. Infuriated, Basch decried that

young Hitlerians returned to Berlin and could say that there is only one non-fascist country where they were cordially welcomed and understood with sympathy and that country is France, and in France [it is] the youth, and among those youth, the flower of the left and the pacifists! What an unexpected vindication and what magnificent encouragement to persevere!<sup>393</sup>

In addition, the League of Human Rights issued a statement in May 1933 announcing that its members “could not conceive of useful collaboration between pacifist groups from

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<sup>392</sup>Cf. For a public statement of his stance toward France in early 1933, see Otto Abetz, “Deutsche Jugend zwischen West und Ost,” *DFR* 6, no. 2 (Feb. 1933): 128-132.

<sup>393</sup>PA-AA DBP 1050/1 Press Clipping. Victor Basch, “Paix ou démocratie,” *La Volonté*, 14 May 1933.

France and representatives of Hitler's movement."<sup>394</sup> For now, the focus remained on those openly tied to the Nazi Party, which Abetz was not.

For those pacifists like Basch, who voiced their opposition to working with the Nazis at an early date, law, justice, and democracy trumped the value of peace.<sup>395</sup> They had urged the Germans to turn away from fascism,<sup>396</sup> but had been disappointed.

Meanwhile, LAURS, with the full support of the French branch of the League of Human Rights, made clear its independence from the French half of the Sohlbergkreis. What is more, the Catholic Association of French Youth pulled out of the Comité d'Entente.<sup>397</sup>

In contrast, Luchaire wanted to continue working for some sort of rapprochement with Germany. He believed that Germans, and particularly young Germans, had turned to Nazism because democracy had failed them; they were entitled to try something new, and above all, he wrote, "everyone is entitled to peace."<sup>398</sup> That same month, May 1933, Luchaire explained the need to spurn "the politics of barbed wire, of intellectual, diplomatic, and economic excommunication."<sup>399</sup> Interaction offered a smarter approach than isolation. Many agreed. Hoping to abide by the spirit of goodwill that had animated the Sohlbergkreis encounters, and (for many) in the belief that the National-Socialist government would prove short-lived, some French members believed they should stay

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<sup>394</sup>As quoted in Emmanuel Naquet, "Éléments pour l'étude d'une génération pacifiste dans l'entre-deux-guerres: La LAURS et le rapprochement franco-allemand (1924-1933)," *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* no. 18 (Jan.-March 1990): 57.

<sup>395</sup>Followers of "old-style pacifism" tended to defend these values over peace in the 1930s. Norman Ingram, *The Politics of Dissent: Pacifism in France, 1919-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 121.

<sup>396</sup>Gorguet, 220-221.

<sup>397</sup>PA-AA DBP 1050/1 Bericht Pariser Reise Abetz 22.-28. Oktober 1933. Signed Abetz (31 Oct. 1933).

<sup>398</sup>Jean Luchaire as quoted in Alden, 93.

<sup>399</sup>Jean Luchaire as quoted in Naquet, 57.

the course. It would be precipitous to put at risk the personal bonds forged in the crucible of Sohlberg, much less its spirit of inquiry and its model for seeking rapprochement between peoples.

As the battle lines were being drawn, more changes ensued. Facing opposition at home for what Abetz called his “courageous” efforts on behalf of Germany in the French press, Luchaire was replaced by the relatively fresh-faced journalist and Sohlbergkreis alumni Bertrand de Jouvenel, a young Turk with ties to both the Radical Party and diplomatic circles, who was willing to welcome the French radical right to the nest.<sup>400</sup> That year, too, Abetz was replaced as director of the Sohlbergkreis by Friedrich Bran, newly of the Party, though Abetz would remain on board as its manager.

On the German side, the Sohlbergkreis had gone from practicing rapprochement of peoples to engaging in rapprochement the way politicians saw it: conciliation in the name of one’s own national interests.<sup>401</sup> The French contingent was more fragmented and simply unsure of how to handle the new Germany. Some supporters of French-German cooperation execrated the Nazi regime, and with it, the Sohlbergkreis which seemed to have fallen under its wing. Many adopted a wait-and-see approach, while others advocated the pursuit of peace. In this way, the cooperation pursued by the Sohlbergkreis, in the end, was not so different from the Mayrisch Komitee or the DFG; many sought cooperation on their nation’s terms rather than from a purely disinterested wish to mediate.

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<sup>400</sup>PA-AA DBP 1050/1 Bericht Pariser Reise Abetz 22.-28. Oktober 1933. Signed Abetz (31 Oct. 1933); PA-AA DBP 1050/1 No. B3295 Abetz to Legationsrat Dr. Kühn (18 Nov. 1933). In fact, both Luchaire and Jouvenel had by then already faced accusations of being (paid) German agents. See Alden, 92.

<sup>401</sup>See, for example, Edward D. Keeton, “Economics and Politics in Briand’s German Policy, 1925-1931,” in *German Nationalism and the European Response, 1890-1945*, eds. Carole Fink, Isabel V. Hull and MacGregor Knox (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 157-180.

## *Conclusion*

The group's first summit at Sohlberg had proved its highpoint. Scholars agree that each meeting of the Sohlbergkreis exhibited the growing influence of radical nationalism and the deterioration of French-German relations.<sup>402</sup> They are not wrong, and a number of contemporaries similarly lamented what they viewed as a backward slide. The centripetal tendencies pulling together French and German youth—the memory of war, the idea of Locarno—were contending with the centrifugal forces of nationalism and economic collapse. Deepening divisions, internationally and domestically, politically and economically, did not bode well for the project of cooperation. Indeed, they underscore the immense challenge undertaken by these interwar groups (whether the Sohlbergkreis, the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft, or the Mayrisch Komitee) in the first place.

For the Sohlbergkreis more particularly, internal factors did not make this confrontation any smoother. The Sohlbergkreis had never coalesced into an ideologically united front; in fact, participants saw their diverse backgrounds as a strong suit. But precisely because it drew from such divergent sources, the group could not hold together well in the face of powerful external forces, and even its most basic platform of cross-border youth solidarity never sufficiently gelled. If at first it was too broad-based, the Sohlbergkreis soon suffered from having too many participants coming from positions of intransigence.

Created in 1930 at the end of the age of Locarno<sup>403</sup> with its first meeting on the heels of the French evacuation of the Rhineland, the Sohlbergkreis exemplifies both

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<sup>402</sup>Lambauer, 24-44; Thalmann, 67-86; Unteutsch, 52-77.

<sup>403</sup>Franz Knipping has argued that the Locarno era collapsed over five stages from 1928-1931. If the summer of 1929 marked a temporary upswing and witnessed the era's "most concrete results," it was

Locarno's promise and its fragility. The replacement of Stresemann with von Bülow in the Foreign Ministry was perhaps the most obvious sign of the swing to the harder nationalist right in German foreign policy; this change in tone, of course, also echoed in the legislature following the September 1930 elections, six weeks after Sohlberg. But even though the policy of rapprochement was on the wane, the so-called spirit of Locarno was alive and well among many ordinary citizens in both France and Germany. 1930 not only saw the height of the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft, but it also witnessed the birth of a group of youths devoted to bringing about rapprochement from the bottom up. At the same time, the growing involvement of openly nationalist youth in the Sohlbergkreis—ostensibly dedicated to the cause of European youth—revealed precisely how tenuous the Franco-German bonds of Locarno were.

Equally important, the Sohlbergkreis demonstrates the flexibility and durability of the message of Franco-German cooperation, which did not disappear with the end of the Locarno era in 1930/1931. Although the succession of meetings became increasingly strained as national forces took hold, Sohlbergkreis participants persisted in their efforts even after the Nazi takeover in Germany. Objections to the nationalist turn within the Sohlbergkreis did not lead to its demise. Though some left the circle, numerous French participants felt encouraged to redouble their efforts. If anything, these changes attracted new blood. Within Luchaire's "experiment" could be seen new elements and what future observers would describe as a more noxious odor. But the experiment carried on, with proponents of peace (of all persuasions) mixing and learning to live together, perhaps even to like each other.

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followed by a steep decline in Franco-German relations. See especially, Knipping, 220-224. Hermann Hagspiel has dated the end of Locarno *Verständigungspolitik* to 1929. See Hagspiel, 4-5.

Not only, then, did the Sohlbergkreis forge important personal bonds that would endure multiple tests, but perhaps more crucially, it stretched an already elastic notion of cooperation. Abetz and Luchaire, among others, remained so fixated on cooperation that they closed their eyes to the escalating problems within the group. In the face of adversity and evolving geopolitical circumstances, their focus on the goal, however, led them to accommodate new ideas and even reframe cooperation. Their conceptual recalibration created a flexible moral and intellectual framework, which, when readjusted for the realities of the German occupation, allowed these personal relationships to transform into collaboration.

Luchaire rejoiced that at Sohlberg they discovered, “that the youth of France feels identical to the youth of Germany about many essential points—this is an exceedingly valuable, exceedingly substantial pledge of collaboration.”<sup>404</sup> Only in retrospect, of course, can we see the irony in Luchaire’s excitement. It is important to remember that the term “collaboration” did not did not drip with contempt in either language until 1940, in the wake of Montoire.<sup>405</sup> Luchaire’s report instead burst with hope for entente, and within it lay the kernel of Henri Lichtenberger’s message about finding common ground.<sup>406</sup> In analogous situations, with similar perspectives and responses, the Germans and the French could find themselves working together. Like Lichtenberger, and above all Otto Grautoff, Luchaire pled for his audience to cease thinking in oppositions. Instead he encouraged Sohlbergkreis participants “to consider the characteristics that we saw

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<sup>404</sup>PA-AA R98888 Press clipping. Jean Luchaire, “Une expérience franco-allemande: Deux jeunes générations qui se ressemblent,” *La Volonté*, 9 Aug. 1930.

<sup>405</sup>Philippe Burrin, *France under the Germans*, 3-4.

<sup>406</sup>Henri Lichtenberger, “Psychologie du Rapprochement Franco-Allemand,” *Revue d’Allemagne*, no. 23 (Sept. 1929): 769-784.



until now as opposed as complementary.”<sup>407</sup> They could now abolish the abstractions of Frenchness and Germanness by meeting living, breathing young people, more or less akin to themselves, with similar anxieties and dreams.

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<sup>407</sup>“Discours final de Jean Luchaire,” *Notre Temps*, 10 Aug. 1930. Speech given 3 Aug. 1930.

## PART TWO

### Maintaining a Franco-German Community, 1933-1944

Such is the generosity of the French people, so strong its faith in the eternal and indestructible nature of mankind, that it's no surprise to see it, in all innocence, trusting in the eventual victory of humanity, continuing with the student exchange program, as if Germany were still Germany, the way France is still France, as if the language of the Third Reich were still a German language that one could and ought to learn—and not the barbarous stammering and whining it has become ....

No, if French children want to learn German, there is a country where they've spoken good German since the days of Walther von der Vogelweide; and the country is Austria....

So let people set up a Franco-Austrian children's exchange! In Austria the children of France will learn a true, a free German! And their young souls will not have to struggle with the weight of having seen a country that smells of arson and murder: an un-German land.—Joseph Roth<sup>408</sup>

Shortly after Bertrand de Jouvenel advocated the continuation of Franco-German efforts at cooperation, the Austrian journalist Joseph Roth issued a withering critique of French-German exchanges in the German exile press. For Roth, it was a question of morality. Hitler's rise to power had dramatically transformed the meaning and implications of French-German cooperation. If Franco-German cooperation was far from a natural inclination in the Weimar era, it became even more complicated after 1933.

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<sup>408</sup>Joseph Roth, *Report from a Parisian Paradise: Essays from France 1925-1939*. Translated and with an introduction by Michael Hofmann (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 219-220. Roth's article originally appeared in *Das Neue Tage-Buch* (29 July 1933). On the role of *Das Neue Tage-Buch* among the German émigré community as well as its influence in Europe more generally, see Hans-Albert Walter, "Leopold Schwarzschild and the *Neue Tage-Buch*," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1, no. 2 (1966): 103-116.

While the Weimar-era project for cooperation had been fraught with doubts, fears, and tensions, the Nazi rise to power exacerbated these misgivings. The stakes, moreover, were higher. On the one hand, as Roth made clear, new moral qualms had entered into the equation; on the other hand, war seemed even more imminent. For the French at least, as Eugen Weber has written, the 1930s were a “nightmare of fear,” bursting with anxieties about a war to come.<sup>409</sup> Cooperation thus held a certain allure.

For the French, the issue had long revolved around whether seeking cooperation was appropriate; now, those who had championed French-German cooperation under Weimar had to ask whether it remained a righteous cause with the National Socialists in power. This question regularly surfaced among champions of cooperation throughout the 1930s, only to take an even sharper edge once the two nations were at war, and especially after the French defeat.

As early as 1932, a French army intelligence report broadcast to the Foreign Ministry and other government bodies the dangers posed by Hitler—citing, for example, a passage from *Mein Kampf* about how “the annihilation of France is the only way to ensure the greatest expansion possible for our people.” French intelligence issued similarly alarming reports on German rearmament and mobilization as well as domestic repression and indoctrination quite regularly after Hitler’s seizure of power. Even Pierre Viénot, formerly of the Mayrisch Komitee, now a Radical Deputy, submitted a careful report to the Quai d’Orsay and the Chamber of Deputies’ Foreign Affairs Commission about the dangers to France of the German situation. The Nazis had turned Viénot away

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<sup>409</sup>Eugen Weber, *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 237-256.

from the pursuit of rapprochement.<sup>410</sup> Those without access to internal government documents were also confronted with exposés and denunciations of the Nazi menace. As we have seen, some of the leading French pacifists, most notably Victor Basch, publicly decried Nazism from an early date.

Yet, the resonance of such reports was weak. For many, including French Ambassador André François-Poncet, the foreign policy aims of Hitler's state did not appear fundamentally different from those of other chancellors since Versailles. François-Poncet remained supportive of attempts for French-German cooperation throughout his tenure in Berlin, which is to say through 1938. And French civilian leadership, in line with the bulk of the broader public, wished itself into believing this was so.<sup>411</sup> The French thus adopted a wait-and-see, reactive approach toward the Nazis, which diplomats sustained throughout the decade.

Warnings of the increasing aggression and escalating power of Nazi Germany poured out to the world: not just domestic assaults on freedoms following the Reichstag fire and outbreaks of violence such as the Night of the Long Knives, but also issues of more immediate relevance to the international scene, and of particular consequence to France, such as withdrawal from the World Disarmament Conference in Geneva and the League of Nations, the referendum in the Saar, the (re)introduction of compulsory military service, the remilitarization of the Rhineland, and German involvement in the Spanish Civil War. As the Nazi state's extremist policies at home and abroad became

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<sup>410</sup>The intelligence reports sometimes overestimated Germany's capacity to take on France; such exaggerations proved hard to swallow. Peter Jackson, "French Intelligence and Hitler's Rise to Power," *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 3 (1998): 805-814. The *Mein Kampf* quotation comes from a military intelligence report cited on page 805.

<sup>411</sup>Peter Jackson, 813-817.

increasingly evident to the French—and seemed in no way to be letting up—the French continuously renegotiated their views of Germany (and of the idea of peace at all costs).<sup>412</sup> French intellectuals and much of the French public remained inert, of two minds, resigned, or sure that Hitler was better than war—or, for some, Blum. In 1936, Henri Lichtenberger, then a member of the Comité France-Allemagne, wrote, “People here [in France] float between a thousand contradictory feelings ranging from decided horror, through mistrust and anxiety, to curiosity mingled with sympathy or regret that in France we do not have a ‘strong man’ of Hitler’s ilk.”<sup>413</sup> The pacifist writer Roger Martin du Gard, famed for his cycle of novels on the Great War, explained his position during the Spanish Civil War: “Anything rather than war! Anything! . . . even Fascism in Spain . . . even Fascism in France: Nothing, no trial, no servitude can be compared to war: Anything, Hitler rather than war!” The following year, fellow writer and veteran Jean Giono offered an even more direct assessment: “What’s the worst that can happen if Germany invades France? Become Germans? For my part, I prefer being a living German to a dead Frenchman.”<sup>414</sup>

Although punctuated by a few months of clarity—when the French and Germans were at war and efforts for cooperation were out of the question—during the late 1930s and early 1940s the French continued to be beset with the same confounding questions. Was cooperation with the Germans in France’s interests? In Europe’s interests? The dilemma after defeat became, of course, once again thornier for the French. Cooperation

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<sup>412</sup>For teachers, for example, German remilitarization and the Spanish Civil War marked important turning points; these developments led them to consider the possibility of confronting Germany as well as the notion of an “honorable” war. See Siegel, 191-219.

<sup>413</sup>Quoted in Burrin, *France under the Germans*, 41.

<sup>414</sup>From Martin du Gard’s private correspondence, as quoted in Weber, *The Hollow Years*, 19; for the quotation from Giono, also see Weber, *The Hollow Years*, 24.

with an occupying power presented even more of a moral dilemma. But, just as some who had wanted to avoid another war found merit in the cause of cooperation, so now did those fearful of a harsh occupation or Nazi reprisals. Cooperation, for some, still appeared an attractive option. For others, this was the first time cooperation with Germany presented itself as an imperative for France's or their own personal well-being.

Groups like the Comité France-Allemagne and its German analog the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft in the 1930s as well as the Groupe Collaboration in the 1940s helped make cooperation thinkable—even palatable—in the darkest of times. The following two chapters explore how these organizations both added force to and subverted the campaign for cooperation that began in the 1920s. They analyze the significant differences and the multiple continuities with what came before. And they address how activists managed to sustain the project for cooperation when, on a broader geopolitical plane, it seemed utterly doomed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A New Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft and the Comité France-Allemagne

. . . since the end of the hostilities, our politics in Europe have been less a French politics than an anti-German politics . . . . In France, we have never, so it seems, conceived of what a purely French politics could be. We have automatically pursued anti-Germanism in some way. It was the politics of least effort; it was also bound to be a disappointing and sterile politics. After sixteen years in which the power and the prestige that gave us victory singularly crumbled away, we notice that everything is left to be done, that the problem of our security is not resolved, that we remain in the presence of “eternal Germany.”—Régis de Vibraye<sup>415</sup>

Only understanding from people to people can bring about the reconciliation of French and German national interests and the unshakeable good neighborliness which both core members of Europe are duty-bound to achieve for humanity and for history after a thousand years of enmity.—*Deutsch-Französische Monatshefte/Cahiers franco-allemands*<sup>416</sup>

Is there a contradiction between this Germany that proposes peace to France and that Germany which arms itself to extremes against her? Or is this the same Germany, wanting to be strong in order to have better chats? Hitler and Goebbels pretend there is no contradiction.—Henry Berenger<sup>417</sup>

Each time that we speak of Franco-German rapprochement, we must act very prudently. This problem, the most important for the two nations, is one that must only be commented about delicately. Also we should refrain from great enthusiasm as well as from any skepticism.—Jean Leroy<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>415</sup>Régis de Vibraye, *1935... Paix avec l'Allemagne* (Paris: Les Éditions Denoël et Steele, 1934), 8-9.

<sup>416</sup>“Zum neuen Jahrgang,” *Deutsch-Französische Monatshefte/Cahiers Franco-Allemands* (henceforth *DFMh*) (Jan. 1936): 2.

<sup>417</sup>Henry Berenger, “Tirons la Chose au Clair,” *Agence Économique et Financière*, 27 Nov. 1934.

<sup>418</sup>AN AP 411/1. Unmarked press clipping from Grenoble newspaper. Jean Leroy, “Des conversations franco-allemandes vont-elles avoir lieu?” (22 Jan., probably 1938).

In 1934, Otto Grautoff, who had emigrated to Paris the year before, published an impassioned plea in the French press in which he renounced any association to the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft.<sup>419</sup> With this repudiation, he effectively drew the line between his organization that had grown out of the spirit of Locarno and a group of the same name that appeared after the Nazi seizure of power. While Grautoff immediately distanced himself from what he saw as a new venture, his French counterpart Maurice Boucher remained silent. Boucher's *Revue d'Allemagne* faded away in 1934, not quite a year after the final issue of Grautoff's *DFR*. But Boucher, who had once described the Nazis as "beasts,"<sup>420</sup> continued in the enterprise of Franco-German cooperation throughout the 1930s, and indeed into the 1940s. This continuity was by no means unusual, as many members of Franco-German societies from the 1920s and early 1930s, upon the dissolution of their own groups, transferred their loyalties to two other associations in the second half of the 1930s: the *Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft* (DFG) and the *Comité France-Allemagne* (CFA).

Choosing cooperation with the so-called hereditary enemy had long been controversial for the Germans and the French alike, but new challenges arose with the *Machtergreifung*. German policy-makers (and, in their wake, German citizens) needed to determine the degree to which they would follow the anti-French line of *Mein Kampf*, which portrayed France as the Erbfeind, a stance directly in contradiction with organizations that sought French-German cooperation. Would such efforts be eliminated,

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<sup>419</sup>Otto Grautoff, "La Société franco-allemande," *Le Temps*, 24 July 1934, press clipping from PA-AA DBP 1049/1. Grautoff had left Berlin and the DFG in the spring of 1933 for Paris, where he remained until his death in 1937.

<sup>420</sup>PA-AA R70553 No. e.o. AA II Fr 3029 Abschrift from von Blücher to Grautoff (8 Nov. 1930).



or could they find purchase within Nazi ambitions? For their part, the French had to ask whether working together with Nazi Germany contributed to the greater good—peace—or whether it was simply morally repugnant. The answers to these questions remained unresolved throughout the 1930s.

Even before Hitler took over Germany, the Mayrisch Komitee, the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft, and the Sohlbergkreis all had found themselves on unstable ground. As we have seen, this was due to a combination of internal and external factors. Each group had struggled to stay together, and each confronted an uncertain European future. The three Weimar-era organizations hobbled along for awhile longer. One after another, however, they weakened, then faded out or quietly disappeared even though many members wanted to continue the work of cooperation. Numerous proponents of cooperation from all three groups accordingly joined forces with the CFA or a group known as the DFG, with mysterious, indeterminate ties to Grautoff's group of the same name. This Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft retained elements of Grautoff's DFG, combined them with aspects of both the Mayrisch Komitee and the Sohlbergkreis, and wrapped them around a Nazi core. In different ways, the Comité France-Allemagne, which catered only to French members, also drew from earlier organizations while sustaining ties to the Nazis.

The Nazis thus tapped into the networks established by the Mayrisch Komitee, the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft, and the Sohlbergkreis. Relying on preexisting international networks reflected the Nazi strategy to infiltrate, “marshal the resources or plug into” clubs, associations, and the press at home.<sup>421</sup> For the Nazis, networks of

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<sup>421</sup>In his book on bourgeois political and civic activism in the 1920s, Peter Fritzsche also discussed the Nazis' instrumentalization of preexisting civic organizations within Germany. Fritzsche, 13.

pacifists and Germanophiles offered potential contacts through which to mollify French public perceptions of Nazi intentions, especially with regard to foreign policy.<sup>422</sup> Then, while pursuing a confrontational agenda, the Germans could profess to be extending a hand to France.<sup>423</sup> Maintaining and even enhancing French-German relations through cultural organizations would help assuage fears that the new leaders of Germany posed a threat to French security.

That is not to say that ordinary members of the new DFG and the CFA were unwitting pawns. Members of French-German organizations actively and often enthusiastically sought out representatives of the current leadership in Germany. If some, like Grautoff, quickly turned away from outreach efforts on the part of the National Socialists, others took far longer to cut off ties, and many eagerly sought to carry on their work for cooperation, now with the new order. Maurice Boucher, for one, slid into a more accommodating stance by 1935, when he joined forces with the Comité France-Allemagne; he remained a member of that group at least through January 1939.<sup>424</sup> Alongside Boucher, many students and intellectuals, as before, fervently desired French-German entente. Some saw the Nazi regime as immaterial to the pursuit of cooperation; perhaps more viewed it as added motivation to work for peace.<sup>425</sup> Particularly notable

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<sup>422</sup>Ray, 13.

<sup>423</sup>Weinberg, 159-179.

<sup>424</sup>PA-AA R61396 Mitglieder des Comité France Allemagne (20 Sept. 1939). This list, along with several others, was signed and dated by the Geschäftsführer of the DFG in September, but the contents of this list date back to January of that year.

<sup>425</sup>One clear example is Jules Romains. See Philippe Burrin, "La France dans le champ magnétique des fascismes," *Le Débat*, no. 32 (Nov. 1984): 57-59. While Romains had served on the board of the *Revue d'Allemagne* and had been an editor of the *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau*, he devoted himself with renewed vigor to the cause in 1933.

after Hitler's seizure of power was the degree to which veterans of the Great War plunged headlong into the cause for cooperation in the hope of avoiding another war.<sup>426</sup>

The new DFG and the CFA maintained a complicated relationship not only to Franco-German organizations of the past but to one another. The DFG and the CFA may have had their symmetries, and they seemed to work in tandem, but this was a lopsided enterprise. The CFA was a private effort with a relatively expansive, if elite, base. The DFG had a more geographically diffuse base, but it operated under the watchful eye of the Nazi administration and acted as a discreet arm of its paradiplomatic services. Ribbentrop's bureau, in particular, undertook an international public relations campaign to quell French anxieties and shore up French public opinion in favor of Nazi Germany,<sup>427</sup> a mission under which the DFG, and less directly if not less effectively, the CFA neatly fell.

It is then to this intersection of French desires for peace and the German state's pursuit of an international information campaign that this chapter turns. For some, the allure of these twinned forces overrode the impact of an array of reports that suggested Hitler's intentions were far from benign.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> Antoine Prost, *In the Wake of War: 'Les Anciens Combattants' and French Society 1914-1939* trans. Helen McPhail (Providence: Berg, 1992), 69-72, 75-78.

<sup>427</sup> Alfred Kupferman, "Le Bureau Ribbentrop et les campagnes pour le rapprochement franco-allemand, 1934-1937," In *Les relations franco-allemands, 1933-1939, Actes du Colloque International du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique à Strasbourg du 7 au 10 octobre 1975*, ed. François G. Dreyfus. (Paris: CNRS, 1976), 89. On 1 June 1935, Ribbentrop became Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary on Special Mission, and his office changed designations from *Büro* to *Dienststelle*—an office that shot up from about 30 employees to over 150 in 1936. See Michael Bloch, *Ribbentrop* (New York: Crown, 1992), 69, 77-81.

<sup>428</sup> Peter Jackson, 795-824.

## *Reincarnation*

Between the summer of 1933 and the fall of 1935 a series of negotiations took place to determine how best—if at all—to proceed with the quest for cooperation. These discussions occurred at the official level, within individual organizations, between private citizens, with potential benefactors, and most visibly, in the press. Divisions and uncertainties marked all three Weimar-era groups as well as French society more broadly because it was exceedingly difficult to grasp what was happening across the Rhine. Many wondered whether the Nazi regime was merely a passing phase that would not—and could not—possibly endure. More confusingly, the Germans seemed to be sending mixed signals. On the one hand, Germany's withdrawal from the Geneva Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations in October 1933 suggested contempt for diplomatic negotiations and the abandonment of international talks. On the other hand, Hitler and his representatives immediately and repeatedly sent reassuring, sometimes flattering, messages to the French.<sup>429</sup> Most famously, in a two-hour exclusive (and sensational) interview with Fernand de Brinon in November 1933, Hitler expressed his wishes for peace and understanding with France; a rapt Brinon professed his belief in Hitler's "sincerity."<sup>430</sup>

Whereas the French right had traditionally struck an anti-German stance, it found itself more sympathetic to the Nazi regime than did the French left. And yet these generalizations did not always hold true, particularly in the 1930s. As Robert Michael has explained, a complicated political "realignment" emerged in mid-1930s France with

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<sup>429</sup>Weinberg, 166-173.

<sup>430</sup>Fernand de Brinon, *Le Matin*, 22 Nov. 1933; Fernand de Brinon, "M. Hitler et la paix. Comment j'ai été reçu par le chancelier," *L'Information*, 23 Nov. 1933; Franz, 107-116.

regard to foreign policy that pitted soft-liners (or what he dubbed “appeasers”) and hard-liners (in his words, “resisters”). Each bloc consisted of individuals on the political left and the political right, and each wanted peace.<sup>431</sup> If Michael’s loaded terminology perhaps obfuscates more than it reveals, the general thrust of his argument makes plain what other scholars have rendered very complicated by tracking individuals’ meanderings across the political landscape of the 1930s: left and right are not the most useful categories when trying to understand French attitudes toward Nazi Germany.<sup>432</sup>

As with politicians, French intellectuals’ responses to the new regime in Germany took a variety of forms and did not always conform to a clear left-right split. In a typically spectacular gesture, for example, André Malraux accompanied André Gide to Berlin in January 1934 to try to set free those imprisoned for allegedly having set fire to the Reichstag; both writers, moreover, consistently spoke out against fascism and Nazism more generally.<sup>433</sup> Others associated with the left, such as Bertrand de Jouvenel<sup>434</sup> and André Weil-Curiel, however, traveled to Germany with a more open mind and quite different intentions. The very month of Gide and Malraux’s voyage to Berlin, Jouvenel and Weil-Curiel attended a Sohlbergkreis summit in Berlin, made contact with representatives of the Hitler Youth, and toured the “new” Germany. Upon their return to

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<sup>431</sup>Robert Michael, *The Radicals and Nazi Germany: The Revolution in French Attitudes toward Foreign Policy, 1933-1939* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), 3-7.

<sup>432</sup>Indeed, scholars have been trying, in very different ways, to transcend the categories of left and right in their analysis of the Third Republic more generally. A volume of *Historical Reflections* devoted to the question recently appeared under the title, “Beyond Left and Right: New Perspectives on the Politics of the Third Republic.” See *Historical Reflections* 34, no. 2 (Summer 2008).

<sup>433</sup>Jean-Michel Palmier, *Weimar in Exile: The Antifascist Emigration in Europe and America*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2006), 193.

<sup>434</sup>Jouvenel’s politics, to be sure, went through a complicated transformation as he changed from a position on the non-Communist left to become a member of Doriot’s *Parti populaire français*. As mentioned in chapter three, some have pegged him as a fascist.

Paris, they spoke to the League of Nations' International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation about their positive impressions. Yet even within their touring group, opinions differed. René Georges-Étienne of the League of the Rights of Man, who had traveled to the Sohlbergkreis meeting alongside Jouvenel and Weil-Curiel, reported separately on his experience to the Institute. Georges-Étienne found to his dismay that German youth held completely incompatible views with those of the French; "building a bridge" to German youth would be, to his mind, impossible.<sup>435</sup>

To court French public opinion, numerous Germans traveled to France to undertake the delicate task of public relations. For his part, Otto Abetz spent much of 1933 and 1934 scrambling to keep the Sohlbergkreis alive. He met with a number of French organizations that had turned away from cooperation with the Germans and encouraged links between the Hitler Youth and French youth groups including the scouts. He pursued connections with cultural, artistic, and academic circles in Paris to campaign on behalf of Germany in an anti-Nazi milieu. In addition, Abetz planned for a future Sohlbergkreis summit at the Loire estate of Bertrand de Jouvenel's father, Henry de Jouvenel. The Sohlbergkreis' Fritz Bran and Carl Nabersberg of the *Reichsjugendführung* also worked hard to woo French youth groups to the side of the new Germany.<sup>436</sup> Taking on a similar role of advocacy, student leader Johannes Maaß of the *Deutsche Studentenschaft* met with an array of French intellectuals to convince them to look to other German intellectuals than the émigrés. Maaß hoped to promote another expression of the German *Geist* as valid. Through blatant flattery, Maaß seems to have encouraged

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<sup>435</sup>Cf. "Ein schiefes Bild: Deutschlandreisende berichten," *Pariser Tageblatt*, 25 Jan. 1934; "'Die Hitlerjugend zu unintelligent' Ein offenes Urteil französischer Deutschlandbesucher," *Pariser Tageblatt*, 27 Jan. 1934.

<sup>436</sup>PA-AA DBP 1050/1 No. DBP B 00434 Unsigned notes from DBP staff member, probably Rintelen (30 Jan. 1935); PA-AA DBP 1050/1 Aufzeichnung (12 Feb. 1935).

numerous French intellectuals to read the so-called new German literature and visit Germany for themselves before making hasty judgments, or worse, launching a campaign against Nazi Germany. As he insinuated, a good intellectual does not judge until he sees for himself.<sup>437</sup>

War veterans proved another crucial target of the German public relations drive. Abetz and Jouvenel laid the groundwork for bringing together the key leaders of the veterans' movement in both countries. With their help and at the "instigation" of Ribbentrop, Hanns Oberlindober (1896-1949), head of the Nazi war victims' organization [*NS-Kriegsopferversorgung*], was able to make contacts with the heads of France's principal veterans' organizations. He then campaigned heavily to win over the French community of veterans on both the left and right.<sup>438</sup> Wounded in the knee in the First World War, Oberlindober joined both the Nazi Party and the SA in 1922, becoming a member of the Reichstag and head of the Party section devoted to disabled veterans in 1930.<sup>439</sup> Oberlindober, who thus helped obtain a critical constituency for the CFA, would become a vice president of the new DFG.

While these men worked hard to forge new bonds between the French and the Germans, and while Abetz and Jouvenel actively sought ways to continue the Sohlbergkreis, the DFG went into hibernation. Grautoff had abruptly fled to Paris in the

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<sup>437</sup>If we take Maaß's report to the Foreign Office as an accurate representation of what these intellectuals told him—even disregarding some of it as his own exaggerations to appear more influential in Parisian circles—the report seems to mark a turning point in right-wing intellectual circles as becoming more open to Hitler's Germany. PA-AA DBP 1050/1 Abschrift zu VI S 6447. "Bericht über Reise nach Paris" Johannes Maaß to Geheimrat Böhme [AA] (10 July 1934).

<sup>438</sup>PA-AA R70556 No. e.o. II Fr. 3750 Aufzeichnung, von Rintelen to Ref II Fr, II SG, Ref. Deutschland, and Abt. V (12 Nov. 1934).

<sup>439</sup>James M. Diehl, "Victors or Victims? Disabled Veterans in the Third Reich," *The Journal of Modern History* 59, no. 4 (Dec. 1987): 706-707, 735. Diehl explains that Oberlindober's ultimate fate remains a mystery though it is likely he died in 1949 in a Warsaw prison.

spring of 1933. The DFG's "gloomy state" that summer—even members were uncertain whether it still existed—did not mean that they and others were willing to let it disappear. French members of the organization as well as Ambassador André François-Poncet sought out representatives of the German Foreign Office to discuss reviving or reorganizing the DFG. German Foreign Office officials showed mild interest, but proved reluctant on two counts. First, they believed the timing was premature. Second, the German Embassy still demanded reciprocity. If the DFG were to be resuscitated or re-founded in some way, it would need a French counterweight.<sup>440</sup>

As *Geheimer Legationsrat* Emil von Rintelen of the German Foreign Office discovered in November 1933, however, a short-term solution had been determined by forces outside of both the DFG and the German Foreign Office. At that time, Rintelen met with a representative of the Propaganda Ministry, who informed him of the establishment of an emergency committee for Otto Grautoff's DFG, "to create it anew on a wholly changed basis." Confused and surprised, Rintelen had thought "Herr Grautoff's Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft was already definitively a thing of the past."<sup>441</sup> While it may have been defunct, the DFG had never legally ceased to exist since it was still listed on the books as a registered association. Therefore, a smooth transformation of the DFG could take place whereby the name and status of the group could stay intact while its substance was significantly modified.

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<sup>440</sup>PA-AA R70555 No. e.o. II Fr 1925 Aufzeichnung. Rintelen to Köpke, Abt. VI; Herr V.L.R. Böhme, Abt. P.; and II Fr (24 June 1933); PA-AA R70555 No. AA II Fr. 2268 Kühn to Rintelen (28 July 1933); PA-AA R70555 No. II Fr. 2996 Köpke to Preussischen Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Kunst, und Volksbildung (26 Oct. 1933).

<sup>441</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 No. B 3378/33 and PA-AA R70555 No. AA II Fr 3412 Aufzeichnung signed von Rintelen (21 Nov. 1933).



Rintelen, however, was more struck by the Propaganda Ministry's solution to the problem of reciprocity. To Rintelen's mind, the fatal flaw of the original DFG could be traced to its moment of conception. Created without a French counterpart to advocate for Germany, the DFG had developed incrementally into a mouthpiece for French ideas. But rather than creating a partnership of equals—as the Foreign Office had envisaged—the Propaganda Ministry representative (also a member of the DFG emergency committee) wanted to reverse the flow of ideas and thus radically alter its power dynamic. The primary purpose of such an association, he explained, lay in “pull[ing] the strings that control the other country.” The reconfiguration would occur all the more easily since (again to Rintelen's surprise), the *DFR*'s Jewish publisher Walther Rothschild had already “ceded” his business to another publisher; the journal thus had already been aryanized. The Propaganda Ministry would keep the public and even for a time the Foreign Office in the dark as to the particulars of the DFG's makeover.<sup>442</sup>

The Propaganda Ministry envisioned the DFG emergency committee as a temporary solution to the challenge of bringing an international association in line with the “new Germany.” In fact, it was erected primarily to put in place a new organization, presumably a step removed from Grautoff's venture. Once it learned of the existence of the DFG emergency committee, the German Embassy imagined the new possibilities opening up in French-German relations; here was an opportunity to remake the DFG according to its own recommendations from years ago. Above all, this meant the somewhat defensive attempt to reintroduce reciprocity. This time, there needed to be not simply two reviews, but two associations, one based in Germany and one in France.

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<sup>442</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 No. B 3378/33 and PA-AA R70555 No. AA II Fr 3412 Aufzeichnung signed von Rintelen (21 Nov. 1933).

Where Grautoff's DFG had failed to produce an association to promote Germany in France, a fresh endeavor would be sure to set up both at once in the name of reciprocity.<sup>443</sup> At this moment, the Foreign Office viewed the DFG emergency committee through the lens of Grautoff's DFG and its shortcomings rather than through the lens of Nazi *Gleichschaltung*.

The Foreign Office was not alone in eyeing the DFG with interest. In Grautoff's absence, Max Ilgner of I.G. Farben—a member of the DFG since early 1932—planned to take over the DFG, “raise its standard,” and transform it into an umbrella organization.<sup>444</sup> Others who saw potential in Grautoff's ill-conceived DFG likewise came to the German Embassy with suggestions and offers to help set it on the right track.<sup>445</sup> Not surprisingly, however, it was the plans of Nazi officialdom that reached fruition.

According to Christiane Grautoff, her father had known something of the Propaganda Ministry's intentions toward the DFG. Convinced one member of the DFG—formerly an employee of the Propaganda Ministry—had infiltrated the group as a Nazi spy, Grautoff believed his telephone and mail were under surveillance.<sup>446</sup> After Ambassador François-Poncet warned of an impending visit from the Nazis, Otto Grautoff hopped on a train to Paris, with only a toothbrush in hand; even his wife stayed behind. Though Grautoff felt harassed by and uncomfortable with the new regime, his politics left

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<sup>443</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 [also PA-AA R70555 No. AA II Fr. 426] Kühn to von Rintelen (26 Jan. 1934).

<sup>444</sup>PA-AA R70555 No. II Fr 3723 DBP to Rintelen (15 Dec. 1933).

<sup>445</sup>PA-AA R70555 No. zu AA II Fr. 2093 Prof. Eduard Wechßler to Herr Staatsminister (28 June 1933); PA-AA DBP 1049/1 No. DBP 05226 Pierre Lefèvre [Secrétaire du Comité France-Italie de l'Aisne] to M. Le Secrétaire de l'Ambassade (3 Dec. 1935).

<sup>446</sup>Belitz, 228; Pellissier, 48. Though it is not clear whether this particular DFG member was acting as a spy in Berlin, the German Foreign Ministry asked its Parisian Embassy to report on Grautoff's doings in Paris. See PA-AA DBP 1049/1 II Fr. 3412 AA to DBP (16 Jan. 1934).

him an unlikely candidate for persecution. He may have considered himself a political refugee, but early on, he had shown himself willing to bow to pressures to strike Jewish-sounding names from the *Rundschau*. In one case, he took the time to write a letter to fire a Jewish editor that did not so much excuse his actions, as state that the “voice of the times” did not favor Jews and suggest the editor was remiss in his duties anyhow.<sup>447</sup>

Grautoff lived in a kind of limbo in Paris, where he maintained an ambivalent stance toward the German authorities and an uncertain position with regard to the DFG. Although he had taken flight, deemed himself a political exile, and purportedly assisted numerous German émigrés in finding posts in France,<sup>448</sup> Grautoff still nursed ties to the Nazi state. He paid a courtesy call to the German Embassy in Paris, and more damningly, tried to contact both Goering and Goebbels regarding his work for French-German understanding. A representative of the German Foreign Ministry complained to a colleague about Grautoff wanting it both ways: to be considered a “political refugee” and to maintain regular contacts with the German authorities. While in exile, Grautoff incongruously expected German officials to grant him special favors. Just as he was not ready to cut off ties to the Nazi state, Grautoff did not fully give up the DFG. Though its activities had lapsed, Grautoff now provided a new address for the DFG, his Parisian boarding house. He had reportedly, moreover, volunteered his services from Paris to IG-Farben’s Max Ilgner, still on the DFG board, to help promote French-German relations.<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>447</sup>Belitz, 227.

<sup>448</sup>Christiane Grautoff, 39.

<sup>449</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 No. AA II Fr. 209. Letter from AA to DBP (16 Jan. 1934); PA-AA DBP 1049/1 No. AA II Fr. 209 Grautoff to Herr Geheimrat von Rintelen (9 Jan. 1934); PA-AA DBP 1049/1 Kühn to

Over a year after Grautoff moved to Paris, articles appeared in the French press that described the most recent meeting of the DFG in Berlin, over which Grautoff was imputed to have presided. Not only had the dormant DFG announced its dissolution, but Grautoff had allegedly drawn a connection between the end of his group and the need “to open the way to ‘the tendencies’ of the new Germany.”<sup>450</sup> Though Grautoff had, to be sure, maintained an ambivalent stance toward the German authorities, he, as an exile, had hardly been present at a meeting in Berlin. Such inaccurate articles prompted his public statement:

After my resignation, an executive committee was formed by constraint, against my will, and contrary to my convictions to “set right” the Franco-German Society according to the Nazi spirit. It is quite possible that this emergency committee made decisions that had no connection to the spirit and activity of the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft as I knew it and directed it. Moreover, the continuity of my efforts in the cause for Franco-German rapprochement that I have supported all of my life would prohibit me from pronouncing the words that are ascribed to me against all truth and probability. Not having wanted to open the Franco-German Society to the tendencies of the Third Reich, I retired a year ago so as not to be disloyal to my principles. The work that I was able to accomplish throughout my life and that summoned me to a lofty and weighty task obliges me to remain attached to ideas of liberty, generosity, wisdom, and reason, for which France continues to be the champion.<sup>451</sup>

This letter lays bare Grautoff’s sense of betrayal, both by the National Socialists and by the French press, his disgust for the new state of the DFG, and his absolute renunciation of the Nazi mentality. Above all, it points out that in his opinion, the extant DFG had

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von Rintelen (26 Jan. 1934) [also in PA-AA R 70555 No. AA II Fr. 426]. Grautoff later alleged, in contrast, that Ilgner and others had come to him. See Belitz, 229.

<sup>450</sup>“Dissolution de la Société franco-allemande,” *Le Temps*, 19 July 1934. See also Camille-Schneider, “La ‘Société Franco-Allemande’ et la ‘Deutsch-Französische Rundschau’ cessent d’exister,” *Comoedia*, 22 July 1934, press clipping found in PA-AA 1049/1. Schneider also called Grautoff “one of the pioneers of pacifist relations between Germany and France,” an inaccuracy (or at best an oversimplification) that surely would have compounded Grautoff’s ire.

<sup>451</sup>Otto Grautoff, “La Société franco-allemande,” *Le Temps*, 24 July 1934.

nothing whatsoever to do with the DFG he directed, and that it was, like so many German institutions, “coordinated” by the Nazi authorities.

In fact, the DFG had officially dissolved on 12 July 1934 in a meeting run by Hans Draeger (b. 1896), a department head at the Nazi Party’s *Wehrpolitisches Amt* and head of the DFG emergency committee.<sup>452</sup> Draeger had long served the cause of German propaganda as the manager of the Working Committee of German Associations, a powerful voice in the campaign for revisionism. As Holger Herwig has argued, Draeger and others in his circle managed to cloud the historical record on German war guilt until as late as the 1960s, and had thereby contributed to giving Germany a leg up in its case for the revision of Versailles.<sup>453</sup> Draeger’s sudden incursion into a leadership role at the DFG had a similar end in sight: the reconceptualization of the DFG into a tool by which to advance Nazi aims abroad. Newly at the helm of the DFG, Draeger issued a press release, pre-approved by the Foreign Office, that explained, “this in no way means that we want to renounce the strenuous work of cultural relations between Germany and France. On the contrary, the disappearance of an association tied to the spirit of an earlier epoch clears the way for a reorganization of such efforts, which have as their object the rapprochement and intellectual exchange of the two great *Kulturvölkern*, Germany and

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<sup>452</sup>Both Draeger and Max Ilgner played leading roles in the Vereinigung Carl Schurz, a group founded in 1926 to foster German-American relations. See BAKo Kl. Erwerbungen. Nr. 351/7. Draeger, who had joined the Nazi Party in January 1932, would eventually serve as *Generalreferent* of the Reich’s Ministry of the Interior and *Reichshauptstellenleiter* in the Party’s *Aussenpolitisches Amt* as well as play a role in the *Deutsch-Spanische Gesellschaft*. See BAKo R64 I “Personalangaben der Vorstandsmitglieder der Deutsch-Spanischen Gesellschaft” sent from DSG to Herrn Polizeipräsidenten in Berlin, Abt. V (24 April 1941).

<sup>453</sup>Holger H. Herwig, “Clio Deceived: Patriotic Self-Censorship in Germany after the Great War,” in *Forging the Collective Memory: Government and International Historians Through Two World Wars*, Keith Wilson, ed. (Providence: Berghahn, 1996), 119-120.

France.” In response to Grautoff’s protest, Draeger also acceded that the press had been mistaken; Grautoff had not been in attendance at the fatal meeting.<sup>454</sup>

If the DFG emergency committee—with the support of the Propaganda Ministry—hijacked Grautoff’s DFG as the first step in creating a French-German organization more to their liking, the new effort did not simply grow out of the remains of the old DFG. Over the course of this chapter, the many debts owed to the both the Mayrisch Komitee and the Sohlbergkreis as well as to Grautoff’s DFG by the new DFG/CFA will be made clear. This argument contrasts with that of scholars who have painted the DFG/CFA as a successor to the Sohlbergkreis *tout court* or as a “mere shell” of Grautoff’s DFG.<sup>455</sup> It also differs from the assessment of some members of the DFG/CFA, who purported that it was wholly original. The groundwork to create such a composite organization, including the forging of personal contacts, the wait for a propitious moment for the group’s unveiling, and above all the postponement for the realization of a French analog, meant that more than a full year passed between Draeger’s hostile (yet smooth) takeover and the DFG/CFA’s public debut.

Like the DFG, the Comité France-Allemagne’s origins were far from transparent.<sup>456</sup> In similar fashion, German officials played an important role in shaping

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<sup>454</sup>PA-AA R70555 No. zu AA II Fr. 2413 Pressenotiz über die Auflösung der DFG (4 July 1934). One article that appeared in the German press changed this text to read, “On the contrary, the way should be cleared for a furtherance and growth of these efforts, which in the new Germany have as their object the rapprochement and intellectual exchange of the two great *Kulturvölkern*, Germany and France.” See PA-AA R70555 Press clipping “Selbstauflösung der DFG,” *Berliner Börsenzeitung*, 18 July 1934.

<sup>455</sup>Thalmann and Unteutsch both argue that the Sohlbergkreis evolved into the (new) DFG. Unteutsch briefly discusses the Mayrisch Komitee and Grautoff’s DFG as indirect connections (among others), and Thalmann does not mention them. Ina Belitz, in contrast, considers the Nazi-era DFG in light of Grautoff’s project, but argues it was only related on a superficial level. See Thalmann 68-86; Unteutsch, 37-41; Belitz, 232-233.

<sup>456</sup>Indeed, they seem to have confounded scholars for many years. Although the DFG and especially the CFA make brief appearances in much of the literature on Vichy-era collaboration, the details are often

the ostensibly French organization. In the spring of 1935, Abetz and a number of German veterans, including most importantly Oberlindober, visited the German Embassy in Paris to report on the progress they had made in convincing prominent Frenchmen, from leaders of veterans' groups to the writer Jules Romains, to join a French association parallel to the DFG. The Embassy urged them, however, not to rush the foundation of a French group, but to wait until it might attract more interest: when relations between the two nations might prove less tense and when those other than the usual suspects might be willing to lend their names to the effort. Indeed, the Embassy advised that the enthusiasm of these particular French personalities, "virtually stamped as specialists in French-German understanding," might dissuade others susceptible to the message from joining.<sup>457</sup>

A host of French personalities had in fact shown interest in creating a Franco-German society already in 1934, and many were willing to run such a group, but their competing egos meant that they each vehemently rejected the others for the top position.<sup>458</sup> The DFG, which had been waiting for a reciprocal organization to be founded in France before it officially resurfaced, finally scheduled an inauguration dinner at Berlin's Schloss Montbijou for 25 October 1935.<sup>459</sup> Because, as Henri Lichtenberger,

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murky. Pascal Ory, for example, mistakenly notes the existence of a DFG in Paris *before* Hitler's rise to power, when it was precisely the lack of such an association in Paris that frustrated the German Foreign Office under Weimar. See Ory, *Les Collaborateurs*, 18. David Littlejohn has dated the foundation of the CFA to November 1933, rather than 1935. David Littlejohn, *The Patriotic Traitors: A History of Collaboration in German-Occupied Europe, 1940-45* (London: Heinemann, 1972), 202.

<sup>457</sup>PA-AA R70555 Forster to Rintelen (8 March 1935).

<sup>458</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1, No. II Fr. 2634 Ang. II. Letter from DBP to AA (19 Aug. 1935).

<sup>459</sup>The official date of the founding of the DFG was 17 November 1935, though its unveiling was a few days later. See PA-AA R61397 Bericht über eine Arbeitsbesprechung um 18. Dezember 1935.

pointed out, neglect to reciprocate might be seen as a “truly hostile act,”<sup>460</sup> the embryonic Comité France-Allemagne scheduled its first event for less than a month thereafter.

To the public, the new DFG and the CFA emerged in more spectacular fashion, like Venus on her shell. The festivities surrounding the birth of the two groups, like many of their subsequent activities, were gala affairs. If the Sohlbergkreis had celebrated the informality of youth, with its tents and dormitories along with its spartan meals, the DFG and the CFA, like the Mayrisch Komitee, catered to elites. At the first CFA event, held at the ritzy Hotel Georges V, members enjoyed lobster thermidor and Veuve Cliquot. The CFA was in large part peopled by the well-heeled. And the DFG aimed to spread the mission of “the creation and care of friendly relations between the leading personalities and the different organizations of public life from both countries.”<sup>461</sup>

### *Continuity and Change*

At times, it was unclear whether the Nazi-era DFG was conceived, then redefined as an extension and refinement of the Weimar-era DFG, or whether it was considered and branded as something altogether new. Torn between a desire to assert the originality of the project and thereby rewrite the history of Franco-German cooperation (as in the interests of National Socialism) and a wish to lull the French into believing nothing had changed, the leaders of the DFG/CFA portrayed it inconsistently. This was such a complete makeover that some could hardly discern the original(s) beneath the new trappings. But others hardly seemed to notice (and certainly did not acknowledge) a

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<sup>460</sup>PA-AA R70555 Press reviews from Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro (15 Nov. 1935).

<sup>461</sup>PA-AA R27129 Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft. Satzung (20 Jan. 1936).



change at all. A decade later, one French newspaper made sense of the DFG/CFA's relation to Weimar-era organizations by exclaiming, "The king is dead! Long live the king! It's the same for the Comité 'France-Allemagne.' It was at the point of death in 1934. It was reborn in 1936."<sup>462</sup>

The DFG and CFA capitalized on the experience of prior groups, all the while maintaining a clear distance from their associations with the discredited Weimar regime. The fact of the DFG's coordination—at an organizational and philosophical level as well as in the realm of personnel—speaks directly to this ambivalence. As we shall see, elements of the DFG/CFA agenda more squarely placed the two groups as heirs to those of Weimar. What is more, the joint DFG/CFA journal, the *Deutsch-Französische Monatshefte/Cahiers franco-allemands* (henceforth *DFMh*)<sup>463</sup> began as a direct extension of the *Sohlbergkreis*. In the case of the DFG, the Nazis successfully built upon and subverted the achievements of French-German groups launched in the Locarno era.

Yet much needed to be done to transform Weimar-era groups and sensibilities into a type of French-German cooperation that would conform to the Nazi standard. Looking back on Grautoff's *Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft*, one Bruno Rieth found it contaminated by the presence of pacifists, leftists, Jews (much like France itself of late), and French political interests; the organization offended Nazi sensibilities in almost every

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<sup>462</sup>AN 411 AP Carton 1. Press Clipping. H.-J. Clouard, "Le comité France-Allemagne renaît de ses cendres," *L'Aurore*, 4 Dec. 1945. Clouard's dates are, to be sure, rather fuzzy.

<sup>463</sup>The journal was bilingual and had two titles. For the sake of clarity (namely to avoid confusion between the French association and the French name for the journal, both of which are abbreviated as CFA, but also because the journal went through some name changes to be discussed later), I will use *DFMh* to stand for the DFG/CFA journal.

way.<sup>464</sup> Régis de Vibraye of the Mayrisch Komitee similarly spoke of older groups having followed “an ideology of Jewish and Masonic inspiration;”<sup>465</sup> presumably, he had Grautoff’s organization in mind. Eduard Wechssler, who ran a well-known French literature seminar at the University of Berlin and had twice contributed to Grautoff’s *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau*, contacted the Foreign Office to maintain that he had kept his distance from the “worldly” *DFR*, but hoped to continue his “totally different” involvement in French-German affairs should a new journal be born.<sup>466</sup> The German Foreign Office shared Wechssler’s negative view of the *Rundschau*; it was “out of the question” to consider reviving Grautoff’s German-language journal.<sup>467</sup> And so it was that the leadership of the new DFG pledged to look to Ribbentrop’s guidance.<sup>468</sup> Surely, this step marked the most profound change from any of the prior organizations.

At the opening gala of the DFG, Régis de Vibraye—who had headed the Paris office of the Mayrisch Komitee—made a point of stressing the group’s novelty. His

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<sup>464</sup>PA-AA R70555 “Die Tätigkeit der DFG, dargestellt an Hand von Zitaten aus der DFR dem Organ der Gesellschaft aus den Jahrgängen 1931, 1932, und 1933.”(Undated report from 1933). Signed Bruno Rieth. Rieth complained about the people associated with the organization as well, whether because their ideas were opposed to National Socialism, they had been disavowed by Hitler (Otto Strasser), or because they were, in the case of Maurice Boucher, simply “third tier.”

<sup>465</sup>“Première manifestation de la Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft à Berlin,” *DFMh* (Jan. 1936): 29 (as translated and reprinted from the *Essener Nationalzeitung*).

<sup>466</sup>PA-AA R70555 No. zu AA II Fr. 2093 Prof. Eduard Wechsler to Herr Staatsminister (28 June 1933). Wechsler was not misrepresenting himself. His seminar served as an important meeting ground for French and German intellectuals in the Weimar years, but he was widely known as a German nationalist and his seminar attracted like-minded students. On Wechsler, see Susanne Paff, “Eduard Wechsler et les conférences françaises à l’Université de Berlin 1926-1934” in *Échanges culturels*, ed. Bock and Krebs, 175-226.

<sup>467</sup>PA-AA R70555 No. II Fr. 2996 Köpke to Preussischen Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Kunst, und Volksbildung (26 Oct. 1933).

<sup>468</sup>PA-AA R61269 Revers (Statement of adherence to Führerprinzip by DFG). Signed by Abetz, von Arnim, Bran, Heinrich Stahmer, Friedrich Grimm, and von Cossel [on behalf of Oberlindober] (20 Nov. 1935).

speech left the impression that no such organizations had ever existed to promote French-German cooperation except those tainted by a certain decadence: “It seems less extraordinary that this society was founded just now than the fact that it did not exist until now. Because the goal of this society is the realization of entente and rapprochement between the two nations, [and it] signifies an enrichment of the entire Western world.”<sup>469</sup> As de Vibraye had persistently and eagerly pushed for the Mayrisch Komitee’s “understanding” of the new Germany, his pronouncement at the DFG gala can be understood as a way to distance himself from earlier efforts toward cooperation that had been less open to the Nazis. Of course, de Vibraye made no mention of his ties to the Mayrisch Komitee. More significant to his audience, however, was his suggestion that they were heralds of a new altruistic message of rapprochement. Others collapsed the ideas of novelty and hope into a near-religious sensibility; Fernand de Brinon (1885-1947), a CFA vice president, deemed the group’s initial vision “apostolic.”<sup>470</sup>

Not all associated with the new DFG or the CFA could in good faith dispute the links between them and the older organizations. Many showed a certain reluctance to acknowledge these connections, but others used them when convenient. The DFG president began the 1936 meeting of the full executive committee by comparing the DFG to past models of efforts for understanding. Whereas earlier stabs were marked by their “lack of success,” the DFG “which is based on the outlook of the Third Reich naturally has an entirely different impetus from earlier endeavors.”<sup>471</sup> Thus, like Grautoff, the new

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<sup>469</sup>“Première manifestation de la Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft à Berlin,” *DFMh* 3 (Jan. 1936): 29 (as translated and reprinted from the *Essener Nationalzeitung*).

<sup>470</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 B03951. Speech by Fernand de Brinon (29 Aug. 1936).

<sup>471</sup>PA-AA R61397 Protokoll der Sitzung des erweiterten Vorstandes der Deutsch-Französischen Gesellschaft am 19. Mai 1936 um 17 Uhr.

leadership of the DFG—and therefore German officialdom—understood the DFG to be new, at least in regard to its successes and its strength. At least one CFA member perceived the disjuncture between the DFG/CFA and earlier groups as something to rue. Senator Gaston Henri-Haye wished there had been more continuity from the efforts of the Weimar era. At a 1937 CFA conference, Henri-Haye expressed regret that older Franco-German groups had ceased their work and turned away from Germany.<sup>472</sup> For Henri-Haye, the problem was not that of the DFG/CFA's novelty, but that some had given up and cut off their important international contacts.

The words “re-organization” and “new foundation” appeared almost interchangeably in the correspondence and notes of German officialdom. This ambivalence was reproduced among DFG members and the broader public. Press coverage exhibited some of this confusion, with one paper noting the DFG “just revived after a long eclipse,” another noting that it wanted “to regain its former activity,”<sup>473</sup> but others insisting upon its novelty. Interested individuals, who wrote seeking more information about the DFG and CFA, likewise had a shaky grasp of the details. An array of letters to the German Embassy in Paris attest to the fact that initial reports had aroused much curiosity, while leaving the public with only an impressionistic view. At first, many did not understand that membership to each group was based on nationality; Germans inquired about the CFA and French people tried to join the DFG. More notable is how many were under the impression that the DFG/CFA was the resumption of or somehow

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<sup>472</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/2 No. B 03840 Press clipping. “Gegen Tendenz um Entstellung: Die Tagung des Comité France-Allemagne—Einrichtung eines Nachrichtenaustausches,” *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 26 June 1937.

<sup>473</sup>Cf. PA-AA DBP 1049/1 Unlabelled press clipping from French paper about 25 October 1935 DFG event; PA-AA R70555 Press clipping. “Pour un rapprochement intellectuel franco-allemand,” *Le Matin*, 28 Oct. 1935.

linked back to endeavors from the Weimar era. One Paul Brauer, an employee of the city of Berlin who read about the CFA in the newspaper, assumed it was a French counterpart to the “recently revived” Deutsch-Französischen Studienkomitee, i.e. the Mayrisch Komitee.<sup>474</sup> A prospective French member wrote to the German ambassador about his happiness regarding “the upcoming renaissance of the Comité France-Allemagne,” as if it had existed previously; it is not clear of which organization he was reminded.<sup>475</sup> Years later, this sense of continuity would serve as a convenient excuse for an association with the DFG/CFA; once Nazism and collaborationism had been thoroughly discredited, individuals on trial or otherwise seeking to clear their names emphasized the CFA and DFG’s pre-1933 origins.<sup>476</sup>

### *Personalities*

Examining the list of participants at DFG/CFA events and the available membership rosters further helps illuminate the Nazi-era groups’ overlaps with organizations from the late Weimar years; at the same time, these indicate quite clearly an influx of new members, whose links to the Nazi regime were unmistakable. As the

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<sup>474</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 Paul Brauer, Stadtassistent to DBP (18 Nov. 1935).

<sup>475</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 No. B 04094 Jules Piquet to German ambassador (16 Nov. 1935).

<sup>476</sup>Georges Bonnet is just one example, see Alden, 143. In his memoirs, Abetz implies the DFG/CFA was a better version of Grautoff’s DFG, with more balance and a wider reach. He also argued the “spirit remained the same” as the Sohlbergkreis. Abetz, *Histoire*, 59-70. In a list of CFA members he drew up in his memoirs, Fernand de Brinon rather interestingly named the members of the Mayrisch Komitee. Granted, some of these men had belonged to both groups, but Viénot, Schlumberger, and d’Ormesson, for example, had not. Moreover, because Jean Goy, Henri Pichot, and Georges Scapini among others had not served on the Mayrisch Komitee, these CFA leaders’ names were absent from Brinon’s list. In conflating the two groups, Brinon was clearly attempting to suggest the benign nature of the CFA. In light of Brinon’s lack of involvement with the Mayrisch Komitee, his list appears especially calculated and strange. See Fernand de Brinon, *Mémoires* (Paris: LLC, 1949), 37-38.

DFG's and CFA's identities began to cohere, many of the lines between the older and newer advocates of the cause for cooperation eroded.

Numerous members of the Mayrisch Komitee—especially noteworthy in light of the Komitee's small size and select nature—pledged allegiance to the CFA or DFG. Those who continued in the quest for French-German cooperation by making such a leap included those from both the Komitee's "intellectual" and economic factions. Régis de Vibraye, head of the Komitee's Paris office, played a starring role at the first CFA event. Sorbonne professor Henri Lichtenberger, probably France's foremost expert on Germany who had been active in the Mayrisch Komitee and the *DFR/Revue d'Allemagne* as well as the Liges des Études Germaniques, likewise came on board. Chemist Ernest Fourneau and psychologist Pierre Janet, both of whom had not joined the Mayrisch Komitee until 1930, also became involved in the CFA; Fourneau immediately signed on to serve as one of the CFA's vice presidents. Additionally, the Nobel Prize-winning physicist Maurice de Broglie joined the CFA along with his wife (who had, of course, not sat on the all-male Mayrisch Komitee). Emil Georg von Stauss, the former head of *Deutsche Bank*, lent a voice notably tinged with economic concerns and the importance of commercial relations to both the Mayrisch Komitee and the second incarnation of the DFG. The Cologne iron industrialist Otto Wolff had likewise belonged to the Mayrisch Komitee and now proved an important donor to the new DFG. On the French side, Étienne Fougère, President of the National Association for Economic Expansion, sat on the CFA's Honorary Committee, and the industrialist Edme Sommier and his wife were members until at least early 1939.<sup>477</sup>

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<sup>477</sup>While Mayrisch Komitee member and chairman of the International Labor Office Arthur Fontaine had passed away in 1931, his son Victor-Arthur Fontaine joined the CFA.

In fact, the many overlaps and connections between the two groups led to the Mayrisch Komitee folding itself into the DFG/CFA—a step that seems to have eluded scholars. Although Frank Rümelin, the German clerk at the Mayrisch Komitee office in Paris, remained skeptical, even suspicious of the CFA in its first months, he became more enthusiastic once its stability seemed certain. The German wing of the Mayrisch Komitee decided on group membership in the DFG and the French half followed suit by choosing to join the CFA.<sup>478</sup> The Mayrisch Komitee, which had already shrunk—Viénot and Schlumberger, for example, had for all intents and purposes left—and had seen a significant downturn in its activity, thus diminished all the more. Formerly fleeting visions of adding a British sector looked like the only way to sustain the Komitee and grant it some purpose. The DFG/CFA instead swallowed the Mayrisch Komitee whole, which was exactly what Nazi officialdom wanted.<sup>479</sup>

Participants from the Sohlbergkreis lent their voices to the DFG/CFA journal, the *DFMh*. Otto Abetz (who also sat on the new DFG board), Jean Luchaire, Bertrand de Jouvenel, Cécil Mardrus, Adolf von Grolmann, and others contributed articles to the *DFMh*, though by 1939—the only year for which we have a full membership list of the CFA—none of these were considered members.<sup>480</sup> Fritz Bran, Abetz's childhood friend

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<sup>478</sup>PA-AA DBP 702c No. DBP A 03095 Rümelin to Nostitz (5 June 1936) [forwarded by Rümelin to Forster (5 June 1936)].

<sup>479</sup>PA-AA DBP 702c No. DBP A 2155 Abschrift, signed Rümelin (18 May 1938) [forwarded to Welckeck (23 May 1938)]; No. B 5968/11-5.7 Deutsch-Französisches Studienkomitee. Pariser Büro. Vorschlag zur Erweiterung des Deutsch-Französischen Studienkomitees (Mayrisch) nach England; Abschrift to Deutsch-Französische Studienkomitee from SS-Obergruppenführer Lorenz, Präsident der Vereinigung Zwischenstaatliche Verbände und Einrichtungen (30 Nov. 1938); No. DBP B 5968/11-5.7. Draft, signed Bräuer, Inhalt: Deutsch-Französisches Studienkomitee (22 Dec. 1938).

<sup>480</sup>Philippe Burrin called Jouvenel one of the DFG's most active members and claimed he sat on its board, but the document to which he referred was merely a prospectus for the group, drawn up a few months before the CFA's birth. See Burrin, "La France et la force," 62. Though a member, Jouvenel, in fact, was not part of the CFA board. He certainly contributed articles to the *DFMh* and worked hard for French-

and editor of the *Sohlbergkreis*, now directed the *DFMh*, likewise published by his father's press. Erich Benz, who had participated in the Sohlbergkreis meetings and belonged to Grautoff's DFG (and wrote for the *DFR* and *Revue d'Allemagne*), contributed the *DFMh* as well. For unknown reasons, Luchaire's involvement petered away rather quickly; even his biographer could only speculate why, especially as Luchaire continued to serve as an intermediary between Abetz and prominent politicians and journalists in France, and his journal *Notre Temps* received subsidies from the German Embassy.<sup>481</sup>

Far fewer hailed from Grautoff's DFG and its two journals. Most prominently were those already mentioned, Lichtenberger, Maurice Boucher, and Benz. Many other former DFG activists were Jews or democrats or otherwise disinclined or unable to participate in the CFA/DFG.

Some of the most visible members of the CFA and the DFG were also new to the world of organized advocacy for cooperation. Journalist Fernand de Brinon, a CFA vice president, held the dubious honor of being the first Frenchman to interview Hitler as chancellor in 1933. The following year, he published *France-Allemagne 1918-1934*—part collection of his reportage on Germany, part historical account, part plea for entente—which sealed his reputation as a proponent of cooperation and, like the Hitler interview, provoked an uproar.<sup>482</sup> If Brinon had at least long been interested in Germany, the president of the DFG's connection to France was less evident. Skeptics in France

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German cooperation, but there is little evidence that he was a leading member of the organization. Grolmann, of course, as a German could not have belonged to the CFA, and there is no known complete list of DFG members.

<sup>481</sup>Some assumed Luchaire was part of the CFA, but direct links are not in evidence. Alden, 145-149.

<sup>482</sup>Franz, 107-123.



characterized DFG president Achim von Arnim (1881-1940), the rector of the *Technische Hochschule Berlin-Charlottenburg*, as a “confidence man of the Führer,” and an SA-leader “who today plays a humane professor of military studies.”<sup>483</sup>

Many at the CFA and DFG came from the highest ranks of the veterans’ movement. Jean Goy (1892-1944) of the conservative *Union Nationale des Combattants* (National Union of Servicemen, UNC) and Henri Pichot (1884-1945) of the *Union Fédérale* (Federal Union, UF), which had supported Briandist attempts at rapprochement in the 1920s, served as CFA Secretaries-General; each represented around 900,000 veterans. Conservative deputy Georges Scapini (1893-1976), head of the *Union des Aveugles de Guerre* (Association of the War Blind), became its president. At the DFG, Hanns Oberlindober of NSKOV spoke on behalf of over one million disabled veterans.<sup>484</sup>

More generally, the CFA represented a wide swath of French, particularly Parisian, society and politics. Deputy Eugène Frot, from the moderate wing of the Popular Front (the *Union Socialiste Républicaine*), and several who identified themselves as members of the *Croix de Feu*, managed to find common ground at the CFA. Its treasurer, R.S. de Chappedelaine, had been linked to the *Francistes*.<sup>485</sup> Other prominent

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<sup>483</sup>“Le Cours d’Instruction Publique du lieutenant-colonel von Arnim à l’Ecole Polytechnique de Berlin: ‘La France est notre plus terrible ennemie et l’Allemagne ne pourra faire de projets d’avenir que le jour où cette France sera battue et détruite,’” *Echo de Paris*, 2 Dec. 1935; Manuel Humbert, “Dîner mit von Tschammer und Osten,” *Pariser Tageblatt*, 1 Dec. 1935. Both articles found in PA-AA DBP 1049/1.

<sup>484</sup>The statistics for the French groups are from 1932—over 900,000 for the UF and 860,000 for the UNC. See Prost, 39. The one million figure for NSKOV comes from 1933. See Diehl, 715.

<sup>485</sup>Debates have long raged about whether these groups (particularly the *Croix de Feu*)—or any organizations in France—were fascist. Compare, for example, René Rémond, *Les Droites en France* (Paris: Aubier, 1982); Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave, 1933-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). For a particularly helpful discussion of the historiography, see Robert J. Soucy, “The Debate over French Fascism,” in *Fascism’s Return: Scandal, Revision, and Ideology since 1980*, ed. Richard J. Golsan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 130-151. For a more recent reassessment, see William D. Irvine, “Beyond Left and Right and the Politics of the Third Republic: A Conversation,” *Historical Reflections* 34, no. 2 (Summer 2008), 134-146. On Chappedelaine more specifically, see PA-AA

members included the journalist-politician Gustave Hervé, writer Jules Romains, and the composer Florent Schmitt.

Previously unconsulted documents have allowed for a better understanding of the CFA's composition. Most importantly, a list of over 700 individual members allows for a rough sketch of the group as it stood in August 1939, at the outbreak of war. Members hailed from a variety of professions: deputies and senators, journalists, engineers, doctors, military officers, and teachers—as well as students. Women constituted 16% of members. Almost all came from Paris or the Île de France.<sup>486</sup> It is also thanks to this list that we can trace membership continuities from Weimar-era groups to the CFA.

It is hard to pin down precisely who belonged to the DFG, however, because no comprehensive membership lists have been found. Those who spoke at DFG events or traveled with DFG tour groups to France came from the ranks of local or Party notables, lawyers, doctors, journalists, and so forth. Indeed, the socio-economic composition of both groups reflected a combination of the Mayrisch Komitee elites and old DFG *Bildungsbürgertum*—along with the almost 2.8 million veterans who notionally belonged to the DFG.

The extended DFG board, however, consisted almost exclusively of Party elites. A handful came from Ribbentrop's circle—besides Abetz, there was Heinrich Stahmer, Ludwig Freiherr von dem Bongart, Rudolf Schleier, and Hermann von Raumer.<sup>487</sup> Others represented an array of Party offices from the Nazi Women's League to the German

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R70555 Abschrift Schmolz [DBP] to Reichsminister für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, "Grundung einer Deutsch-Französischen Gesellschaft in Paris" (6 Dec 1935).

<sup>486</sup>PA-AA R61396. Unfortunately, most members' professions are not listed. This list presumably only refers to the main (Paris) branch. It is not clear whether similar records for the Lyon branch still exist.

<sup>487</sup>Unteutsch, 129.

Labor Front. The honorary board included some of the most powerful men in Germany, including Goebbels and Ribbentrop, but as Abetz quietly explained to the real decision-making board, the honorary board was just a “dummy” to impress the French.<sup>488</sup>

The DFG gave the impression it had an expansive base due to its multiple branches and corporative memberships. Yet, in reality, the DFG, while powerful, remained quite small. Audits suggest the DFG only had 185 individual dues-paying members in 1939 and 200 in 1940, statistics which confirm a seemingly untrustworthy report by a nervous and dismissive agent of the Mayrisch Komitee shortly after the DFG began.<sup>489</sup> The tiny membership base of the DFG—especially when considered in light of its relative power and the much larger base of the CFA—suggests it should have been named a committee, with the French side as the association. More importantly, it further underscores the degree to which the DFG, at least, was an instrument of Nazi officialdom.

### *Peaceful Intentions*

In retrospect, it is easy to condemn out-of-hand any attempt to work alongside the Nazis. As in the cases of Pierre Viénot, Victor Basch, and an array of contributors to the French and German exile press, so, too, were many eager to denounce such efforts from

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<sup>488</sup>PA-AA R61397 Bericht über eine Arbeitsbesprechung am 18. Dezember 1935. Betr. Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft.

<sup>489</sup>Cf. PA-AA R61345 No. 12055. Bericht der Deutsche Revisions- und Treuhand-Aktiengesellschaft Berlin über die bei der Deutsch-Französischen Gesellschaft, Berlin, vorgenommenen Prüfung des Abschlusses zum 31. März 1939; PA-AA R61346 Bericht Nr. 13865 und Anlage der Deutsche Revisions- und Treuhand- Aktiengesellschaft, Berlin über die bei der DFG, Berlin, vorgenommene Prüfung der Einnahmen und Ausgaben für die Zeit vom 1. April 1939 bis zum 31. März 1940 und des Abschlusses zum 31 März 1940; PA-AA DBP 702c No. DBP A 03094 Letter from Rümelin to Nostitz (12 May 1936) [as forwarded from Rümelin to Forster (14 May 1936)].

the start. But it is imperative to address why so many willingly signed on to the CFA (and to a lesser extent the DFG), and why they persisted in the endeavor throughout the 1930s.

The Germans and the French joined—and remained part of—the DFG/CFA for a variety of reasons. And many members' relations to the idea of cooperation did not remain static but evolved over the course of the 1930s. Some clung to the notion of cooperation despite the manifold indicators screaming caution. For many, fears of another war or of the dangers of Communism overrode any concerns they may have had about Nazism. Along these lines, some maintained a profound conviction that working for peace and conducting international outreach did not automatically signify their approval of the other nation's domestic politics. Others joined expressly because they admired aspects of Nazi thought.

For some French members of the CFA, the choice to work for cooperation was tied to feeling deeply implicated in Germany's turn to Hitler.<sup>490</sup> Saddling the Germans with the burden of guilt, a tremendous inferiority complex, and enormous debt through Versailles had brought trouble to France's own doorstep. It was therefore up to the French to try to right a wrong, and ideally ensure the peace along the way. For many French members, it was an obligation to make up for the past—as well as an intense desire to act preemptively to safeguard a better future. For the Germans, at least those spearheading the endeavor, the DFG/CFA project was about Germany's potential to reverse the imbalance in the French-German equation. In other words, it also hinged upon overturning past injustices against Germany.

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<sup>490</sup>For an example of a CFA member blaming France for Hitler, see Jean Weiland, "Ist eine Verständigung zwischen Frankreich und Deutschland immer noch möglich?" *DFMh* 3 (March 1936): 92.

Veterans, horrified at the prospect of another war, were especially drawn to the messages of peace and understanding. For veterans on the political left and right, it was, in Antoine Prost's words, "a moral duty to resist war."<sup>491</sup> Negotiations with veterans' groups—with Abetz as one of the primary mediators—had been underway between Draeger's meeting to dissolve the old DFG in July 1934 and the emergence of the DFG/CFA in the fall of 1935. As a longtime proponent of French-German cooperation and the need to avoid another war, Abetz (though not a veteran himself) had been particularly moved when reading about a 1934 Rudolf Hess speech at Königsberg. Hess proclaimed the need for veterans of the Great War to "build a bridge of understanding from people to people when politicians cannot find a way." Although Abetz reacted more enthusiastically to Hess' speech than did a wary French public,<sup>492</sup> it inspired him to work harder to sell French veterans to the cause. It was then Abetz began meeting with Henri Pichot, and in a creative fit, proposed that the two countries light bonfires along the length of the Rhine to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of war, a plan that was a bit too daring (and impossible to plan in mere weeks) for Pichot to agree to adopt on the spot.<sup>493</sup> Abetz's eager report on veterans' understanding (which the Foreign Office dismissed) captivated Ribbentrop, who promptly hired him as an expert on France.

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<sup>491</sup>Prost, 75.

<sup>492</sup>As discussed in Abetz, *Histoire*, 41-43; Unteutsch, 96-99. For the speech and commentary about the French response, see "Text of the Address by Rudolf Hess, Hitler Aide, to East Prussian Nazis," *The New York Times*, 9 July 1934; "Paris Suspicions of Hess Speech," *The New York Times*, 10 July 1934. It should be noted that this speech was by no means entirely peaceful. Hess defended Germany's right to self-defense if attacked (it would seem by the French). He also made sure to differentiate between "the Germany of today, a Germany of peace," and "the Germany of yesterday, a Germany of pacifism." The speech began with a long justification for the Night of the Long Knives.

<sup>493</sup>Lambauer, 71-75.

The heads of the major veterans' organizations took on leading roles at the DFG and the CFA, a clear sign that, to them, cooperation might fulfill the dream of peace. Only one of these men, Commandant René Michel l'Hôpital, the provisional president of the CFA, found Hitler's aggressive actions sufficient cause to leave at an early date. L'Hôpital promptly quit the CFA the day German troops marched into the Rhineland,<sup>494</sup> but he was easily replaced by another prominent veteran, Georges Scapini. Goy and Pichot each met with Hitler in late 1934, as did Scapini in the spring of 1935. And if they sometimes wavered in their enthusiasm and hesitated before making certain commitments that telegraphed their sanctioning of the regime, these veterans' leaders nonetheless remained at the helm of the CFA throughout the 1930s.

It is unclear from the records whether the millions of veterans who were nominal members of the DFG/CFA were avidly supportive, receptive, ambivalent, or even hostile to the notion of French-German cooperation espoused by the DFG/CFA. The glimmers of evidence seem to indicate that veterans' attitudes ran the gamut. Just as l'Hôpital found the remilitarization of the Rhineland intolerable, ordinary veterans from the *Union Nationale* withdrew on that occasion from their plan to participate in a special French-German commemoration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Verdun.<sup>495</sup> Then again, many veterans rallied around Pichot and Goy, some signaling their support by traveling to Germany or attending CFA talks by German personalities. Pichot even hand-delivered a letter of support from the *Union Fédérale* to Daladier at Munich.

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<sup>494</sup>PA-AA R61397 Protokoll der Sitzung des erweiterten Vorstandes der DFG am 19 Mai 1936 um 17 Uhr, signed von Arnim.

<sup>495</sup>Unteutsch, 119, 298.

Although it represented only the tiniest fraction of French veterans, the declaration of the *Union Nationale Indépendante des Combattants* (UNIC) helps explain in bald terms how the French, especially veterans, might find cooperation with Nazi Germany appealing. In a 1934 letter addressed to the French press, the Ambassador to Germany, and Hitler himself, UNIC's director Eugène Napoléon-Bey welcomed Hitler's call for a joint meeting of French and German veterans. "For a Franco-German collaboration, the mass of French veterans cries, down with war, long live the peace between the two peoples. Hail to German veterans and their leader Adolf Hitler," he exclaimed.<sup>496</sup> For Napoléon-Bey, veterans had a particular duty to work for peace and thus to work with Germany.

Such ideas were not limited to the UNIC. Jean Goy of the mammoth UNC pursued a similar line with regard to Germany, a stance which contrasted strongly with the Union's anti-Briandist position in the 1920s.<sup>497</sup> In a 1934 interview with Jean Luchaire, Goy explained,

See here: I am hostile to a stupid and sterile Germanophobia. I believe that the utility of direct contacts, of Franco-German explanations is no longer contestable. The declarations of Chancellor Hitler and those more recently of Minister Hess should not be passed by in silence. First, they steer German opinion in a direction favorable to détente between the two peoples. Next, they open up opportunities that we don't have the right to stipulate. If, with such contact, there is a chance for peace for Europe, how could we shut our eyes and let it pass us by?<sup>498</sup>

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<sup>496</sup>PA-AA R70556 No. AA II Fr 2532 Letter from Eugène-Napoléon Bey to Hitler, Ambassador of Germany, and French press (10 July 1934). Napoléon-Bey's emphasis.

<sup>497</sup>Prost, 37. Whereas the UNC had about 860,000 members in 1932, UNIC was believed to have only 3,000 total members. On the *Union Nationale*, see Prost, 39; on UNIC, see PA-AA R70556 No. AA II Fr 2744 Köster to AA (3 Aug. 1934).

<sup>498</sup>Jean Goy, as quoted in Jean Luchaire, "'Une explication franco-allemande est devenue possible, nécessaire' affirme M. Jean Goy, député animateur de l'Union Nationale des Combattants," *Le Petit Journal*, 18 Sept. 1934. This interview was also discussed in "'Chancen für den Frieden Europas' Ein französisches Echo auf die Königsberger Heß-Rede," *Völkische Beobachter*, 19 Sept. 1934 and "Loyale

Goy met with Hitler, who told him of his peaceful intentions and his support of Franco-German rapprochement. Goy's conservative *Union Nationale*, like the left-leaning *Union Fédérale*, would be folded into the CFA membership roster.

Others specifically feared the potential for conflict over various hotspots. The Saar question, for example, figured heavily into both French and German desires for cooperation. For the French, especially veterans of the Great War, it was not worth going to war over the Saar.<sup>499</sup> In his book, *1935...Paix avec l'Allemagne*, Régis de Vibraye spelled out the reasons why he did not want to go to war over Eastern Europe.<sup>500</sup>

The writer Jules Romains later defended his own willingness to work with Hitler's Germany—he after all had sat on the CFA's Honorary Committee and met on numerous occasions with Ribbentrop, Alfred Rosenberg, and Goebbels—for three principal reasons. First, he had vowed to himself to “do everything in my power to prevent the outbreak of another war.” Tied to that oath to work for peace came a fierce conviction in the power of the engaged intellectual; Romains looked to Zola's *J'accuse* as an example of the way he (and others) might be able to influence European public opinion. Finally, he argued, “since we had let Nazism eat into her [Germany] bit by bit...it was necessary in 1934 to consider Nazi Germany as a fact, an established and

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Aussprache. Ein französische Frontkämpfer gegen die stupide Deutschfeindlichkeit,” *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* (undated). Press clippings found in PA-AA R70556.

<sup>499</sup>PA-AA R70556 No. AA II Fr 3579 Abschrift zu B 3258 III from Bey to Pierre Laval (18 Oct. 1934).

<sup>500</sup>De Vibraye, *1935...Paix*, 222-227.



confirmed fact.” The path to peace, according to Romaines, had to go through Nazi Germany, however unsatisfactory that option may have been.<sup>501</sup>

In the face of public condemnation years later, Abetz expressed an important point about why some might bother trying to work with the Nazis. In his prison memoirs, Abetz explained that he “had the hardest time understanding” why French officialdom in the 1930s “had so little interest in French-German rapprochement initiatives in which members of the [Nazi] Party were engaged.” The self-serving nature of his comment notwithstanding, it speaks to a larger issue of why some French members of the CFA in particular may have placed so little import on the problem of making common cause with the Nazis, especially in the face of pointed criticism in sectors of the French press. Working with the Nazis, in this view, was the only way to secure the peace and have an impact on German public opinion. For Abetz—again in retrospect—the involvement of prominent Nazis was positive and a sure sign that cooperation, and with it peace, not only had a chance but might prevail.<sup>502</sup>

To the argument that cooperation with Hitler or the Nazis was out of the question, members could resort to an easy answer. When Edouard Herriot told Friedrich Grimm in 1937 he could not “befriend the Germany of Hitler,” Grimm responded that “understanding should not be a thing of regimes, it must simply happen from people to people.” There was a difference between working with Nazi Germany and with Germans. For Grimm, who signed onto the DFG board at the direct bequest of Ribbentrop,<sup>503</sup> such

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<sup>501</sup>Jules Romaines, *Seven Mysteries of Europe*, trans. Germaine Brée (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940), 4-5; 163-164.

<sup>502</sup>Abetz, *Histoire*, 65-66.

<sup>503</sup>BAKo N 1120 File 14. Friedrich Grimm, *Lebenserinnerungen eines deutschen Rechtsanwalts, Band VI: Im Hitler-Reich*, 236-238, 262.

assurances were clearly calculating. But this also proved an effective way to rationalize the decision to work alongside the DFG/CFA.

Interested citizens in the DFG and CFA, who had neither been affiliated with other friendship societies nor brought in by the Party, cited many reasons for their desire for membership. “No profound divergence in ideas separates our two peoples,” wrote one Jules Piquet to the German Embassy in Paris in 1935, “they must simply learn to look at each other with more confidence—that will be the task of all French people of good will. I ask you, your Excellence, to count me as of now, one of the first adherents of the new committee...”<sup>504</sup> Whereas for Piquet the reasons were rather moral, for others it was more related to personal experience. A Parisian teacher wrote how he had spent his vacations for the last 15 years in Germany, “where I was always met with a friendly reception.”<sup>505</sup> Similarly referring to her biography as the root of an interest in the new “League” for rapprochement a French woman explained, “Since my childhood, my [German] uncle taught me to understand and love Germany; moreover, I spent three years of my youth in Darmstadt and Berlin and I retain unforgettable memories of the affectionate welcome I received there. It is therefore in my eyes a debt of gratitude to try to create links of friendship between our two countries.”<sup>506</sup> The Munich Accords did not deter and seem to have prompted at least one individual, an accountant, to seek out the CFA and pledge “to

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<sup>504</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 No. B04094. Letter from Jules Piquet to [German] Ambassador (16 Nov. 1935). It is important to note that Piquet recognized that this was a rebirth of an old group.

<sup>505</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 No. B 2275 V 4 Sdb. Letter from Marcel Choplin to DBP (31 May 1936).

<sup>506</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1. Letter from Camille Bouglé to DBP (10 Feb. 1936).

devote all of my activity to the rapprochement for which so many French people wish.”<sup>507</sup>

One Pierre Lefèvre, involved in efforts for French-Italian rapprochement, gushed about joining the CFA for reasons that recalled the agendas of the Sohlbergkreis, Grautoff’s DFG, and above all the Mayrisch Komitee:

Zealous partisan of French-German rapprochement (that must be rapid to have some influence on future European events!), I remain persuaded that aside from certain scientific or artistic rapprochements, the rapprochements of veterans and above all students (such as through school trips over vacations)—and adding to that the ease accorded here and there to tourist excursions—are those that are capable of giving the best results. With the essential condition that both sides cease all polemics in the press and all ideological quarrels!!!<sup>508</sup>

Lefèvre, while citing the kinds of activities undertaken by the Weimar-era groups, nonetheless seems to have had a clear sense of the propagandistic nature of the CFA/DFG since he had pushed for such a group the previous year and still had advice to offer on how to create a “favorable atmosphere” for the Germans.

Many succumbed to a wave of propaganda that served to buttress the French fervor for peace. From the upper echelons to the lower, the Germans tried to convince the French of their peaceful intentions; much of their audience heard what they wanted to hear. Once the January 1935 referendum in the Saar determined that 90% of locals desired the region’s return to Germany, for example, Hitler announced that Germany no longer had cause to fight.<sup>509</sup> For the French, this could be convincing, as a parallel of

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<sup>507</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/2 Letter from Louis Simenon to Welczeck (4 Nov. 1938).

<sup>508</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 No. DBP 05226 Pierre Lefèvre [Secrétaire du Comité France-Italie de l’Aisne] to M. Le Secrétaire de l’Ambassade (3 Dec. 1935). Lefèvre triple-underlined, where I have only used a single line.

<sup>509</sup>Poidevin, Bariéty, 292; “Der Weg zu Verständigung ist frei/Après le plébiscite le rapprochement,” *DFMh* 2, no. 4-5 (Jan.-Feb. 1934/1935): 1.

sorts to Alsace and Lorraine's return to France at the end of the war. The DFG served as a vehicle for a similar message aimed at the broader populace, as did numerous attempts to captivate public intellectuals and journalists.

Understanding German involvement is more difficult. French opponents of working with Nazi Germany explained German overtures as the rhetorical prong of their two-part strategy. As there was a rhetorical push for peace, there was a material push in the opposite direction, namely the build-up of the military, an argument that was duly noted by much of the French press. French challengers of cooperation fully believed the Germans did not spread this message at home. In other words, it was no secret that the Germans may have had ulterior motives. In a 1934 meeting, a skeptical Foreign Minister Jean-Louis Barthou saw right through Ribbentrop and reported that "the words are of peace, but the actions are of war."<sup>510</sup> More generally, French opponents of cooperation attributed German eagerness for rapprochement to duplicity, whether to have more freedom for maneuver in the Saar<sup>511</sup> or to achieve concessions more generally. In retrospect, we can view with more certainty German veterans' involvement—indeed leadership—within the movement for cooperation in light of Hitler's tendency to tie aggressive actions to showy efforts abroad to promote peace.<sup>512</sup> The work undertaken to found the DFG and the CFA came on the heels of the reintroduction of conscription.

While many former members of Weimar-era groups simply stayed on without comment, some chose to excuse their past affiliation and make clear their current

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<sup>510</sup>Jean-Louis Barthou as quoted in Bloch, 52.

<sup>511</sup>PA-AA R70556 Press clipping. Henry Berenger, "Tirons la chose au clair," *Agence Économique et Financière*, 27 Nov. 1934.

<sup>512</sup>Diehl, 730-731; Weinberg, 169-171.

intentions. One former member of the DFG branch in Württemberg wrote to the German Foreign Minister that he had only joined the Württemberg branch once Jews had left, and that the group rested on “national foundations.” Above all, he explained, a new DFG could act as a “useful element for understanding and fairness in the sense of the words of the Herr Reichs Chancellor and the Herr Propaganda Minister.”<sup>513</sup> Even this member of the DFG—removed from the schemes of Nazi officialdom—understood that the DFG could advance a revisionist agenda, including the remilitarization that lay behind the euphemism of fairness.

Sometimes, proponents of the new associations imagined they held broader appeal than the record shows. Before the re-founding of the DFG and the birth of the CFA, Abetz, for example, put forth the idea that Marshall Pétain might join, a notion one representative of the German Foreign Office even found absurd.<sup>514</sup> Not only did this indicate a fundamental misreading of Pétain, but it reveals the conflation in Abetz’s mind of a desire for peace with Germanophilia.

### *Reading for Rapprochement*

The glossy bilingual DFG/CFA review, the *Deutsch-Französische Monatshefte/Cahiers Franco-Allemands (DFMh)*, acted as an important transmitter of the message of cooperation. Edited in Karlsruhe by a wholly German staff—led by former Karlsruhe teacher and Sohlbergkreis activist Friedrich “Fritz” Bran and overseen in Berlin by a representative of the Dienststelle Ribbentrop—the *DFMh* was a German project heavily

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<sup>513</sup>PA-AA R70555 Letter from Abs. Freiherr Eberh. Von Waechter, Kais. Reg. Rt. und Referent a.D. to Reichs-Aussenminister (11 March 1934).

<sup>514</sup>PA-AA R70555 Forster to Rintelen (8 March 1935).

skewed toward a French audience; nonetheless, it gave the appearance of balance.

Through a careful selection of texts that conveyed a pro-German message without being too overtly National Socialist—the journal, for example, avoided swastikas and tended to steer clear of a racist discourse—its editors sought to mold French opinion. The *DFMh* reminds us of the meaninglessness of the phrase “empty rhetoric”; the language of the journal—even if devoid of sincerity—was one of the principal vehicles by which the CFA attracted and maintained members. Most importantly, it promoted a positive image of the new Germany.

The journal largely consisted of sets of thematic articles, on subjects from farming to veterans to the arts. Just as there was one such article on each country, the review juxtaposed images of both countries to highlight their similarities visually: without the aid of the caption, it would be very difficult to make out the origins of the smiling peasants, gleaming industrial complexes, half-timbered houses, or rolling hills. Most striking, perhaps, was a juxtaposition of images of the eternal flames to the fallen at the *Arc de Triomphe* and the *Neue Wache*. With these images cropped so as to avoid any specific architectural references, and the shadows falling across the photographs at the same angle, even a casual reader could make the connection: both countries made heavy sacrifices during the war and mourn them still. The two nations were fundamentally the same.

Circulation of the monthly was about 4,500,<sup>515</sup> a figure which compares favorably to the *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* until one takes into account that the bilingual

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<sup>515</sup>This figure refers to 1938-39, as cited in a financial audit of the DFG. See PA-AA R61345, No. 12055. “Bericht der Deutsche Revisions- und Treuhand-Aktiengesellschaft Berlin über die bei der Deutsch-Französischen Gesellschaft, Berlin, vorgenommenen Prüfung des Abschlusses zum 31. März 1939.” In his 1985 interview with Barbara Unteutsch, Fritz Bran recalled a print run of about 2000 at most, a figure

journal served two national audiences. The *DFMh* cost significantly less in France than in Germany, a difference that suggests the copies headed to France were partially subsidized by the Germans.<sup>516</sup> This price differential also makes it all the clearer that the journal was directed squarely at French readers.

The first issues of the DFG/CFA journal revealed a certain ambivalence to its Weimar predecessors: these were at once something old and something new. The masthead made clear the journal's ties to the Sohlbergkreis by listing Fritz Bran as the head of the Sohlbergkreis and its journal as well as Abetz as its manager. Even more notably, these early issues maintained the title *Sohlbergkreis*, but added a new subtitle, *Deutsch-Französische Monatshefte/ Cahiers franco-allemands*. The publisher, G. Braun, directed by Fritz Bran's father, also stayed the same.<sup>517</sup> The broader change in administration was made explicit in the *DFMh*; the editors noted (in both languages) that the "community of views and goals" of the review would remain the same as the *Sohlbergkreis*, but that DFG management would permit it to disseminate this message more effectively. The first issue opened with voices from the Sohlbergkreis, in the form of short contributions by Abetz, Cécil Mardrus, and Bertrand de Jouvenel; following these came alternating voices of peace from the leaders of veterans' groups in both countries. The first issue even carried an account of French travelers in Germany who

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Unteutsch believed plausible only after 1937 when the *DFMh* hit its stride. Financial records clearly indicate that Bran's estimation some 50 years after the fact (as well as Unteutsch's conclusions from Bran's interview) underestimated the scope of his journal by more than half. Bran also claimed "hardly anyone read it," which clearly reflects the same ploy Luchaire used at his 1946 trial: diminishing their ties to the Nazis as well as the impact of their work together. See Unteutsch, 23-24.

<sup>516</sup>Unteutsch, 23.

<sup>517</sup>The archives of G. Braun—and thus the publishing records of the *DFMh*—were apparently destroyed in a 1944 bombardment. See Unteutsch, 21.

spent their first day on an overnight pilgrimage to Sohlberg in honor of what happened there five years before.<sup>518</sup>

After a full year of publication, however, the new review dropped the word Sohlbergkreis from its title and left the old group behind. Barbara Unteutsch has suggested that the Dienststelle Ribbentrop might have wanted to blot out the memory of the *DFMh*'s "origins in the youth movement" and perhaps liberate dedicated Nazis from the rumor that working for French-German understanding had "pre-revolutionary origins."<sup>519</sup>

Even at the most basic level of the journal's dating and numbering system, the *DFMh* asserted a particular narrative about German history and the history of the DFG/CFA more particularly. For the DFG/CFA, symbols carried more weight than accuracy. The volume numbering of the journal does not conform with its publication history, but instead dates its origins to the beginning of the Nazi regime. The first issue, which appeared in October 1934, thus was labeled volume 2, issue 1. Like the French Revolution, a new calendar reconfigured the reality of time. The first issue also proclaimed the simultaneous births of the DFG and the CFA, symbolically useful, but a small fiction nonetheless.

In terms of its content, the new journal resembled the *DFR* and the *Revue d'Allemagne* more than it did the old *Sohlbergkreis*. All had lengthy, substantive articles on a wide range of themes, often by distinguished contributors. Like the *DFR* and *Revue d'Allemagne*, it carried book reviews, press reviews, and an announcements section about

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<sup>518</sup>Pierre Chérny, "Jeunesse française en Allemagne," *Sohlbergkreis: Deutsch-Französische Monatshefte/Cahiers franco-allemands* 2, no. 1-2 (Oct.-Nov. 1934-1935): 39-40.

<sup>519</sup>Unteutsch, 18-19.



Franco-German contacts, events of interest, and firsts in the realm of cooperation. In February 1935, for example, the *DFMh* announced the first time a French scholar spoke at a plenary session of the German Academy of Law.

Crucially, it went a step beyond the *DFR/Revue d'Allemagne* by maintaining the dialogue (or the appearance of dialogue) within the review. The French-German community, at least the French-German reading community, was one. French and German personalities from Emmanuel Mounier to Rudolf Hess contributed to the *DFMh*. By and large, French contributors' articles appeared in German and Germans' articles in French, to a rather dizzying effect. The idea was that readers would be able to understand authors from across the Rhine—presumably even better than their own compatriots.

While praising Nazi Germany from the outset, the *DFMh* never grew to be especially effusive. In one early article, for example, journalist Claudine Chonez, who spent a week visiting a Pomeranian work camp, admired the rigors of camp existence—the straw mats, the icy showers, “the grand sacrifice offered to the fatherland [patrie],” but found room to criticize other elements of her experience. “Nothing is as depressing as a diet made up of bread and margarine and boiled potatoes,” she wrote. But she managed to slip in a far more cutting critique of the conformism hammered into young Germans' minds so that they had an enviable “collective discipline” but were not “really free.”<sup>520</sup>

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<sup>520</sup>Claudine Chonez, “Reflexions [sic] au retour du camp de travail,” *DFMh* 2, no. 6 (March 1934-1935): 160-161.

### *Defining Cooperation after Weimar*

The DFG and CFA relied on multiple visions of cooperation drawn from an array of Weimar sources. Members' diversity further contributed to the blurring of what they meant by cooperation as well as to the groups' inconsistency in their choice of target audience. Their diffuse message helped reach out to different constituencies. As we will see, the Nazis took advantage of the ambiguities about cooperation and the elasticity of its vocabulary to recast the terms of the discussion in their favor.

Ostensibly, the two groups aimed, in the words of Fernand de Brinon, "to get to know one other in order to talk things over, to talk things over in order to understand one another."<sup>521</sup> These notions "se connaître" [sich kennenlernen] and "se comprendre" [sich verstehen] came straight from the arsenal of Weimar ideas on cooperation, above all from Grautoff's DFG and its associate the Ligue des Études Germaniques, which had even named its bulletin *Se Connaître*. The notion of "mutual comprehension" popped up frequently: the CFA, for example, sought "the development of private and public ties between France and Germany in all domains...in order to contribute to the consolidation of European peace by better mutual comprehension."<sup>522</sup> Although the idea of a "European peace" also held a prominent place in the CFA's mantra, this slogan did not translate to an open espousal of pacifism. Just as with the groups from the Weimar-era, peace could serve as an eminently useful catchword, but pacifism set off alarm bells.

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<sup>521</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 B03951 Speech by Fernand de Brinon (29 Aug. 1936). The first sentence reads in the original: "Se connaître afin de s'expliquer, s'expliquer pour se comprendre."

<sup>522</sup>This phrase appeared on numerous CFA materials and reports about the group; see for example, PA-AA DBP 1049/1 No. B 5230 V. 4 Sdb. Betr. Gründung eines Comité France-Allemagne. Report signed Forster to AA (6 Dec. 1935); PA-AA R70555 No. zu AA II Fr. 4389 "Discours du Commandant l'Hôpital, Président du CFA" sent by Kühn to AA (17 Dec. 1935).

Like their predecessors, the DFG/CFA purported to steer clear of politics. Brinon proclaimed:

We lay no claim to meddle in public affairs that belong to our governments. We know perfectly well that entente between France and Germany would not be enough to resolve all of the problems of our times. We are not dreaming of joint rule [condominium] dictating to the universe. It is nevertheless the case that an exact mutual awareness between our two countries and a collaboration born of practical settlements would have a supreme importance in today's world.<sup>523</sup>

As some critics duly noted, however, the DFG and the CFA certainly had a political purpose; they were simply reluctant to wear that on their sleeves. This strategy further served to shake off a bit of the Weimar taint by distancing the new associations from Briand and Stresemann's legacy of rapprochement. Descriptions of the two groups thus avoided formulating a comprehensive agenda and instead stressed the importance of fostering personal connections. As those planning the CFA argued, "leave it to the responsible statesmen to judge if one day a political rapprochement will be possible. That is not the task of private individuals."<sup>524</sup>

Following the precedent of the Mayrisch Komitee, Grautoff's DFG, and the Sohlbergkreis, leaders of the CFA and DFG championed the patriotic character of their organizations to the public. For l'Hôpital, "Love of the fatherland, the ardent love that should animate every citizen, does not preclude the incomprehension of other fatherlands."<sup>525</sup> Such patriotic principles, of course, were self-evident from the

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<sup>523</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 B03951 Speech by Fernand de Brinon (29 Aug. 1936).

<sup>524</sup>PA-AA R70555 Press reviews from Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro (15 Nov. 1935).

<sup>525</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 Discours du Commandant l'Hôpital Président du Comité France-Allemagne. Speech from von Tschammer und Osten event, 29 Nov. 1935; also found as PA-AA R70555 No. zu AA II Fr 4389. Reprinted in German, along with Achim von Arnim's speech reprinted in French as, "Deux Comités en Présence," *DFMh* 3 (Jan. 1936): 4-7.

credentials of many of the groups' most visible leaders. In the *DFMh*, Abetz contended that only wounded veterans could have taken such an initiative,<sup>526</sup> an argument worthy of notice given Abetz's own role at the head of the Sohlbergkreis. To the German public, some also made sure to contrast this patriotic approach to working with the French to the so-called decadent betrayal by certain German intellectuals, such as the Mann brothers, who had exposed themselves as "descendants and imitators of French nationalists."<sup>527</sup>

Speeches at the first CFA event sought to channel French anxieties into desires to seek entente with Germany. The Rector of Berlin's Technische Hochschule, SA-*Oberführer* and DFG President Achim von Arnim struck a chord by bringing up the postwar population crisis—the French were after all in the middle of the so-called hollow years short of soldiers and without babies—and reminding them that Germany's population saw no such calamity. Arnim cast French population worries in a more positive light, by reframing Germany's more robust population growth as a source of strength for both countries against the rising tide of Communism. Germany possessed the strength, according to Arnim, to stand as a "bulwark" against the Bolsheviks and could thus protect the French from its true worst enemies. By all reports, this line, uttered less than a year after the February 1934 riots that pitted left versus right, brought a round of applause.

Numerous rallying points pulled the DFG/CFA in different directions. Even in the space of one speech, members of the DFG or CFA could find themselves lurching from

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<sup>526</sup>Otto Abetz, "Die Stimme der Frontgeneration/ La voix de la Génération de feu," *Sohlbergkreis. Deutsch-Französische Monatshefte. Cahiers franco-allemands* 2, no. 3 (Dec. 1934-1935): 70-72. This article appeared in the third issue of the *DFMh*, before its editors had settled on a name.

<sup>527</sup>PA-AA R70555 Press clipping. E. J. Rasche, "Für eine kulturelle Annäherung zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich—Zusammenarbeit der Geister: Eine Antwort auf den Aufsatz 'La Société des Esprits' von André Chamson in der Pariser Zeitschrift 'Vendredi,'" *Rhein. NSZ Front*, 9 Dec. 1935.

one point to the next and could not seem to settle on a unified vision. At the celebration of Reichssportführer von Tschammer und Osten, for example, Arnim first hailed veterans, then called on “all social ranks, including the worker,” and finally alighted on youth as the most important targets in the work of French-German understanding. Singling out the worker, of course, was a stunt—geared not at all to the tony audience in the room but to the readers of the press coverage of the event. Deeming the workers’ an important voice for cooperation was also nothing new; Gottfried Salomon had pursued this line in the Weimar-era DFG, against Grautoff’s instincts, and to little avail. Arnim’s focus on youth in contrast derived from the Sohlbergkreis, but he linked this directly to the racial logic of the Nazis. “Above all, he argued, “we wish for youth to get to know each other. French youth should not be pushed away by our uniforms, which have nothing to do with a martial ethos. If we speak thusly for understanding, we are tying it to the [notion of] medieval solidarity of the European races.”<sup>528</sup> Arnim—who as President of the DFG had no reason to be unsure of its agenda—seems to have used the concept of understanding as a receptacle into which he could toss whatever ideas tickled his fancy. It was broad enough to allow for competing interpretations: medieval notions of fighting the outsider-pagans (Muslims or Jews) as well as the image of Charlemagne harmoniously uniting the cultures of Europe. His talk was vague and hopeful and above all defensive of German intentions.

As evident from Arnim’s speech, the DFG and CFA seemed torn between the allure of exclusivity and inclusiveness. They laid stress on the involvement of elites in the quest for cooperation, an emphasis clearly suggestive of the Mayrisch Komitee’s

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<sup>528</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 Press clipping. Manuel Humbert, “Dîner mit von Tschammer und Osten,” *Pariser Tageblatt*, 1 Dec. 1935.

example. According to its statutes, the DFG worked for “the creation and care of friendly relations between the leading personalities and the different organizations of public life of both countries.”<sup>529</sup> Members’ names (and in the French case, often addresses) attest to the elite base of the twinned organizations. And a multitude of extravagant functions reinforced to the public, if nothing else, an image of the DFG and especially the CFA as exclusive. In this sense, the new groups looked like a flashier version of the privileged Mayrisch Komitee, which had at least kept a low profile. Yet by reaching out to veterans, the DFG and CFA claimed a broader mandate and could purport to be of the people. Such inclusiveness became a point of pride. Fernand de Brinon, for one, refused to limit the endeavor to elites.<sup>530</sup> One press account took pains to distance the CFA from earlier instances confined to “a narrow circle of society people;” the CFA instead worked “without pretension, or illusion.”<sup>531</sup> Abetz recalled the DFG/CFA as a better incarnation of Grautoff’s DFG because it, on the one hand, captivated a broader public, and, on the other, retained a balance (because of its twinned nature) sorely lacking in the Weimar effort.<sup>532</sup>

Following the precedent of Grautoff’s DFG as well as of the Sohlbergkreis, the DFG/CFA paid deference to the ordinary citizen. The DFG and CFA called upon veterans, young people, and journalists; they also beckoned to farmers, mothers, and workers. And like its three Weimar predecessors, the DFG/CFA recognized the

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<sup>529</sup>PA-AA R61269 Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft e.V. Satzung. Signed Achim von Arnim, Otto Abetz, etc. (20 Nov. 1935, 20 Jan. 1936).

<sup>530</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 B03951. Speech by Fernand de Brinon (29 Aug. 1936).

<sup>531</sup>PA-AA R70555 Undated press clipping. “Un Comité France-Allemagne,” *Nouvelles d’Allemagne*, no. 23 (probably Nov. 1935).

<sup>532</sup>Abetz, *Histoire d’une politique*, 59-60.

importance of promoting cooperation outside government channels. Indeed, its leaders claimed, “It is not financiers, nor politicians, nor diplomats even if they are well-intentioned—who can change psychological fundamentals.” If people in positions of power were the ones who mattered least for the quest for cooperation—an idea fundamentally at odds with the Mayrisch Komitee model—the root of the problem, as the Mayrisch Komitee’s Pierre Viénot had argued a decade before, lay in psychologies. The French-German problem was at heart a “problem of passion.”<sup>533</sup>

In hashing out the best ways to achieve Franco-German cooperation, and what this end-product would look like, the DFG/CFA took an all-encompassing approach. Deutsche Bank’s Emil Georg von Stauss (1877-1942), honorary president of the DFG-Berlin and a board member of a range of firms from the Ufa film studios to Daimler-Benz, for example, heavily stressed the centrality of economics.<sup>534</sup> “Economic relations are the most primitive and the most natural connection between peoples,” he argued. “Even cultural exchanges between very developed nations,” Stauss continued, “are only possible on a base of healthy economic exchange. It is only there that the two sides gain something.”<sup>535</sup> By making the cultural contingent on the economic, Stauss connected the DFG to the Mayrisch Komitee, which, with a large portion of its membership base drawn from the world of high finance and big industry, had regularly made similar appeals. The Mayrisch Komitee idea of cleansing the press of misinformation and

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<sup>533</sup>“Unter dem Schirm des Samurai,” *DFMh* 5 (Feb. 1938): 52.

<sup>534</sup>On Stauss, see Harold James, *The Nazi Dictatorship and the Deutsche Bank* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 92-107.

<sup>535</sup>AN AP 411/1. “Conférence de M. von Stauss, Président d’Honneur du Comité France-Allemagne à Berlin, sur les relations économiques Franco-Allemandes tenue à l’Association Nationale d’Expansion Économique le 11 Oct. 1937.”

“*Greuelpropaganda*” would become a mainstay of the DFG and CFA. At a 1937 conference, for example, members resolved to promote honest reporting, combat “tendentious news,” and correct any distortions and errors that surfaced.<sup>536</sup> On a more cultural and intellectual level, the groups arranged tours, conferences, concerts, and film screenings, just as they furthered the expansion of exchanges and encounters. Its journal devoted much space to discussions of the arts, literature, and history.

Framing the project in so many ways resulted in an unclear message. The Nazis were able to use the very nebulous nature of these discussions to begin recasting many of the key concepts of cooperation for their own strategic purposes. Ideas like difference, understanding, equality, and moral disarmament were granted new meanings as they became perverted and instrumentalized to help achieve Nazi aims. For some CFA members, the ideal of peace yielded to self-adjustment to this new vision of cooperation. Other French activists showed profound sympathy for these new arguments and committed themselves to their propagation.

Loose translations can be especially revealing of the tensions within the organization’s visions of cooperation and shed light on the different messages broadcast to French and German audiences. One such article that appeared side-by-side in German and French, for example, slipped in an important distinction about the group’s goals. To the French, it purported to seek “to reveal and reconcile national particularities.” To the Germans, in contrast, the project was not described as about reconciling difference at all; instead, it revolved around the “portrayal and explanation of *völkisch* life” in the two

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<sup>536</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/2 No. B 03840 Press clipping. “Gegen Tendenz um Entstellung: Die Tagung des Comité France-Allemagne—Einrichtung eines Nachrichtenaustausches,” *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 26 June 1937.



countries.<sup>537</sup> Whereas for some the project involved an emphasis on national difference, for others it concerned a dialectical relationship—the project of overcoming the space between.

At times, the DFG/CFA's stress on national difference took other forms. A DFG/CFA conference aimed to show, "the contribution of our two countries to the cultural life of Europe . . . . In this clash of [our] mutual cultural values, is there not the hope of envisioning new perspectives to resolve the political problems that confront us at the current hour?"<sup>538</sup> This argument echoed Grautoff's principle of complementarity that suggested that the two countries' dissimilar traits were a source of strength; together, their complementary natures comprised European civilization. At the same time, it emphasized the productivity of conflict more than it did the value of resolution. This idea of competition reflected the spirit behind one of the great celebratory moments for the DFG/CFA: the 1936 Olympics.

Paying close attention to questions of national difference was not only a way to talk about conflict but also about the project of understanding. For the DFG and CFA, as for their predecessors, the notion of understanding did not entail the chiseling away of difference to yield two versions of the same thing, but the recognition of separate identities. Yet a subtle, but crucial shift marked the DFG/CFA. Whereas Weimar-era societies had underscored the importance of national particularities while nonetheless seeking common ground, the DFG/CFA agenda clearly privileged the importance of difference. As Henri Jourdan, director of the Institut Français de Berlin and cultural attaché at the French Embassy, explained in the *DFMh*, understanding meant "to be

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<sup>537</sup>"Zum neuen Jahrgang," *DFMh* 3, no. 1 (Jan. 1936): 3.

<sup>538</sup>"À la veille du Congrès de Baden-Baden," *DFMh* 5 (June 1938): 193-196.

aware of one's own limits and to base good relations with other nations on such self-awareness" [seine eigenen Grenzen erkennen und auf solcher Selbsterkenntnis ein gutes Verhältnis zur anderen Nation aufbauen].<sup>539</sup> Even more tellingly, one contributor to the *DFMh* contended that "the primary condition for entente is once again the total acceptance of the nature of the other, an a priori recognition in a way . . . Life side-by-side for Germany and France is so intimate by its nature and history that we have the right to speak of it as a community of destiny equivalent to a marriage. To the extent that we have the intention to live in the future in a relationship that is not conjugal war, the obvious thing to do is to establish our relationship on the same base as any happy marriage: mutual recognition of each other's spirit and lifestyle."<sup>540</sup>

Such arguments for respecting the character and "lifestyle" of the other nation pointed toward a more brazen argument about the need to recognize the rights of national sovereignty. Nations should let other nations do as they saw fit, a handy way to denounce Versailles and its regulation of German affairs as well as to advise the French to refrain from judging German politics. Conversely, Germans took umbrage at purportedly aggressive moves on the part of the French, an unacknowledged double standard about the DFG/CFA's assertion not to take a stand against the decisions taken by another government.

Contributors to the *DFMh* often blamed the French for their turbulent relationship with the Germans. Cécil Mardrus from the Sohlbergkreis drew attention to the fact that it was Hitler making overtures to the French, and the French, in turn, were reluctant to

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<sup>539</sup>"Was heisst Verständigung?" *DFMh* 2, no. 9/10 (May/June 1934-1935): 253.

<sup>540</sup>Hans Eberhard Friedrich, "La France devant l'opinion publique allemande," *DFMh* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 1938): 10.

cooperate. Abetz made a similar point by stressing French nationalists' opposition to Germany as a form of intolerance.<sup>541</sup> Not only, then, did *DFMh* writers paint the Germans as more open-minded and actively peace-seeking than the French, they also at times more directly held the French responsible for German actions. Even historical arguments sometimes took this form. One article in the *DFMh*, for example, explained that by considering Karl Freiherr vom Stein "the enemy of France," Napoleon "created the climate in which Stein could act."<sup>542</sup> Less innocuously, this genre of argumentation permitted the *DFMh* to depict the French as aggressors, against whom Germany needed to defend itself.<sup>543</sup> According to Jean Weiland, for example, the French "were playing with fire" by signing the Franco-Soviet Pact. Weiland thus helped his audience "understand" why German troops moved into the Rhineland: the French were at fault for having given the Germans motive.<sup>544</sup> This was a very different notion of understanding from that of the Locarno years. Now it referred to the explaining and sanctioning (or at least the tolerating) of political or strategic actions on the part of the state. Such arguments gave the lie to the DFG/CFA's self-portrait; the groups were only nonpolitical insofar as that meant that they had no place criticizing the domestic and foreign policies of the other nation (except at times when that other nation was France).

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<sup>541</sup>Otto Abetz and Edouard C. Mardrus, "1930-1934 Rückblick und Ausschau," *DFMh* 2, no. 1-2 (Oct./Nov. 1934-1935): 1-3.

<sup>542</sup>"Stein et Napoléon," *DFMh* 3 (Oct. 1936): 343.

<sup>543</sup>See, for example, Dr. Giseler Wirsing, "Evolution des problèmes européens," *DFMh* 3 (Nov. 1936): 361-367.

<sup>544</sup>Jean Weiland, "Ist eine Verständigung zwischen Frankreich und Deutschland immer noch möglich?" *DFMh* 3 (March 1936): 92.

Hand-in-hand with an emphasis on German blamelessness came an appeal for equality. A pair of articles in the *DFMh*—one by the lawyer and DFG vice president Friedrich Grimm, who had defended German nationalist saboteurs during the French occupation of the Ruhr, and one by Weiland, an employee of Henri-Haye—considered the gaping inequality between the two nations through the lens of Versailles. Together, they left the impression that Versailles had shackled Germany and thereby made a hypocrite of France. Grimm subtly prodded readers to question how the birthplace of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity could see a land in chains and not wish it freedom.<sup>545</sup>

At the first CFA event, Achim von Arnim hinted at what kind of cooperation suited the age of Hitler. Although he employed the usual vocabulary—above all, rapprochement and entente—his insistence upon the German people’s (and Hitler’s) wish for peace veiled a subtler message about military parity and rearmament. His code was not terribly difficult to crack. “Rapprochement and entente,” he explained, “are only possible between peoples enjoying the same rights and sufficient means for defense.”<sup>546</sup> Dressed up in a language of equal rights—a language which the French themselves loved to invoke—was a revisionist plea that might sit more easily with a French audience. Grimm reiterated this message in a passionate article about German desires for “equal rights” as the only way to guarantee French security.<sup>547</sup>

By Munich, the language of peace deployed by the *DFMh* had changed dramatically. Veterans now were lauded for their mutual respect and their bravery, but

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<sup>545</sup>Friedrich Grimm, “Chiffon de papier,” *DFMh* 3 (March 1936): 81-89; Jean Weiland, “Ist eine Verständigung zwischen Frankreich und Deutschland immer noch möglich?” *DFMh* 3 (March 1936): 90-98.

<sup>546</sup>“Deux comités en présence,” *DFMh* 3, no. 1 (Jan. 1936): 6.

<sup>547</sup>Friedrich Grimm, “Chiffon de papier,” *DFMh* 3 (March 1936): 86.

not in a pacific or brotherly framework. The *DFMh* still recognized the “spirit of the veteran” as the banner under which the DFG/CFA had marched from the start. Yet it also drew a more soldierly image of these veterans: “This reciprocal sympathy and spontaneous love of peace of two nations-in-arms, known as courageous warriors, are the great sensation of today’s Europe.”<sup>548</sup> No more were veterans solemnly declaring the end of war together and jointly commemorating the fallen at Verdun as they did in 1936; that much was clear. But the *DFMh* seemed to rejoice in this turn of events. It had drifted at last into an open celebration of martial values.

After what it considered the triumph of Munich, the *DFMh* looked back to the old argument from the 1920s of “moral disarmament,” an idea veterans of both countries had revisited in 1935.<sup>549</sup> Whereas the idea of moral disarmament (or in Lichtenberger’s phrasing intellectual demobilization) had originally put forward the importance of destroying an ethos of war alongside the material disarmament that was already underway, the *DFMh* of 1938 promoted something else entirely: moral disarmament without material disarmament. By focusing very carefully on the need for moral disarmament, the editors steered around the question of remilitarization. The article asked, “Have we, French and Germans, done everything in our power so that moral disarmament gains ground in the hearts of our two peoples as we owe it to the millions of dead...on this twentieth anniversary of the armistice?” Through the lens of moral disarmament, the French were to blame for harboring fears of a German menace. By holding onto old prejudices against their neighbor, the French had put at risk the

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<sup>548</sup>“Der Durchbruch,” *DFMh* 5 (Oct. 1938): 412.

<sup>549</sup> At an interallied meeting of veterans in July 1935, they resolved to stay in close contact with one another and to try to achieve moral disarmament. See “Des Anciens Combattants Allemands à la Conférence de la F.I.D.A.C.,” *DFMh* 2, no. 10 (1934/1935): 283.

realization of a “moral armistice.”<sup>550</sup> Certainly, this was a perversion of Lichtenberger’s 1922 premise, but, then again, an article of his had appeared in the *DFMh* earlier that year.

By the late 1930s—despite the geopolitical turmoil—the DFG/CFA took comfort in not only having seen a slew of successes on an interpersonal front, but in also having contributed to what they saw as concrete political victories. Jean Weiland privately expressed his certainty, and that of many colleagues, that his group had helped pave the way to Munich.<sup>551</sup> In December 1938, Ribbentrop told the CFA at a celebratory reception that they had “brought a precious psychological contribution” that enabled the Franco-German Declaration just signed by himself and Foreign Minister Georges Bonnet.<sup>552</sup>

### *A Misleading Partnership*

Though they looked like mirror images of each another and acted as partners, the DFG and CFA remained vastly different associations from the start. The politics of Nazi Germany gave the DFG a more complicated history than that of its sister society in France. A key tension lay in the fact that, on the French side, private citizens had mobilized to form an independent association; whereas, on the German side, state power had invaded the civic space. The Comité France-Allemagne consisted of activists who by and large subsidized the groups through membership fees and donations. The DFG also consisted of activists, but relied upon the direction and funding of Nazi officialdom to a degree only guessed at until now. The two societies thus outwardly shared the same

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<sup>550</sup>“Pour un armistice ‘total,’” *DFMh* 5 (Nov. 1938): 465-468.

<sup>551</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/2 Jean Weiland to G. Bonvoisin (27 Oct. 1938).

<sup>552</sup>Joachim von Ribbentrop, “D’État à État, de Peuple à Peuple,” *DFMh* 5 (Dec. 1938): 531-532.

goals, but not the same resources. This distinction would help the DFG hold a more dominant position, as it ran the publication both groups shared and managed to found seven regional branches. German authorities, in effect, acted as the motor of the DFG, which meant that they, in turn, also helped drive the CFA.

Although the complete records of the DFG and the CFA no longer exist, more files than have been previously acknowledged are available for consultation.<sup>553</sup> These records do not revolutionize our understanding of the organization, but they provide concrete evidence to support vague suppositions, and in so doing, spell out the degree to which Nazi officials steered the organization. Surviving minutes of DFG board meetings reveal that decision-making, down to the level of minutiae, came from the top. Following the Nazi doctrine of the Führer principle, Ribbentrop was invested with ultimate authority within the DFG.<sup>554</sup> A series of financial audits of the DFG illuminates details most obviously about its financing, but also about membership numbers, circulation of the *DFMh*, events hosted by the DFG, and the relative successes of each of the DFG branches—as well as how these conditions changed over the period from 1938 to 1942, the years covered by these audits.<sup>555</sup>

Although the money trail has until now remained hidden, certain aspects of the DFG's connections to the Nazis have long been evident. Most obviously, numerous

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<sup>553</sup>Unteutsch, who generally provides an unusually specific listing of details in her study, for example, explicitly notes the lack of files about the finances and memberships—as well as of the details of the two groups. Instead, she draws hesitant conclusions from the leaders' connections and from the reports in the *DFMh*.

<sup>554</sup>PA-AA R61269 Revers (Statement of adherence to Führerprinzip by DFG). Signed by Abetz, von Arnim, Bran, Heinrich Stahmer, Friedrich Grimm, and von Cossel [on behalf of Oberlindober] (20 Nov. 1935).

<sup>555</sup>The audits were conducted by the Deutsche Revisions- und Treuhand- Aktiengesellschaft on behalf of the Stiftung Deutsches Auslandswerk.

members of the DFG were well-known members of the Nazi establishment. The DFG board maintained close ties to numerous German government and party agencies. From the start, reports in the British press that trickled down to some French papers had announced that the DFG was the creation of “Nazi agents,” more particularly the Propaganda Ministry.<sup>556</sup>

The DFG aimed to project an image of itself as the equal of the CFA. But behind the scenes, puppetmasters including Arnim and Abetz as well as representatives of the Propaganda Ministry, the *Reichsjugendführung*, the various foreign policy offices—the Foreign Ministry, Ribbentrop’s Dienststelle, the Party’s *Aussenpolitisches Amt*, and the Party’s *Auslandsorganisation*—sketched out the grand outlines of the DFG. At one such closed meeting, Arnim announced the need to tap the major occupational groups in France (alongside French youth groups and veterans that had already proved receptive) to unite them against “the influences hostile to Germany of the government, the parties, the press, and anonymous powers” and ensure they were “mobilized for an understanding with Germany.”<sup>557</sup> This fight against hostile propaganda perverted the two-sided struggle of the Mayrisch Komitee to combat negative propaganda and misinformation on both sides of the Rhine. No wonder this proclamation occurred in closed session, without even ordinary DFG members present.

In July 1936, the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft joined with a number of similarly-styled associations aimed at the “care of friendly relations abroad”—among others, the *Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft*, the *Deutsch Ibero-Amerikanische*

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<sup>556</sup>PA-AA R70555 No. zu Fr. 4310. Fitz Randolph [Presse Attaché, Deutsche Botschaft London] to Reichsminister für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda and AA (2 Dec. 1935).

<sup>557</sup>PA-AA R61397 Protokoll der Sitzung des erweiterten Vorstandes der DFG am 19 Mai 1936 um 17 Uhr, signed Achim von Arnim.



*Gesellschaft*, and the *Deutsch-Japanische Gesellschaft*—in an umbrella association of international organizations, the *Vereinigung zwischenstaatlicher Verbände und Einrichtungen*, under the purview of Goebbels, Ribbentrop, and the Nazi Party's *Stiftung Deutsches Auslandswerk*.<sup>558</sup>

Financial security and an opulent setting for DFG events were some of the “positive” changes gained by Nazi support. Whereas Grautoff could not get approval for a DFG house, the DFG's new leaders purchased one and outfitted it with furniture from the New Palace in Potsdam, art on loan from the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum, and a piano from the Bismarck collection of the Chancellery.<sup>559</sup> Audits reveal that the downpayment on the house in Berlin came from Ribbentrop's Dienststelle as did the DFG Secretary General's salary and funds for telephone bills and other basic administrative costs. The Dienststelle Ribbentrop and the Vereinigung der zwischenstaatlicher Verbände und Einrichtung both contributed money for events as well. In 1938 alone, the Vereinigung der zwischenstaatlicher Verbände und Einrichtung donated more than two-and-a-half times as much money to the DFG as came in to the DFG-Berlin branch as membership fees and private donations; the Vereinigung's funds subsidized half the cost of the *DFMh* and some was shuttled to the various DFG branches.<sup>560</sup> The following year, the

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<sup>558</sup>PA-AA R61269 Satzung der Vereinigung zwischenstaatlicher Verbände und Einrichtungen, e.V. Vertraulich. (From meeting held on 29 July 1936).

<sup>559</sup>PA-AA R61397. Protokoll der Sitzung des erweiterten Vorstandes der DFG am 19. Mai 1936 um 17 Uhr, signed Achim von Arnim.

<sup>560</sup>PA-AA R61345 No. 12055 Bericht der Deutsche Revisions- und Treuhand-Aktiengesellschaft Berlin über die bei der Deutsch-Französischen Gesellschaft, Berlin vorgenommenen Prüfung des Abschlusses zum 31. März 1939 (31 March 1939). In a 1985 interview, Fritz Bran stated the German Foreign Office financed the *DFMh* in 1934/35 as well as in its earlier *Sohlbergkreis* iteration. See Unteutsch, 22.

Vereinigung gave a substantial sum to help pay off the DFG house.<sup>561</sup> Put simply, the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft relied heavily on the Nazi regime's paradiplomatic services. These budgets belie Abetz's postwar claims that the DFG had remained wholly independent from Reich ministries and the Party apparatus.<sup>562</sup>

By 1939, the DFG held an enviable financial position. Whereas the Sohlbergkreis and especially Grautoff's DFG worried about money, the DFG of the late 1930s enjoyed a budget surplus. Funds from the Dienststelle Ribbentrop and the Vereinigung der zwischenstaatlicher Verbände und Einrichtung (along with income from various events) kept the organization flush. From a financial standpoint, membership fees and private donations were simply an added bonus; their principal value lay in maintaining the illusion of the DFG as privately-funded and privately-operated. The CFA, in contrast, lived largely off membership fees—though, to be fair, its membership base was much larger. Although the CFA seems to have received a degree of funding from the Quai d'Orsay,<sup>563</sup> it saw nothing along the lines of what the DFG accepted from the Germans.

Thanks to its financial situation and powerful friends, the DFG eventually opened seven regional branches. We know (as yet) very little about the individual branches of the DFG located in the Hanseatic cities, the Rhineland, Southwest Germany, Baden, the Rhine/Main region, Württemberg, and Austria.<sup>564</sup> We do not know exactly who or how many joined. Statutes from the seven branches closely resembled those of the main

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<sup>561</sup>PA-AA R61346 No. 13865 Bericht Nr. 13865 und Anlage der Deutsche Revisions- und Treuhand-Aktiengesellschaft, Berlin über die bei der DFG, Berlin, vorgenommene Prüfung der Einnahmen und Ausgaben für die Zeit vom 1. April 1939 bis zum 31. März 1940 (19 Aug. 1940).

<sup>562</sup>On Abetz's deceit, see Unteutsch, 130.

<sup>563</sup>Unteutsch, 133.

<sup>564</sup>This is an area ripe for future research on the local level.

association based in Berlin and indicate that the central DFG in Berlin controlled them all. These branches looked to the Berlin DFG, which in turn looked to Ribbentrop.<sup>565</sup> Budget reports reveal that the various branches represented only a tiny fraction of the DFG's overall income and expenses.<sup>566</sup> While the branches did not have permanent homes, their members made use of the lavish facilities in Berlin, and they still managed to host many events, from talks to trips, in the regions.<sup>567</sup> Occasional reports tell of local concerts and talks—Henry-Haye in Cologne, the writer Alphonse de Châteaubriant in Karlsruhe, Jacques BENOIST-MÉCHIN in Stuttgart. Some DFG branches tried to foster special relations with specific cities in France, for example, the DFG-Hanseatic Cities with Bordeaux and Württemberg/Stuttgart with Lyon.

The CFA was, in contrast to the DFG-Berlin, both more independent and a more peripatetic creature, with three Parisian addresses over the course of its short life. The CFA was independent of both the French authorities and the German authorities. For the CFA, the impulse to create branches came from below. Although there was only one branch office of the CFA in Lyon, some had made stabs at founding groups in Nice and Algiers. Deeply impressed by a conference they attended in Hamburg and favorable

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<sup>565</sup> Although the DFG-Rhineland attempted to style itself more openly—with a more democratic structure of its board and a more inclusive notion of membership (i.e. board members would not be limited to representatives of state or Party-approved groups, ordinary members could be French)—these efforts were checked by the central office, which kept a close eye on the activities of the DFG branches. The initial leader of the DFG-Rhineland seems to have been rather a maverick. His replacement was far more willing to comply with Nazi structures of authority. PA-AA R27129 Letter from Frh. v.d. Bongart to Dr. Garben (20 July 1937); unsigned letter from von Arnim to Strenger (and forwarded to Garben) (30 Aug. 1937); Aktennotiz über eine Besprechung mit Herrn Abetz, signed Garben (11 Dec. 1937); Letter from Henning Schlottmann to Dr. Manfred Garben (7 July 1938).

<sup>566</sup> See, for example, PA-AA R60605 Kult. Gen. 908, 1938. Etat-Ausstellung. Für das Rechnungsjahr 1939 (1 April 1939 bis 31 März 1940).

<sup>567</sup> Presumably the dearth of branches in Eastern Germany related to a certain distance—spiritual, intellectual, and otherwise—from France. The case of Bavaria is more curious due to its predominantly Catholic population.

reports by area folklore groups of their trip to Germany, interested parties in Nice, deemed “undoubtedly earnest” about the cause of “rapprochement” by the local consulate in Marseilles, tried to found a local CFA chapter.<sup>568</sup> In this case, networking had created local interest in the Paris-based society. The bid for expansion in Algiers demonstrates its roots to have been more firmly grounded in political outlook: a prominent local businessman, known by its consulate as having a “strong pro-German [deutschfreundliche] stance as well as an animus against Jews” likewise attempted to begin another CFA branch beyond the metropole.<sup>569</sup>

### *Pomp and Circumstance*

Although the two associations were each nationally grounded, the DFG and CFA created many opportunities for the groups to mingle or otherwise forge cross-border ties. Whether at fancy galas or small receptions, concerts or talks, or on organized tours, members of the two organizations became acquainted and learned about life in the other land.

Of particular interest were meticulously and cleverly orchestrated travels through Germany that offered only the most limited view. Visitors were certainly shielded from the more disturbing aspects of Nazi Germany. This is no mere judgment in hindsight. In 1934, one Sorbonne professor refused to travel to Germany precisely because he did not want to be used; he explained that the tours looked no different from such propaganda

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<sup>568</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/2 Letter from Bode to Welczeck (29 Nov. 1937).

<sup>569</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/2 No. DBP 416. Letter from Richter to DBP (20 Jan. 1938).

efforts put on by the Soviets.<sup>570</sup> Welcoming and leading these tours seems to have been one of the primary functions of local German DFG branches.

Because such travels and events were back-and-forth, they were trumpeted as examples of reciprocity. A couple of months after the Parisian banquet in honor of Hans von Tschammer und Osten, for example, a CFA delegation traveled to Berlin for the opening of the Olympics. Members of the DFG showed them around Berlin including a tour to the Ufa movie studios, and Oberlindober and von Stauss hosted banquets in the French visitors' honor. By a lucky coincidence, they were also able to attend Foreign Minister Constantin von Neurath's annual diplomatic dinner, where they met Rudolf Hess, Ribbentrop, and Hitler himself. Hitler reinforced their positive impressions by reportedly telling them, "in a largely relaxed atmosphere, the two countries that have contributed so much to one another, in all domains, to civilization, should not only co-exist but get along. If France and Germany can finally agree, it's Europe as a whole that will be saved! And what a relief for the two peoples!"<sup>571</sup>

This particular trip served to pass along an important message to the French public, one played up on occasion in the *DFMh*. Not only did Hitler abominate war and seek accord with France, as in fact de Brinon had reported in 1933, but the Germans worried about potential aggressors. Georges Pineau, the Union Fédérale representative sent to Berlin, wrote in its journal to an audience of French veterans, "From this quick voyage to Berlin we report the very distinct impression of a profound desire on the part of Germans to draw nearer to France. The German Führer, the German people want nothing

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<sup>570</sup>AN 70AJ 30 Letter from Tonnelat to M. le Directeur (5 May 1934).

<sup>571</sup>PA-AA R70555 No. zu AA II Fr. 616. Georges Pineau, "Le Comité France-Allemagne à Berlin," *Cahiers de l'Union Fédérale des Combattants*, 10 Feb. 1936.

less right now than to be our friends. And if something scares them it's to see us turning toward the East . . . 1936 Germany has a phobia—to an unhealthy degree—of encirclement (like in 1914) and of Communism.”<sup>572</sup>

Another big CFA/DFG event, once again full of photo opportunities, brought 86 Germans—about half of whom belonged to the Hamburg DFG branch—to the 1937 World's Fair in Paris. Once again, receptions, banquets, and tours filled the program. Yet, on this occasion, the CFA actually extended a hand to non-elites by hosting a luncheon in honor of the workers who helped construct the German pavilion. One day, Henry-Haye, the mayor of Versailles and member of the CFA's Honorary Committee, invited the German contingent to tour the chateau. In this symbolically charged moment, Henry-Haye told the group he hoped the word “Versailles” thereafter would lose some of its association with the terrible war.<sup>573</sup> Largely planned by businessman Rudolf Schleier, an expert on France for the Nazi Party and vice president of the Hanseatic DFG, the itinerary catered to a variety of tastes, a smart choice in light of the participation of well-known politicians—senators, mayors, and Gau representatives—as well as businessmen, lawyers, journalists, doctors, and teachers.<sup>574</sup> The group thus paid visits to Notre Dame, the Palais de Justice, the Institut Pasteur, a couple of printing presses, and a hospital. The 26 women (by and large wives and daughters) who were excluded from the veterans' gathering and a reception at the German Chamber of Commerce instead toured a

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<sup>572</sup>Ibid.

<sup>573</sup>See BAKo N 1120 File 14. Friedrich Grimm, *Lebenserinnerungen eines deutschen Rechtsanwalts, Band VI: Im Hitler-Reich*, 258-259.

<sup>574</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/2. “Programm für den Aufenthalt vom 22. bis 27. Juli 1937”; “List der Teilnehmer an der Fahrt zur Internationaler Ausstellung Paris 1937.”

perfumery and the fabled Lanvin fashion house.<sup>575</sup> The Hanseatic visitors thus hobnobbed with all sorts of prominent Parisians and discussed pressing social issues together, from the benefits of the *Organisation der Frauenarbeit* in Germany, to the modernity of French housing developments for workers. In most respects—the chosen destinations, the occupations of the visitors, the mix of socializing, touring, and learning—this trip closely resembled the tours planned by Grautoff's DFG.

In addition, the DFG and CFA were involved in a few larger initiatives. About 1,000 children of French veterans spent their vacation at Hitler Youth ski camps in 1938 upon the invitation of Baldur von Schirach,<sup>576</sup> a trip that on the surface at least resembled Sohlbergkreis efforts on a far bigger scale. More spectacular was a gathering of 30,000 veterans (of whom, granted, only 500 were German) at Verdun to commemorate its twentieth anniversary. Together, they mourned their losses and spoke out for peace.

From the DFG's perspective, the two groups also made a crucial, if often indirect impact on developments and opinion in France. Whenever CFA members spoke out on behalf of Germany in the Chamber of Deputies or published books on Germany, as in the cases of Fernand de Brinon and Jules Romains, the DFG saw its own influence at work. Moreover, it encouraged (and took a degree of credit for) DFG board members' efforts to reach out to the French within their own ministries and offices. Thus, a plan by a representative of the Reichsmusikkammer for a joint conference program between Potsdam and Versailles, an ambition of a Reichsfrauenführung representative to set up homestays for French and German youth, and a successful exchange program undertaken

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<sup>575</sup>On this trip, see, for example, PA-AA DBP 1049/2 Programm für den Pariser Aufenthalt vom 22. bis 27. Juli 1937; letter Schleier to Welczeck (3 July 1937); List der Teilnehmer an der Fahrt zur Internationalen Ausstellung Paris 1937 veranstaltet von der DFG in den Hansestädten e.V.

<sup>576</sup>AN AP 411/1 Press clipping. "Le Rapprochement des Jeunesses Franco-Allemandes," *Ouest Éclair*, 21 Jan 1938.

by the Reich Ministry of Transport for 160 French and German children of railway workers, all could be traced back to them.<sup>577</sup>

*Resistance to Cooperation: The Battle over Hearts and Minds in the Press and Elsewhere*

Not surprisingly, the French press offered a more nuanced examination of the CFA and DFG during the 1930s than did the German press. German newspapers either provided neutral chronicles or acclaimed the societies' attempts at bridging the cultures. The French press was largely split along party lines, with the left-wing press contributing more frequent and damning editorials and the more right-oriented papers lauding efforts for peace. The German exile press viewed the CFA/DFG in a particularly negative light. Any press debates tended to coincide with the most prominent events of either the associations or of European politics in general: the launching of the DFG and CFA, Brinon's trip to a Nuremberg Party rally, and, not surprisingly, Germany's aggressive moves on its Eastern borders all prompted the publication of critiques of the two Franco-German associations.

From the start, the left-leaning press in France bristled at the new CFA. One important arena for criticism revolved around whether the CFA/DFG was, as it claimed, not political. At *Vendredi*, André Chamson—who would later show his colors by volunteering in the Spanish Civil War—asked after the first CFA gala whether “we are really in the presence of rapprochement with a cultural character and not an operation to support a whole political maneuver.”<sup>578</sup> Chamson thus questioned one of the CFA's

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<sup>577</sup>For these and other examples, see the transcripts from DFG board meetings in PA-AA R61397.

<sup>578</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 Press clipping. André Chamson, “La Société des Esprits: Le Comité France Allemagne vous prie de bien vouloir assister au Dîner qui sera donné en l'honneur du Reichssportführer M.



fundamental claims about the style of cooperation it pursued. Though the group professed to steer away from politics and stick to the realm of culture (as, of course, had its forbears), Chamson saw through the façade. Working together with representatives of the Nazi regime was inherently political and the French associated with the group were leaving themselves open to exploitation.

Anxieties about such manipulation were tied to accusations that the CFA and DFG merely maintained an illusion of reciprocity. Those who questioned whether the two associations were in equilibrium and sought an evenhanded form of cooperation focused on the relative control of the overall organization. One journalist, noting the all-German editorial staff of the *DFMh*, argued, “But what surprises me, is that French people accept, under the guise of rapprochement, collaborating on a review in which in terms of direction and control Germany has all and France has nothing. Free for others to call that rapprochement; I call it abdication.”<sup>579</sup> In this light, the *DFMh* represented a broader submission to German domination. Such fears of a lack of reciprocity had plagued both German and French officials throughout the 1920s, but the CFA made plain that it was now the turn of the French to submit to German hegemony.

Others considered the entire venture a form of fraud, with the French as its dupes. In light of the difference between the soft diplomacy of the DFG and the aggressive politics of Hitler—and more particularly between the peace-seeking rhetoric of Arnim toward the French and his bellicose lessons to his students at the Technische Hochschule, one Strasbourg newspaper recalled an old line, “The German is a kind of bicephalus. He

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le Baron von Tschammer und Osten, le Vendredi 29 Novembre 1935 à 20h.30 dans les salons de l’Hôtel Georges V,” *Vendredi*, 29 Nov. 1935.

<sup>579</sup> AN AP 411/1 Undated press clipping. Albert Bayet, “La Moralité de l’Affaire Brinon,” *Lumière*. Bayet was a pacifist Radical, writing for the left-wing *Lumière*. In this article, he professed that he had originally believed the *DFMh* to be “genuinely Franco-German” and was shocked to learn otherwise.

thinks and dreams with one head; he conducts himself and acts with another.”<sup>580</sup>

Journalist Louis Lévy warned dramatically about the Nazis’ subtle euphemisms that hid a more treacherous design:

And only naïfs can be taken in by appearances. Hitler and his collaborators do not cease to speak of Franco-German rapprochement, of psychological détente, and to use their jargon, ‘cultural’ exchanges. But as soon as one coldly examines the heart of the matter, one notices that the aims of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reich survive....the France of the Popular Front has proclaimed many times that it wants peace with all peoples regardless of the form of their government. But it would be childish to remain closed off from realities: Hitler’s Germany refuses to reenter into the collectivity of pacific nations.<sup>581</sup>

The Germans were laying a thick web of deceit that the French should be able to recognize and try to resist.

Others saw as the fundamental problem, not cooperation itself, but the company the CFA kept. Whereas the CFA consisted of private individuals, the DFG was something else entirely:

Public opinion should be put on guard: Berlin’s Germany-France Committee is a committee of Nazi functionaries, official or unofficial agents of Hitler’s propaganda . . . . By the fault of the Third Reich, there is no longer a common language between the French and the Germans. The Germans with whom we can get along on intellectual, scientific, political, etc. terrain are today in concentration camps or in exile. The Nazis with whom the Comité France-Allemagne wants to fraternize burned the books of our thinkers, boycotted Zola, Anatole France, etc. and boast of being adversaries of our civilization based on the revolution of ’89 and the rights of man. This committee is founded on a pernicious equivocation. The

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<sup>580</sup>The quotation is attributed to the geographer Daniel in “Le Lieutenant-colonel von Arnim au cours d’une nouvelle conférence parle de la guerre future entre l’Allemagne et la France: Il relate les avantages pour le Reich de la neutralité anglaise,” *Echo de Paris*, 4 Dec. 1935. Press clipping in PA-AA DBP 1049/1.

<sup>581</sup>AN AP 411/1 Press clipping. Louis Levy, “La propagande hitlérienne en France,” *Populaire*, 22 Jan. 1938. A caustic and anti-Semitic retort to this article (and to another anti-Brinon article in the communist paper *l’Humanité*) blamed “our false pacifists of the extreme left” who “display once again their ordinarily secret but irresistible Carthaginian, Hebraic [hébraïque] hatred of peace.” He continued, “That two great neighboring nations may one day discuss at last, at the official level, their divergences and their interests—that is what makes these men who claim to be the friends, the protectors, the defenders of the French people indignant to the point of being out of breath!” See AN AP 411/1 Press clipping. Paul Marion, “La haine de la Paix,” *La Liberté*, 23 Jan. 1938.

French who only know the Germany of Goethe, Schiller, Heine, and Nietzsche will know nothing of its activity.<sup>582</sup>

Harsher still, one editorial argued that it was unacceptable to converse with the Germans until they resumed their ties to the League of Nations. As it stood, the *Petit Provençal* (whose editor, the Radical deputy Vincent Delpuech actually belonged to the CFA), presumed the Germans had ulterior motives in courting the French. First they could use the French to get close to the Russians, then they would betray the French. “We are big enough boys,” wrote the anonymous author, “to detect the perfidies and traps if the kiss we are offered is only a kiss from Judas.” The following week, an op-ed piece took the opposite tack; the CFA and the DFG—which the author asserted 4,000 Germans had already requested to join—could “open the true path that leads to rapprochement between the two nations.”<sup>583</sup> And while such articles make for less dramatic and more homogeneous reading, they certainly were common. Much of the press in France—and of course, all of the highly regulated press in Germany—took the groups at their word. Germans followed the “order of their hearts” not orders from on high.<sup>584</sup>

The rift between supporters and detractors of the CFA/DFG grew wider as Hitler’s aggression became bolder. A longstanding feud between the CFA’s Fernand de Brinon and the conservative deputy and journalist Henry de Kérillis illustrates in dramatic form the sheer magnitude some placed on the question of cooperation. In a

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<sup>582</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 Press clipping. André Pierre, “La constitution d’un comité ‘France-Allemagne’: Sur quelles bases Françaises et Hitlériens peuvent-ils s’entendre?” *L’Oeuvre*, 29 Nov. 1935.

<sup>583</sup>Cf. PA-AA R70555 “Conversations franco-allemandes,” *Le Petit Provençal*, 17 Nov. 1935; C.-B. Bergeron, “La Pacification de l’Europe,” *Le Petit Provençal*, 24 Nov. 1935.

<sup>584</sup>PA-AA R70555 Press clipping. E.J. Rasche, “Für eine kulturelle Annäherung zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich—Zusammenarbeit der Geister: Eine Antwort auf den Aufsatz ‘La Société des Esprits’ von André Chamson in der Pariser Zeitschrift ‘Vendredi,’” *Rhein. NSZ Front*, 9 Dec. 1935.

series of articles after the Munich Accords he had opposed, Kérillis accused the CFA—which he had condemned from the start—of “contributing to the chloroforming of a group of high society Parisian elites when Germany, wanting to gain time and not yet having thrown off its mask, had an interest in spreading so many illusions and lies about its true designs regarding our country.” A press war between the two, who quickly added to their mudslinging new nicknames for each other, von Brinontrop and Kérilliskof, culminated in Brinon’s unanswered call for a duel.<sup>585</sup>

Such colorful articles condemning the two societies did not stop other newspapers from applauding Brinon and the CFA for their successes in working toward European peace. One Fredo Lehrer wrote personally to Brinon in 1938 to laud his courage to wish for rapprochement at this point. On both sides of the Rhine, some newspapers enthusiastically recorded the successes of Brinon and the CFA. Others offered the more reluctant praise of desperation. In 1938, one Alsatian paper remarked how developments in Europe seemed to have led the French Foreign Ministry “to the conviction that French-German rapprochement is the only way to avoid the catastrophe that is generally admitted to be imminent. It would thus be criminal not to try and approve the attempt of this last chance.”<sup>586</sup>

The German exile press, though catering to a limited and self-selecting circle, ridiculed and scorned the CFA. German exile journalist Kurt Caro (pseud. Manuel Humbert) from the exile journal *Pariser Tageblatt* described how, at a CFA/DFG event at

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<sup>585</sup>Kérillis refused to fight, so Brinon sued for libel instead. See AN AP 411 and Franz, 207-210. Kérillis was the only conservative deputy to vote against the Munich Accords; in this way he sided with the Communists and one Socialist. This explains the Russian-style epithet. On the Munich vote, see Julian Jackson, 91.

<sup>586</sup>AN AP 411/1 Press clipping signed “S.” “Remarques...,” *Mulhouse Bote*, 26 Jan. 1938.

the Hotel Georges V, his thoughts drifted back to a similar event in 1931 Berlin headlining Aristide Briand, near death, and speaking of an “eternal theme: French-German understanding.” Both Briand and the speaker of 1935 were guilty of harboring “illusions.” But the current organization merited more scorn and was, according to Caro, full of doubletalk. He maintained the rhetorical efforts of the DFG/CFA—“a repertory of bluffs”—sounded like the “cooing of turtledoves.”<sup>587</sup> A similar article cut away the rhetorical flourishes to uncover “a whole club sent forth to bluff to foreigners.”<sup>588</sup>

If the German exile press acted as a mere thorn in the DFG/CFA’s side, a more pernicious opponent from the exile community surfaced elsewhere: the *Deutsch-Französisches Union*. The Nazis saw in this new organization founded by Willi Münzenberg a dangerous adversary as well as a competitor. In October 1938, Münzenberg and Arthur Koestler along with a group of well-known German émigrés and French leftists launched a short-lived, irregular newspaper *Die Zukunft* (*The Future*), around which they built up a group called the Deutsch-Französisches Union. The Union upheld the tradition of seeking French-German cooperation, while subverting its more recent Nazi incarnation. *Die Zukunft* and the Franco-German Union aimed to unite the German exile community worldwide around antifascism.<sup>589</sup> Tied to this notion was a desire to rehabilitate the banished as the true voice of Germany. The DFG saw the union as an attempt by “circles in France hostile to Germany [deutschfeindlich]” “to thwart and nip efforts for a Franco-German understanding in the bud.” To be sure, the DFG claimed

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<sup>587</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 Press clipping. Manuel Humbert, “Dîner mit von Tschammer und Osten,” *Pariser Tageblatt*, 1 Dec. 1935.

<sup>588</sup>PA-AA DBP 1049/1 Press clipping. “Friedenstauben: Zweimal Herr von Arnim,” *Pariser Tageblatt*, 3 Dec. 1935.

<sup>589</sup>“Aufruf an die Leser und Freunde der Zeitschrift ‘Die Zukunft’,” *Die Zukunft* no. 1 (12 Oct. 1938).

the Franco-German Union was “usurping” its idea with a “fantasy-construction of a not-National Socialist Germany” to be connected to France.<sup>590</sup> What it meant was that the Nazis did not hold a monopoly on initiatives for French-German cooperation.

The group around the union hardly needed to steal from the new DFG to dream up a project for cooperation; Thomas Mann and Fritz von Unruh, who had both served on the board of Grautoff’s DFG, as well as Pierre Viénot all contributed to *Die Zukunft*. More to the point, the Deutsch-Französische Union, its name notwithstanding, was really not at all in the same vein as other groups for French-German cooperation. Its main focus was to fight Nazi propaganda and battle the forces of evil in Germany. Consisting largely of writers and politicians based in France, it really did not advocate a French-German union, but the union of left-leaning forces against fascism and Nazism. In this respect, it resembled the republican émigré journal, *Pariser Tageblatt* (from 1936, the *Pariser Tageszeitung*) or Paris’ Institute for the Study of Fascism, more than it did organizations first and foremost geared toward cooperation.<sup>591</sup> And between its modest beginnings and the crackdown against those antifascists who supported it, the Union and *Die Zukunft* barely lasted more than a year.<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>590</sup>PA-AA R27129 Arbeitskreis für Literarische Fragen in der DFG. Sitzungsbericht vom 6 Juni 1939 (6 June 1939).

<sup>591</sup>Georg Bernhard, “Unsere Aufgabe” and “Notre tâche,” *Pariser Tageblatt* (12 Dec. 1933).

<sup>592</sup>Sean McMeekin suggests that, beyond its modest start, *Die Zukunft* fizzled out quickly because the bulk of its readers, contributors, and advertisers were sent to French internment camps at the start of the war. Willi Münzenberg, who spearheaded and directed both *Die Zukunft* and the Union was dead by October 1940. Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow’s Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 295-307.

### *Another End?*

International affairs in the spring of 1939 put the DFG and CFA in a state of limbo. Although there had clearly been numerous political and diplomatic disasters that had tested the DFG/CFA, it was not until the invasion of Czechoslovakia that the two groups tottered. In March 1939, Hitler's "brutal violation of treaties," led the Lyon branch of the CFA to ask the central committee of the CFA in Paris to cut ties to the DFG and take a firm position against the Reich.<sup>593</sup> A couple of days later, the executive committee of the CFA decided to suspend its activities and call a meeting of the General Assembly to dissolve the CFA altogether. A "prominent" member of the CFA explained, "We continue to believe that the German people desires to live in peace with France, but we are obliged to note that the politics of Hitler's government finally has brought Europe to the edge of catastrophe!"<sup>594</sup>

German officials still held out a degree of hope for the two groups. A representative of the German Embassy in Paris put the situation in different terms just before the CFA meeting. For him, "If it comes down to dissolution, then a new committee would be founded—excluding the elements which have recently been trying to bring politics into the CFA—and it will surely prove to be resistant."<sup>595</sup> This official thus clung to the very tactic that had launched the DFG/CFA in the first place: kick out the old dissenters—or let them fall away of their own volition—and continue on with the consensus view. As for the DFG, though its activities had lapsed, the group endured. In

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<sup>593</sup>PA-AA DBP 1297 "Compte-Rendu de la Séance du 23 Mars 1939" Signed Madinier (24 March 1939).

<sup>594</sup>PA-AA DBP 1297 Press clipping, "Le Comité France-Allemagne décide de suspendre son activité," *Le Journal*, 24 March 1939.

<sup>595</sup>PA-AA DBP 1297 No. A 1271. Abschrift to the AA from Bräuer (26 March 1939).

April, officials from a variety of Party offices, including the Propaganda Ministry and the Foreign Office, decided to maintain the DFG budget as before for one more quarter before re-assessing its stability and perhaps then slashing the *DFMh* budget.<sup>596</sup> The *DFMh*, however, was instead knocked off balance when the French Ministry of the Interior banned it in the summer of 1939.<sup>597</sup>

That May, the CFA General Assembly had met to vote on dissolution. While it unanimously opted to cease activities for the moment, a majority, but not the needed 2/3 majority voted for complete dissolution. Veterans, including a strident Goy and a more tempered Pichot, led the charge for dissolution.<sup>598</sup> Although the General Assembly announced the “sterility” of its current relations with the DFG, all in attendance agreed that “they hoped circumstances would allow, one day, the pursuit of their effort for entente between the German people and the French people, the only way to guarantee the peace in a lasting way.”<sup>599</sup> Political circumstances may have momentarily impeded the project, but the French still held onto the idea of continuing their work at a later date. Goy explained to his Federal Union, “We had hoped otherwise for this collaboration [...] We were wrong.”<sup>600</sup>

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<sup>596</sup>PA-AA R60605 Kult. Gen. 908, 1938. No. AA Kult Gen 1420 (g). Protokoll der Vorstandsitzung der Stiftung Deutsches Auslandswerk vom 18 April 1939. Geheim. [Forwarded to Legationsrat von Stolzmann AA, Kult Gen. (9 May 1939)].

<sup>597</sup>Karlsruhe Hauptregistatur. Press clipping Nr. 426, Nachrichtenstelle, Karlsruhe, den 26 Aug. 1939. “‘Deutsch-Französische Monatshefte’ in Frankreich verboten,” *Frankfurter Zeitung* (22 Aug. 1939).

<sup>598</sup>PA-AA DBP 1297 No. A 2177 Circular signed Welczeck to AA (27 May 1939).

<sup>599</sup>PA-AA DBP 1297 No. DBP A 02177 Press Release/Havas Wire, signed JZ. “Spéciaux: Au Comité ‘France-Allemagne,’” 24 May 1939.

<sup>600</sup>This quotation from Jean Goy in the April 1939 issue of *Cahiers de l’Union fédérale* was cited in Ray, 155.



## *Conclusion*

Viewing the DFG as a composite of Weimar organizations infused with a Nazi sensibility helps clarify the disconnect others have identified between Grautoff's DFG and the DFG of the mid-to-late 1930s. Ina Belitz, for one, has called the second iteration of the DFG an "empty shell" of the first, with only "symmetries" not continuities with its predecessor.<sup>601</sup> Yet these mere "symmetries," when seen in combination with its parallels and imbrications with both the Mayrisch Komitee and the Sohlbergkreis, take on more importance. The DFG of the Nazi-era drew on crucial aspects of each of these Weimar predecessors. And though it retained fundamental differences from these groups as well, many activists saw their involvement in the DFG/CFA as an extension of their earlier work on behalf of French-German understanding. The similarities certainly made it more thinkable simply to carry on.

Coopting the language and strategies of the Weimar-era organizations for French-German cooperation and playing on rampant anxieties about the possibility of war made for a savvy strategy; yet, that is not to say that those involved were simply pawns. Some may have been "blind," "naïve," "Nazi henchmen," or may "without having desired it...facilitate[d] the installation of the apparatus of Nazi propaganda in France beginning in 1934,"<sup>602</sup> but such dismissive interpretations do not really help us come to terms with members' goals or their conceptions of cooperation. They also end up papering over essential differences between the DFG and the CFA as well as within each group—above all, what motivated individuals to get involved in the project and what kind of

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<sup>601</sup>Belitz, 232-233.

<sup>602</sup>As according to Unteutsch, 111, 122; Ory, 13. For an overview of such perspectives, see Ray, 153-155.

cooperation they envisioned. These were activists generating the rhetoric, contributing articles and giving speeches. And they ranged from idealists in search of peace and cooperation to revisionists looking for so-called equal rights; some were even a bit of both.

The two associations embraced a multiplicity of forms of cooperation from the economic to the political. Although some scholars have cast the members as little more than social butterflies, significant for their networking alone,<sup>603</sup> it is equally important to take seriously their ideas. Their numerous conceptions of cooperation neither indicated fickleness nor did they undermine one other. Instead, their very diversity appealed to many, from members of the three Franco-German associations of the Weimar era to a new public. Moreover, this diversity of visions enabled some French members to discount the flurry of articles in the French press denouncing cooperation with Nazi Germany. From this perspective, such articles seemed knee-jerk reactions to what was really an open forum seeking solutions to the Franco-German problem.

If the DFG/CFA faced virulent criticism, resistance to Franco-German cooperation was nothing new. Franco-German societies in the 1920s had also encountered much opposition to their projects for entente. The critiques remained basically the same: lack of reciprocity, fears of rising German power, and worries about German nationalism. In tone, the criticism may have become more frantic, but even in the 1920s, prominent personalities published very harsh critiques of the Briand-Stresemann accords and the work of Franco-German societies.

This chapter has shown the ways that civil society was usurped, perverted, or even corrupted by the Nazis. But the National Socialists could not go the full distance

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<sup>603</sup>See Ory, 18-20.

they went at home to collapse civil society and the state. In this case, the Nazis were not simply duping people, and the DFG/CFA was not simply a matter of straight-up instrumentalization. Some Germans believed in the project, as did most French adherents. The changing vision many embraced shows the malleability and flexibility of notions of cooperation.

The many types of cooperation embraced by DFG/CFA members did not die with the associations but continued to resonate through the Occupation/Vichy period, in some cases even to the present. By carrying these ideas not only through the 1930s, but into the 1940s and beyond, these Franco-German mediators became far more than socialites; they became central to understanding the motors of cooperation, and in the near term, of collaboration.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Groupe Collaboration

. . . Franco-German rapprochement is the condition to safeguard Western Civilization.—  
Adrien Marquet, Mayor of Bordeaux<sup>604</sup>

There are no other people on earth who were as destined to live with and quarrel with one another as Germany and France. Between no other peoples does such an intimacy with esteem and contempt, with love and hate prevail. History has reunited the Germans and the French in good as in evil. Each generation is newly confronted with the problem of the German-French relationship. With the tremendous political caesura of the year 1940 this problem lost nothing of its urgency. On the contrary: since then, the question of how to organize German-French relations is posed with greater acuity and more profoundly than ever. But the magnanimity of the victors has opened new horizons. For the first time, the hope has awakened that the German-French relationship could be resolved other than by the periodic return of man-eating wars. For the first time since the end of the Middle Ages, the idea of a common continental mission in which Germany, Italy, and France helped by the other nations of Europe will work side-by-side for the task of peace has reemerged.—Karl Epting, Head of the German Institute in Paris<sup>605</sup>

. . . In the interest of France in Europe and of Europe in the world, we should all group ourselves behind Marshall Pétain and President Laval, and without hesitation or evasion, accept the hand that our former adversary extended to us, aware that in so doing we do nothing against national honor, but cooperate in a moral, political, and social Revolution of incalculable significance.—Charles-Albert Reichen, vice president of Groupe Collaboration, Nice<sup>606</sup>

We never hid from our French friends that we wanted the national and social unity of our fatherland [patrie], but *we believed it was completely compatible with a sincere Franco-*

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<sup>604</sup>“Allocution de M. Marquet, Maire de Bordeaux,” *Regards sur l’Histoire*, Cahiers de l’Institut Allemand, ed. Karl Epting (Paris: Sorlot, 1941): 217-218.

<sup>605</sup>Karl Epting, “Deutschland-Frankreich” and “France-Allemagne,” *Deutschland-Frankreich. Vierteljahresschrift des Deutschen Instituts Paris* 1, no. 1 (1942): 3, 8-9.

<sup>606</sup>AN F17 13359 Undated press clipping from Nice. Charles-Albert Reichen, “La réconciliation franco-allemande et la collaboration européenne,” *Le Bulletin du Palais*, 15.894-15.897.

*German collaboration* [his emphasis]. Mutual comprehension is developing more and more.—Fritz Bran<sup>607</sup>

In July 1940, not long after the French had been routed by the German army, one Lucien Bourot wrote to the German Embassy about his intentions to “re-form” a Comité France-Allemagne: “I have always advocated rapprochement between our two peoples on this basis [cultural, artistic, political]. Well before 1938 and even during the war—though mobilized—I did not hide my sentiments on this subject, which evidently cost me some trouble. I want to turn your attention to the psychological importance that such an organization could have in the always difficult period in the aftermath of war. In my opinion, it’s necessary to begin immediately . . . .” The German Embassy thanked Bourot, but rebuffed his effort.<sup>608</sup>

In this instance, French willingness to cooperate not only preceded the efforts of the German authorities (as well as German unofficial mediators), but even was deemed premature by German officials. This was not the only time that French proponents of cooperation with the German occupier outpaced German expectations—and, on occasion, even went too far in their eyes. The initiative undertaken by Bourot to seek to work hand-in-hand with the Germans so soon after defeat reflects a broader trend on the diplomatic and political levels first discussed by Eberhard Jäckel and Robert Paxton. Unlike earlier histories of France under the Occupation, Jäckel boldly demonstrated that the French had enjoyed choices in diplomacy and that French negotiating strategies revealed more than a

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<sup>607</sup>Fritz Bran, *La jeunesse allemande et l’avenir de l’Europe*. Preamble by Jacques Schweizer (Paris: Groupe Collaboration, 1942), 25. Talk given at Groupe Collaboration event, Maison de la Chimie, Paris (31 Jan. 1942).

<sup>608</sup>PA-AA DBP 1297 Letter to DBP from Lucien Bourot (31 July 1940); Consul General Schleier to Lucien Bourot (7 Aug. 1940).

degree of compliance by French elites. According to Jäckel's argument, then, while Hitler's vision propelled Franco-German diplomacy during the first half of the 1940s, the French leadership often chose to meet him halfway. In Robert Paxton's daring, damning classic *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944*, he argued that the French were more than just complicit with Nazi demands; they increasingly anticipated them. The Vichy government not only developed its own domestic program for change, but also it more than willingly executed tasks the Nazis set before it.<sup>609</sup> The case of Bourot also makes clear that not all who sought cooperation with the Germans were new to the effort.

If the Vichy regime, both to bolster its domestic agenda and its position in a German-dominated new European order, engaged in morally suspect actions, average French citizens were forced to negotiate difficult—and at times crisscrossing—paths of resistance, accommodation, and collaboration. Within the morally blurred landscape of the Vichy South and the Occupied North, proponents of cooperation had to take a deep pause to reconsider the relationship between France and Germany. While many former advocates of cooperation left the fold, others, drawn by ideological affinities, opportunism, cynical realism, or even misplaced idealism, sought to engage or renew cultural ties with the German occupiers.

Although Bourot's wish to pick up the Comité France-Allemagne where it had left off in 1939 was not realized, a new organization with similar aims and a significantly larger base soon emerged. Founded in the fall of 1940 and registered as an association the following February, the Groupe Collaboration both extended and further perverted the notion of cooperation put forward by the DFG/CFA. Jean Weiland, vice president and

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<sup>609</sup>See Jäckel; Paxton.

director-general of the Groupe, considered it a continuation of the CFA, in which he had likewise been active.<sup>610</sup> Building off French-German networks put into place by earlier Franco-German organizations enabled the Groupe to assert an important place for itself in the “new order” quickly and fluidly.

By promulgating the idea of Franco-German entente and a Europe united under the Germans, the Groupe Collaboration explicitly aimed at sustaining the politics of Montoire. It organized and sponsored popular lecture series and cultural functions throughout the occupied and unoccupied zones. Given by both Nazis and French proponents of collaboration, the propagandistic talks were then published. In several senses, the Groupe was the most extreme of the organizations in this study. Its language was the most vitriolic and its version of cooperation the most overtly imbalanced. It also commanded the largest audience.

While the Groupe comes across as radical compared to earlier French-German organizations, it appears relatively tame compared to its contemporaries. The Groupe Collaboration bears the reputation, somewhat deserved, of having presented the polite face of collaboration to the public. Bertram Gordon has called its members “parlor collaborators.”<sup>611</sup> Certainly, the presence of many well-known personalities—members of the Académie française and the Institut de France, as well as Cardinal Alfred Baudrillart, head of the Catholic Institute, lent the group a veneer of respectability. Members did not wear uniforms, goosestep, or salute. And the language used by some of the more famous

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<sup>610</sup>Franz, 257.

<sup>611</sup>The often-repeated notion of the Groupe Collaboration as a “polite channel of collaboration” no doubt can be traced to the British Foreign Office’s wartime handbook on France. See The Foreign Office and the Ministry of Economic Warfare, *French Basic Handbook* (London, 1944), 152. For the term “parlor collaborators,” see Gordon, *Collaborationism*, 230. For a more recent rendering of the Groupe as “the respectable face of collaborationism,” see Julian Jackson, 201.

Groupe Collaboration members, as well as their general comportment, retained a degree of civility lacking in the coarser collaborationist groups such as the *Parti Populaire Français* (PPF). Yet the Groupe Collaboration harbored a zealous core, many of whom became increasingly fanatic and aggressive. Moreover, a number of those self-same upright personalities also served on the Honorary Committee of the *Légion des Volontaires Français contre le Bolchévisme* (Anti-Bolshevik Legion or LVF), a group of French volunteers in German uniform who served on the Eastern Front;<sup>612</sup> many ordinary members also belonged to the PPF. The Groupe Collaboration's youth contingent, the *Jeunes de l'Europe Nouvelle* (Youth of the New Europe, henceforth JEN), was particularly militant. And from the first, many Groupe representatives spouted the racist, anti-Semitic, anti-Anglo-American, anti-Masonic language favored by the most rabid "collabos."

Philippe Burrin has identified four themes that colored arguments for collaboration. First, it served France's national interests. Next, collaboration would help "end the cycle of Franco-German wars and . . . establish concord between neighbors." In addition, collaboration would allow for the creation of a "new Europe," that would defend Europe's civilization and economic welfare. Finally, collaboration would help defeat "common enemies."<sup>613</sup> It is in the first two themes that we can most clearly see the philosophical overlaps between the Groupe Collaboration and its predecessors—especially if we swap the word collaboration for the more neutral term cooperation. The context in which cooperation was to take place, of course, was astonishingly different,

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<sup>612</sup>The overlaps here included Abel Bonnard, Cardinal Baudrillart, Brinon, Châteaubriant, and Abel Hermant.

<sup>613</sup>Burrin, *France under the French*, 384-385.



but the ways in which arguments were mounted remained remarkably similar. The idea of a new Europe or defending Europe had appeared in earlier French-German organizations as well, though to a lesser extent. The Groupe added that final, more antagonistically-framed theme of fighting enemies (both internal and external), one that some members of earlier organizations had touched on in the past, but which now ran through every text.

This chapter looks to how the scope of cooperation was readjusted in the process of focusing on a fresh object: a new Europe. The new object of activists' gaze represented a substantial distortion of the cooperation imagined by most of its proponents in the 1920s and 1930s. But, in the Groupe Collaboration, we can still see the traces of those older ideas (and even some of those ideals). And if the cause for cooperation had lost some of its champions in the context of war and occupation, the skeletons of the networks established by earlier organizations remained; in some cases, the activists did too.

As with the rest of this study, this chapter explores a particular iteration of French-German cooperation; it therefore does not claim to speak for all types of wartime collaboration. Scholars have considered an array of thoughts, stances, and actions as instances of collaboration(ism); Pascal Ory even reasoned that "taken to the extreme, all the French who stayed on territory occupied by the German army or depending on its goodwill had to a degree collaborated."<sup>614</sup> This chapter thus is not about the black market or "horizontal collaboration" (sleeping with German officers), nor is it about the work of bureaucrats, police officers, railroad employees or others directly complicit in mass deportations. In other words, it is not about functional collaboration. Working with the

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<sup>614</sup>Ory, 10. John Sweets was among the first to argue that scholars, reacting to the problematic tendency to paint the French as a "nation of resisters," had become instead too liberal with the label of collaborator. See John F. Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: The French under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Oxford, 1986;1994); see also his "Hold that Pendulum! Redefining Fascism, Collaborationism, and Resistance in France," *French Historical Studies* XV, no. 4 (Fall 1988): 731-758.

Germans or Vichy (itself operating with attention to German concerns) could, as in these examples, stem from very different motives than those discussed here, or be tied to simple questions of fate, such as those neatly captured in Louis Malle's film, *Lacombe Lucien*. Instead, this chapter revolves around a certain form of collaboration—often ideological—but fundamentally concerned with French-German cooperation in the new context of occupation. Looking at this subset of collaboration, not just as collaboration, but as a product of years of efforts for cooperation, helps us to remove the brackets that separate our examination of the Vichy years from the rest of French history.

### *Founding Principles*

As Sartre reminds us in his celebrated postwar essay *What is a Collaborator?*, “it would be an error to confuse collaborator and fascist, although each collaborator had to accept on principle the ideology of the Nazis.”<sup>615</sup> The Groupe was not explicitly fascist, though, to be sure, many fascists and Nazi sympathizers did belong. Tied to notions of Pétain's National Revolution, Europeanism, and most obviously collaboration with Germany, the Groupe set out its primary goals. First, it would bring together those who “sincerely wish to establish a New France in a New Europe” to conform to Pétain's wishes. It would also strive to “sustain” Pétain's foreign and domestic policies as outlined in his speech of 10 October 1940. Finally, it had a specifically Franco-German goal: “to establish this spirit of collaboration as it was defined and recommended at the Montoire interview and to acquaint the French better with the real Germany.” This last objective

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<sup>615</sup>The August 1945 essay was reprinted as Jean-Paul Sartre, “Qu'est-ce qu'un collaborateur?” *Situations, III* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), 44. In her analysis of Sartre's essay, Alice Kaplan points out that Sartre, in fact, did not keep them straight. See Alice Yaeger Kaplan, *Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature, and French Intellectual Life*, Theory and History of Literature vol. 36 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 13-20.

brought together the notions of collaboration—and specifically that as modeled by Pétain—and the notion of “mieux connaître,” which subtracted out the reciprocal quality from the organizations of the 1920s and 1930s. Rather than “getting to know one another” [se connaître], the Groupe Collaboration set out on a one-way street of knowledge [connaître]. The French would get to know the Germans, but not apparently, the other way around.

Adherence to the Groupe Collaboration was a decidedly political act, far more than for any other organization in this study. This is not only a retrospective verdict. Collaboration was expressly written into the Groupe’s statutes as a political gesture to support and maintain the policies of Pétain. Moreover, involvement in the Groupe was interpreted as a political act, as seen most obviously in the violent actions against Groupe members undertaken by résistants.

Yet, like its predecessors, the Groupe considered itself non-political. In this case, however, political connoted the taint of the divisions of the Third Republic. The auxiliary bishop of Paris, for one, expressed his interest in the Groupe with the understanding that it was not political, “in the divisive and odious sense it had had for too long in our country.”<sup>616</sup> Because it was also not deemed a political party on the official level, the Groupe could operate in both the free and the occupied zones.

Considered France’s largest collaborationist movement,<sup>617</sup> the Groupe Collaboration began in Paris, but soon established local chapters throughout the Occupied Zone. In November 1941, Darland authorized the Groupe to operate in the Free Zone as

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<sup>616</sup>PA-AA DBP 1121/2,3 Letter from Roger Beaussart to M. le Président [Weiland] (13 Aug. 1942).

<sup>617</sup>Gordon, *Collaborationism*, 230.

well. Eventually, the Groupe Collaboration had branched into towns and villages throughout the metropole, even extending to Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Senegal, and the Ivory Coast.<sup>618</sup> If the Groupe attracted more members—both relative to contemporary movements and to the French-German organizations of the past—it was not open to all. Its statutes required the board to approve all members, and Jews and Freemasons were explicitly denied membership.<sup>619</sup>

The Groupe Collaboration had no true partner in Germany. Though numerous Germans were involved in the Groupe and took part in its activities, it was fundamentally a French organization. At times, it allied with Karl Epting's German Institute to co-sponsor events. Established in 1940 by the German Embassy, the Paris-based Institute, which promoted German culture, served as an instrument of German cultural politics. Created by Abetz, and directed by Karl Epting (1905-1979), former head of the Parisian branch of the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), the German Institute packed its calendar full of special events: concerts, lectures, soirées, and theater. The Institute's successes led to the foundation of numerous German Institutes throughout France. Some 30,000 people enrolled in their popular German language courses, though many potential students had to be rejected because the classes were too full. The German Institute, according to Eckard Michels, was the "most visible form of the seduction tactic" employed by the Germans as part of their policies toward the French; its propaganda was subtle, but no less devoted to the establishment of German hegemony.<sup>620</sup>

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<sup>618</sup>Unteutsch, 202.

<sup>619</sup>AN AJ40/551 Extrait des Statuts du Groupe "Collaboration" (undated) (Also in AN F17 13359/11).

<sup>620</sup>Eckard Michels, *Das Deutsche Institut in Paris 1940-1944: Ein Beitrag zu den deutsch-französischen Kulturbeziehungen und zur auswärtigen Kulturpolitik des Dritten Reiches, Studien zur modernen Geschichte* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1993), 5, 47-48; Philippe Burrin, *France under the Germans*, 296-

In addition to its loose association with the German Institute, the Groupe Collaboration maintained casual ties to the DFG, which had a new mandate, to be discussed below. In this way, the Groupe followed the tradition of the CFA, albeit to a diminished extent.

### *New Roles in a New Order*

The French defeat and ensuing occupation touched off changes on the German side of the border as well. While the Groupe Collaboration emerged from the strongest holdouts of cooperation as the phoenix from the CFA's ashes, the DFG found its role recast. The *DFMh* and the DFG, while continuing to push for cooperation, moved well off the track laid by previous groups for French-German cooperation.

The *DFMh* dropped the German portion of its title; now called the *Cahiers franco-allemands*, its name fed the illusion that it was neither German, nor Franco-German, but fully French. The *Cahiers* targeted French prisoners-of-war and French workers in Germany, and it was no longer sent to Germans (in the DFG or otherwise). It served as a propaganda tool by which to publicize the merits of working in German factories, namely contributing to continental unity to fend off the Bolsheviks and Anglo-Saxons and thereby help usher in a European peace. In this way, too, the *Cahiers*—still under the direction of Fritz Bran—aimed to encourage French workers in Germany to keep up their productivity. The *Cahiers* thus became part of a constellation of propagandistic newspapers sent to the French in Germany such as *Le Pont* and *Le Trait d'Union* and veered away from the legacy of past Franco-German journals.

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305; 352-353. See also Wolfgang Geiger, *L'image de la France dans l'Allemagne nazie, 1933-1945* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1999), 237-281.

In similar fashion, the DFG modified its agenda to focus on the care of POWs and the French work force in Germany. The DFG, for example, helped establish “universities” in POW camps and staged small celebrations for POWs able to return home in exchange for French volunteer laborers.<sup>621</sup> Though more narrowly conceived than in the 1930s, the DFG as well as the *Cahiers* targeted a much larger audience. Money from German bureaus came pouring into the DFG after France’s swift defeat, with the Dienststelle Ribbentrop contributing almost double in 1940/41 what it had the year before.<sup>622</sup> But the DFG had shed much of its civic, associational identity as it adopted more of an institutional form; its partners in France were administrative offices relating to POWs and labor conscription.

If German victory had transformed French-German organizations like the DFG, it also had an impact on the careers of longstanding Franco-German mediators. Many previously involved in French-German initiatives found that their connections whether to the occupying or occupied country, as well as their familiarity with it, positioned them well in the new order. While the extent of Abetz’s power has been disputed, there is no question he was generally assumed, as German Ambassador, to be at the heart of the German administration in Paris. Fernand de Brinon of the CFA, now the figurehead at the top of the Groupe Collaboration, served as Vichy’s “General Delegate of the French Government in the Occupied Territories,” essentially Vichy’s ambassador to occupied Paris. The Sohlbergkreis’ Jean Luchaire ran the French press syndicate. Others worked closely on POW issues. The Scapini Mission, known more formally as the *Service*

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<sup>621</sup>Unteutsch, 178, 188.

<sup>622</sup>For audits of the DFG, see PA-AA R61345; PA-AA R61346; PA-AA R61347.

*Diplomatique des Prisonniers de Guerre* (Diplomatic Service for Prisoners of War), charged veteran leader Georges Scapini of the CFA with coordinating POW affairs. Friedrich Bentmann of the Sohlbergkreis organized Wehrmacht propaganda aimed at French POWs. Fritz Bran, too, worked on propaganda, in his case by encouraging POWs to join the cause of collaboration; in addition, Bran helped set up the *Amicales des Travailleurs en Allemagne*, which arranged leisure activities for French workers in Germany and was sponsored by the DFG.<sup>623</sup>

### *Personalities*

The founder and president of the Groupe Collaboration, the writer Alphonse de Châteaubriant (1877-1951), had won the Goncourt Prize some thirty years earlier for *Monsieur de Lordines*, a novel with a decidedly conservative, anti-modern cast. Fascinated by the feudal world, Châteaubriant, according to Sartre, later “considered himself the liege of Hitler.”<sup>624</sup> Certainly, he styled himself in the mode of another age, both in appearance—complete with bushy beard and walking stick—and in his writing—with his Christian, mystical, florid prose. In 1936, Châteaubriant toured Germany, where he spoke as a guest of the CFA and attended both the Olympics and the annual Nuremberg rally, the latter as a guest of honor. Soon thereafter, Châteaubriant penned *La gerbe des forces*, where he expressed his awe of Hitler. Most notoriously, he wrote, “If Hitler has one hand that salutes, that reaches toward the masses in the way with which we are familiar, his other hand, unseen, does not cease clasping the hand of He who is named

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<sup>623</sup>Unteutsch, 189-193.

<sup>624</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, “Qu’est-ce qu’un collaborateur?” reprinted in *Situations, III* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), 56.

God.” In February 1939, the author spoke at the DFG-Berlin on his book, recently translated into German and promoted by the DFG. During the Occupation, Châteaubriant’s popular weekly newspaper, *La Gerbe*, created and funded with German help, was loaded with vitriol against the Jews, the Bolsheviks, the bourgeois, and the other usual suspects.<sup>625</sup>

Although Châteaubriant led the Groupe and the CFA’s Fernand de Brinon held an honorary position above that, most of the day-to-day tasks at the national level were undertaken by three other men. Jean Weiland, who served as the Groupe’s vice president and director-general, came to the Groupe Collaboration having spent years addressing the German question. He had worked for the Inter-Allied Commission in the Rhineland in the 1920s, and as we have seen, played an active role at the CFA in the 1930s. Weiland claimed to have known Ribbentrop for twenty years,<sup>626</sup> though he did not specify whether they had met during Weiland’s time in the Rhineland or whether it related to business: Weiland was a wine merchant and exporter, and Ribbentrop had sold champagne. Both Weiland and René Pichard du Page (b. 1896), the other Groupe Collaboration vice president, worked in Versailles. Weiland had served under Mayor Henry-Haye (also of

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<sup>625</sup>On Châteaubriant, see Kay Chadwick, “Alphonse de Châteaubriant, Collaborator on Retrial: Un non-lieu individuel d’une portée nationale,” *French Historical Studies* 18, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 1057-1082; Richard J. Golsan, “Ideology, Cultural Politics and Literary Collaborationism at *La Gerbe*,” *Journal of European Studies* xxiii (1993): 27-47; “Alphonse de Châteaubriant: Apocalypse, Nazism, and Millenarianism,” in *French Writers and the Politics of Complicity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2006), 53-76. The translation from *La gerbe des forces* is my own. The German translation of *La gerbe des forces* was published by G. Braun, the publisher of the *DFMh*, which promoted Châteaubriant’s book. See joint advertisement for the *DFMh* and *Geballte Kraft* in *DFMh* 5 (Sept. 1938): 409. For the invitation to his DFG talk in Berlin, see PA-AA R27129 Invitation Alphonse de Châteaubriant, *La gerbe des forces* (23 Feb. 1939). On a CFA membership list from September 1939, Châteaubriant’s name did not appear. PA-AA R61396.

<sup>626</sup>Jean Weiland, René Pichard du Page, Ernest Fornairon, *Pourquoi nous croyons en la collaboration* (Paris: Groupe Collaboration, 1940), 12. Talk given at Groupe Collaboration event, Salle Gaveau, Paris (27 Dec. 1940).



the CFA), and Pichard du Page—a cousin of Châteaubriant—was a conservator at the Versailles library. The writer Ernest Fournier served as Secretary General.

Numerous Groupe members were well-known figures in France. Several had seats in the Académie Française or the Institut de France, and member Maurice Gabolde (1891-1972) was named Vichy's Minister of Justice. Groupe subcommittees on such themes as literature, the arts, science, and law were administered by such luminaries as the composer Florent Schmitt (1870-1958), plastic surgeon Charles Claoué (1897-1957), chemist Ernest Fourneau (1872-1949), and the sculptor Paul Belmondo (1898-1982)—all formerly of the CFA. Others included the director of the Opéra Comique, the curator of the Musée Rodin, the artist Othon Friesz (1879-1949), and Minister of Education Abel Bonnard (1883-1968), whom Laval called “more German than the Germans.”<sup>627</sup>

But, as with the other organizations under review, not all associated with the Groupe were Germanophiles. Honorary Board member Cardinal Alfred Baudrillart, for example, who served as a devoted member of the Groupe until his death at 82 in 1942, saw cooperation with the Germans as a necessary last resort; he had made clear his animus against the Germans during the First World War. Baudrillart cited Châteaubriant's *La gerbe des forces* as instrumental in convincing him to see “rapprochement” with the Germans favorably.<sup>628</sup>

The Groupe was large, both relative to its predecessors and to other collaborationist organizations of the time, but it is difficult to gauge its precise size. Scholars have turned to quite different sources: the probable boasts of Groupe activists or

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<sup>627</sup> Julian Jackson, 213.

<sup>628</sup> On his distaste for Germany, see Kay Chadwick, *Catholicism, Politics, and Society in Twentieth Century France* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 102; on his reading of *La gerbe des forces*, see Chadwick, “Alphonse de Châteaubriant,” 1065-1066.

officials interested in showing signs of French tractability cannot be expected to yield the same results as depositions from the postwar purges. In June 1942, Abetz reported the Groupe at 38,000 members.<sup>629</sup> Seven months later, Weiland claimed it had over 100,000, with 70-75,000 in the occupied zone, 10,000 in Paris, and another 25-30,000 in the newly occupied zone. Philippe Burrin cites a figure for May 1944 of 42,283 members; it is not clear whether this represents a major decline due to the unpopularity of the cause at that late date—a problem the Groupe certainly faced—or whether this is a sign that the 100,000 figure was markedly inflated. Yet others have even put the figure as high as 200,000.<sup>630</sup> As with other collaborationist organizations, membership in the Groupe was not evenly distributed throughout France. In Clermont-Ferrand, 95 individuals were known to belong, in the Gard—primarily Nîmes—there were approximately 270 members, and in the Calvados, the Groupe peaked between 300 and 350 members, where it proved the most active propagandist of any of the collaborationist groups.<sup>631</sup> In 1942, a regional delegate of the Groupe in Corsica bragged that, in areas formerly known as

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<sup>629</sup>PA-AA DBP 1122 No. DBP Kult 3042/42 Notiz für III, signed Abetz, Betrifft: Groupe Collaboration (19 June 1942).

<sup>630</sup>PA-AA DBP 1121/2 Aufzeichnung, Betr. Besprechung mit Jean Weiland, Generalsekretär der Groupe Collaboration am 19.1.1943 um 17:30. Signed Schleier (19 Jan. 1943). Burrin, *France under the Germans*, 427. David Littlejohn, in contrast, noted the Groupe claimed it had 200,000 members. His source is not named—though it may well be the British *French Basic Handbook*, which gave that figure as an estimate for mid-1943—but the number certainly is exaggerated. See Littlejohn, 222; *French Basic Handbook*, 152.

<sup>631</sup> Sweets, *Choices*, 88; Robert Zaretsky, *Nîmes at War: Religion, Politics, and Public Opinion in the Gard, 1938-1944* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 149-150, 207; Jean Quellien, *Opinions et comportements politiques dans le Calvados sous l'occupation allemande* (Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2001), 223-224. The example of Nîmes is particularly illustrative of the challenge of the numbers game. Whereas Robert Zaretsky found 270 members there in May 1942 and 200 there in early 1944, a Groupe Collaboration report for the Marseilles region indicated that the Groupe had 1200 members in Nîmes in the period between November 1942 and September 1943, an immense difference for which it is difficult to account. The Gaullist intelligence service reported anywhere between 50 and 80 members in attendance at the weekly meetings in Nîmes from November 1943 to May 1944, which points to Zaretsky's numbers as likelier. Cf. PA-AA DBP 1121/2,3 Activité du Groupe 'Collaboration' dans la Région de Marseille à dater du mois de novembre 1942. [As forwarded from German consulate, Marseilles to DBP (24 Sept. 1943)].

“fiefs of the Popular Front,” the Groupe Collaboration had more members than had the Socialist Party in its heyday.<sup>632</sup>

Members of the Groupe hailed from a variety of backgrounds. From a nationwide sample of records from the postwar purges, Philippe Burrin has determined that about 60% of Groupe members had come from the political right. About 14% were employees, 10% shopkeepers, 8.6% had no profession, and just over 7% came from the liberal professions. Few from this sample were teachers, civil servants, workers, clergy, police, or part of the military.<sup>633</sup> From this portrait, we can see that though the Groupe included a significant proportion of the educated middle classes—the heart of both DFGs and the CFA—it catered more to the popular classes than any of the organizations examined thus far. Indeed, in the Marseilles region, including Nice, Cannes, Toulon, and Nîmes, the Groupe reported that only 10% of its members were professionals, whereas 60% were workers or low-level employees.<sup>634</sup> In one department, 16% of members were women.<sup>635</sup>

Membership did not preclude involvement in other organizations. Many Groupe figures also belonged to other collaborationist groups, which, as John Sweets has pointed

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<sup>632</sup>PA-AA DBP 1122 Press clipping. Jean Fricker [Délégué Régional], “Groupe Collaboration,” *Dépeche Corse*, 3 Aug. 1942.

<sup>633</sup>Burrin, *France under the Germans*, 430, 468-469. It is not clear from the text whether members of JEN were included in this sample, in which students only constitute about 1% of the total. Burrin’s breakdown by professional background differs from what Jean Quellien found for Calvados, where over 30% were bosses, 19% were managers, 14% worked in the liberal professions, and 13.5% were employees. See Quellien, 245.

<sup>634</sup>Here, I am including the Sohlbergkreis, which largely consisted of college students and young writers as well as the base of the Nazi-era DFG and CFA. (It is another story if one also takes into account the millions of veterans who were nominal members of the DFG and CFA.) For the report on the Marseilles area, see PA-AA DBP 1121/2,3 Activité du Groupe ‘Collaboration’ dans la Région de Marseille à dater du mois de novembre 1942. [As forwarded from German consulate, Marseilles to DBP (24 Sept. 1943)].

<sup>635</sup>Quellien, 246.

out, has often led scholars to overestimate the numbers of active collaborationists in France. The head of the Clermont-Ferrand chapter, for instance, also helped run the local Doriotiste Parti Populaire Français, served as secretary of Clermont's *Cercles Populaires Français*, and led the *Légion Tricolore* at the departmental level.<sup>636</sup> In the Calvados, 55% of Groupe members were involved in another collaborationist movement as well; of these, 65% belonged to the Parti Populaire Français, 30% to the *Rassemblement National Populaire*, and 15% to the *Mouvement Social Révolutionnaire*.<sup>637</sup>

While many members thus testified to their political engagement—and showed their political stripes—many chose to join the Groupe out of other considerations. One study has shown that, at least in police interrogations after the war, Groupe Collaboration members tended to explain their adhesion to the group as an issue of ideology, a claim which generally matches those made by members of other collaborationist organizations. But in the case of the Groupe Collaboration, members were more likely to point to that ideology as pacifism or a desire for cooperation with Germany than were those, for example, in the Parti Populaire Française or the Mouvement Social Révolutionnaire. Anticommunism, former members of the PPF and MSR tended to report, had driven them specifically to those organizations. Such interests in pacifism and cooperation situate the Groupe closer to the specifically French-German organizations of the past than were many of its contemporaries. Groupe members also more commonly mentioned a wish to

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<sup>636</sup>Sweets, *Choices*, 82-98. Not surprisingly, this particular *collabo* was killed by the Resistance in the summer of 1944.

<sup>637</sup>Quellien, 224.

follow Pétain. One former veteran described his sorrow after the German victory; he decided the best step forward was to follow his “old leader from Verdun.”<sup>638</sup>

Infighting at a meeting of the Pau chapter in January 1944 pointed to another possible motive to belong at that late date to the Groupe: for profit. The Secretary General of the Groupe Basses Pyrénées and the leader of that chapter of the JEN accused each other of pilfering food and gas vouchers meant for Groupe Collaboration events and cloth intended for JEN uniforms in order to sell them on the black market.<sup>639</sup> Although joining out of greed or to advance private interests seems to have been a decidedly rare occurrence among Groupe members—especially relative to other collaborationist groups<sup>640</sup>—the Pau incident was hardly the first. The head delegate for the North African chapters, a businessman “with a dark past,” was dismissed in September 1942 because he had apparently pocketed money from the ticket sales for a Groupe lecture and, more generally had “treated collaboration as a business.”<sup>641</sup> Worse yet, the seemingly talented Groupe representative in charge of organizing all talks for the Southern Zone turned out, much to Weiland and the rest of the Groupe administration’s surprise, to have been a “big swindler,” whom they suspected had embezzled between 40 and 50,000 francs.<sup>642</sup> Those

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<sup>638</sup>For these statistics as well as the quotation, see Quellien, 254-257.

<sup>639</sup>AN F1a 3748 BCRA report on Groupe Collaboration of Basses-Pyrénées (20 Jan. 1944).

<sup>640</sup>During the purges, only 2% of Groupe Collaboration members in the Calvados stated they had joined for personal gain; this figure is lower than for other collaborationist groups in the department. That said, 9% cited the wish to help bring home POWs as motivation to join; such claims may often have been calculated to try to secure a degree of mercy during the *épuration* and/or sympathy from their neighbors. For these numbers, see Quellien, 254-257.

<sup>641</sup>PA-AA DBP 1122 Groupe Collaboration in Nordafrika (6 Sept. 1942); No. Kult 5022/42 Telegram No. 112 Rahn to German Consulate Algiers (15 Sept. 1942).

<sup>642</sup>References to this Groupe officer, Alfred Lange, grow increasingly negative in the files. See PA-AA DBP 1121/2.

who expected their affiliation with the Groupe Collaboration to lead to personal gain, however, found their wishes unmet. Writer Ernest Fornairon, the active Secretary General of the Groupe, called in a favor to German officials to try to have a film contract authorized and found to his dismay that he was given no special treatment, even as a dedicated activist for French-German collaboration.<sup>643</sup>

### *Talking about Collaboration*

Throughout France, the Groupe Collaboration arranged lectures on the task of collaboration. In Paris, such talks generally took place at the Maison de la Chimie, run by former CFA vice president Ernest Fourneau, who now sat on the Groupe's subcommittee on scientific relations. With the support of the German Embassy, the Groupe sent well-known speakers on lecture tours. Scientist Georges Claude, for example, gave his 1943 address, "Frenchmen, We must understand!" in 51 towns throughout France.<sup>644</sup> To give the impression of the independence of such initiatives from German influence—as well as to underscore the notion of their popularity—the Groupe charged small fees to attend. Groupe leaders hoped these fees would lead attendees to believe the organization they were supporting was fully autonomous and not an instrument of German propaganda.

This fiction followed the German design<sup>645</sup> to keep secret the degree to which the German administration supported such collaborationist organizations. Embassy officials, for example, reprimanded Weiland for sending them a telegram about a flare-up within

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<sup>643</sup>PA-AA DBP 1122 Letter from Ernest Fornairon to [Schlottmann?] (24 Dec. 1942); Notiz für Herrn Lohmann, signed Ref. H. Schlottmann, undated.

<sup>644</sup>BDIC F Res 334/35/1-2. Procès de Georges Claude. Cour de Justice. Audience du 26 juin 1945. List of Conferences.

<sup>645</sup>Burrin, *France under the Germans*, 380-381.

one of the local branches; instead, he should have wired Vichy.<sup>646</sup> At the same time, the Embassy generously funded the Groupe; in 1943, it raised its subsidy to 450,000 francs and then again to 500,000 francs per quarter—a substantial amount that, according to Weiland, scarcely covered the growing Groupe’s expenses.<sup>647</sup> Vichy also supported the Groupe. In a meeting with Laval, the Groupe’s Secretary General for the entire Southern Zone unflinchingly requested a million francs a month from Vichy, a demand Laval instantly dismissed.<sup>648</sup> But with Laval in power, the Groupe was granted funds from the Vichy Ministry of Education.<sup>649</sup>

If much of the Groupe’s funding came from the Germans, its primary impetus and support came from the French. Friedrich Grimm recalled that the popularity of his first talk at the Maison de Chimie led to a request from Rouen that he speak there as well. Soon, Grimm found himself a regular on the Groupe Collaboration lecture circuit.<sup>650</sup> The audiences for such talks were large—hundreds, sometimes thousands of people—and typically included regional and municipal officials, who sometimes introduced the visiting speakers. Reports about these talks often note packed auditoria, and in some cases—particularly with Philippe Henriot—the use of speakers to reach the thousands of people crowding the streets to listen.

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<sup>646</sup>PA-AA DBP 1122 No. Kult 5238/42 Telegram No. 142 Pfeiffer to Schleier, Rahn, GK Bode, Pol. Abt. (20 Sept. 1942).

<sup>647</sup>See exchange of letters between Weiland and the German Embassy in Paris (as well as internal DBP notes) in PA-AA DBP 1121/2,3 and PA-AA DBP 1121/2.

<sup>648</sup>PA-AA DBP 1121/2 No. 515/43 Zweigstelle DBP in Paris Report, Betr. Vortrag Georges Claude in Vichy (26 Feb. 1943).

<sup>649</sup>Gordon, *Collaborationism*, 239-240.

<sup>650</sup>BAKo N 1120 File 14. Friedrich Grimm, *Lebenserinnerungen eines deutschen Rechtsanwalts, Band VII: Im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 83-99.

Not all Groupe Collaboration speakers met such an enthusiastic response. Some towns—especially in the North, where the German presence was most palpable at first—were unwelcoming. But local organizers’ anxieties about negative responses to Groupe speakers sometimes proved misplaced. The head of the German Institute in Dijon, who was arranging a Groupe Collaboration talk by the scientist Georges Claude, decided to cancel the 1942 event for fear of trouble; Abetz intervened, and the event not only went off without a hitch, but managed to make the largest auditorium in town feel cramped.<sup>651</sup>

Speakers at Groupe events came from France and Germany alike, and they, like the Groupe’s ordinary members, came at collaboration from different directions. Some had long been involved in efforts for Franco-German cooperation, some were advocates of Pétain’s National Revolution, some were devoted National Socialists, and some united all three elements. Régis de Vibraye, Max Clauss, and Fritz Bran had each become active in the quest for French-German cooperation around 1930. Reichstag member and attorney Friedrich Grimm, one of the Groupe’s most popular speakers, had been active in the Nazi-era DFG, but his relationship with France stretched back much further. Even more celebrated for his talent as a speaker was Philippe Henriot, who would come to serve as the head of propaganda for Vichy France. Jacques de Lesdain, a political editor at *L’Illustration* given that position by Abetz<sup>652</sup> as well as the organizer of the 1941 and 1942 “La France européenne” expositions, went out of his way to explain to his audiences why he chose to be a Nazi. According to Groupe vice president Pichard du Page, one of Lesdain’s great merits, like that of the Vienna-born German globetrotter and

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<sup>651</sup>PA-AA DBP 1122 No. DBP Kult 3042/42 Notiz für III Betrifft: Groupe Collaboration, signed Abetz (19 June 1942). See also Lambauer, 243.

<sup>652</sup>Ory, 70.



fellow Groupe speaker Colin Ross (1885-1945), was the capacity “to expand their national field of vision [to capture] the measure of the world.”<sup>653</sup>

### *How Did They Define Collaboration?*

Like the organizations that preceded it, the Groupe Collaboration had no unified view of what cooperation signified, though it generally limited itself to one term to describe its programs and goals: the collaboration of its name. Some representatives of the Groupe focused on a pro-German message, others on an explicitly National Socialist position, and still others leaned more toward a pro-Vichy, pétainiste argument. The banner of a “new Europe” allowed the Groupe to recast the French-German relationship as a partnership—however uneven—in common cause: combating Bolshevism and other shared enemies and fighting for a nebulous notion of a common European civilization.

The elasticity of the term collaboration has historic roots. Before the war, it was—in French, German, and English—neutral, more or less an exact equivalent of the way I have been employing the term cooperation. In the immediate aftermath of war, as Robert Paxton noted, it “was to become a synonym for high treason.”<sup>654</sup> When Pétain shook hands with Hitler at Montoire and pledged to collaborate, he had in mind a bland sort of diplomacy, talks and agreements, primarily in the realm of the economy.<sup>655</sup> Though he

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<sup>653</sup>Colin Ross, *L'avènement d'une nouvelle Europe dans le cadre d'un nouvel ordre mondial*, Preamble by René Pichard du Page (Paris: Groupe Collaboration, 1941), 5. Talk given at Groupe Collaboration event, Maison de la Chimie, Paris (25 Oct. 1941).

<sup>654</sup>Paxton, 19.

<sup>655</sup>H.R. Kedward, *Occupied France: Collaboration and Resistance, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 32-36. Jan Gross has pointed out that the word “collaboration” in the context of German occupation was first used in this way by Pétain in his speech after Montoire; thereafter, corresponding terms in a variety of European languages began to be used in a similar way, specific to the World War II context. See Jan T. Gross, “Themes for a Social History of War Experience and Collaboration,” in *The Politics of Retribution: World War II and its Aftermath*, ed. István Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt (Princeton: Princeton

used the word collaboration—a term which later became inextricably linked to that fatal handshake—Pétain and Hitler did not hammer out precisely what that would signify or sign any formal agreements in the train car.

While the Groupe claimed from the outset to follow the path of Pétain, it did not champion what is known as “Maréchalisme,” that is to say the hero-worship of Pétain. In vowing to support Pétain, the Groupe’s emphasis lay not on the man, but on the moment of Montoire, the handshake itself, and the notion of collaboration. The Groupe Collaboration did not contribute to the myth-making around Pétain, with the enormous placards, the children’s books, the memorabilia.<sup>656</sup> The Groupe instead rallied primarily to the cause of working with the Germans. Some members who later abandoned the Groupe regretted that it had not revolved more around the Maréchal, as it seemed to promise; others who left noted their disappointment with a collaboration that meant working for the Germans more than working with them.<sup>657</sup>

The Groupe Collaboration followed out of that October 24, 1940 Hitler-Pétain meeting at Montoire.<sup>658</sup> In its statutes, the Groupe Collaboration explicitly acknowledged its origins lay in Montoire, and it vowed to help carry on its work. Leaders of the Groupe

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University Press, 2000), 24. For a more thorough discussion of the word collaboration, see Bertram M. Gordon, “The Morphology of the Collaborator: The French Case,” *Journal of European Studies* 89, no. 89-90 (March-June 1993): 1-25.

<sup>656</sup>On the cult of Pétain, see, for example, Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, *L’Art de la Défaite, 1940-44* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1993), 107-135; Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, “La question artistique et le régime de Vichy,” in *La Vie Culturelle sous Vichy*, ed. Jean-Pierre Rioux (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1990), 149-151; Christian Faure, *Le Projet Culturel de Vichy: Folklore et révolution nationale, 1940-1944* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1989), 158-159.

<sup>657</sup>Quellien, 313-314.

<sup>658</sup>Although the Groupe was officially born in September of that year, before the handshake at Montoire, its statutes, which explicitly situated the Groupe as a response to Montoire, were not written until later that winter. The Groupe was authorized in February 1941.

quickly made clear that they supported not only the notion of working with the Germans, but also agreed with Pétain, Laval, and Hitler that France's involvement in the war had been a mistake.<sup>659</sup> Fritz Bran argued that Montoire opened new "perspectives" for the pursuit of French-German cooperation, especially since the Third Republic had been so hostile toward Germany. Now they had a better chance, he implied, to achieve cooperation.<sup>660</sup>

In addition to citing the importance of Montoire, the Groupe's statutes explicitly singled out Pétain's speech of October 10, 1940, where, alongside his appeal for *international* collaboration,<sup>661</sup> the Maréchal condemned (without condescending to name it) the Third Republic and called for a national revolution. This, then, was the two-part agenda the Groupe claimed to support and defend.<sup>662</sup> Identifying collaboration with nationalism and with peace, Pétain argued that it was a choice, on both the part of the Germans and the French. By a national revolution, he had foremost in mind the French

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<sup>659</sup>Paxton, 74-76. François Delpla, "Montoire: Les raisons d'une cécité," *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains* no. 220 (Oct. 2005), consulted at [http://www.delpla.org/article.php3?id\\_article=122](http://www.delpla.org/article.php3?id_article=122).

<sup>660</sup>AN F1a 3748 No. ZAC/8 825.094 Report. "Le Groupe Collaboration" (March 1944).

<sup>661</sup>Interestingly, the statutes did not refer to Pétain's speech of 30 October, where he stated, "It is with honor and to maintain French unity—a unity of ten centuries—in the framework of the constructive activity of the new European order, that I enter today into the path of collaboration. See Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux français 17 juin 1940-20 août 1944*, Preface by Antoine Prost (Albin Michel, 1989), 94-95.

<sup>662</sup>AN AJ40/551 Extrait des Statuts du Groupe "Collaboration" (undated) (Also in AN F17 13359/11). After the war, Jean Weiland, for one, denied that the Groupe had anything to do with Montoire, much less that it had French-German collaboration as its object. In 1948, he alleged they had chosen the word "to indicate collaboration only between Frenchmen in the sense of national solidarity, for at that moment when the group was founded we were all far from envisaging any Franco-German collaboration." The Groupe then supposedly held onto the name as a means of protecting the French from harsh rule. His retrospective argument reflects Pétain's argument that he had acted as a shield. Not surprisingly, Weiland also purported the Groupe Collaboration had performed "thousands of interventions" to free hostages and POWs and reduce sentences, a revisionist claim for which I have seen no evidence to support. See Jean Weiland, "Laval's Struggle against the Collaborationist Groups," in René de Chambrun, ed., *France during the German Occupation 1940-1944. A Collection of 292 Statements on the Government of Maréchal Pétain and Pierre Laval* vol. 3. Philip W. Whitcomb, trans. (Stanford: The Hoover Institution, 1957), 1170-1174. On the shield idea, see Paxton, 46-47.

nation. In his speech, Pétain in fact slipped between revolution and renovation: “A revolution is not made only by the provisions of law and decrees. It is accomplished only if the nation understands it and calls for it, that the people accompany the government along the path of necessary renovation.”<sup>663</sup> This line underscores the important point that, for all his talk of revolution, Pétain had a national project in mind, one situated on the political right and better represented by the term “renovation.”<sup>664</sup>

Building off Pétain’s call, the Groupe’s slogan “French renovation, Franco-German reconciliation, European solidarity” tunneled outward. It asserted an agenda that started at home but extended—through the Franco-German cause—to the European framework. Groupe vice president René Pichard du Page explained how these nested goals fit together. Members of the Groupe Collaboration, he argued, harbored an allegiance to a cause greater than themselves—Europe—without giving up their notion of the *patrie*. Pichard du Page argued that the Groupe Collaboration and its associates consisted of partisans of “Franco-German entente, the solid and only possible base for this ‘European *patrie*,’” who at the same time were French or German patriots.<sup>665</sup> Although Europe played a much larger role in the imagination of Groupe members than it had for most of their predecessors in Franco-German organizations, Pichard du Page’s insistence on the maintenance of national loyalties reveals that his conception of the new Europe, at least, may have expanded the size of the field of cooperation, but still relied on enduring shibboleths.

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<sup>663</sup>Pétain, 85-94.

<sup>664</sup>Rod Kedward, *France and the French: A Modern History* (Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 2006), 253.

<sup>665</sup>Colin Ross, *L’avènement d’une nouvelle Europe dans le cadre d’un nouvel ordre mondial*, Preamble by René Pichard du Page (Paris: Groupe Collaboration, 1941), 8. Talk given at Groupe Collaboration event, Maison de la Chimie, Paris (25 Oct. 1941).

Yet as with earlier Franco-German organizations, Groupe representatives' notions of identity, borders, and how to bridge them were neither fixed nor easy to articulate. The bestselling German travel writer Colin Ross seemed to advocate the dissolution of borders and other barriers and the formation of a truly unified community. He reminded his audience of an argument he had put forward in 1928 not simply championing rapprochement, but "Franco-German fusion," a notion which he acknowledged would not sit well with his government. "In speaking now of a fusion that goes beyond simple rapprochement," Ross argued, "I am conscious of not having been very happy in my choice of words, but I don't want to change the expression I chose in 1928. Perhaps they haven't yet forged a word to designate what I am conceiving."<sup>666</sup> Publisher Bernard Grasset expected that Groupe Collaboration speaker and renowned author Friedrich Sieburg might talk about a new age of "alloys" to replace the age of alliances, a view which would have infuriated Hitler and Pétain alike. Indeed, it also would not found favor with earlier advocates of cooperation such as Grautoff, who had strongly opposed the idea of French-German "unity brew." Sieburg was quick to repudiate such a vision of collaboration as melting pot.<sup>667</sup>

For Sieburg, collaboration merely implied giving up "part of your sovereignty in favor of the community we will form together." For the French, this should only have been the smallest of sacrifices, since they, as he pointed out, had previously been subject to threats on their autonomy by "the League of Nations, Anglo-Saxon capitalism, the evangelism of the Popular Front, and Jewish, Communist, and masonic forces." Whereas

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<sup>666</sup>Ross, 49-50.

<sup>667</sup>For the comments of Grasset and Sieburg, see, Friedrich Sieburg, *France d'hier et de demain*, Preamble by Bernard Grasset (Paris: Groupe Collaboration, 1941), 8, 22. Talk given at Groupe Collaboration event, Maison de la Chimie, Paris (22 March 1941).

these forces had weakened France, collaboration would strengthen it. In this reading, German occupation was no threat to sovereignty, but could enable France to go beyond its state of complacency (as it tried to preserve its “charming” lifestyle) in order to become part of something greater than itself.<sup>668</sup>

Self-sacrifice proved a common theme. While Pétain spoke of sacrifice, most famously in his grand gesture on the afternoon of 17 June 1940, when he intoned, “I make to France the gift of my person to attenuate her misfortune,”<sup>669</sup> this phrase also found resonance elsewhere. Karl Epting, for example, advised the French not to let their hopes for peace become unrealistically high: “The moral and political storm that gave birth to the war of 1939-1940 did not build up in one day. The Franco-German peace will also not be made in one day. It cannot result from an isolated act. It will only be attained thanks to a constant effort, to an important and relentless work, to the gift of the self and to sacrifice.”<sup>670</sup> Representatives of the Groupe Collaboration often tied this theme of sacrifice to the fight against complacency and the importance of engagement. While praising the energies of the few, Marc Augier chastised his 1941 audience for their general lassitude: “The masses, the majority, the unanimity refuses to carry out the gift of themselves!” Augier appealed to the romantic impulses of the young—he began with stories of his own mountain-climbing adventures—to sacrifice themselves on behalf of the greater good of Europe. In his earlier work for Vichy’s youth corps, the *Chantiers de*

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<sup>668</sup>Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>669</sup>Pétain, 57.

<sup>670</sup>Karl Epting, “Deutschland-Frankreich” and “France-Allemagne,” *Deutschland-Frankreich. Vierteljahresschrift des Deutschen Instituts Paris* 1, no. 1 (1942): 4, 9.

*Jeunesse*, (as well as in his involvement with the French youth hostel movement)—Augier believed he “had lit the little spark of adventure” in his recruits.<sup>671</sup>

The most obvious instances of sacrifice on behalf of collaboration—assiduously promoted by the Groupe Collaboration—were the *relève* (relief) and later the *Service du Travail Obligatoire* (Compulsory Labor Service or STO), which sent French workers to Germany, at first as volunteers, then as conscripted labor. Efforts such as these, Groupe representatives argued, not only served to unite the French and Germans in common cause on behalf of Europe, but also acted as a bridge between peoples. Like the French-German encounters staged by earlier organizations for cooperation, they would bring the French and Germans (young people, in particular) into close contact. Living abroad would help the two peoples “get to know one another better.” Fritz Bran argued that these French “civilian workers,” along with French POWs and volunteers for the Anti-Bolshevik League “*together form the avant-garde of French integration into the new Europe . . . these young French people will be the best pioneers of Franco-German reconciliation*” [emphasis his].<sup>672</sup> Work in the name of Europe would forge a new French-German solidarity no matter the inequality of the relationship.

More so than any of its predecessors, the Groupe Collaboration framed cooperation as a project to band together against outsiders. While it encouraged the bridging of national borders, those were generally limited to the continental. Representatives of the Groupe relied on some of the same notions we have come across so often—*rapprochement*, *entente*, mutual understanding—but invoked them to help

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<sup>671</sup>Marc Augier, *Les Jeunes devant l'aventure européenne* (Paris: Conférences du Groupe Collaboration, 1941), 13, 17. Talk given at Jeunes de l'Europe Nouvelle event, Théâtre du Grand Palais des Champs-Élysées, Paris (25 Oct. 1941).

<sup>672</sup>Bran, *La jeunesse allemande*, 26-28.

consolidate an international community in its fight against the Eastern menace, the rapacious British, and the greedy Americans. In this way, they operated in similar fashion to nationalist groups that harnessed anxieties about and hatred of others as a way to strengthen the bonds within the community. In the case of the Groupe Collaboration, however, the framework of the community had been expanded to the Franco-German and even continental European level. There were also forces to be battled that transcended national boundaries and existed both within the continent and outside of it: capitalism (and “trusts”), communism, democracy, Jews, blacks, Freemasons, and so forth.

Key was to draw attention away from the French-German antagonism by focusing on other, shared enemies. As Jacques Schweizer argued, “It’s not Germany that’s France’s hereditary enemy, it’s England!”<sup>673</sup> From the Opium War and the Boer War to the British Blockade and Mers-el-Kébir, the British had announced their will to dominate Europe and the wider world. Groupe Collaboration speakers also played into long-held, very real anxieties about the United States eclipsing Europe, or the Bolsheviks overtaking it. Colin Ross expressed the fear that Europe might one day become a colony.<sup>674</sup> Following the prevailing winds in both Germany and France, Groupe members laced their arguments with denunciations of Jews, Freemasons, and blacks. Blame for the Franco-German enmity, for the war, and for France’s humiliation was laid at their feet. And as was commonly the case, these arguments became so twisted together—the Popular Front, American capitalism, and the Bolshevik threat all were somehow riddled with Jews—that they made no sense at all.

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<sup>673</sup>Jacques Schweizer, “Vers l’union de la jeunesse française,” in Jacques Schweizer, *La jeunesse française est une jeunesse européenne* (Paris: Éditions des Jeunes de la Nouvelle Europe, 1944), 40-41. Talk given at Congrès Régional des JEN, Vichy (9 Jan. 1944).

<sup>674</sup>Ross, 28.



In addition to trying to consolidate a Franco-German community against their shared enemies, Groupe members tried to locate more positive common ground. This strategy proved less fruitful than the promise of fighting enemies or constructing Europe. Though perhaps a distant hero, Charlemagne proved someone both nations could admire. The occasion of his 1,200<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1942 gave cause to celebrate. While Charlemagne remained a contested figure in old debates over the French and German heritage, the Groupe Collaboration invoked him rather differently. In this venue at least, the Germans seemed willing to share his legacy.<sup>675</sup>

To convince French audiences of their good-will, Germans who spoke at Groupe Collaboration events often opened their remarks by establishing their pedigree as defenders, even promoters of France. Passing over his days representing in court those who had tried to sabotage the French occupation of the Ruhr, Friedrich Grimm told French audiences of the work he had undertaken to defend Frenchmen called before the German military justice system during the Great War. He also referred to his efforts representing French industrialists against their German counterparts after the armistice. Others, like Friedrich Sieburg, author of the 1929 *Gott in Frankreich?*, published in several editions including the French *Dieu est-il français?*, emphasized their expertise in (if not always admiration for) French culture. Jean Weiland outdid his German associates by making a more general argument about German goodwill toward France. It was important for the French to realize, explained Weiland, that Nazi leaders had conducted an “intense propaganda” campaign at home “to lead German public opinion to consider

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<sup>675</sup>Ross, 50. On the contested place of Charlemagne during the Occupation years, see Ory, 159; Geiger, 273-276. Still today, Charlemagne is commonly invoked as a symbol of French-German cooperation as well as of the European Union. Consider the Charlemagne Prize, tied to the European project, bestowed by the city of Aachen.

the French no longer as the hereditary enemy.” They had succeeded in instilling in the Germans the idea that “entente with France was the goal of German foreign policy.” To support this claim, Weiland made note of Hitler, Ribbentrop, Baldur von Schirach, Abetz, and the late Achim von Arnim (who had died on the battlefields of Northern France); he also underscored the way in which the DFG (though he did mention its name) had warmly welcomed French visitors to Germany and worked hard to forge better relations between the two peoples.<sup>676</sup>

If the Germans had embraced the French, Groupe speakers made clear that the French had traditionally shown themselves hostile toward the Germans. The French, they argued, had tried at best to circumscribe Germany’s power, at worst to split the nation apart. Here, the unstated connection, of course, was to France’s current plight. Divided into zones, France was facing no worse a fate than had the Germans, multiple times, at the initiative of the French. Versailles and the Rhineland occupation, not surprisingly, offered obvious instances of French desires for hegemony, but older examples often came to the fore. A favorite for Friedrich Grimm was Richelieu, whom he blamed for setting the French on a long quest to keep Germany divided; he therefore traced the problem of hereditary enmity back to the Cardinal. Both Grimm and Jacques de Lesdain also invoked the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia.<sup>677</sup> In this way, they sought to establish that France had been the one to foment the idea of a hereditary enemy, just as it had historically been the French who aimed to impede the national unity of their neighbor (and not the other way

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<sup>676</sup>Weiland et al., *Pourquoi*, 11-13.

<sup>677</sup>See Friedrich Grimm, *Allemagne et France: Hier, Aujourd’hui, Demain* (Paris: Groupe Collaboration, 1941), 10-15. Talk given at Groupe Collaboration event, Maison de la Chimie, Paris (18 Jan. 1941); for a verdict dismissive of Grimm’s interpretation, see Henry Bertram Hill, “Introduction” in *The Political Testament of Cardinal Richelieu*, trans. Henry Bertram Hill (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), xiv-xv. See also Jacques de Lesdain, *Notre Rôle Européen* (Paris: Groupe Collaboration, 1941). Talk given at Groupe Collaboration event, Maison de la Chimie, Paris (1 June 1941), 10.

around). The unspoken message hinted that what was transpiring in France was part of a longer story, in which Germany had previously played the role of victim. Posing France as the aggressor in this way was a strategy that went back to the pages of the *DFMh*.

Groupe speakers—French and German alike—thus took great pains to show how magnanimous the Germans were in extending a hand to the French, who had historically not behaved as well to the Germans. Collaboration, in this view, was a gift of sorts. Not only did it offer the promise of future peace and the end to unnecessary divisions that stretched back three centuries (or more, since some even alluded to the 843 Treaty of Verdun), but it was a “formula” devised from empathy. Collaboration was, in Grimm’s words, “desired and realized by those who understood for having [themselves] suffered.” Here, he catalogued a long line of German woes: Versailles, the Rhineland, the Ruhr, the Saar, Upper Silesia, the Polish Corridor, Austria, Danzig, the Sudetenland.<sup>678</sup>

Colin Ross likewise found promise in the idea of French-German empathy. Having a shared (if not coterminous) experience should help them better understand one another. “Where I see the great, the unique possibility for our two peoples to reach a definitive comprehension,” he explained, “it’s in the fact that in the course of one generation, we both suffered the same fate, having each been both victors and vanquished. We can understand your situation and you can understand ours!”<sup>679</sup> This view of understanding took Viénot’s idea of “leaving the self” to a different level. The Germans and the French had actually taken each other’s places as victor and vanquished. On the one hand, Ross left the impression that the Germans would be merciful in their rule. On the other hand (and rather perversely), he implied that, as former victors, the

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<sup>678</sup>Grimm, *Allemagne et France*, 23-24.

<sup>679</sup>Ross, 10.

French were theoretically well-positioned to empathize with Germany's current position and could take a certain solace in their newfound victimhood.

The French, in effect, were getting more than they deserved. Weiland was baffled that after Hitler had expressed that he wanted "to bury the hatchet" as early as 1935, the French nonetheless chose war. Once again, he found himself bewildered when, in defeat, "the victor again proposes entente and reconciliation. And we would refuse it!"<sup>680</sup> As he had at the CFA, Weiland posed the French as intransigent and the Germans as peace-seekers—even once they were conquerors.

While they often admonished the French for their hostility and obduracy, a number of speakers went out of their way to flatter the French as a way to package their message in a more appealing manner. Jacques de Lesdain reminded audiences that other European nations would look to France's example. It was therefore up to France to be the first to turn to Europe, though Germany would be, in its "role as driver" the first overall. This was an odd sort of flattery in that it did not try to mask France's post-defeat weakness and humiliation. France would be the first among losers.<sup>681</sup>

According to this line of thought, collaboration with the Germans, in fact, had much to offer the French. It would ensure peace with Germany, and thus put an end to France's old bugbear, security. It would also act as that important first step toward the unity of continental Europe. Germany could safeguard Europe from the Asian menace, as it had selflessly done in the past when the other European powers had run off in search of

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<sup>680</sup>Weiland et al., *Pourquoi*, 15-16.

<sup>681</sup>Lesdain, *Notre rôle*, 27.

empires. It would also achieve “the eviction of England from the continent.”<sup>682</sup> On the economic level, it offered guaranteed markets and plentiful resources through its plans for European autarchy. Resources and finished products would be pooled across Europe to yield the most efficient results (the real meaning of *Lebensraum*, explained Jacques de Lesdain). Lesdain’s curious portrait of *Lebensraum* reflected that of a mural at the Exposition France Européenne, which he had planned. The mural showed farmers hand-in-hand across a map of continental Europe. The caption read, “French peasants united with Central and Eastern European peasants to feed Europe.” Finally, this vision of French-German collaboration in the framework of a united continent would allow for each nation to conduct domestic politics as it saw fit once peace had arrived. Overall, it was a rosy portrait of European unity, certainly better than the “dark years” in which France currently found itself. In the meantime, France needed “severe moral, mental, and physical discipline” to pick itself up again.<sup>683</sup>

This European-centered message clearly had an effect on tenacious advocates of French-German cooperation. Régis de Vibraye, who had contributed to earlier discussions of French-German cooperation at the Mayrisch Komitee and the CFA, now described a vision like that of Pichard du Page which placed Europe at the top. While he had argued in 1930 for the nobility of patriotism and what he called the “persistence of *patries*,” he had also advocated a federated Europe, a federation that would start with partnership between France and Germany. In 1930, de Vibraye had made clear that his

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<sup>682</sup>Werner Rheinbaben, *Vers une Nouvelle Europe*. Preamble by Jean Montigny (Paris: Groupe Collaboration, 1941), 34-35. Talk given at Groupe Collaboration event, Maison de la Chimie, Paris (19 April 1941).

<sup>683</sup>Lesdain, *Notre rôle*, 21-24, 29.

conception of Europe “would not be centered on Germany to our own [French] detriment.”<sup>684</sup> In 1941, he showed himself willing to let that condition slide:

The time has come to transcend our patriotism, to integrate our traditional *patrie* into a wider *patrie*. Without renouncing the ardent love that we have for our respective countries, we must open our hearts to a new sentiment that alone will permit us to overcome the problems of the hour and tackle them in a spirit of confidence and total assurance, the sentiment that we all bring to a great European *patrie*.<sup>685</sup>

The “cruel trials” of the war, as he put it, had led de Vibraye to a new perspective.

In light of the present gloom, Groupe representatives tried to show that the promise of a new Europe burned bright. Some speakers expressed a sense of hope not that far removed from the way advocates had felt in the wake of Locarno, several years after the war’s end: a cautious, but no less sincere, idealism. Jacques de Lesdain, perhaps the most virulent and openly racist of the Groupe speakers, ended his bleak plea for sacrifice almost sweetly:

Where it concerns Europe, it’s the collective soul that should prevail in us. It’s a new mentality that we should create. I’m convinced that each of you will advocate the sacrifice of the self to the community which will give rise to our security and be worth the joy of leaving to our sons a better world than the one in which we will have lived.<sup>686</sup>

The enthusiastic (if similarly rabid) regional delegate from Corsica painted French defeat in a positive light, because with it came the possibility to create a new Europe. “Out of our defeat, which is not that of the French people, but that of the evil forces that led it, has sprung an immense hope,” he argued. “From the Vistula to the shores of the Mediterranean, men are thinking that at last a unique opportunity appeared, that their

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<sup>684</sup>De Vibraye, *Allemagne 1930*, 158.

<sup>685</sup>Max Clauss, *Le fait continental*. Preamble by Régis de Vibraye (Paris: Groupe Collaboration, 1941), 8. Talk given at Groupe Collaboration event, Maison de la Chimie, Paris (24 May 1941).

<sup>686</sup>Lesdain, *Notre Rôle*, 30.

children, ceasing to hate each other, will find a fraternal and fertile entente.”<sup>687</sup> It was Montoire that had opened that door to cooperation in a new Europe.

### *Collaboration as Continuity?*

In light of the huge rupture of the war and occupation, the Groupe Collaboration tried to impose a sense of continuity. Its representatives sought both to insert the Groupe into a longer narrative of organizations seeking French-German cooperation and to code the word collaboration itself as part of that same story. Key was to depoliticize the concept of collaboration, or, better yet, render it palatable.

Whereas the DFG and CFA had by turns embraced, by turns abjured their ties to organizations from the Weimar era, it was in the Groupe Collaboration’s interests to emphasize its links back to the CFA and DFG. Weiland advertised the Groupe’s connection to the CFA to the general public through a broadcast on Radio-Paris.<sup>688</sup> At a 1942 talk, JEN leader Jacques Schweizer introduced Fritz Bran of both the Sohlbergkreis and the Nazi-era DFG as “an artisan of the first hour for Franco-German rapprochement.”<sup>689</sup> And Bran, too, tended to pay his respects to the role of the CFA and especially the Sohlbergkreis.<sup>690</sup>

Representatives of the Groupe thus not only looked back to the DFG/CFA as a precedent, but also turned to the legacy of Weimar-era organizations. Régis de Vibraye introduced Groupe speaker Max Clauss to the audience for his May 1941 address. Over

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<sup>687</sup>PA-AA DBP 1122 Press clipping. Jean Fricker, “Groupe Collaboration,” *Le Jeune Corse*, 5/6 July 1942.

<sup>688</sup>PA-AA DBP 1122 Jean Weiland, Allocution prononcée sur l’Antenne de Radio-Paris le 8 mai 1943.

<sup>689</sup>Bran, *La jeunesse allemande*, 5.

<sup>690</sup>AN F1a 3748 No. ZAC/8 825.094 Report. “Le Groupe Collaboration” (March 1944).

the years, he told the audience, they had worked together at the Mayrisch Komitee and at European conferences to pursue “Franco-German friendship” and peace; today they met again to address similar themes.<sup>691</sup> Jacques Schweizer and Fritz Bran tied JEN’s origins to the Sohlbergkreis.

Some went a step further by relating the saga of French-German cooperation as a story of progress. Werner Rheinbaben noted in a 1941 speech how efforts for rapprochement between 1924 and 1939—including his own—had failed. Rheinbaben re-configured collaboration as a way to achieve what rapprochement between France and Weimar had failed to realize. He thus cast war-era collaboration as the apotheosis of post-Versailles efforts for peace. Whether or not collaboration was something new (that is, the result of the exigencies of the war), in Rheinbaben’s rendering it was explained as the fulfillment of Locarno-era goals.<sup>692</sup> In similar fashion, Bran praised the more general legacy of past efforts, while acknowledging their failure. Collaboration would ensure that “*the pre-war oeuvre will not have been completely in vain*” [his emphasis]. Bran then singled out the contributions of, among others, Jacques Schweizer (of the CFA), Jean Luchaire, Fernand de Brinon, Georges Scapini, Alphonse de Chateaubriant, and Jean Weiland.<sup>693</sup>

In retrospect, after the ignominy of the Nazis and the collaborators was universally recognized, it behooved former Groupe Collaboration members even more to stress such links to earlier efforts. In his postwar memoirs, for example, Friedrich Grimm

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<sup>691</sup>Clauss, *Le Fait Continental*, 5-8.

<sup>692</sup>Werner Rheinbaben, *Vers une Nouvelle Europe*. Preamble by Jean Montigny (Paris: Groupe Collaboration, 1941), 9-12. Talk given at Groupe Collaboration event, Maison de la Chimie, Paris (19 April 1941).

<sup>693</sup>Bran, *La jeunesse allemande*, 25-26.



contended that in his first speech to the Groupe Collaboration in 1941, he argued “fundamentally nothing different from what I had said already in 1937 in Lyon, Marseilles, and Besançon [at CFA events].”<sup>694</sup>

Cooperation, some of its proponents reminded their contemporaries, had always been controversial. Then as now, it represented a wise doctrine, whose merits had often gone unrecognized. Karl Epting wrote that “rarely have we devoted to an idea more faith, but also more incomprehension, doubt, and ill-will than to the idea of Franco-German entente.”<sup>695</sup> Surely, Epting had in mind the sometimes (and increasingly) intense opposition to collaboration and to Germans like himself. Friedrich Grimm argued that in the France of the late 1930s, some had feared “collaboration” with Germany. But as we have seen, however the merits of cooperation with Germany may have been sharply contested in those years, the arguments had not pivoted on the term “collaboration,” and even when that word appeared, it was employed as a value-neutral synonym for cooperation. Grimm was trying to divorce the notion of collaboration from the specific context of the occupation and assert that this was the same underrated phenomenon as ever. “I always advocated collaboration, despite all the difficulties . . . . And I continue to advocate it,” he declared. The next paragraph of his speech then proceeded to slip back and forth between the word of the moment—collaboration—and the older term—*rapprochement*—as if to emphasize their interchangeability.<sup>696</sup> Bran echoed this sentiment by trying to gloss over the difference between the “New Germany” and the

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<sup>694</sup>BAKo N 1120 File 14. Friedrich Grimm, *Lebenserinnerungen eines deutschen Rechtsanwalts, Band VII: Im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 82-83.

<sup>695</sup>Karl Epting, “Deutschland-Frankreich” and “France-Allemagne,” *Deutschland-Frankreich. Vierteljahresschrift des Deutschen Instituts Paris* 1, no. 1 (1942): 3, 9.

<sup>696</sup>Grimm, *Allemagne et France*, 7-8, 21-22.

Germany of 1930. Note the slippage: “Because the new Germany has always desired and practiced rapprochement between European nations. It was in this spirit that, since 1930, we have, for example, organized Franco-German conferences, trips, ski camps.”<sup>697</sup> This was an argument that could only be made before a French audience.

### *Desperate Passion*

Emotions ran high both within the Groupe and among its opponents. Groupe members articulated their desires for cooperation in more expressive, sometimes zealous terms than had their predecessors. Their forerunners may have acted as dedicated advocates of their cause, but Groupe members brought a new emotional vitality to the task. At times this was a sign of passion, at others of desperation. The energy of Groupe members was matched by that of their opponents. Championing cooperation in this form and in this context could be a matter of life and death.

The Groupe’s spirited approach most resembled that of the Sohlbergkreis, but its tone had even more in common with the leagues or other politicized groups of the time. Groupe members in Lyon pledged to “give their whole heart” to the cause.<sup>698</sup> At talks, audience members might find themselves in tears. After a two-hour lecture by celebrated speaker Philippe Henriot, one of its organizers explained, “No doubt his fluency sometimes rose to theatrical pathos, but his words were not only oratorical gestures. One felt behind them the overwhelming power of an apostle, who, out of fervent love for his fatherland, searches for a way out of the abyss and preaches collaboration out of rational

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<sup>697</sup>Bran, *La jeunesse allemande*, 25.

<sup>698</sup>AN AP 411/3/3 “Motion votée par les membres du Bureau du Groupe de Lyon dans sa réunion du 2 avril 1943” (2 April 1943).

considerations. Seldom is a speaker so often interrupted by true storms of applause.”<sup>699</sup>

Even part of the Groupe’s slogan—“Franco-German reconciliation”—had a more sentimental resonance than words like *rapprochement* or even understanding.

To attract new members, boost its popularity, and energize the existing base, one avid member wrote a “Song of Collaboration.” In the belief that music served as “one of the most powerful means of propaganda,” bandmaster Captain L. Laurenceau offered the anthem to Fernand de Brinon, a childhood friend, in the name of the Groupe. Laurenceau hoped his song about “the *rapprochement* we work for with all our soul” would receive daily play on the radio, as a way to introduce the day’s news and any announcements related to collaboration. Laurenceau likely took his inspiration for a song about collaborating with the Germans from the success of the rousing *pétainiste* anthem, *Maréchal, nous voilà!*<sup>700</sup> Certainly, his *Chant de la Collaboration* relied on a more visceral approach geared toward stirring up allegiance than the more cerebral approach of Grautoff’s DFG.

That Groupe members ratcheted up the tone is apparent at the most basic levels of language, where both a higher emotional register and a new emphasis on taking action were in evidence. Speakers and writers on behalf of the Groupe (even members in their basic correspondence) were liberal with the exclamation point. Relying heavily on verbs like “act” and “combat,” representatives of the Groupe Collaboration prodded members to engage. In its confidential bulletin, the more forceful JEN proclaimed to its members,

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<sup>699</sup>PA-AA DBP 1122 Bericht über den von der Groupe Collaboration veranstalteten Vortrag des Phillippe Henriot am 14. April 1943. Signed Lektoratsleiter [illeg.] to Gerlach (11 May 1943).

<sup>700</sup>AN AP 411/3/3 Letter from L. Laurenceau, Chef de musique capitaine to Brinon (24 March 1943). The song itself has not been located. On the popular *Maréchal, nous voilà!* see Nathalie Dompnier, “Entre la Marseillaise et *Maréchal, nous voilà!* Quel hymne pour le régime de Vichy?” in *La vie musicale sous Vichy*,” ed. Myriam Chimènes (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 2001), 69-88.

“Don’t moan anymore . . . ACT!” and “Ready for combat.”<sup>701</sup> This new tone can be attributed to the general context of war and occupation, the heightened emotionalism of politics of the era (from Hitler to Mussolini to Jacques Doriot), and some representatives’ prior or current affiliations to the leagues, the Nazi Party, or parties sympathetic to the fascist cause.

The passion of leaders of the Groupe Collaboration at times led them to pursue goals that even the German authorities deemed excessive or premature. Weiland, for one, wanted to “enlighten Catholic milieus, generally so resistant to our ideas, about the true connections between National Socialism and the Catholic Church.” German officials found such gestures imprudent, both when Weiland first suggested it in early 1942 and when he resumed his entreaties in the autumn of 1943.<sup>702</sup>

The most dramatic testament of passionate devotion to the cause for Franco-German collaboration came from Groupe speaker Georges Claude (1870-1960), chemist, engineer, and member of the Institut. A decorated veteran of the First World War, Claude had long been a conservative, sympathetic to the Action Française and opposed to universal suffrage. As the inventor of liquid air and neon lighting, Claude had become wealthy; at his postwar trial, the prosecution made sure to underscore that Claude had collaborated out of “political passion” rather than from desire for “lucre.” Due to his wealth as well as the fact that he was pushing seventy at the start of the occupation, Claude enjoyed the leisure time to dedicate himself full-time to collaboration. Though he claimed at his trial that he had never been a dues-paying member of the Groupe

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<sup>701</sup>AN F17 13366 Paul-Louis Joullie, “Mars 1943,” *Les Jeunes de l’Europe Nouvelle. Bulletin Intérieur Mensuel* no. 6 (April 1943): 2.

<sup>702</sup>PA-AA DBP 1121/2,3 Letter from Weiland to Dr. von Bose (22 Oct. 1943).

Collaboration, Claude's intense involvement with the Groupe cannot be denied. He sat on its Honorary Board as well as its subcommittee on scientific relations. More importantly, Claude went on numerous lecture tours for the Groupe throughout France's different zones, where he pled repeatedly and feelingly for the French to pledge their support to attain German victory.

One month after the Allied landing in North Africa, Claude hatched a plan to show the entire nation the importance he attached to French-German collaboration. Accordingly, he decided to create a spectacle at one of his talks in Bordeaux, in the conviction that reports of his "theatrical gesture" would find their way into every newspaper in the country. Without warning to his family, conference organizers, or the press, Claude conceived a scheme he hoped would serve as the "equivalent of jumping from the top of the Eiffel Tower into a nest of serpents." He planned to swallow a vial of poison twelve times the mortal dose to end his talk on collaboration in dramatic fashion.<sup>703</sup>

In his third-person narrative of a suicide note—intended as a press release and written one hour after he drank his brew of strychnine and arsenic (plus two cubes of sugar)—Claude "expressed the hope that the Führer would accept this sacrifice as the ardent expression of his confidence, that . . . a France regenerated will receive a place worthy of her in this new Europe that she will without doubt help to form and organize." For Claude, at this moment, the prospect of "Anglo-Saxon and Bolshevik victory" struck him with fear for the future of France. Not hopelessness, but a desire to snap the French

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<sup>703</sup>On Georges Claude and his suicide attempt, see AN AP 411/3/4 Confidential note from the Préfet de la Gironde to Brinon (20 Dec. 1942); AN AP 411/3/4 Georges Claude, "Mort pour la France!" Suicide note (19 Dec. 1942); BDIC F Res 334/35/1-2. Procès de Georges Claude. Cour de Justice. Audience du 26 juin 1945.

public out of its apathy had led Claude to sacrifice himself. From its “inertia and doubts,” the public might come to see “that all should be done for the victory” of the “new Europe.”

Claude’s gesture in support of collaboration was an utter failure. In his excitement, he garbled his words such that the audience did not understand what he was saying. People imagined he was taking medicine. Then, nothing happened; it took a full half hour for any symptoms to take effect, by which time he had already returned to his hotel, where he collapsed in intense pain. Quietly carted off to the hospital, Claude made a remarkable, if uncomfortable recovery. And despite his efforts to the contrary, the Germans did not permit the press to publish accounts of the incident for fear of encouraging public despair. This was precisely the reaction Claude hoped to avoid; he wanted to attest to the gloriousness of the cause and demonstrate that it was worthy of martyrdom. At his postwar trial, an unrepentant Claude, who clearly still relished telling this tale, intimated that he had outdone Pétain by “*really* making the gift of my life to France because I made the gesture that should have been irrevocable” [my emphasis]. With this literal gift of his person (however manqué), Claude had aspired to prove his credentials as a hero of collaboration. His was a spectacle intended both on behalf of France and on behalf of Germany. The fact that Claude continued give lecture tours for the Groupe indicated that he still had not lost faith in collaboration.

While Claude’s case is unique, Groupe members’ activities also sometimes shifted into higher gear, moving from the realm of words to that of action. The Groupe Collaboration in the Marseilles region boasted of its offerings to the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD); Groupe members had shared valuable information, including the location of

weapons depots, and had pointed them to “very dangerous terrorist leaders” (i.e. resistance fighters).<sup>704</sup> And at least one German official noted that, in their eagerness to help collaborate, Groupe members often approached them with well-known, if unsubstantiated rumors or other unreliable information; they tried to be of use to the Germans, but failed.<sup>705</sup>

Denunciations, whether true or false—as well as a more general disgust for the Groupe—led some in turn to take action against the Groupe Collaboration. Although resistance to the Groupe was initially expressed quietly, hostility toward the Groupe Collaboration eventually took a far more extreme form—in fitting with the larger context—than did opposition to earlier organizations in favor of cooperation. Yet, given the circumstances, challenges to the Groupe Collaboration remained covert. We cannot know precisely who the Groupe’s antagonists were, but we have a very clear sense of the degree to which they despised it.

With the press in both nations highly controlled, the Groupe Collaboration did not face public excoriation or even mild criticism in the press. Attacks with the pen were only an option when anonymous and unpublished. A stash of anonymous letters sent in 1941 to the head of the Groupe Collaboration in Caen, a right-wing furniture dealer who had numerous enemies even well before the war, reveal an array of reasons why individuals refused to join the association. Some simply expressed a crude Germanophobia, the language of *boches* and Huns. Others grounded their arguments in a real sense of Germany’s exploitation of French resources and their own corresponding dismay,

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<sup>704</sup>Activité du Groupe ‘Collaboration’ dans la Région de Marseille à dater du mois de novembre 1942. Forwarded from German consulate, Marseilles to DBP (24 Sept. 1943).

<sup>705</sup>PA-AA DBP 1121/2 Aufzeichnung für Gesandten Rahn signed Dr. Kuntze, Betr. Groupe Collaboration (27 Oct. 1942).

disgust, or outrage. Some proved sympathetic to certain Nazi ideals—and showed their blatant hostility toward the Soviets, British, Americans, and Jews—but nonetheless could not stomach cooperation with their subjugator. Others still provided critiques of Nazism or of the notion of collaboration. One particularly clear-eyed note read:

You ask France to collaborate with Germany. Do you think that a conquered people can collaborate with a conqueror? And to collaborate to what end? To help Germany in its work of conquest and destruction, to help it institute the new German order throughout the world, which is to say the obligation of abandoning all man's rights and fundamental liberties? We see too well what constitutes this collaboration. For us, it is a synonym for humiliation, for abasement, for cowardice in associating with enterprises as criminal as those of the Germans. What will Germany do to collaborate? It will send emissaries of the Gestapo here to organize espionage, spying, [and foster] mistrust and thereby create division among the French. It will steal all our products that will serve the needs of its army while the French will see rationing . . . The Germans persecute the Jews, and you shout really loudly, "Death to the Jews." The Germans would like to see the French help them in Russia, and immediately you try to constitute the volunteer corps to get them killed there in the great European crusade against bolshevism, the "battle for civilization." What civilization?

For this Caen resident, collaboration meant not merely compliance, but eager submission.

These arguments, however they may have stung, did not receive a public airing. More powerful, though harder to document, were whisper campaigns and rumors. One member of a new Groupe section in Villers-sur-Mer worried about the talk generated by a press release about his group; it was enough to make him fear reprisals.<sup>706</sup>

Opposition to the Groupe often surfaced as small acts, such as a prominent local citizen not coming to hear a Groupe lecture or a child of a Groupe member being picked on in class. A talk by Jacques de Lesdain in Amiens proved a "complete fiasco" when the prefect made his excuses for not attending, and the police serving as guards seemed to be

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<sup>706</sup>For his local study on life under German occupation, Jean Quellien came upon these letters to the head of the Caen chapter of the Groupe Collaboration. See Quellien, 226-239.



blocking entrance to the hall. After 500 invitations had been sent and an announcement placed in the newspaper for a special mass in honor of victims of Allied bombs hosted by the Groupe Collaboration-Bassin de la Sambre, the abbot refused to conduct the mass unless it could be for all civilian victims (including Russians). Bolder actions likewise became common: smashed windows of Groupe Collaboration or JEN premises, a Gaullist Croix de Lorraine painted on the doors of Groupe members' homes and businesses, the more alarming delivery of tiny coffins that opened to reveal an even smaller axe and noose to Groupe members in Nantes.<sup>707</sup> Soon, many members found themselves in mortal danger.

By 1943, violence against Groupe members had escalated. That October, Weiland reported assassination attempts on "a good dozen" Groupe members, most of them successful, along with an attack on the headquarters of the Pau branch.<sup>708</sup> Months earlier, one woman had advised Groupe leaders of the pressures she and her husband faced in their village in the Yonne and expressed her dismay that the authorities had not come to their aid:

My husband and I have the honor to lend our sincere support to  
COLLABORATION, but alas! a really disappointed support until this day  
[because the authorities had still not responded to their complaints],  
though not discouraged, oh! no, not at all, because we are confident in our

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<sup>707</sup>For the Nantes incident, see Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: Daily Life in the Heart of France during the German Occupation* (New York: Picador, 2002), 309. This fate also befell members of the milice. See Julian Jackson, 533-534. Several reports of such incidents appear, for example, in PA-AA DBP 1121/2,3. For La Rochelle, see PA-AA DBP 1121/2 Letter from André Jolibois (La Rochelle) to Weiland (21 Nov. 1942). For the Amiens incident, see PA-AA DBP 1121/2 letter from Préfet de la Somme to M. Charlier (Pres. du Groupe Collaboration à Amiens) (18 June 1943); letter from Charlier to Dir. Gen. du Groupe Collaboration (Paris) (23 June 1943) –both letters forwarded from Weiland to Schleier (26 June 1943). On the refusal to conduct a mass, see a series of letters from April 1943 in PA-AA 1121/2. For children with problems in school or catechism class, see Quellien, 233.

<sup>708</sup>PA-AA DBP 1121/2,3 Weiland to Brinon (forwarded to Schleier) (13 Oct. 1943); Weiland to Schleier (16 Oct. 1943).

final victory. Unfortunately, as I've already pointed out several times, we sustain loud insults, threats, etc. every day. We very often erase vulgar and mean inscriptions with death threats, such as most recently, a large gallows 0.5 meters high in tar stuck to our houses . . . 12 inhabitants of Ravières suffered the same situation . . . <sup>709</sup>

In her note, this Madame Scordel proceeded to condemn the local priest as anti-German, a teacher as a Communist, the local police as neglectful (and thus perhaps even anti-Pétain), and the mayor for encouraging youth to dodge German labor conscription orders. Five months later, gendarmes found Madame Scordel's body, riddled with eight bullets, each of a different caliber. Her husband, a gardener, managed to defend himself with a cudgel and escape, but two other Groupe members in Ravières were killed that day: a 51-year-old woman whose husband was working in Germany and a 58-year-old retired postal worker.<sup>710</sup> Other villages saw violence against Groupe Collaboration members as well. The Haute-Saône/Belfort branch saw both the Raddon mayor, an associate member of the Groupe, and at least one other member shot at, and the Secretary-General's apartment was bombed.<sup>711</sup> That November, Fornairon reported that ten Groupe members had been murdered and four wounded; other attacks included eight bombings and the plundering of Groupe Collaboration offices in St. Briec, Saintes, Montpellier, and Vichy itself.<sup>712</sup>

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<sup>709</sup>PA-AA DBP 1121/2,3 Letter from Mme B. Scordel to Collaboration (4 May 1943) [her emphasis].

<sup>710</sup>PA-AA DBP 1121/2,3 Unlabeled press clipping with dateline Auxerre, 8 Oct. 1943. "Trois attentats sont commis à la même heure dans un village de l'Yonne."

<sup>711</sup>PA-AA DBP 1121/2,3 Letter to Directeur Général signed Barrey-Didier (Collaboration, Comité Haute-Saône-Belfort) (5 Oct. 1943) [forwarded from Weiland to Brinon (13 Oct. 1943) and to Schleier (16 Oct. 1943)]; Letter from Barrey-Didier to Directeur Général (8 Oct. 1943) [forwarded from Weiland to Brinon (13 Oct. 1943) and to Schleier (16 Oct. 1943)].

<sup>712</sup>PA-AA DBP 1121/2,3 Letter to Ernest Fornairon to Dr. von Bose (19 Nov. 1943).

Many Groupe members, in search of more than soothing rhetoric, demanded action from their leaders. Members complaining of threats tended to deplore the inadequacy—and often unwillingness to help—of their local police forces. Often such complaints came laced with aggravated accounts of local officials’ former connections to freemasons, Jews, or leftists. At least one member who claimed to have escaped an assassination attempt and bemoaning the inadequacies of the French government (both local and national) to protect him, asked for German help. “To what extent,” he asked, “can Germany substitute for the impotence of the Government?”<sup>713</sup> This desperate member from Luxeuil thus looked to Germany rather than France for strong leadership, an indication that he, at least, had fully absorbed some of the Groupe’s implicit messages.

In the face of these complaints, Groupe Collaboration leaders worked hard to try to offer their constituents a sense of security. In addition to attempting to placate them by reinforcing the righteousness of their cause, Groupe leaders sought to attain the right for their members to bear arms. Frustrations, Weiland explained to the German authorities, stemmed from the fact that members, who understood themselves to be “aiding government action, realize with bitterness that the French administration more often considers them as a nuisance or even worse.”<sup>714</sup> By mid-October 1943, approximately 400 Groupe members in the Southern Zone had requested authorization to carry a weapon.<sup>715</sup> The head of the Groupe for the entire Southern Zone pled with the German Embassy in Paris for permission to establish “protection groups,” uniformed and armed

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<sup>713</sup>PA-AA DBP 1121/2,3 Letter from Barrey-Didier to Directeur Général (8 Oct. 1943) [forwarded from Weiland to Brinon (13 Oct. 1943) and to Schleier (16 Oct. 1943)].

<sup>714</sup>PA-AA DBP 1121/2, 3 Letter from Weiland to von Bose (3 Nov. 1943).

<sup>715</sup>PA-AA DBP 1121/ 2,3 Aktenvermerk, Betr: Bewaffnung der Groupe Collaboration zu 1952/43g. Signed von Bose to Oberbannführer Theilen (15 Oct. 1943).

security squads, a call that met some resistance (especially with regard to the uniforms).<sup>716</sup> Select “German-friendly” members were nonetheless granted authorization to bear arms.<sup>717</sup>

### *JEN*

In June 1941, the Groupe Collaboration launched a youth section, which soon became, in the words of one of its leaders, Marc Augier, “a veritable movement” (a description that at the time had more to do with its high energy than with its size, one might add). Under the name, “Jeunes de l’Europe Nouvelle” [Youth of the New Europe], this movement brought together 6,400 youth from ages 12 to 25 to rally them to the project of collaboration.<sup>718</sup> Fritz Bran’s slogan for these youth, like the motto for the Groupe Collaboration, broadened its scope from the local to the international: “social responsibility, national honor, European order!”<sup>719</sup>

Under the eyes of Augier and Jacques Schweizer, however, JEN took on an identity more in tune with its two leaders’ backgrounds and its enthusiastic core of youth. Before joining the Groupe Collaboration and taking over the reins of JEN, the lawyer Jacques Schweizer (1904-1981) had been a member of the CFA as well as a leader of the youth section of the right-wing league, the Jeunesses Patriotes. Marc Augier (1908-1990), known as Saint Loup, an avid mountain-climber and outdoors adventurer, had launched a

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<sup>716</sup>PA-AA DBP 1122 No. Kult. 5779/43 Konzept signed Gerlach to DBP office in Vichy (9 Oct. 1943).

<sup>717</sup>AN AJ40 551 Brf.Tgb.Nr. 694/43geh. Abschrift: Geheim!” From Feldkommandant Oberst [Feldkommandantur 677/ Abteilung 1C] to Befehlshaber Südwest Frankreich [Angers] Betr: Lage im Departement Vienne. (18 June 1943).

<sup>718</sup>The 6400 figure was their own estimate in 1944. AN F17 13348 Les Jeunes de l’Europe Nouvelle (Section des Jeunes du Groupe ‘Collaboration’). Undated, unsigned description forwarded from Schweizer to Laval, Bonnard, Gait (26 May 1944).

<sup>719</sup>Bran, *La jeunesse allemande*, 32.

secular youth hostel movement in France in the 1930s and had worked on youth and leisure issues in the Popular Front government. But Augier's romanticism had brought him from the left to the right. In the early 1940s, he worked for Châteaubriant's anti-Semitic newspaper *La Gerbe* and the Anti-Bolshevik League's *La France Combattante*.

According to Augier, JEN's choice of name, with its emphasis on Europe (rather than Germany), indicated members' "will to extend beyond the frame of simple collaboration."<sup>720</sup> Augier craved a more important role in the new order:

At a newspaper, the collaborator is the musician who from time to time furnishes an article for which he's badly paid. He is not part of the editorial team, he's a poor relation, he plays second fiddle. We want to be part of the European team, sharing its responsibilities and its risks, its successes and benefits for the future. It's because youth should be the vanguard of a country that when they propose to us collaboration, we reply alliance.<sup>721</sup>

Augier saw in collaboration an implied subservience; he wanted to do more to fashion and sustain the new order. He was not so much interested in France receiving a bigger slice of the pie, so much as he wanted his country—and especially his vanguard of youth—to be leading the charge side by side with the Nazis.

Initially, JEN shared some common ground with the *Sohlbergkreis*. Jacques Schweizer claimed that "all that has been realized in the domain of youth in the Franco-German arena for ten years" they owed to Otto Abetz and Fritz Bran. Drawing on the legacy of Sohlberg, "that hill" and its journal, Schweizer saw the beginnings of his JEN as well as the contemporary iteration of the *Sohlbergkreis*, the *Cahiers franco-*

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<sup>720</sup> Augier, *Les Jeunes devant*, 18.

<sup>721</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

*allemands*.<sup>722</sup> JEN arranged a joint French-German ski camp as well as a summer camp. Like the Sohlbergkreis, moreover, it could claim that it had an unusually international perspective for a youth group. JEN considered itself the only French youth movement of the time to maintain contacts with youth from other nations in Europe.<sup>723</sup> Like the Sohlbergkreis at its very end, the groups with which JEN interacted were fascist groups of a piece—from Italy to Romania.

JEN combined play and work. The group screened movies (from “Romania in War” to “The Ski and the Canoe” to “The Young Hitlerian and the March toward the Führer”) and maintained a choral society. Members also distributed pamphlets and assorted propaganda about the task of collaboration. In addition, they maintained contacts with French laborers in Germany. In 1941, Augier had proposed a program whereby French youth would volunteer for public works projects throughout Europe: building canals, clearing away the rubble of war, repairing railroads, planting trees. These projects would at once serve the public interest and foster a European spirit. This was, in effect, a more European version of the way the Germans would later market labor conscription to the French. But it really was more like an extension of the *Chantiers de Jeunesse* to the entire continent. The public works scheme, however, never took off, in part because it was proposed just a few days shy of the German invasion of the Soviet Union.<sup>724</sup> The girls’ section—which was notably large<sup>725</sup>—visited wounded members of the Anti-

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<sup>722</sup>Bran, *La jeunesse allemande*, 5.

<sup>723</sup>AN F17 13348 Les Jeunes de l’Europe Nouvelle (Section des Jeunes du Groupe ‘Collaboration’). Undated, unsigned description forwarded from Schweizer to Laval, Bonnard, Gait (26 May 1944).

<sup>724</sup>Augier, 23-24.

<sup>725</sup>At a 1944 JEN conference in Vichy, out of 350 people in attendance, 200 were female. AN F1a 3748 No. X.C.G./I/35316. “Informations sur les Jeunes de l’Europe Nouvelle” by the C.F.L.N./ Commissariat à

Bolshevik Legion and wrote letters to legionnaires and Waffen-SS men to keep up their spirits.

In the spring of 1943, JEN began to pull away from its international outlook to focus more on issues at home. In this way, it came closer to resembling other French youth groups and increasingly differentiated itself from the Groupe Collaboration.<sup>726</sup> JEN adopted an agenda that was primarily “revolutionary” and European and shed its specifically French-German character.

Organized via the Führer principle, JEN’s structure looked nothing like the Sohlbergkreis. The leader of JEN directed the movement and had the power to rid the group of those who lacked the necessary drive, or conversely, those who were overzealous. Such a structure, Augier believed, served as a prototype for the ideal state. Echoing Augier, Jacques Schweizer laid stress on the importance of the leadership principle, particularly where youth was concerned. The example of the leader, he maintained, inspired courage, and an ideal leader should “give words of order that will lead to action.”<sup>727</sup>

JEN took a militant line in keeping with a stronger National Socialist perspective. In the pages of its bulletin, one delegate declared the “genius” of Hitler and another

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l’Intérieur/ Service Courrier Documentation et Diffusion. Dated Inf: Jan. 1944; Rec.: 21 Feb. 1944; Dif.: 6 March 1944.

<sup>726</sup>AN F1a 3748 No. X.C.G./I/35316. “Informations sur les Jeunes de l’Europe Nouvelle” by the C.F.L.N./ Commissariat à l’Intérieur/ Service Courrier Documentation et Diffusion. Dated Inf: Jan. 1944; Rec.: 21 Feb. 1944; Dif.: 6 March 1944.

<sup>727</sup>Jacques Schweizer, “Les Jeunes de l’Europe Nouvelle et la Révolution Nationale. 2e Congrès National des J.E.N.,” in *La Jeunesse française est une jeunesse européenne* (Paris: Éditions des Jeunes de l’Europe Nouvelle, 1944), 12-13. Talk given at JEN Conference, Paris (14 June 1943).

described JEN as working to “assure the triumph of the National Socialist ideal.”<sup>728</sup>

Schweizer had no qualms about embracing violence. Calling the attacks on Groupe Collaboration and JEN members a sign of “the efficacy of our action,” Schweizer argued, “far from discouraging us, they multiply our ardor tenfold. It is not our intention to receive strikes without returning them, and my comrades are not waiting for me to give them orders of this kind.”<sup>729</sup> For him, the doctrine of JEN was unambiguous: “today, each must prove by his acts whether he is for or against a policy that abroad collaborates in the creation of Europe, and which domestically, must exterminate the Communist peril.”<sup>730</sup>

Prove their devotion they did. JEN members sported navy uniforms with black ties and a Y-shaped figure, an abstract rendering of a man opening his arms to the light and the future, on its badge. They repeatedly asked authorities for the right to bear arms. Eventually, “protection groups” were established to help with security; less glamorously, they also helped clear the wreckage from air strikes. In addition, JEN members were granted permission to serve in the milice.<sup>731</sup> Just as they had to wait for guns, they held out for the right to parade, a right which was granted to them in January 1944.<sup>732</sup> De Gaulle’s Intelligence Service reported that, at least around Nîmes, JEN helped the

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<sup>728</sup>AN F17 13366 Paul-Louis Joulle, “Mars 1943,” and Sturmführer Pecault Noel, “Belgique N.S.K.K.,” in *Les Jeunes de l’Europe Nouvelle. Bulletin Intérieur Mensuel* no. 6 (April 1943), 3, 8.

<sup>729</sup>AN F17 13366 Jacques Schweizer, “Vers une action nationale,” *Les Jeunes de l’Europe Nouvelle. Bulletin Intérieur Mensuel* no. 6 (April 1943): 1.

<sup>730</sup>Jacques Schweizer, “Vers l’union de la jeunesse française,” in Jacques Schweizer, *La jeunesse française est une jeunesse européenne* (Paris: Éditions des Jeunes de la Nouvelle Europe, 1944), 38. Talk given at Congrès Régional des JEN, Vichy (9 Jan. 1944).

<sup>731</sup>AN F17 13348 Jacques Schweizer, “Un élément indispensable: l’Unité d’esprit,” *Les Jeunes de l’Europe Nouvelle. Bulletin Intérieur Mensuel* no. 11 (Feb. 1944): 1.

<sup>732</sup>Pierre Philippe Lambert and Gérard Le Marec, *Partis et Mouvements de la Collaboration: Paris 1940-1944* (Paris: Jacques Grancher, 1993), 169-175.



Gestapo locate those who had dodged the labor draft.<sup>733</sup> Members volunteered or were conscripted to work in Germany or joined the ranks of the Anti-Bolshevik Legion to fight in the Soviet Union. Marc Augier had made the latter choice and thus left his JEN post; later, he enlisted in the Charlemagne Division of the Waffen-SS.

The notion of French-German cooperation was so elastic that in JEN we cannot even recognize it as such. Holding onto the idea of European cooperation, the French-German issue got lost altogether.

### *Winding down*

The fate of the Groupe Collaboration was, of course, intimately tied to the fate of the French and German nations. There could be no such organization with German defeat, just as there could be none without the occupation of France. The end of the Groupe, unlike that of the other organizations in this study, was therefore swift and unambiguous. Along with an array of other groups, including the *milice*, Doriot's *Parti Populaire français*, and the *Légion française des combattants*, the Groupe Collaboration was officially dissolved with a decree by the provisional government under de Gaulle on 10 August 1944. With that same gesture, the provisional government re-established the French republic.

The course of the war made clear well before August 1944 that the Germans would not triumph and that the French who had collaborated would not find themselves on the winning side of history. It therefore comes as little surprise that de Gaulle's Central Bureau of Intelligence Information and Action [BCRA] noted growing problems

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<sup>733</sup> AN F1a 3748 No. X.C.G./I/35316. "Informations sur les Jeunes de l'Europe Nouvelle" by the C.F.L.N./ Commissariat à l'Intérieur/ Service Courrier Documentation et Diffusion. Dated Inf: Jan. 1944; Rec.: 21 Feb. 1944; Dif.: 6 March 1944.

within the Groupe. In February 1944, the Creuse branch found itself immersed in a discussion about the imminent landings and the expected British and American victory. The Marseilles branch saw a decrease in its activities.<sup>734</sup> The BCRA learned that the Vichy branch of the Groupe Collaboration experienced a swift decline in membership, from 180 paying members in 1943 to just 40 the following year.<sup>735</sup> The Montpellier chapter had trouble meeting in the spring of 1944 due to rumors of the need to evacuate the Mediterranean coast. More to the point, they had begun to recognize that “the game is up, that we no longer can hope to conquer the majority of decidedly rebellious minds.” Nonetheless, the Montpellier branch expected to persevere in its efforts “to which despite everything we have until now remained loyal.”<sup>736</sup>

This tenacity in the face of ruin revealed the degree to which, even in the spring of 1944, some members of the Groupe still held fast to a bit of Georges Claude’s dedication—perhaps enough to give the gift of *their* bodies. That April, Joseph Garrette, the Groupe’s administrative secretary general for the Southern Zone who had advocated a more violent approach, became a target of the maquis, who peppered his car with bullets outside the town of Thonon without managing to touch Garrette himself.<sup>737</sup> Rather than cave, Garrette continued, as militant as ever. As many flocked to the resistance (or at least fled to the hills to avoid labor conscription), Garrette and other members of the

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<sup>734</sup>On the Creuse and Marseilles branches, see AN F1A 3748 No. XCG/4/35.309 “Le Groupe ‘Collaboration’ Quelques Informations Divers” C.F.L.N./ Commissariat à l’Intérieur/Service Courrier/ Documentation et Diffusion. Inf: Jan. 1944; Rec: 13 March 1944; Diffusion 28 March 1944.

<sup>735</sup>AN F1a 3748 No. XCG/7/35.308 Report (10 April 1944).

<sup>736</sup>AN AP 411/1 Letter from Robert Bousquet, Président du Comité de Montpellier to Weiland (24 March 1944). Forwarded from Weiland to Brinon (28 March 1944).

<sup>737</sup>AN AP 411/1 Letter from Garrette to Weiland. Forwarded by Weiland to Brinon (16 April 1944).

Groupe Collaboration had become, like many “ultras” in 1943 and 1944, in the words of Bertram Gordon, “more defiantly strident.”<sup>738</sup> That insistence on holding the line (and also on denouncing others) did not serve them well. In June of 1944, Abetz reported that 100 members of the Groupe Collaboration, along with hundreds of other collaborators, had been assassinated.<sup>739</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Members of the Groupe Collaboration, much like the wider spectrum of collaborationists across France, met often ignominious ends. Those who had dedicated the war years to working for cooperation found themselves condemned for it. Those who had held visible national positions, not surprisingly, were punished. Brinon and Luchaire were executed. Abetz was sentenced to 20 years. Some members of Groupe Collaboration also met difficult fates. Jacques Schweizer received a death sentence, though he was eventually amnestied, and René Pichard du Page was condemned to ten years of forced labor. Georges Claude received a life sentence. Grimm was imprisoned. Châteaubriant hid under a false name in Germany, then Austria, and thus received his death sentence in absentia. Likewise condemned to death in absentia, Marc Augier had fled to South America, where he served as Eva Peron’s ski instructor. Weiland hid out near—but not in—Sigmaringen with the final hold-outs, then stayed for awhile in Austria. Max Clauss had gone to Portugal in 1943, where he lived for a decade in voluntary exile. Colin Ross committed suicide on 30 April 1945 in the home of Baldur

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<sup>738</sup>Gordon, *Collaborationism*, 280.

<sup>739</sup>Burrin, *France under the Germans*, 451-452.

von Schirach.<sup>740</sup> Fritz Bran, in contrast, went free, and, in the early 1950s, again picked up the mantle of French-German cooperation.

The perception was that these activists were opportunists or fascist fellow travelers. Indeed, some had knowingly and willingly engaged in propaganda activities on the part of the National Socialists. But most of them would have had trouble distinguishing between propaganda and their own perverse idealism, one that sought constantly to adjust their hopes (and illusions) about French-German cooperation to the post-defeat circumstances. Most notably, this recasting of the French-German relationship found its highest expression in the concept of a new Europe, in which France stood alongside Germany as an active, if junior partner. It was within the matrix of this perverse idealism that associates of the Groupe Collaboration could not just see merit in elements of the new order such as the STO, but even could celebrate those virtues.

This was not only a matter of psychological adjustment by the vanquished or outright manipulation on the part of the victors. For many involved in the Groupe Collaboration, their wartime experiences fit into the arc of their careers working for French-German cooperation as well as into a larger narrative of organizations and rhetoric geared toward effecting a better Franco-German relationship. They looked back to the precedents—in many cases, precedents they themselves had set—of the CFA and the DFG, and even further back to the Mayrisch Komitee and the Sohlbergkreis and saw (or at least purported to see) a reflection, perhaps a shade less bright, of the work they were currently undertaking.

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<sup>740</sup>Diane Rubenstein, "Publish or Perish: The 'epuration' of French Intellectuals," *Journal of European Studies* 89, no. 89-90 (March-June 1993): 71-100; Herbert R. Lottman, *The Purge* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1986); John Hellman, "Wounding Memories: Mitterrand, Moulin, Touvier, and the Divine Half-Lie of Resistance," *French Historical Studies* 19, no. 2 (1995): 472.

As we have seen before the war, cooperation took many paths. In the morally ambiguous world of the war and occupation, cooperation became collaboration. This form of cooperation may have been the black sheep, but that does not make it any less of an heir to the cooperation of the 1920s and 1930s. And despite its troubling nature, it surprisingly did not destroy all attempts for future French-German reconciliation. At the end of the war, we see a negative continuity taking shape, whereby postwar advocates of cooperation looked backward not only in search of successes or models on which to build, but also in consideration of the lessons of the failures and failings of wartime cooperation in its collaborationist guise. Franco-German organizations after the war would set out to reclaim, redeem, and reinvent cooperation with these lessons in mind.

## PART THREE

### Reconciliation and Redemption, 1945-1954

Ute Frevert has recently argued that increased contact through war leads to greater transnational familiarity and connectedness.<sup>741</sup> In the case of the French occupation of Germany after World War II, such familiarity did not merely breed contempt. New Franco-German organizations tried to sidestep the mindset of war and occupation in an attempt to foster reconciliation. In an attempt to reconfigure their tortured histories, German and French activists elided problematic episodes from the past, allayed perceptions of an imbalance of power in the present, and projected a path of Franco-German harmony for the future. The following chapters examine how advocates for cooperation tried to untangle and reweave the complex ties between Germany and France after the war. In particular, this section focuses on how Franco-German activists introduced a new moral urgency into the postwar drive for cooperation by injecting it alternately with an ethos of Catholicism or of Resistance. What they sought was a new transnational moral community.

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<sup>741</sup>Ute Frevert, "Europeanizing Germany's Twentieth Century," *History & Memory* 17, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2005): 87-116; Frevert, "Europeanizing German History," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 36 (Spring 2005): 9-24. This section will examine hyperconscious attempts to bring about a new Franco-German relationship. These nodes of contact, in other words, are quite different from more unintentional bearers of harmony, such as the fraternizing (American) soldiers studied by Petra Goedde. See Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender, and Foreign Relations, 1945-1949* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

Of course, the most common tale of the French-German relationship in the first decade or so after the war revolves around the nations' increasing economic interdependence, epitomized by the Schuman Plan. The cultural side of the story is far less well-known and has often gone by unnoticed. But these were parallel, complementary efforts. The postwar occupation of Germany was pregnant with possibility and presented an opening not only for political and economic cooperation, but for reconciliation between the two "hereditary enemies."

This version of postwar reconciliation was peculiar to the French-German situation and did not apply to the other Allied zones of occupied Germany. For the French, it was particularly necessary to set up special channels through which to re-imagine a new set of relations between occupier and occupied in a way that did not happen with the Soviets, the Americans, or the British. Neither the Soviets nor the Americans had such a long legacy of enmity with the Germans as did the French. And if the Germans and the British had nursed a longstanding rivalry,<sup>742</sup> the British at least had not just emerged from an occupation. The Soviets conducted cultural diplomacy with their zone with similarly styled, but rather coercive associations heavy on propaganda.<sup>743</sup> The best-known private organizations for German-American exchange, like the *Atlantik Brücke* [Atlantic Bridge], did not get a start until the early 1950s, five years after CFEAN and seven after BILD.<sup>744</sup>

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<sup>742</sup>Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980).

<sup>743</sup>Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), 398-464.

<sup>744</sup>The well-known Amerika-Häuser, which began in 1946, functioned as information centers and were not associations. They served as a locus for the transfer of American culture and values to the Germans and not the reverse. On the Atlantik Brücke and the Amerika-Häuser, see the following three articles in Detlef Junker, ed., *The United States and Germany in the Era of the Cold War, 1945-1968. A Handbook*, vol. 1.

Chapter six focuses by and large on the French zone of occupied Germany; here, the nascent Cold War was less palpable than in the other western sectors, much less Berlin or the Soviet zone. For this reason, as well as due to the longstanding French-German enmity and more particularly the recent occupation of France, the members of the *Bureau International de Liaison et de Documentation* [BILD] concerned themselves far more with the French-German relationship than with the Cold War. Put simply, we can see a greater preoccupation with the aftermath of the war, than a leap forward to the next round of concerns for Europe: the Cold War and European integration.<sup>745</sup> The inside back cover of each issue of BILD's journal *Documents* explained the birth of the publication, "On the day after the conflict that opposed the peoples [of the world], we feel the need to resume cultural exchanges that were for too long interrupted." This publication thus claimed to be a product of the Second World War; its explicit mission was to bridge the divisions triggered by the war.

In similar fashion, the *Comité français d'échanges franco-allemands* (CFEAN), the subject of chapter seven, was gripped by the legacy of the war, even as it tried to plot a new course for the future. Chapter seven centers on a French conception of a "new Germany," one that had shaken off the remnants of the Nazi legacy. For CFEAN, both postwar Germany and France were in desperate need of renewal.

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Publications of the German Historical Institute (New York: Cambridge, 2004): Karl-Heinz Füssl, "Between Elitism and Educational Reform: German-American Exchange Programs, 1945-1970," 415; Rebecca Boehling, "U.S. Cultural Policy and German Culture during the American Occupation," 389-390; Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, "American Cultural Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany," trans. Robert Kimber and Rita Kimber, 404-405.

<sup>745</sup>Tony Judt has similarly underscored the ways in which the legacy of the Second World War marked the next half century in his recent *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005).



The Cold War, of course, was by no means absent from cultural efforts for cooperation in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Postwar French-German efforts for cooperation without doubt contributed to the Federal Republic's far from inevitable integration into the West.<sup>746</sup> Moreover, the Cold War allowed activists to frame their efforts for French-German cooperation in a newly promising way: around a notion of Europe. If they only did so periodically at first, this strategy took on increasing resonance and served to distance them from recent attempts to promote a united Europe under the aegis of the Nazis.

To be sure, European integration also played into postwar Franco-German activism (and to be fair, even into interwar activism). But it was not until later—the 1960s or even the 1970s—that European integration and French-German relations were operating on the same track. Until then, these were two (often parallel) but largely separate phenomena.

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<sup>746</sup>Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* Trans. by Brandon Hunziker (New York: Oxford, 2006), 103-129.

## CHAPTER SIX

### BILD

They fear each other because they don't know each other, or only know each other as soldiers. The father carries the fear to the son, and there will be no end.

Now, though, the weapons are still and now the opportunity is here to appeal to the reason and insight of the fathers, to the impartiality or of necessity the distant yearning of the sons and to lead them over the borders of their (oh-so-small) nations, to show them that in the other country dwell not monsters, but men: men, indeed with another way of life, but with the same talent to live, to love, to work and perhaps also to pray to the same God....The more people lose this fear, the more affection and sympathy will grow, and the sooner the rising generation will see the neighbor no more as a faceless collective but as people—like you and me . . . —Eitel-Victor Couchoud<sup>747</sup>

If the Franco-German enmity . . . is not recognized and overcome as anachronism, then it will be a noose, choking the lives of both peoples and the life of Europe.—Alfons Erb<sup>748</sup>

1945 stands as a *Stunde-Null* not only for the history of Germany, but in many ways, for the quest for Franco-German cooperation. The legacy of the war, occupation, and collaboration had embittered the Franco-German relationship and seemingly undercut the project. The Germans experienced a harsh first few months of military occupation by the French.<sup>749</sup> In both France and Germany, efforts were underway to

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<sup>747</sup>AOFAA AC 302/1b E.V. Couchoud, "Gedanken über internationale Begegnung und über nationale Zusammenarbeit," *Jahresbericht 1953*, 33.

<sup>748</sup>Alfons Erb, "Deutsche und Französische Schriftsteller in Royaumont," *Dokumente* no. 1 (1949): 3.

<sup>749</sup>On the early months of military occupation, especially the abuses under General de Lattre's 11-week watch, see F. Roy Willis, *The French in Germany 1945-1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 67-91.

purge the ranks of those who had worked with the Nazis. Collaborationism had poisoned the notion of cooperation. In this hostile atmosphere, long-term proponents of cooperation were in no position to continue their work or even to resume their pre-1933 agendas. Pierre Viénot had just died of a heart attack in London, where he had worked alongside Charles de Gaulle. Otto Grautoff had died in exile, and Otto Abetz languished in prison. Jean Luchaire, too, sat in jail, where he would be executed by firing squad the following year for having collaborated with the Germans.

But another Jean would take up the torch in 1945. Though French priest Jean du Rivau was a newcomer to the cause of Franco-German cooperation, his efforts recalled those of the Locarno era. At the same time, they also were inextricably tied to the legacy of the war and occupation. As founder of the umbrella organization the Bureau International de Liaison et de Documentation (BILD), du Rivau tailored the long-term project for French-German cooperation to the needs of the postwar era. Once again, Franco-German mediators created an organization by which to tear down prejudice, replace it with knowledge, promote dialogue, and ease the route toward friendship. In the aftermath of war and in the midst of occupation, however, du Rivau insisted on the moral obligation to achieve reconciliation. For him, European recovery and a promise for peace could only be sustained through the spiritual renewal of the German and French communities. By building and tending a new moral community of “Europeans,” BILD helped French and German citizens assuage their anxieties, foster contacts, and prepare themselves for a European future.

Several scholars have argued that a moral language of “reconciliation” between France and Germany first emerged in the early 1960s.<sup>750</sup> Although this may apply to politicians like Konrad Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle, the notion of reconciliation—complete with all of its moral and theological underpinnings—lay at the heart of the BILD enterprise from its conception in August 1945. In this sense, postwar associational initiatives toward reconciliation preceded those of the French and German governments.

Reconciliation went beyond the notions of cooperation explored by earlier groups. If, for example, there was a loose spiritual and a strong moral component to Henri Lichtenberger’s goal of “demobilization of *esprits*” after the First World War, BILD’s position on reconciliation after the Second World War was based expressly on these values. Moreover, reconciliation entailed taking steps beyond demobilization, and even normalization, to try to “forgive and forget.”<sup>751</sup> Although the postwar occupation-era was replete with tensions between the French and the Germans, BILD, in part by dint of its independence from officialdom, maintained a steady push to bring France and Germany from a vague penitence to reconciliation to salvation.

After the Second World War, any attempts at cooperation faced overwhelming challenges on both sides of the Rhine. Those interested had to find ways in which to navigate the storms of the present, from the Saar question to the denazification debate. Both also had to find useable ways to negotiate their pasts—their shared past as

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<sup>750</sup>See Corine Defrance and Ulrich Pfeil, “Der Elysée Vertrag und die deutsch-französischen Beziehungen: eine Einleitung,” in *Der Elysée Vertrag und die deutsch-französischen Beziehungen 1945-1963-2003*, ed. Corine Defrance and Ulrich Pfeil (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2005), 29-30.

<sup>751</sup>For definitions of “reconciliation” in the political sense, in particular its moral-theological dimension and its “essential societal dimension,” see Lily Gardner Feldman, “The Principle and Practice of ‘Reconciliation’ in German Foreign Policy: Relations with France, Israel, Poland and the Czech Republic,” *International Affairs* 75, no. 2 (April 1999): 333-356; Ann L. Phillips, “The Politics of Reconciliation Revisited: Germany and East-Central Europe,” *World Affairs* 163, no. 4 (Spring 2001): 171-191.

“hereditary enemies” and their more recent past under the Nazi stranglehold. Moreover, they had to come to terms with their back-to-back occupations.

French occupiers engaged in an aggressive set of strategies to tame the German beast politically, economically, and culturally. Security topped the list of French priorities in Germany. To minimize the chance of a future German threat, French officials leapt at any prospect of detaching the Rhineland, the Ruhr, or the Saar from Germany. French occupiers expressly pursued a policy of economic exploitation of their zone through reparations and requisitions, and even when they helped reconstruct German infrastructure, this rebuilding was carried out in the name of increasing exports to France.<sup>752</sup> The French waged a campaign of deforestation, dismantled factories, and enjoyed a luxurious standard of living relative to locals. Exaggerated reports of such inequality only heightened the animus toward the French occupier. Cultural policy, too, played a significant role, but it is in this realm—from reeducation to artistic offerings—that French policy was relatively successful.<sup>753</sup>

Nonetheless, several private groups chose to pursue their own cultural agenda independent of the occupation authorities so as to downplay the power disparity and interact on more equal footing. Associations like BILD and the Comité d’échanges avec l’Allemagne nouvelle (chapter seven) explicitly aimed “to supplement the deficiency of

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<sup>752</sup>Willis, *The French in Germany*, 109-146.

<sup>753</sup>These efforts were successful relative to those of the other Western occupiers as well as relative to French cultural policy in the occupied Rhineland after the First World War. For overviews of the debates on the role of French cultural policy in occupied Germany see, Corine Defrance, *La politique culturelle de la France sur la rive gauche du Rhin 1945-1955* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1994), 22-23; Stefan Zauner, *Erziehung und Kulturmission: Frankreichs Bildungspolitik in Deutschland 1945-1949* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1994), 9-18. See also Martin Schieder, *Expansion/Integration. Die Kunstausstellungen der französischen Besatzung im Nachkriegsdeutschland*. Passerelles, vol. 3. (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2003).

French public powers.”<sup>754</sup> In this sense, the groups relied on the occupation administration as a foil. Rather than operating with security as the centerpiece of the new French-German relationship, these private organizations attempted to locate cultural, social, and moral affinities as the basis of mutual understanding. In the case of BILD more specifically, French and German activists extended the hand of friendship across the border to work together in a partnership of equals. In this sense, BILD promoted learning, but in an entirely different sense than that of French (or other Allied) efforts at reeducation. Rather than overhauling what was seen as the “Prussian,” militarist mindset, BILD aimed to show how the French and Germans could learn from one another. Such efforts necessitated a thorough overhaul of the imagination. What these groups sought was the creation of a new moral community that transcended the national.

### *Origins: Myths and the Reality of Occupation*

One version of a well-known story begins in the summer of 1945 overlooking the Rhine at the industrial city of Ludwigshafen. There, the Rhine marked the border between the French and American zones of occupied Germany; further south the river separated France from French-occupied Germany. Along the southern stretch of the river, the French not only dominated but predominated: all Germans had been evacuated from the port town of Kehl, across the river from Strasbourg, thus rendering both banks effectively French. Toward the end of the war, the river itself had been strewn with the

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<sup>754</sup> Alfred Grosser, “Le Comité a-t-il encore un sens?” *Allemagne* no. 17 (February/March 1952): 1, 3.

remains of 50 bridges and rendered unnavigable.<sup>755</sup> Contact across national borders as well as across zonal borders was minimal.

Legend has it that, amid the ruins of Ludwigshafen, one of the most damaged areas under the purview of the French, Jean du Rivau (1903-1970) met a young compatriot about to cross the bridge into Mannheim. Du Rivau, a Jesuit chaplain of the French garrison at Offenburg, asked the young soldier what compelled him to defy the rules and attempt entry into the American sector. This Frenchman famously responded that, as a Communist, he sought his comrades wherever they might live so that they might work together. The idea of embracing Germans in common cause so soon after the war inspired the priest, despite his distaste for Communism. Shortly thereafter, a German clergyman further spurred du Rivau to action by arguing that the most critical task for the French occupiers was to “inform” the Germans, who had been bombarded with Nazi propaganda for the last twelve years. Du Rivau had an epiphany: he reclaimed the Communist’s quest for brotherhood as a Christian effort; it would operate primarily as an information campaign. He thus established an institute in Offenburg geared toward promoting French-German contact. In this way, two simple encounters begat thousands more between the French and the Germans.

This legend appears with variations in most accounts of the BILD. The discrepancies, however, point to the ways in which the myth has eclipsed the man. Whereas most iterations of the story locate du Rivau’s epiphany in Ludwigshafen in the summer of 1945, both translator and editor René Wintzen (1924-) and editor Eitel-Victor Couchoud situate it in Strasbourg. Wintzen recalled BILD journals *Documents* and

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<sup>755</sup>David A. Meier. “French-German Relations: The Strasbourg-Kehl Encounter, 1945-1955,” *European Review of History* 11, no. 1 (2004): 55-65; Willis, *The French in Germany*, 128.

*Dokumente* being conceived at the end of 1944 in Strasbourg, whereas Couchoud traced BILD's origins to 1945 when, in his telling, du Rivau spotted a group of French and German civilians, arm in arm, singing the "Internationale" on the bridge to Kehl. According to Jean-Charles Moreau, who as head of the "Youth and Popular Culture" office in the French military government and the subsequent French High Commission worked closely with du Rivau, the priest, in contrast, drew his inspiration from a Communist hitchhiker.<sup>756</sup> Since the early 1960s, when BILD's success was assured, such stories have run rampant, and du Rivau has been lionized as a pioneer of French-German cooperation, usually without reference to historical context or precedent. Some have called du Rivau a prophet, but this reverence loses sight of the realities of the postwar landscape as well as of the ambivalence felt toward du Rivau in the early years of his venture.

Du Rivau founded the twin journals *Documents* and *Dokumente* in August 1945 along with the Centre d'Information et de Documentation Économiques et Sociales (Center for Information and for Economic and Social Documentation) (CIDES); this center evolved into the organizations that would come to be known as BILD and the Gesellschaft für übernationale Zusammenarbeit (Society for Supranational Cooperation)

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<sup>756</sup>Michel de Guervel, "Le fondateur Jean du Rivau" *Documents* 6 (1974); René Wintzen, "Le rôle des 'Services d'Éducation populaire' et des initiatives privées (rencontres franco-allemandes d'écrivains, *Documents/Dokumente*)," in *Von der Besatzungszeit zur deutsch-französischen Kooperation*, ed. Joseph Jurt (Freiburg: Rombach, 1993), 217-218; Eitel-Victor Couchoud, "Die Gesellschaft für übernationale Zusammenarbeit," in *Deutschland-Frankreich: Ludwigsburger Beiträge zum Problem der deutsch-französischen Beziehungen*, vol. 3, ed. Deutsch-Französischen Institut Ludwigsburg (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, 1963), 29. See also the following taped interviews: AOFAA AOR 5/1 Interview with Jean Charles Moreau, conducted by Claude Lorentz and Sandrine Einhorn-Heiser (10 March 1997); AOFAA AOR 7/1 Interview with François Bourel, conducted by Claude Lorentz and Sandrine Einhorn-Heiser (21 April 1997).



(GüZ).<sup>757</sup> As an umbrella organization geared toward improving Franco-German relations, BILD arranged lectures, conferences, study tours, scholarships, internships, and charity drives. Catering to a broad social swath, it favored exchanges and what it dubbed encounters—among students, laborers, artists, journalists, mayors—that underscored participants’ similarities of class, profession, confession, or generation despite their national differences. Of prime importance were its journals: *Dokumente* and *Documents*. *Dokumente* began as an informational service, publishing German translations of articles about France appearing in the French press. Its counterpart, *Documents*, translated German articles about Germany for the French public. These translated articles served as a means to peek “on the other side of the wall” as the first issue of each journal proclaimed in August 1945. Both journals gradually began to incorporate original articles on contemporary themes.<sup>758</sup> In addition, BILD operated a Franco-German bookstore, a small publishing imprint, a liaison office to organize Franco-German contacts, and a study bureau frequented by graduate students, who conducted research and compiled dossiers on contemporary issues such as unemployment, refugees, and the Ruhr statutes.<sup>759</sup>

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<sup>757</sup>CIDES was rechristened the Centre d’Études Culturelles, Économiques et Sociales (Center for Cultural, Economic, and Social Studies) (C.E.C.E.S.) in 1946 and was again renamed in 1948 when it became known as BILD. That year, GüZ, which referred to the German half of the organization, became a registered association in Germany. The distinction at the time between BILD and GüZ, however, was by and large a function of their budgets (i.e. for funding sources such as the occupation government and issues of currency and exchange). For the sake of simplicity, and in the interest of following custom, all of these groups will be referred to collectively as BILD.

<sup>758</sup>Verlag und Redaktion der Dokumente, “An unsere Leser!” *Dokumente* no. 6 (1947).

<sup>759</sup>In 1953, for example, three graduate students came from France, two from Germany, and one each from Belgium and the Netherlands. Sometimes, students hailed from farther afield, whether from Spain or the United States.

Scholars have pointed to the fact that BILD's name avoided referencing its Christian (much less its Catholic) ethos or its Franco-German mandate.<sup>760</sup> A religious reference might have perhaps been too limiting. More importantly, in the aftermath of war and the midst of occupation, "Franco-German" might appear too divisive. Instead, the organization favored "international" in the case of BILD and "supranational" in the case of GüZ. But it is clear that BILD began with a French-German sensibility that only proceeded to grow stronger. This style of naming applied equally to the organization's publications. If *Documents* and *Dokumente* did not expressly use the term "Franco-German" in their titles, a quick perusal of their table of contents made their goals clear. *Dokumente*'s first subtitle "Internationale Beiträge zu kulturellen-sozialen-wirtschaftlichen Fragen" (International Contributions to Cultural- Social-Economic Questions) proved noticeably broad—the economic part would quickly be dropped just as it was from C.E.C.E.S.—but the subtitle would eventually turn to "Zweimonatschrift im Dienste überationale Begegnung" (Bimonthly in the Service of Supranational Meeting) a more explicit nod to its transnational mission. *Documents*, subtitled "*Revue mensuelle des questions allemandes*" (Monthly Review of German Questions) not only directly referred to Germany, but in fact, drew on a more nuanced view of Germany than that shared by many in France. Simply pluralizing that bugbear, the German question, indicated a novel approach.

Although BILD claimed to operate independently from the occupation authorities, it received much of its funding from the Directorate of Public Education (later, the

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<sup>760</sup>Marie-Sophie Guisse, "Naissance et Émancipation d'une revue: *Documents, revue des questions allemandes*, des lendemains de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale à nos jours" (master's thesis, Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Rennes, 2002), <http://www.rennes.iep.fr/IMG/pdf/Guisse.pdf>, 8-9; Henri Ménudier, "La revue *Documents* et le BILD. Les articles des années 1945-1955," in *Passerelles et Passeurs: Hommages à Gilbert Krebs et Hansgerd Schulte*, ed. Bernard Bosredon et al. (Asnières: PIA, 2002), 239-240. Ménudier also notes the lack of reference to Europe or politics.

Cultural Affairs Bureau) as well as the Information Bureau of the occupation administration.<sup>761</sup> Moreover, BILD—located at the time in Offenburg—took advantage of the perks of its location in the French zone: property was requisitioned for the premises and staff housing; utilities and even a cook were paid as “occupation costs,” borne by the German population.<sup>762</sup> Offenburg itself was overrun with French soldiers.<sup>763</sup> Nonetheless, BILD retained a large degree of freedom from occupation authorities; some of this independence should be attributed to the complexities of the occupation administration itself, with its overlapping and competing offices that left wiggle room for independent agencies.<sup>764</sup>

BILD’s beginnings mere weeks after the French zone of occupation had been established likewise contributed to the organization’s autonomy. Du Rivau launched the two journals in August 1945 before French occupation policy had been set; in this way

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<sup>761</sup>The Direction de l’Éducation Publique (DEP) was charged not only with education in the zone, but also fine arts, sports and youth, and other cultural affairs. With the creation of the Federal Republic in 1949 (and with it, the onset of German sovereignty and the end of the French military government in Germany), the French occupation administration transformed. The DEP was replaced by the Direction Générale des Affaires Culturelles (DGAC), its staff changed, and its budget was reduced.

<sup>762</sup>Per capita, Germans in the French zone paid more in occupation costs than did their compatriots in the British or American zones. On the economic policy of the French occupiers, see Willis, *The French in Germany*, 109-146. On BILD’s premises, see AOFAA AOR 7 1 Interview with François Bourel (1997) as well as BILD’s budgets sprinkled throughout the files of the AOFAA. The BILD house in Offenburg belonged to a Jewish exile living in Baltimore.

<sup>763</sup>F. Roy Willis notes 2,800 in a town of 18,000. See F. Roy Willis, *France, Germany and the New Europe, 1945-1967*, rev. and enl. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 34. In 1946, 838 apartments and another 603 rooms in Offenburg were requisitioned for the French; in 1953, Eitel-Victor Couchoud of *Documents* still counted about 2,000 French civilians plus 4,000 to 5,000 barracks soldiers in Offenburg. See Eitel-Victor Couchoud, “Une petite ville; monographie d’Offenbourg-en-Bade,” *Documents* no. 2-3 (Feb./March 1953): 214-229.

<sup>764</sup>Occupation officialdom could be divided into the following camps: planners in Paris, the military government of General Pierre Koenig, and the civil government of Emil Laffon. Despite their differences, the question of security always remained at the front and center. On the conflicts within the French occupation administration, see for example, Willis, *The French in Germany*, 22-91; F. Roy Willis, *France, Germany and the New Europe*, 7-53; Alain Lattard, “A propos de l’occupation française en Allemagne 1945/1949: Le conflit Laffon/Koenig” in *Sept décennies de relations franco-allemandes: Hommage à Joseph Rovin*, ed. Gilbert Krebs (Asnières: Institut d’Allemand d’Asnières, 1989), 227-262.

they were independent in both conception and execution.<sup>765</sup> Indeed, du Rivau neglected to contact the occupation authorities about his reviews until the fall of 1946 and was compelled to remind them of his organization several months later.<sup>766</sup> Until then, neither journal fell under the eyes of the censors. Although historian Martin Strickmann faults du Rivau for pandering to the authorities and voluntarily handing his independent reviews to the occupation censors,<sup>767</sup> it is clear that BILD needed the financial support of the authorities to survive. To be sure, until the summer of 1947, *Dokumente* and *Documents* were precisely that—a bundle of individually (and cheaply) bound documents in a folder. Once known to the French administration, BILD received money as needed, whether directly from General Koenig, from the various cultural bureaus, or the Information Bureau; such subsidies by and large were kept off the books. Both this irregularity and extemporization reflected BILD's accounting more generally; an administrator noted that when du Rivau “lacks money in one account, he takes from another, and he counts on Providence to stop the gaps.”<sup>768</sup> This patchwork understanding remained in place until the French High Commission decided in favor of a more systematic arrangement in the

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<sup>765</sup>Jacqueline Plum, “Französische Kulturpolitik in Deutschland 1945-1955. Das Beispiel der Jugendbewegung und privaten Organisationen” (Ph.D. diss. Universität zu Bonn, 2005), 148. The launching of *Dokumente* and *Documents* came on the heels of the first release of a local newspaper in the French zone: the *Mittelrhein Kurier* on 3 August 1945. See Defrance, *La politique culturelle*, 136-138.

<sup>766</sup>The military government authorized C.E.C.E.S. on 23 November 1946, see AOFAA AC 33/2 Morange to Mellac (14 Dec. 1946).

<sup>767</sup>Martin Strickmann, *L'Allemagne nouvelle contre l'Allemagne éternelle: Die französischen Intellektuellen und die deutsch-französische Verständigung 1944-1950. Diskurse, Initiativen, Biografien* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004), 131-132.

<sup>768</sup>AOFAA AC 53/3 Unsigned memo from Haut-Commissariat de la République Française en Allemagne, Cabinet (undated, late July or early August 1951).

early 1950s.<sup>769</sup> Though BILD relied heavily on the French occupation administration for funds, du Rivau was satisfied that the organization operated independently enough that it “was never considered an official foundation of the occupation by the Germans.”<sup>770</sup>

BILD’s openness after the war represented a bold gesture. The pervasive mood in both France and Germany was far less cordial. In August 1945, a poll showed 78% of the French favored breaking up Germany and 71% wished it to become an agrarian nation.<sup>771</sup> Such resentments were not reserved for Germany as a state, but extended to the German people as well. In May 1946, for example, the French occupation government requested that the Sorbonne reserve slots for German students in its *Cours de Civilisation* program for foreign students; this was conceived not as an expression of liberality, but rather as another tool for denazification and reeducation. Even so, this request was deemed premature and ill-advised because many students there “must have retained rather vivid memories of German occupation—the Dutch, Norwegians, Czechs, Serbs, [and] Polish.” A German presence would thus harm “the success of these courses as well as discipline and order at the Sorbonne.”<sup>772</sup> More generally, BILD would have to overcome another obstacle to friendship; by 1947, polls showed the French by and large exhibited

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<sup>769</sup>See, for example, AOFAA AC 53/3 J. Moreau to Directeur Général des Affaires Culturelles (17 Oct. 1951). Eventually, the Federal Republic and the Land of Baden would contribute significant sums to BILD as well. BILD’s finances were messy. While BILD did not seem to misuse any of its own money, it could not always account for its money because there was little in the way of documentation. BILD acted as the bank for many of its events, and as such, requested money from the Services Culturelles; this money would be applied toward other BILD events and activities. BILD continually received requests from the French government for proof its money was spent. See, for example, some of the correspondence in AOFAA AC 302.

<sup>770</sup>AOFAA AC 53/3 Jean du Rivau to M. Rivain (27 Nov. 1950).

<sup>771</sup>Willis, *The French in Germany*, 94.

<sup>772</sup>AN AJ 16 6958. Henri Goy to the Recteur G. Roussy de l’Université de Paris (13 May 1946).

indifference toward Germany.<sup>773</sup> In Germany, attitudes toward the French were more mixed. If Edgar Wolfrum has pointed to the sheer amount of resentment toward the French, F. Roy Willis has convincingly argued that French occupation policy was more criticized in France itself than in Germany.<sup>774</sup> Regardless, many proved open to French influence and culture.

In general, the French zonal administration approved of du Rivau's efforts. General Koenig consistently supported BILD, and over time du Rivau won over everyone from the French Ambassador to the Vatican to High Commissioner André François-Poncet to Konrad Adenauer. Such approval, coupled with BILD's later successes, helped forge du Rivau's reputation as a "pioneer" and a "prophet," but these designations mask the controversies that du Rivau engendered in the years before he became the first French recipient of the *Bundesverdienstkreuz*, a Chevalier in the French Legion of Honor, and the first beneficiary of the Prix de l'Europe in 1956.

Du Rivau was neither one to follow protocol nor to comply with official guidelines; in light of his independent spirit, he happily referred to himself as a *franc-tireur*. If administrators agreed, it was not out of admiration. A Communist member of the French occupation administration pointed out that du Rivau possessed a "certain revolutionary ferment that worries conservatives and traditionalists" within the Church and administration. Indeed, wild rumors flew about du Rivau's loyalties. Some assumed him to be a pawn of the pope; some French administrators, firm believers in *laïcité*,

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<sup>773</sup>Cyril Buffet, "La sage aventure. Les conditions de réconciliation franco-allemande, 1944-1963" in *Deutschland und Frankreich vom Konflikt zur Aussöhnung. Die Gestaltung der westeuropäischen Sicherheit*, ed. Stephen A. Schucker (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2000), 252.

<sup>774</sup>Compare Edgar Wolfrum, "Das Bild der 'düsteren Franzosenzeit.' Alltagsnot, Meinungsklima und Demokratisierungspolitik in der französischen Besatzungszone nach 1945," in *Vom 'Erbfeind' zum 'Erneuer': Aspekte und Motive der französischen Deutschlandpolitik nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, ed. Stefan Martens (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1993); Willis, *The French in Germany*, 83-91.

disapproved of the degree to which the priest pursued a Catholic agenda that touched on the political realm. Others, even in the Church, saw him as an untrustworthy renegade. The conservative Archbishop of Freiburg, for example, prohibited Badisch clergy from participating in one of BILD's conferences for writers. Police reports accused him of inciting the formation of autonomous unions, most notably a Christian-Socialist one, in the French zone.<sup>775</sup> Even his Church superiors sent du Rivau off packing to Brittany in 1949 as the new rector of the Collège Saint-François Xavier in Vannes. To be sure, this office was an honor, but it also was a way for the Church to extricate du Rivau from his profane activities at BILD. Du Rivau took the change in stride and continued to commute to Offenbourg; this became easier once he was moved to the École Sainte-Geneviève in Versailles in 1953.

Although du Rivau steered away from partisan politics, he leaned toward a peculiar blend of conservatism, anti-materialism, and populism, an engaged and religiously-infused politics reminiscent of Marc Sangnier or Emmanuel Mounier.<sup>776</sup> A colleague remembered him as no fan of the Third Republic<sup>777</sup> and he served the Vichy state, but du Rivau would also prove himself to be a champion of the poor and the dispossessed. Born in Le Mans to a well-to-do family, du Rivau joined the Jesuits in

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<sup>775</sup>See correspondence in AOFAA Bade 118, for example, No. 4395/SPJ Confidential note to M. le Gouverneur from Deshayes (10 Sept. 1947); No. 5246/PR Confidential Letter from Administrateur de 4e classe Robert, délégué pour le G.M du cercle (Offenbourg) to Délégué Supérieur pour le Gouvernement Militaire de Bade, Cabinet, Fribourg (10 Sept. 1947); Letter from Inspecteur en Chef Marcel Guerrini to Commissaire de Police Beronneau/Chef de Sécurité de Lahr with police report (24 Oct. 1947).

<sup>776</sup>It is not clear with what party (if any) du Rivau's political sympathies lay. One Communist French official pegged du Rivau as a left-leaning Catholic. Joseph Rovin recalled that du Rivau distrusted him precisely because of his connections to that official and to the French Communist Party more generally. Cf. AOFAA Bade 118 No. 4395/SPJ Confidential note to M. le Gouverneur from Deshayes (10 Sept. 1947); Joseph Rovin, *Mémoires d'un français qui se souvient d'avoir été allemand* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999), 289-290.

<sup>777</sup>François Bourel, "Jean du Rivau," *Documents* no. 1/2 (1970); also reprinted in the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of *Documents* no. 4 (1995): 157-164.

1921. Du Rivau's first job was as chaplain to the Faculté de médecine in Paris. During the war, he served as a lieutenant in an artillery unit of North African soldiers, until he was captured. After a month as a German prisoner, du Rivau managed to escape. He then became a chaplain for the Chantiers de Jeunesse, where he led youth in outdoor projects for the Vichy state. In the final stages of the war, du Rivau returned to the military to serve as a chaplain; in this capacity, he would become the military chaplain of French-occupied Offenburg. Unlike most of the activists in this study, du Rivau showed no interest in things German prior to his stint in Offenburg; indeed, he did not speak German, even after his years at the helm of BILD.

The BILD team in many ways represented a break with past Franco-German associations. The initial staff had not been active members of earlier groups devoted to the Franco-German question; to be sure, most ranged between only 20 and 25 years old and thus had been born after the Great War. In the case of the Germans, their youth meant that they had spent much of their education in Nazi-era schools. In the case of the French, it signaled that most had backgrounds in either Vichy's Chantiers de la Jeunesse (like du Rivau) or the Resistance. Both milieus, of course, had fostered French camaraderie, but neither led intuitively to sympathy for Germany. Such prior affiliations would inform BILD's team-based approach to work, both on the reviews and in their charitable ventures. Moreover, the anti-materialist spirit of the Chantiers permeated BILD's "missionary" work, and its cult of the outdoors would feature clearly in the choice of venue for many of BILD's conferences. The team's core consisted of a handful of French Jesuits along with a number of French and German journalists, educators, and translators. Two representatives of the evangelical church also sat on the board.



On the level of personnel, BILD retained astonishingly few links with past organizations.<sup>778</sup> Indeed, BILD's intersections with members of earlier French-German groups were namely incidental. Maurice Boucher and Frau Benedikt Schmittmann from Cologne were the sole "ordinary members" of BILD's association with a direct affiliation to the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft, Boucher as the editor-in-chief of the *Revue d'Allemagne* and Professor Benedikt Schmittmann as a member of the DFG. Boucher, like former Mayrisch Komitee member (and current CFEAN member) Jean Schlumberger, participated in BILD's Franco-German conference for young writers in the spring of 1953.<sup>779</sup> Such a tremendous break with prior organizations—again in terms of people, not in terms of structure, goals, or rhetoric—reflects the youthful leadership of BILD. Tied to that, and perhaps even more importantly, it shows the desire to begin anew from the ashes of war. As we shall see in the following chapter, other groups retained much tighter links to pre-1945 circles.

Instead of alumni from previous French-German organizations (whether of the Nazi era or the interwar years), du Rivau's French comrades included a number of Jesuits and other young altruists. Luc-Antoine Boumard (1920-1999), the first editor-in-chief of *Documents*, had entered the novitiate before the war, though he was not ordained until 1952. With a year in the Chantiers de Jeunesse and year of forced labor in Germany under his belt, Boumard took over the fledgling *Documents* in the fall of 1946. His editorship of the journal counted toward his service to the Society of Jesus. Jesuit Roger Heckel (1922-1982), an editor of *Documents*, eventually became prominent enough to be

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<sup>778</sup>Unfortunately, subscriber lists whether to *Documents* or *Dokumente* have not been found.

<sup>779</sup>AOFAA AC 302/1a "Lettre aux amis du B.I.L.D." no. 5 (July/Aug. 1953).

next-in-line to be bishop of Strasbourg. Jean Weydert (1920-2006), too, would become a Jesuit and devote most of his life to Catholic activism and European questions.

Many BILD activists explained their involvement as part of their longstanding personal connectedness to the other nation: as émigrés, as Alsatians, as POWS or soldiers stationed abroad, as academics and journalists. Many claimed a background in the Resistance, whether French or German. Alsatians Roger Heckel (1922-1982), Antoine Wiss-Verdier (1919-1974), and Jean Tschieret (1924-2005) shared the advantages of bilingualism (though Alsatian René Wintzen did not), proximity to Offenbourg, and a lifetime—including the war years—between France and Germany. Later BILD activists included émigrés, most famously scholar Joseph Rován (né Rosenthal) and former participants in BILD events, such as Rován, François Bourel, and German student Franz Ansprenger.<sup>780</sup>

If the French half of the team at first namely consisted of Jesuits, the German half was more diverse. Georg Smolka (1901-1982), the first editor of *Dokumente*—and about two decades older than most of his colleagues—had a particularly ambiguous relationship with the Nazi past and no apparent ties to France before joining the group. His connection to the Catholic Church, however, was longstanding; in his youth, Smolka belonged to the Catholic youth movement Quickborn and eventually planned to take up the cloth. Instead, Smolka trained as a historian specializing in the migration of Germans; he carried out a project on German-Americans at the Library of Congress for several years and then turned to *Ostforschung*, geared toward the legitimization of massive territorial gains in the East. As a translator for the North-East German Research Community [Nordost-

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<sup>780</sup>Rován was very involved with BILD in its early years through his work with the French administration. Bourel attended several BILD conferences as a student in Lyon; his first was at Überlingen in 1947. He was surprised to be the only one from his class waiting for the train to Germany. See AOFAA AOR 7/1 Bourel.

Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft], founded in 1933, Smolka continued to contribute to this cause;<sup>781</sup> he additionally penned his own articles for *Ostforschung* journals. Born in Breslau, Smolka's early inclinations faced East not West.

Jakob Laubach (1917-2001), the successor to Smolka and charged with the cultural sections, similarly had been raised in a strongly Catholic milieu, most notably as a member of the youth group Bund Neudeutschland. Editor Alfons Erb (1903-1983) instead shared Smolka's connection to the East. Better known for his later work on German-Polish reconciliation, Erb, editor of the *Herder Korrespondenz*, likewise had no strong connection to France. But it was perhaps a 1949 request from a *Dokumente* reader that eventually inspired Erb to transfer the BILD mission eastward, where, at least in this reader's mind, the legacy of hatred ran deeper.<sup>782</sup>

Comparatively little has been written on the German half of BILD, whether on the team itself or on the review *Dokumente*, which it edited. Although du Rivau's influence was paramount to the group—and other French members like Jean Tschieret likewise shaped the groups' activities—the German members also played an important role. But their willingness to work for Franco-German cooperation is harder to understand than that of the French staff. Much of their enthusiasm must be attributed to a general desire to improve the standing of Germany after the war. Here, then, is a realm ripe for future research. The paucity of scholarship relating to *Dokumente* is likewise difficult to explain, especially given the relatively meager circulation of its counterpart *Documents*.

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<sup>781</sup>On the Nordost-Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft more generally, see Michael Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 70-77. On Smolka, see Christian Handschuh, *Georg Smolka: Von der 'Ostforschung' zum 'Abendland'* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2003); see also, his personnel file and associated correspondence, AOFAA AC 191.

<sup>782</sup>*Dokumente* no. 3 (1949): 277-280. Erb led a Pax Christi tour to Auschwitz in 1964.

Very quickly, *Dokumente* began to flourish. By November 1946, circulation had reached 40,000; the bulk of these readers resided in the French zone. There were, nonetheless, an impressive 9000 readers in the British zone, 7000 in the American zone, 2500 in Berlin, and another 1000 in Austria.<sup>783</sup> According to Martin Strickmann, *Dokumente* had 65,000 readers by 1947-1948.<sup>784</sup> Its French counterpart *Documents*, however, never saw such success, though its exact circulation remains contested. It is clear that the occupation government regularly swept in to cover *Documents*' debts. In the early 1950s, BILD entreated *Documents*' readers to point out the journal to their friends; "*Documents*," it explained repeatedly, "is not enough known!" More privately, BILD noted that, though the French journal's readership was growing, it was still only read in "milieus preoccupied by German questions, milieus which at the moment are still rather circumscribed."<sup>785</sup> The lowest figure, mentioned by Marie-Sophie Guisse, is an initial print run of 2,000, rising to 5,000 in 1949, and generally falling between 3,000 and 4,500.<sup>786</sup> Strickmann cites a circulation of 5000, still, of course, a significantly higher figure than for earlier journals such as the *Revue d'Allemagne*. Martin Kretzschmar claims, in contrast, that whereas *Documents* had 6500 readers by 1946, there were 12,000

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<sup>783</sup> AOFAA AC 33/2. Unsigned overview of C.E.C.E.S. (8 Nov. 1946); Fiche pour le Général Chef des Services de Direction from Sous-Direction des Affaires Culturelles et de l'Information (8 Nov. 1946). Cf. letter of endorsement from Msgr. Picard de la Vacquerie to General Koenig (8 Nov. 1946), which notes 30,000 readers for *Dokumente*.

<sup>784</sup> This figure cannot be confirmed, as the document to which Strickmann referred, was not found in the file he cited. According to Strickmann, *Dokumente* had more readers in the American zone than in the French and British zones combined. See Strickmann, 130.

<sup>785</sup> AOFAA AC 53/3 Note au sujet du financement du B.I.L.D. pour l'exercice 1952.

<sup>786</sup> There is no documentation of the provenance of these figures. See, Guisse, 65.

readers in the first half of the 1950s.<sup>787</sup> At that point, 20% of *Documents* readers were educators, 12% military, and 10% priests; an additional 10% went straight to libraries.<sup>788</sup> But, as we will see, participants in BILD's programs proved far more diverse in their occupational and familial backgrounds than subscribers to its journals.

The journals' nation-centered, but reciprocal format recalled earlier efforts, such as the Weimar-era *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* and its French counterpart, the *Revue d'Allemagne*.<sup>789</sup> Like their predecessors, BILD's reviews asserted their independence from any political party, but unlike earlier efforts, *Documents* and *Dokumente* originally were comprised entirely of previously published texts in translation. In this way, the editors' claim to authentic representation of the other country rang loud and clear; a French reader would see Germany directly from a series of German perspectives and vice versa. Henri Ménudier has underscored the degree to which the first issue of *Documents* revealed only a limited ambition in terms of its goals of serving as "a tool, an information" source, its scope (the Church), and its longevity over the coming months;<sup>790</sup> its German counterpart began with a similarly small mission. Their stated goal was "to peek over the wall" not to tear down the mental wall between France and Germany.

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<sup>787</sup>Cf. Strickmann, 130 and Martin Kretzschmar, "Die Deutschlandbilder der Zeitschriften *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, *Esprit*, und *Documents*, *Revue des questions allemandes*, 1945-1999 (Ph.D. diss., University of Heidelberg, 2002), 43. It is not clear where these statistics were found.

<sup>788</sup>AOFAA AC 302/1b Jahresbericht 1953. Both journals, of course, had the potential to reach much broader audiences in that their subscribers were largely educators, clergy, libraries, etc.

<sup>789</sup>Cf. bilingual journals such as the *Deutsch-Französische Monatshefte/Cahiers franco-allemands* of the 1930s considered in chapter four.

<sup>790</sup>Henri Ménudier, "La revue *Documents* et le BILD. Les articles des années 1945-1955," 245-246.

By its tenth issue, *Dokumente* no longer aimed solely to transmit reports. It now proclaimed the importance of reconnecting ties that had been so long broken—and here it emphasized, not the ties between nation-states, but between peoples and the renewed need for cultural exchange. Several months later, the two journals incorporated original articles; in this way, “foreign authors would speak directly” to readers on contemporary themes on the assumption that “direct contact is so much the more fruitful.”<sup>791</sup> Thus, the journals quickly shifted their role from the unidirectional flow of information to a more interactive, complex conversation between the Germans and the French. By that point, BILD more broadly had accrued a mandate of an even more interactive nature, by fostering contacts not only in the imagined space of the magazine’s readership, but also by sponsoring so-called “encounters” and exchanges among French and German clergy, writers, students, and so forth.

Even once original articles were added to the journals, their very nature as compendia and forums permitted diverse currents to peek through the lines of the texts. As with a sourcebook, the onus of interpretation largely rested on the shoulders of the reader, though, of course, the selections and omissions revealed editorial biases. BILD chose to compile barely mediated documents to promote the formation of educated opinions. In this respect, *Documents* and *Dokumente* placed an enormous amount of trust in their readers to formulate unbiased attitudes on their own, in contrast to, for example, the efforts of the Mayrisch Komitee to regulate the press from above. If the inundations of cultural propaganda in both countries during the war had cultivated distrust, a more “democratic” format made sense. It was nonetheless remarkable to trust French readers in 1945 to think about Germany without prejudice and the reverse.

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<sup>791</sup>Verlag und Redaktion der Dokumente, “An unsere Leser!” *Dokumente* no. 6 (1947).

Under the first four years of occupation, that is, until the founding of the Federal Republic, both *Documents* and *Dokumente* avoided criticizing—or even discussing—policies of the occupation regime. No articles focused on deforestation or the dismantling of German factories. Rather than dealing with contemporary Franco-German relations, these journals ignored them and centered instead on the spiritual consciousness of the two peoples. In other words, the best way to foster understanding and dialogue during an occupation was to pretend the power differential did not exist, to communicate in eternal truths, not the day's woes.

Both *Dokumente* and *Documents*, like BILD more generally, gradually shed their religious thrust, which had initially been the heart of the enterprise. The first few issues of the two journals consisted almost exclusively of pastoral letters, guidelines from bishops, and other Church texts. Soon *Dokumente* broadened its scope to include articles from Emmanuel Mounier's *Esprit*, the Jesuit newspaper *Études* and even the Dominican newspaper *La Vie Intellectuelle*. On occasion, articles even appeared from the University of Notre Dame's *Review of Politics*. A range of Catholic opinions were thus taken into account, alongside an increasing number of secular pieces culled from, among others, *Le Monde*. Conversely, *Documents* originally selected articles from German clerics, and increasingly, from German periodicals including the Catholic *Rheinischer Merkur* and Eugen Kogon's *Frankfurter Hefte* as well as from secular newspapers such as *Die Zeit* and the *Kölnische Rundschau*. By the late 1950s, the religious aspects of BILD had toned down significantly; today, *Dokumente*, *Documents*, and BILD survive, but as wholly secular ventures. In its first decade, however, even as the organization increasingly began

to emphasize its European orientation, BILD and its journals remained at heart a Christian venture.

Only rarely did the journals raise red flags among the administration. Smolka's article on the execution of Alsatian autonomist Joseph Rossé ruffled feathers at the French High Commission for its criticism of French policies on regionalism; Smolka found French insistence on a Germany of the *Länder* hypocritical. The head of the cultural division of the French High Commission, complaining that "on the one hand [Smolka] wants to get hold of French money while on the other hand, to maintain the latitude to attack France," called for his dismissal and later denied funding for the purchase of the BILD premises when BILD did not follow suit.<sup>792</sup> Alsace was a forbidden topic, according to this administrator. Yet both *Documents* and *Dokumente*, as they expanded their purview beyond religious issues, discussed topics as divisive as German rearmament, the Saar, Algeria, and the Oradour trials. On occasion, the French High Commission scolded *Documents* for its supposedly anti-French—or exclusively German perspectives.<sup>793</sup> But most French administrators—particularly those involved with French-German relations—raved about BILD's activities and, on occasion, reminded the editors of *Dokumente* that they exercised the power to help reshape German public opinion by praising or "stigmatizing" various attitudes toward the French.

To its benefit, BILD's agenda remained multifaceted and open; this allowed many to project their own visions of cooperation onto the organization. To the French

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<sup>792</sup>BILD sought to purchase the requisitioned property in which it was housed. AOFAA AC 53/3 no. 359HC/DC Note à l'attention de M. le Directeur Général from Chef du Service du Livre (11 Jan. 1952); AOFAA AC 53/3 HC/DC No. 04860 H. Spitzmuller to Bourel (10 April 1952). For the offending article, see Georg Smolka, "Wofür starb Joseph Rossé?" *Dokumente* no. 6 (1951).

<sup>793</sup>AOFAA AC 302/1b Spitzmuller to du Rivau (6 March 1954); AOFAA AC 302/1b François-Poncet to du Rivau (12 Aug. 1954).



occupation administration, BILD contributed to French *rayonnement culturel*, and both the BILD staff and its allies who endorsed the organization often took the opportunity to remind the French administration of this perspective. Even General Koenig, military governor of the French zone, considered BILD part of France's effort for *pénétration culturelle* in Germany.<sup>794</sup> Indeed, BILD's French staff was included on a list of 200 people "classed as indispensable to the goal pursued by the occupation."<sup>795</sup> Early on, BILD (at the time C.E.C.E.S.) emphasized not only its goals of informing Germans and "reveal[ing] our spiritual and intellectual riches," but also its function as a "necessary counterpart to Nazi propaganda."<sup>796</sup> Later, in the throes of the European movement, BILD spun itself as part of the project for European unity.

### *Looking for a Savior amid the Ruins*

Informed by his faith, du Rivau created a transnational space in which religion would act as the unifying factor. Both *Documents* and *Dokumente* initially culled texts primarily from Catholic sources because through the Church, the mission "to create the unity of all peoples in a spirit of peace and love" could be pursued.<sup>797</sup> Indeed, du Rivau believed the Catholic Church held the power to renew both nations. Defeat represented a moment of opportunity for German Catholics. However painful, it marked the

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<sup>794</sup>See, for example, AOFAA AC 33/2 Msgr. Picard de la Vacquerie to General Koenig (8 Nov. 1946); Note pour M. l'Administrateur Général adjoint pour le G.M.Z.F.O. (Direction de l'Information) from de Varreux, Cabinet Civil (23 Nov. 1946).

<sup>795</sup>AOFAA AC 53/3/Cabinet No. 4435 HC/CAB/INF. P. Rivain to M. Schwartz (2 July 1952).

<sup>796</sup>AOFAA AC 33/2. Unsigned overview of C.E.C.E.S. (8 Nov. 1946).

<sup>797</sup>J. du Rivau, "Zur Einführung!" *Dokumente* no. 1 (Aug. 1945): 2.

“liberation” of the Church from its “oppressors.”<sup>798</sup> The Vatican likewise saw in 1945 the potential to strike out against secularization. Pope Pius XII allegedly told du Rivau that “Germany is the apple of my eye in regard to the future of the Church in Europe.”<sup>799</sup> Thus, although the Church’s influence had been curtailed under the Nazis—for example by the eventual prohibition of Catholic youth groups—the Church retained high hopes that it would soon regain its foothold.<sup>800</sup> Du Rivau claimed to have been personally inspired by a declaration of the pope that “one could not reconstruct the new world without the Church.”<sup>801</sup> While many French occupation administrators did not share this clerically-minded view of reconstruction, even the Communist head of the Bureau of Sports and Youth acknowledged, “we must be realists and recognize that in a land like Baden, where the Catholic Church still constitutes a great power and where religious traditions are still very alive, this policy...could have excellent results. Democratization of the Land of Baden cannot be accomplished against the Churches, nor outside the Churches.”<sup>802</sup>

For the Church to take on the enormous task of spiritual reconstruction, the Church as a body needed strength and unity. Du Rivau, more generally, was suggesting that the heart of the Church needed to steel itself from falling apart at the end of war, for it was the task of the Church to bring renewal to both Germany and France. For the

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<sup>798</sup> AOFAA AC 33/2 Confidential Report, “Les Catholiques d’Allemagne en face de la situation actuelle” (Jan. 1947).

<sup>799</sup> As cited in Richard Gilmore, “France’s Postwar Cultural Policies and Activities in Germany: 1945-1956” (Ph.D. diss., Université de Genève, 1971), 179.

<sup>800</sup> A recent dissertation points to the massive growth of the German Catholic youth movement in the French zone; see, Plum, 83-94.

<sup>801</sup> As cited in Gilmore, 178. The Vatican supported du Rivau’s project. See AOFAA AC 33/2 Jacques Maritain, Ambassade de France près le Saint-Siège to General Koenig (28 Nov. 1947).

<sup>802</sup> AOFAA Bade 118 No. 4395/SPJ Confidential note Deshayes to M. le Gouverneur [10 Sept. (1947)].

Church to be able to pick up the pieces, it was essential for the faithful to believe in it as a body.

To this end, it was essential to view the Church in a positive light. At once seeking to resurrect the Church's reputation in Germany and in France after its compromises during the war, du Rivau tended to emphasize the Church's role in the Resistance in both countries. He thus tried to offer it up as a role model to Christians. The French "myth of the Resistance" (so popular in the 1950s) that he seized upon most likely also turned many toward joining his project.<sup>803</sup> The Church, according to du Rivau, had emerged from the war with dignity, with its reputation largely unscathed. In this way, he echoed many leading voices of the Church in Germany.<sup>804</sup> To French readers, du Rivau explained that the Church was "the sole social body remaining in Germany that energetically fought Nazism" and was therefore in the best position to report accurately on contemporary Germany.<sup>805</sup> BILD pursued no inquiry into the connections between the Church and the Nazi state.<sup>806</sup> It did not dwell on the past.

Because du Rivau relied on the notion of the Catholic Church's incorruptibility, BILD adamantly opposed the concept of collective guilt:

The term 'collective guilt' is itself poorly chosen. It makes it sound as if all Germans are morally culpable, which is evidently not the case. For those in particular who resisted Nazism, like the Catholic Church through its most genuine leaders and representatives, their responsibility is a responsibility of solidarity.

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<sup>803</sup>Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

<sup>804</sup>Mark Edward Ruff, *The Wayward Flock: Catholic Youth in Postwar West Germany, 1945-1965* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 33.

<sup>805</sup>J. du Rivau, "En guise de présentation" *Documents* no. 1 (Aug. 1945): 2.

<sup>806</sup>Guisse, 46-47.

This was indeed a loose definition of resistance. Catholics, according to BILD, “were the first to suffer the excesses of Nazism and to condemn them courageously; they do not understand that one could find them responsible alongside the Nazis.”<sup>807</sup> In this way, du Rivau portrayed Catholics as the first victims and important resisters; Jehovah’s Witnesses, Communists, and Jews remained unmentioned.

It was not surprising that German Catholics would want to cling to the idea of the German Church’s victimhood and opposition to Nazism—especially in light of the widespread broader narrative of German suffering in the war.<sup>808</sup> But it was certainly remarkable for a group of Frenchmen, several of whom claimed a connection to the Resistance, to adopt such a stance in the mid-late 1940s. Du Rivau had in fact unhinged the Nazi past from its national moorings (Germans are bad) to frame the Nazis instead as a specific political movement whose victims included Catholics on both sides of the Rhine. Not only did BILD take this rather radical position on the German Church, it also embraced a more broadly exculpatory view. BILD did not ignore Nazi crimes, but in its first years, it addressed them in sweeping gestures. Germans should, it contended, be penitent as a people, for having shared the same culture and background as Nazi leaders. Germans therefore should be “suppliant,” such vague, all-encompassing penitence, it implied, gave further grounds for absolute forgiveness of the population. Likewise,

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<sup>807</sup> AOFAA AC 33/2 Confidential report. “Les Catholiques d’Allemagne en face de la Situation actuelle” (Jan. 1947).

<sup>808</sup> Robert G. Moeller, “Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims: West German Pasts in the 1950s,” in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 100. This perspective was notably articulated by Catholics in the new Christian-Democratic Union (CDU), who claimed that the Catholic Center Party—and Catholics more generally—had opposed the Nazi regime. See Maria Mitchell, “Materialism and Secularism: CDU Politicians and National Socialism, 1945-1949,” *The Journal of Modern History* 67 (June 1995): 278-308, see especially, 294-300.

BILD did not dwell on the issue of collaboration in France. Through universal penitence—though without the burden of universal guilt—lay the path to salvation.

Historian Martin Strickmann has called du Rivau's faith in the Church's resistance a "mistaken assumption," but du Rivau's language—and his larger project—seem to indicate that a shrewd strategy underlay his stance on the Church.<sup>809</sup> Indeed, just after its first anniversary (when it still operated under the name C.E.C.E.S.), the organization's own overview announced its assault against Nazi propaganda which had "impregnated even Catholic milieus."<sup>810</sup> Standing by the Church did not mean that BILD wore blinkers. Instead, it suggests that BILD recognized (at least to a degree) Catholic collusion with the Nazis—and acknowledged it when advantageous, for example, in trying to secure support from the French administration. But it behooved BILD to present Catholic history rather differently to the broader public.

In fact, du Rivau was quite conscious of the power of memory in shaping the future. At a BILD conference in 1948, du Rivau openly acknowledged the utility of letting go the past. He stated, "They say in a pejorative sense that peoples sometimes have a short memory. Today we congratulate ourselves about that."<sup>811</sup> But, as historian Robert Moeller reminds us, "remembering selectively was not the same as forgetting."<sup>812</sup> This was a strategy to avoid further alienating the Germans living under occupation. At the same time, it was a firm expression of hope for French-German friendship.

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<sup>809</sup>Strickmann, 125.

<sup>810</sup>AOFAA AC 33/2 Unsigned overview of C.E.C.E.S. (8 Nov. 1946).

<sup>811</sup>Jean du Rivau, "Allocution d'Ouverture," *Documents* no. 1 (1949): 8-11; reprinted in *Documents* no. 4 (1995): 19; see also, Strickmann, 146.

<sup>812</sup>Moeller, 83.

As it defined its mandate—both alongside and against officialdom—BILD faced a similar question as the occupiers: Who deserved a voice in the postwar community? The Allied occupiers agreed that Germans should be denazified and reeducated to yield good German citizens. BILD sought to reach out to anyone in the occupied zone or in the broader French and German reading public who showed interest. For BILD, all contact contributed to greater transnational understanding and constituted a sign of good faith. BILD sought to rescue the whole rather than merely work with the saved, and in this way, BILD redefined for itself who should represent the national, and by extension, the binational community. In contrast, the Comité Français d'échanges avec l'Allemagne Nouvelle (see chapter seven), construed active participation in the Franco-German community more restrictively: neither Germans nor French collaborators could join their board. BILD instead embraced everybody to be able to build a new future together.

Rather than fixating on the tortuous past, BILD took on the issues of the present in the desire to move forward. As du Rivau himself explained,

It has nothing to do with going backward . . . We are horrified of the negative . . . The past only serves to illuminate the future, but it is only the future that interests us. It is about constructing, not finding fault.<sup>813</sup>

Accordingly, the gaps in the journals tell us almost as much about BILD's perspective on reconciliation as does the reviews' content. *Dokumente* and *Documents* drew up "an accounting of the motive powers of the times, the forces for good as for evil."<sup>814</sup> These balance sheets, however, reveal a strong sense of presentism and concern for the future. Although BILD did not hesitate to engage in debates about controversial issues—from

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<sup>813</sup>Jean du Rivau, "Au-delà des frontières," *Documents* (Aug. 1947).

<sup>814</sup>G.S., "Zwischenbilanz zur Jahrhundertmitte" *Dokumente* 7, no. 1 (1951): 1-2.

condemning questionable French occupation policies to deliberating over German rearmament, it did not tend to reckon with the past. French officials in Baden understood du Rivau's initiative as he himself had explained it to them: BILD "collaborate[d] in the spiritual and moral rapprochement of populations, in the realm of Christian ideas."<sup>815</sup> In the face of a legacy of hatred, violence, and death, BILD alluded to martyrdom and salvation, but dwelled on a hopeful enthusiasm for a new world to come.

BILD crafted a Franco-German narrative of mutual resistance to the Nazis and Christian duty to embrace the future. By reaching out to Germans without probing the recent past, BILD in effect skipped over truth to get to reconciliation. Despite its mandate to inform and "to peek over the wall" this was at first realized only in a limited capacity. But, in this way, BILD sought to abjure the ghosts of the past and arouse a new spirit of cooperation.<sup>816</sup> The martyrdom of the Church—combined with universal penitence—could thus lead toward forgiveness and reconciliation. And reconciliation stood on the path to redemption. In the end, reconciliation could permit the forging of a joint Franco-German community; BILD would look to youth as the means by which to achieve this salvation.

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<sup>815</sup>AOFAA/ Bade 118/No. 868. Letter from L'Administrateur de 4e classe Robert, Délégué pour le G.M. du Cercle to M. le Délégué Supérieur pour le Gouvernement Militaire de Bade (10 Sept. 1947).

<sup>816</sup>As its mission expanded, BILD only later would begin to adopt a more methodical look backward. By 1950/51, BILD had taken on a much broader mandate—one that went far beyond the original confessional nature of the organization. AOFAA AC 53/3 No. 4889. Note from Jean Moreau to M. le Ministre Plénipotentiaire, Directeur Général des Affaires Culturelles (27 Oct. 1951). BILD and its journals have gradually evolved into a very different organization—and are now infinitely more concerned with the issue of Europe than that of confession.

*Border Crossings: Students, Missionaries, and Refugees*

In light of its rejection of collective guilt, BILD cleared youth of blame and placed its highest hopes in them to emancipate the French and the Germans from the conventions of nationalism and the pattern of hate. For this reason, BILD placed a high priority on exchanges, particularly among youth, so that they could rebuild the Franco-German relationship on a more positive foundation. BILD especially took pains to underscore the innocence of children because “a child is never responsible for his miserable existence. He has borne no weapon, and did not side with one cause or the other. He is a victim. The sorrows he must experience and that almost shattered him are the result of human stupidity.”<sup>817</sup> Between 1946 and 1947, the Western occupying powers had each issued a general amnesty to absolve German youth of guilt. But like official French reeducation policy—itsself more extensive than that of the other Western occupiers—BILD concentrated on reintegrating German youth into the community of democratic nations.<sup>818</sup> BILD, however, tried to achieve this integration through reciprocal efforts.

BILD facilitated Franco-German exchanges, predominantly for individuals to stay with families across the Rhine, but also for paying guests and au pairs; in addition, it placed interns in companies abroad. The exchange program grew such that in 1953 alone, BILD had helped arrange almost 1,000 trips. About 75% of the exchanges in both countries involved students; the remainder included employees/workers, educators, and

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<sup>817</sup> Advertisement, *Documents* no. 4/5 (April/May 1951). See also, AOFAA AC 302/1b Jahresbericht 1953, p. 24.

<sup>818</sup> Still, some in the French administration—in particular Germanist Edmond Vermeil of the French Reeducation Commission—set little store in the possibility of reeducating German teenagers. Vermeil was a former member of the Mayrisch Komitee and the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft as well as a future co-president of the Comité français d’échanges avec l’Allemagne Nouvelle discussed in chapter seven.



interns. Whereas French and German applicants to go abroad numbered about the same, 95% of French requests could be filled versus only 45% of German requests. This discrepancy may in part be reflected by the fact that 1,400 French families at the time were hosting German refugees through another BILD program, discussed below. Less explicable were gender discrepancies: 74% of French travelers through BILD were male, while German travelers were 60% female. As with the exchanges, the intern program functioned unevenly, with far greater success placing French interns in German firms (in particular in the mines of the Ruhr) than the reverse. Indeed, BILD at most managed to place a dozen German interns in French companies, in large part due to French union regulations and the 1953 strike. On occasion, BILD matched pen pals, but this represented an extremely limited effort, especially in comparison to the thousands of French and German pen pals arranged through the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft in the Weimar-era.<sup>819</sup>

In addition to individual exchanges, BILD planned more ambitious educational tours to France and Germany. Themed trips matched, for example, syndicalists, art critics, laborers, or Church leaders with their counterparts across the Rhine. Through guided tours, discussion groups, and simple hobnobbing, participants learned about the other country and its people. Often, the tours revolved around topical themes. A group of vocational students from Roubaix, for example, traveled to mills and factories in a handful of German towns to observe the manufacture of textiles. One tour involved German architects intent on learning about reconstruction efforts in Normandy so that they could apply these techniques to devastated areas at home. Another brought German

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<sup>819</sup> AOFAA AC 298 “Le Bureau international de liaison et de documentation” (1952) and BILD Annual Reports. Statistics were only broken down by gender in 1953. c.f. Chapter two.

workers and entrepreneurs to heavily industrial areas of France to study French manufacturing successes;<sup>820</sup> this tour proved particularly timely in light of Robert Schuman's proposal to pool the production of coal and steel two months thereafter.

BILD differentiated between study tours and the many Franco-German conferences it sponsored each year that similarly brought together groups like students, writers, or economists. Whereas the tours hinged upon the transfer of ideas across borders, the conferences encouraged the exchange of ideas through French-German contact. In 1950 alone, BILD reported that 1200 people had stayed in Offenburg as its guests for various programs and initiatives.<sup>821</sup> But many programs took place elsewhere; BILD's earliest Franco-German encounters occurred at more scenic sites in the Black Forest and along the shores of the Rhine and Lake Constance. Franz Ansprenger, a Berlin university student who hitchhiked to the 1947 Franco-German meeting at Überlingen, recalled few details about the content of the discussions he had. For him, what resonated—and indeed later compelled him to join the BILD team—was “the fact of singing together, of bathing in Lake Constance, of eating . . . and drinking together . . . . The bonds of friendship remain . . . . These constitute for me the cornerstone of the great edifice formed of Franco-German rapprochements, European collaboration, and the democracy of our part of Germany.”<sup>822</sup>

The content, of course, did matter and further connected BILD to earlier efforts. In his opening speech at BILD's Franco-German Writers' Conference in Lahr, du Rivau

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<sup>820</sup>Jean Tschieret, “Internationale Treffen,” *Dokumente* no. 2 (March 1950): 189-190.

<sup>821</sup>AOFAA AC 53/3. Report on BILD from Jean du Rivau to M. le Haut Commissaire de la République Française en Allemagne (14 Feb. 1950).

<sup>822</sup>Franz Ansprenger, “Qu'est-ce qui c'est passé à Überlingen?” *Documents* no. 4 (Oct. 1985): 75-76.

called for the end of borders. He explained, “Just as an evolution took place from clan consciousness to tribal consciousness, from tribal consciousness to national consciousness, we must arrive at the idea of a human community that overcomes border-ideology and is realized above and beyond the borders.”<sup>823</sup> Thus, at BILD’s first specifically Franco-German conference in the summer of 1947, du Rivau made sure to underscore the group’s transnational purpose. A conference for sociologists and economists in Lahr followed the next month, along with a conference for students in Überlingen. At a subsequent meeting at the scenic abbey at Royaumont, du Rivau clarified his stance on borders and identities. His argument could have come directly from the lips of the DFG’s Otto Grautoff:

I would therefore like to dispel a misunderstanding right away. You are Germans, we are French . . . . It is not about the French becoming Germans or the Germans becoming like the French . . . . We are what we are, the one and the other. It is not about changing, it is only about working together and wanting to work together for the common good.<sup>824</sup>

Crossing, and even overcoming, borders did not signify some sort of European assimilation. Otto Grautoff’s notion of a “Franco-German unity brew” was no more welcome in du Rivau’s postwar Europe than it had been in the Weimar era. Such a vision of French-German cooperation entailed little more than the rebottling of old wine, though the nationalist bouquet had been toned down a notch. Here was a basically essentialist view of national identity and a strong faith in national difference. The key distinction involved the leap from the Weimar-era concept of “understanding” to a more active priority of “working together.” “Working together” clearly fit with BILD’s scheme of

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<sup>823</sup>Jean du Rivau, “Au-delà des frontières,” *Documents* (Aug. 1947); reprinted in *Documents* no. 4 (1995): 16-18.

<sup>824</sup>*Documents* no. 1 (1949): 8-11. The full quotation also appears in Strickmann, 146.

encounters; it also would dovetail with the growing international conversation about European unity.

Some conferences suffused an emphasis on the transnational—and the European—with the religious. At Überlingen (1949), writers discussed contemporary Europe in light of such themes as “Christ in the World of Today,” “Christ and Science,” and “Christ and Politics.” At Maria Rosenberg, for the second convention on pastoral care, 40 German and 40 French priests discussed the need for rapprochement and the construction of a new Europe grounded in Franco-German friendship.<sup>825</sup> At another convention, Catholic journalists discussed whether Catholics had a special role in building a united Europe.<sup>826</sup>

BILD’s conference program also included specifically “confessional encounters,” which routinely brought together church officials and youth from both sides of the Rhine to reinforce the message of Christian brotherhood.<sup>827</sup> From pilgrimages to Chartres, Maria-Laach, Birnau, and Le Puy to conferences for clerics to discuss pastoral work, the organization made sure to inflect internationalism with religious experience. Seeking to attract participants to a Franco-German youth conference, *Dokumente* exhorted:

As Christians, we are bound in particular ways to work with all men of good will on this rapprochement of all territories . . . Faith in the unity of mankind in Christ means that cultural, political, and social unity, which is only a temporal projection on the level of history, must become from now on an open and concrete unity. Therefore we reject all divisions and the formation of all closed and aggressive blocs. All strength must be collected against these so that the Christian mission of people and society will be united.<sup>828</sup>

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<sup>825</sup>See *Dokumente* no. 5 (1949).

<sup>826</sup>Mario v. Galli, “Internationale Tagung Katholischer Publizisten,” *Dokumente* no. 4 (1951): 360-362.

<sup>827</sup>By the late 1950s, the religious aspects of *Dokumente* and *Documents* had toned down significantly.

<sup>828</sup>J. Bernard, “Unsere Studententreffen,” *Dokumente* no. 3 (May 1950): 282-283.

Reaching not only across national but also Christian confessional lines, the organization thus implied the possibility of a heaven on earth, through the unity of all peoples. BILD had the potential to bring disparate societies into contact, teach them to understand one another, and unite them in their love of God. Such unity could be achieved through faith, effort, and will. *Dokumente* announced that the creation of a European humanity would serve as the “fulfillment” of “Western Christendom”—and it was precisely this notion of the “spirit of Western Christendom” that resonated with local clergy.<sup>829</sup> Due to their prominence within local communities, church officials—like journalists and educators—could emerge as mouthpieces for BILD after having participated in an encounter.

Like exchanges and encounters, Christian charity could help draw people together; moreover, charity served as a clear way to incorporate non-elites into the movement for cooperation. Beginning in 1950, BILD dispatched French youth on “missions” to refugee camps in Northern Germany. Each summer and each Christmas, international teams composed primarily of French 18 to 30-year-olds (but including many Belgians, some Germans and even the odd Japanese or Vietnamese youth) flocked to the barracks of Kiel, Flensburg, and elsewhere to generate hope among the expellees from the East. The missionaries worked, ate, and slept among the refugees, so BILD made sure to warn potential participants that camp life would be arduous. Nonetheless some workers spent their entire annual vacations in the camps, and all missionaries had to pay to participate; anywhere from 100 to 150 did so each year. In what was at once a job at

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<sup>829</sup>Georg Smolka, “Die Dokumente,” *Dokumente* no. 2 (March 1950). For one invocation of BILD’s mission for “Western Christendom” see AOFAA AC 195 7604. Correspondence between Generalvikar Burger, Freiburg (17 May 1950) and the Stadtinspektor of Offenburg (23 Jan. 1951).

modern materialism and a reminder of the first Christmas, BILD told winter volunteers that their reward would be a “real Christmas, made of real joy and real poverty.”<sup>830</sup>

The missions comprised three different strands that BILD tried hard to braid. Most visibly, this was a charitable venture. Second, like BILD’s other efforts, the missions revolved around the idea of building bridges between France and Germany. Missionaries spent most of their time visiting with camp residents, whether informally or more formally through children’s activities, festivities, or discussion groups with youth on social, moral, and sexual issues. In this way, the French visitors and the displaced German “hosts” could each learn about the other’s culture, mores, and opinions and befriend one another. In a similar spirit of fostering knowledge and camaraderie, female missionaries helped refugee women cook, clean, and babysit, while male missionaries joined the German men in making repairs, chopping wood, and working in the fields. These shared activities accentuated generational connections and gendered codes that cut across national lines. Individual relationships, moreover, were nurtured over time; returning missionaries made sure to visit former residents of the camps in their new homes to demonstrate that personal ties mattered as much as the charity itself. Finally, if these missions revolved around the notion of fraternity, they were grounded in a far more spiritual sense of fraternity than any of BILD’s other ventures in the 1950s.

Even rhetorically, BILD called attention to the religious underpinnings of its charitable action. BILD, for example, relied heavily upon Christian language merely to describe the naming of its charitable ventures: it had “baptized them ‘missions.’”<sup>831</sup> Yet,

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<sup>830</sup> AOFAA AC 302/1a Lettre aux amis du BILD, no. 2 (Jan. 1953).

<sup>831</sup> AOFAA AC 53/3 Note sur l’envoi par le B.I.L.D. de groupes de jeunes dans les camps de réfugiés de l’Allemagne du Nord [1952].

organizers soon acknowledged that the term “mission” led to misunderstandings because it “risks [. . .] implying an idea of proselytism that we do not have.”<sup>832</sup> In his effort to distance his project from conversion efforts, organizer Jean Tschieret (1924-2005), who had previously headed a German youth hostel, nonetheless continued to deem them missions; he did not instead invoke the more neutral term “service” as had, for example, the German Evangelical Committee for Service to Israel three years earlier.<sup>833</sup> If the goal of BILD’s missions was not proselytizing *per se*, it certainly was the revival of the Christian—and preferably the Catholic—faith. BILD promoted “enlivening existing Christendoms” whether Catholic or Protestant, but it expressed particular concern for Catholic expellees, isolated in the traditionally Protestant North.<sup>834</sup> Although Protestants participated in the charitable action, each team always included a Catholic priest to conduct daily mass. The relief effort also temporarily replaced camp priests with French counterparts so that they could take a six-week vacation from their exhausting duties. A cheerful confessional presence could contribute, BILD hoped, to a renewed sense of spirituality in the camps.<sup>835</sup> Moreover, such action would invigorate the Catholicism of the missionaries themselves.

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<sup>832</sup> AOFAA AC 302/1a Lettre aux amis du BILD, no. 2 (Jan. 1953).

<sup>833</sup> For a discussion of Protestant missionary work among Jews, see Matthew D. Hockenos, *A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 153-170.

<sup>834</sup> AOFAA AC 302/1b Lettre aux amis de BILD, no. 9 (Sept/Oct 1954). Bourel even organized a conference on the problem of Catholic refugees in Protestant-dominated areas, see AOFAA AC 53/3 letter from Bourel to M. LeTellier (21 Oct. 1953).

<sup>835</sup> BILD’s largely lay efforts can both be compared and contrasted to the long tradition of social activism among French priests from late 19<sup>th</sup> century Social Catholicism to the post-1945 activities of worker-priests. The case of the worker-priests, contemporary to BILD’s missions, is particularly of interest. Their work alongside factory laborers became so controversial that French bishops instructed the worker-priests to cease their efforts in 1954. Apparently, French Church leaders found these priests’ elbow-rubbing with

By focusing on the spiritual aspects of the missions, BILD President François Bourel (1924-2004) and Tschieret hoped to conquer potential temptations in the camps that ranged from materialism to nationalism to apathy. The main goal of the missions, they argued, was to help refugees “forget their hardheartedness, their love of prosperity, and their bitterness even if only for a few hours; overcome what separates them, especially the differences of ‘national’ mentalities; learn to see above all what unites them: the love of Christ that exceeds all knowledge [Erkenntnis].” In this way, the two organizers managed to link all three aspects of the missions. But they emphasized that the missionaries did not provide material aid—thus discounting the notion of humanitarian work altogether—and indeed argued that “its goal is much more the testimony for the kingdom of God.”<sup>836</sup> By 1955, the missions had proved successful enough to launch a reciprocal venture in France. BILD now called upon German volunteers to travel in so-called “gypsy wagons” to the impoverished bedroom communities of Parisian workers. Ruins of churches in the Marne Valley attested to its once religious atmosphere; German youth were to renew that spirit to build a “living Church” in the heart of France.<sup>837</sup> By underscoring moral rather than material succor in both Germany and France, Bourel and Tschieret battled the spirit of materialism as they tried to construct a new Franco-German community of faith.

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Communists more threatening than BILD’s contacts with the Germans. See J.E. Flower, “Forerunners of the Worker-Priests,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 2, no. 4 (1967): 183-199; Oscar L. Arnal, “A Missionary ‘Main Tendue’ toward French Communists: The ‘Témoignages’ of the Worker-Priests, 1943-1954,” *French Historical Studies* 13, no. 4 (1984): 529-556.

<sup>836</sup> AOFAA AC 302/1b “Mission in den Flüchtlingslagern von Schleswig-Holstein” signed François Bourel and Jean Tschieret (25 April 1955).

<sup>837</sup> AOFAA AC 302/1b Missionen in Frankreich 1955.



As a counterpoint to the missions, displaced German children were invited for summer homestays in France beginning in 1951. These seven to twelve-year-old children, many of whom had lost at least one parent in the war, had languished in refugee camps for most of their lives. BILD framed the increasingly successful program in the language of Christian mercy and charity.<sup>838</sup> In 1953 alone, some 1400 refugee children were put up in France, though four times as many French families had volunteered to host.<sup>839</sup> By focusing on the innocence of children and the sanctity of the family, a step would be taken toward integrating those “expelled” into the Christian family of Europeans.

The success of the *Flüchtlingsaktion*, however, was not assured. The Minister in charge of *Heimatvertriebene* in Schleswig-Holstein underscored the degree to which the work of BILD was “exemplary” for its success and sheer extent, but more particularly in light of the initial risk: “Coming six years after a terrible war, the call that you issued at the beginning of 1951 to welcome German refugee children into French families represented—I understand it perfectly—a gamble.”<sup>840</sup> Whereas BILD’s Bourel suggested the program arose from “completely natural” charitable sentiments to aid children, the German official rightly pointed out that there was nothing natural about promoting Franco-German friendship in the early 1950s when resentments still ran high. Indeed,

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<sup>838</sup> Jean Tschieret, “Quatre Cents Enfants Réfugiés Découvrent la France,” *Documents* no.12 (Dec. 1951): 1304-1308.

<sup>839</sup> AOFAA AC 302/1b 1063 Note from Geneviève Carrez to M. le Ministre Plénipotentiaire, Directeur Générale des Affaires Culturelles (18 Feb. 1954). cf. A recent director of BILD incorrectly claimed 1500 refugees came to France in 1950. This program, however, did not begin until 1951. Moreover, BILD’s own statistics for later years as well as those kept by the French High Commission (as well as those in the press) never refer to a figure of 1500. See Henri Ménudier, “La revue Documents et le BILD,” 252.

<sup>840</sup> AOFAA AC 53/3 Ministre du Travail des Questions Sociales et des Expulsés pour le Land Schleswig-Holstein to Président, Kiel-Wik (7 Sept. 1952).

after the foundation of the Federal Republic, the French Foreign Ministry had responded to requests for exchanges by German mayors with caution because it feared French hostility at the local level.<sup>841</sup> Many BILD host families in fact reported that they were “‘taken for dreamers or fools,’” and many more noted neighbors’ initial disapproval of lodging German children. Had assisting refugee children been the only thrust of the effort, BILD duly acknowledged, it “‘could have chosen an easier way than through France.’”<sup>842</sup>

French officials subsidized BILD’s work with refugees from the East for several reasons. Above all, the occupation administration and later the High Commission had helped fund BILD projects since the French government became aware of its existence. BILD was classed with a range of independent French-German associations and clubs likewise promoted by the administration as part of the cultural bureau’s mandate. In fact, BILD received more financial support from the French cultural administration in Germany (DGAC) between 1950 and 1954 than any other group.<sup>843</sup> The refugee program in particular could bring sorely needed good press to the French in Germany; much of the High Commission’s interest seemed to stem from the positive impact of BILD’s program. Indeed, the refugee program seemed to invite photo opportunities. High Commissioner André François-Poncet, for example, volunteered his private plane to help fly refugees in Berlin over zonal borders to France.<sup>844</sup> Finally, a whiff of Cold War sensibilities surfaced

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<sup>841</sup> Antoine Vion, “Europe from the Bottom Up: Town Twinning in France during the Cold War,” *Contemporary European History* II, no. 4 (2002): 625.

<sup>842</sup> AOFAA AC 302/1a Jahresbericht BILD 1952.

<sup>843</sup> Plum, 198.

<sup>844</sup> AOFAA Bade 676 Clipping No. 7 140. “Junge Boten des Friedens: Über 1400 deutsche Flüchtlingskinder aus Frankreich zurückgekehrt,” *Badische Zeitung* (7 Sept. 1953).

in official correspondence about funding BILD. An administrator noted, “In fact, the International Bureau of Liaison and Documentation, which works in close cooperation with my Services, sets a fair price on and attaches considerable importance to the development of France’s contacts not only with Germans from the Western zones, but also those compelled by events to leave eastern Germany, and who perhaps more than any others, need to be informed of our country’s position regarding German problems.”<sup>845</sup> Yet BILD itself did not make a point of discussing the Cold War in these years; instead it focused on the French-German relationship and Christian duty to the unfortunate.

Even as BILD harbored broader intentions of fostering Franco-German fellowship, the refugee campaign was framed primarily as a charitable mission. Though the campaign made frequent mention of the international basis of the effort, BILD tended to temper the specific allusions to Germany in favor of a more universal message. BILD advertised in over 50 French newspapers that like “poverty, charity knows no borders.” Participants assumed their efforts would be considered in a “universal, human, and religious context,”<sup>846</sup> though not surprisingly, neighbors did not always interpret their gesture through this lens. Hosting a German child who had been expelled from the East, in BILD’s perspective, represented a timeless, apolitical gesture of humanity that superseded temporal concerns such as the Cold War or old grudges against Germany.

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<sup>845</sup>AOFAA AC 163/17. No. Hc/Dc/Ri/5.251. Mission d’études dans les camps de Réfugiés du Nord de l’Allemagne par le B.I.L.D. d’Offenbourg. DGAC Mainz to M. le Directeur Général des Affaires Administratives et Budgétaires/ Services Financiers/Direction du Budget et de l’Ordonnancement, Baden-Baden [unsigned, undated, 1950].

<sup>846</sup>AOFAA AC 53/3 Note sur le Rencontre organisé par le B.I.L.D. à Kiel du 17 au 23 août 1952.

If the campaign was loath to dwell on the burdens of the past and present, this did not prevent it from suggesting the possibility of a brighter future through the force of good will. Privately, in a request for government support, BILD addressed the enormous challenge posed to Europe by the refugee crisis. BILD could smooth the way to resettlement through its public relations work. Its appeal for funds hinged on the albatross of public opinion: “If it is true that one of the remedies resides in intra-European emigration, it is clear that the ex-enemy countries of Germany are not ready to receive Germans, even refugees.” Hinting that its refugee program and painstaking work to win over public sentiment dovetailed with France’s concrete political needs, BILD laid out the broader stakes. “The peace of Europe was in play,” it averred.<sup>847</sup> BILD thus inscribed the refugee campaign into the effort to build a new Europe.

To the public, BILD stressed a different facet of this new Europe. BILD seamlessly reshaped Christian notions of universalism into notions of supranationalism. Organizers contended that the *Flüchtlingsaktion* served as “a way to awaken the love of the individual for his neighbor on the other side of the border, for his fellow brother in the Christian sense, for his fellow sufferer in the European sense.”<sup>848</sup> The concepts of Christian fellowship and the fellowship of Europeanness—of having survived the war and its aftermath however painfully—thus became inextricably linked; the Christian term *Leidensgenossen* [fellow sufferers] defined what it meant to be European. Such lofty ideals took on a practical twist: “only our love will generate the ‘European *Bürgersinn*,’ which is indispensable for the durability of a European federation.” According to this

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<sup>847</sup> AOFAA AC 53/3 Jean du Rivau to M. le Conseiller Peyrefitte (24 June 1952).

<sup>848</sup> AOFAA AC 302/1a Jahresbericht BILD 1952.

logic, hosting a German refugee was a pragmatic step on the way to a new, more unified Europe.

In addition to casting the French and Germans as fellow sufferers, BILD's campaign took the far more daring step of painting the Germans as victims. According to BILD's campaign rhetoric, "our conscience as men, as Christians forbids us from remaining indifferent before the heart-rending distress of these victims of hate and its consequence."<sup>849</sup> Hosting refugees would thus help consolidate the community of victims, French and German. BILD's plea was a triumph. By accentuating the importance of Christian duty and humanitarian principles, BILD managed to arouse French sympathy for Germans. Indeed, compassion came from all corners: 26% of hosts had white collar backgrounds, 20% were farmers, 18% were craftsmen and shopkeepers, 12% were in the "liberal professions," and 9% each were civil servants and workers.<sup>850</sup> Such diverse backgrounds, and above all the surprisingly high participation rate among non-elites, marked a decided shift away from earlier Franco-German groups' hold on the educated classes alone. Hosts, moreover, hailed from all parts of France; 43 convoys carried the children from the train station in Strasbourg toward Lille in the North, Brest in the West, Pau in the Southwest, and Nice in the Southeast.<sup>851</sup>

The desire to forgive Germany for the crimes of the past or the wish to avoid future war motivated many French families to host a German refugee. Some cited experiences in forced labor service, in POW camps, or even in concentration camps.

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<sup>849</sup>AOFAA AC 302/1a 1952 Brochure "Les Réfugiés de l'Est."

<sup>850</sup>AOFAA AC 302/1a Jahresbericht BILD 1952. Another 6% had no employment or were retired.

<sup>851</sup>For help with logistical issues and other support in this effort, BILD turned to Secours Catholique, the Red Cross, and some Protestant charities.

“M.T.” from Montauban, for example, explained, ““my personal intentions in receiving this child were those of Christian forgiveness to Germany. I am the mother of a 20-year-old son who died of exhaustion at Buchenwald because of blows, inhuman labor, and undernourishment pushed to the extreme.””<sup>852</sup> Housing a German guest represented a test of character. Others referred to their experiences in the Resistance as the springboard for their engagement; hosting a refugee represented another step in the march to a better future. Such stories attested to the desire for reconciliation as a form of Christian forgiveness (or pacifism) rather than as an avowedly political gesture. But if many attributed their participation to a desire to stop the cycle of war, none claimed to be atoning for French misdeeds during the war.

Published letters about the program in *Documents* and *Dokumente*—as well as in BILD brochures—evoke the organizations’ aspirations to foster a transnational moral consciousness. A woman who had encountered local opposition when deciding to host a refugee, found to her great delight that ““this child worked miracles.”” Amazed, the woman reported how little Ursula’s departure at the end of the summer caused her greatest foe to cry.<sup>853</sup> Similarly, a wounded French veteran and former POW described how Barbara had conquered the hearts of even his most anti-German neighbors. Devoted to his German “daughter,” this veteran—whose patriotism was implicit—began to question his own past:

Our little Barbara’s father died in captivity in Belgrade. I’m terrified to think he could’ve been among the Germans I killed at Rethel on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 1940! How many men like him there were among them. Never again

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<sup>852</sup>AOFAA AC 302 Report “établi par le Secretariat du B.I.L.D. d’Offenbourg, au sujet du séjour en France de jeunes réfugiés, au cours de l’été 1951” Signed Tschieret (1 Nov. 1951).

<sup>853</sup>Jean Tschieret, “Neuf cents enfants et leurs hôtes,”*Documents* no. 1 (Jan. 1953), unnumbered supplement.

such horror! I am wholeheartedly with you on the work you have taken on for Peace. It's incredible how effective it is.<sup>854</sup>

The voices of participants thus appealed to readers' desires for future peace and demonstrated the practical ways in which hosting a refugee led to reversals of the heart within the family and beyond. Ideally, both the German and the French families "learned to see the human being first, and to consider his nationality only as one of his attributes."<sup>855</sup> Such stories—and there were many—played on French pacifist sensibilities.

Willingness—and even enthusiasm—to host sometimes went hand-in-hand with reticence to admit any predilection for Germany. A host in Strasbourg, for example, underscored his family's Christian humanitarianism, while clearly distancing himself from Germany. "S." explained, "The presence of a German little girl did not pass unnoticed, especially in Alsace, where the Franco-German question arises with great intensity. Several people showed their disapproval, although they could not reproach us for being Germanophiles (my wife is from the Ardèche and I am a French civil servant). We were only anxious to show that Christian mutual aid does not have to pay attention to nationalities."<sup>856</sup> This host's stress on humanitarianism demonstrates one of the strengths of BILD's program for Franco-German understanding, namely framing the exchange program in universalist terms that bridged national differences and allowed BILD to fulfill its more narrow mission.

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<sup>854</sup>AOFAA AC 302/1a Jahresbericht 1953; AOFAA AC 302/1b Jean Tschieret, *Fraternité sans Passeport* 1953. In the annual report, the girl is referred to as Berta.

<sup>855</sup>AOFAA AC 302/1a Jahresbericht 1953.

<sup>856</sup>AOFAA AC 302 Report "établi par le Secretariat du B.I.L.D. d'Offenbourg, au sujet du séjour en France, de jeunes réfugiés, au cours de l'été 1951" Signed Tschieret (1 Nov. 1951).

This insistence on universalism, however, did not guarantee happy results. Indeed, BILD did not shy away from revealing tensions created by the refugee campaign—from mundane homesickness to the occasional emergency. About 3% of the children and hosts registered formal complaints to BILD, most due to homesickness or the refugee's unrefined manners. On occasion, such complaints targeted not the individual child, but German society more broadly. One host, for example, grumbled, "Gretel is very proud, she refuses to learn French, and at every opportunity makes disparaging allusions....I find it abnormal that after such a cruel war, they have not changed the schooling on the other side of the Rhine."<sup>857</sup> Some complaints were laden with stereotypes, such as one about a German boy "who only likes brutal games." Rather incongruously, a few French hosts voiced their disappointment that the refugees, though malnourished, arrived in a better condition than expected. BILD's advertisements had thus been misleading; hosts' good deeds turned out to be less extravagant and their beneficence less appreciated than they had hoped.<sup>858</sup> Finally, a few children protested that they had been exploited by their hosts and put to work as farmhands.

A couple of more serious cases merit mention. One involved a French boy sent to Germany on the corollary program discussed below. The instant Michel set foot in the host family's house, he had a severe panic attack and was sent home. His parents, unfazed, attributed his breakdown to the fact that "Our poor Michel still lives with the terror that the Germans inspired in the Vosges in 1944!"<sup>859</sup> Why they chose to send their son alone across the Rhine for the summer went unmentioned. The other disaster was the

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<sup>857</sup> AOFAA AC 302/1a Jahresbericht 1953.

<sup>858</sup> AOFAA AC 302/1b Jean Tschieret, *Fraternité sans Passeport* 1953.

<sup>859</sup> AOFAA AC 302/1b *Fraternité sans Passeport* 1954.



tragically ironic case of Wolf Preissner. Nine-year-old Wolf suffered critical wounds to his stomach and legs and had to have his right arm amputated because an old German mine exploded when he was playing in his host family's yard in Compiègne. BILD managed this tragedy gracefully with an impassioned, but far from maudlin plea for long-term peace.<sup>860</sup> What could have erupted into a public relations disaster for BILD in fact roused the sympathies of the town for the child and served as a reminder to both nations of the fruitlessness of war. Even Wolf himself remained a life-long friend of BILD; it was he who penned Tschieret's obituary in *Dokumente* in 2006.

All told, this charitable mission, framed around the notion of "Christian duty" was a success story. The achievements of the *Flüchtlingsaktion* can be measured in several ways. At an anecdotal level were stories such as that of the refugee Heinz S., who gained 11 kilos during his summer in France.<sup>861</sup> More telling, perhaps, was the fact that so many host families invited their guests back summer after summer. By 1954, all 700 children were returning for their second or third visit to their surrogate families in France.<sup>862</sup> In one year alone, twenty families requested formal adoption.<sup>863</sup> And every year, far more French families requested a German guest than the program could accommodate. At an

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<sup>860</sup>See, for example, AOFAA AC 53 Draft of telegram from BILD to Bremen Consulate; AOFAA AC 298 "Le Bureau international de liaison et de documentation." AOFAA AC 302 b Newspaper clipping *Freie Presse*, Bielefeld (30 Oct. 1952).

<sup>861</sup>AOFAA Bade 676. Press cutting no. 205. "1400 Flüchtlingskinder aus Frankreich zurück," *Offenburger Tageblatt* (5 Sept. 1953).

<sup>862</sup>This figure represents a sharp downturn—a full 50%—in the number of participants from the previous year's effort. Because of budget cuts, in particular due to the withdrawal of the French High Commission from Germany, BILD decided only to include children who had been invited back (and had not grown too old). The program cuts can also be attributed to an emergency action taken by BILD to send 200 young victims from the Passau flood to France that summer. Finally, BILD subtracted from its *Flüchtlingsaktion* fund to be able to launch a new reciprocal venture to send French children to Germany (see below).

<sup>863</sup>Jean Tschieret, "Quatre Cents Enfants Réfugiés Découvrent la France," *Documents* no. 12 (Dec. 1951): 1304-1308. In 1951, 36 % of the refugees had lost at least one parent.

organizational level, BILD managed to extend its fingers beyond the French zone into the farthest reaches of West Germany, as well as into towns throughout France. BILD also deepened its influence through this program; host families in the North of France became so intimate that they founded the Committee of the Friends of BILD in Lille to help BILD with outreach and the coordination of future efforts. Pleased with the results of its programs, BILD copiloted the Rural Establishment Project to resettle German refugee families on abandoned French farms and launched another project to send French children to Germany.<sup>864</sup>

Whereas the children's campaign was a resounding success in France, the reciprocal effort in Germany did not find equal purchase. In the fourth year of the *Flüchtlingsaktion*—a year that BILD had coordinated an emergency action to send 200 young victims of the flood in Passau to stay with French families in addition to its regular program—BILD experimented with a relatively modest campaign in Germany. Germans in Baden-Württemberg were summoned to host 300 French children, whose parents could not afford to take them on vacation. In Baden, this call was met with a “wall of silence.” In dismay, Tschieret scolded the French occupation authorities for having caused such rancor in the region.<sup>865</sup> So few volunteered to host in the French zone that BILD felt compelled to expand the campaign to Bavaria, which as we have seen, was not historically a hotbed of efforts for Franco-German cooperation. In the end, over 1500

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<sup>864</sup>On the farm program, see AOFAA AC 302 “Etat des Prévisions d’activité du BILD d’Offenburg pour le 2e semestre 1953” (1 July 1953); AOFAA AC 302/1a “Lettre aux amis du B.I.L.D.” no. 3 (March 1953). This program was undertaken together with Secours Catholique, the World Council of Churches, and the Lutheran World Federation; du Rivau sat on its steering committee and Tschieret served as its Secretary General.

<sup>865</sup>AOFAA Bade 676 No. 779 J. Lottin to M. le Délégué Provincial, Cabinet, Offenburg (4 June 1954); AOFAA AC 302/1b 00248 Tschieret to Spitzmuller (12 June 1954).

Bavarians offered to host, so that 32 children were placed in Baden, 16 in Württemberg, 25 in Westphalia, and 247 in Bavaria; almost all of the hosts were Catholic.<sup>866</sup> Unlike the missionary work, however, the broader children's campaign did not have a Catholic thrust; approximately 1/3 of the German refugee children sent to France, for example, were Protestant.

By focusing on the young—whether exchange students, French missionaries, German refugees, or children—BILD sought to banish traditional hatreds before they took hold, plant a healthy curiosity about neighbors across the border, energize the movement for cooperation and grant it longevity. As an advertisement for hosting French children asked, “How can Europe arise if people do not personally and privately come closer to each other?”<sup>867</sup> Homestays for students and refugees encouraged them to consider Germans and French as part of the same family of Europeans. Not only did the missionary movement help shape this community of Europeans, but it sought to bring them into the Christian fold. BILD understood both communities as necessary pillars of the contemporary moral universe. Moreover, by focusing on children—whom BILD deemed innocent—BILD managed to focus its energies on building a community of Europeans not saddled with the burdens of the past. With youth, there was no need for rehabilitation.

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<sup>866</sup> AOFAA AC 302/1b. *Fraternité sans passeport* 1954. Bavarians' eagerness to participate may in part be explained by BILD's efforts to aid the residents of Passau.

<sup>867</sup> AOFAA AC 302/1b “Ein Beitrag zur Überwindung der Grenzen!” (May 1954).

## *Conclusion*

BILD's wishes for Franco-German reconciliation were inflected with the desire to fight the dechristianization of Europe. The concept of a Western Christendom served as a convenient vehicle by which to address both the issues of spirituality and a certain form of European unity. Through its journals and activities, BILD aimed to convince the French and the Germans to "think of nationality last" and thereby promote a more engaged, humane, and Christian perspective. In combating apathy, both social and spiritual, the organization sought to prevent another war and the turning away from God. BILD was battling wars that were being fought in both nations against materialism, against nihilism and on the side of engagement and renewal.

BILD's activities served as a way not only to regenerate the Church, but also to regenerate the Germans—and less obviously perhaps—to regenerate the French. Émigré intellectual Joseph Rovin, who would decades later become the President of BILD, emphatically argued in the autumn of 1945 that the new Germany "would be the measure of [France's] worth." He explained that "the occupation is one of the new French Revolution's questions of conscience. It will be, in the eyes of European spectators, a touchstone for our capacity for renewal."<sup>868</sup> Rovin was referring to France's renewal—but of course renewal was at issue on both sides of the Rhine. In the efforts of BILD we see the revolutionary desire to forge a new moral consciousness that transcended borders and regimes, as much as those borders and regimes necessarily had driven those desires in the first place.

It may be that, with the birth of the Federal Republic and with it, the diminished presence of French occupiers, BILD had to work all the harder and launch more

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<sup>868</sup>Joseph Rovin, "L'Allemagne de nos mérites" *Esprit* no. 115 (1 Oct. 1945), 529-540.

ambitious programs to proceed in its efforts for French-German contact. Certainly, most of the cultural administration's files in the archives of the French occupation seem to indicate that, by 1952, almost all French-German organizations in the zone had seen a diminution in strength. A Konstanz industrialist, one Dr. Paulssen, who had worked with a number of Franco-German groups in Baden, lamented: "Often the French, who had given life to the Franco-German clubs, leave. It is hard to have a Franco-German club without French representatives."<sup>869</sup> But this does not mean, however, that cooperation was *more* popular under the French occupation than it was in the early 1950s. As the refugee program illustrates, BILD redoubled its efforts and success only grew after the occupation ended. In establishing a stable organization, with ties to government, private associations, and the Church, BILD hoped its efforts would not remain quixotic and abstract wishes for a better future, but would act instead as a "concrete work for peace."<sup>870</sup>

Of course, BILD's efforts did not generate instant goodwill. As we have seen, BILD's program to bring needy French children to vacation in the French zone did not find success. A similar-minded program spearheaded by the governments of Baden-Württemberg and France, "Christmas of the Soldier," met an equally disappointing fate in 1953. The effort called for Germans to invite French soldiers stationed in the area to spend Christmas with their families. Although the French administration tried to put a pleasant spin on the program by focusing attention on those towns with an unusually high rate of volunteering, the overall picture in Baden looked grim. While one mayor and

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<sup>869</sup>AOFAA AC 308/2 Note to M. le Ministre Plénipotentiaire DGAC (M. Marquant) from Ch. Hagenmuller (20 Oct. 1952).

<sup>870</sup>AOFAA AC 302 Jean Tschieret, Report "établi par le Secretariat du B.I.L.D. d'Offenbourg, au sujet du séjour en France, de jeunes réfugiés, au cours de l'été 1951" (1 Nov. 1951).

Landrat representative called for German hosts to welcome French soldiers “who are fulfilling their duty to protect the Western world,” some newspapers cried foul. The French occupier, it seems, had not treated the Germans as equals. In Kehl, the situation had been deemed poor enough that the city was not included until the second year of the venture.<sup>871</sup> Still, in 1953, 858 French soldiers were invited to celebrate the holidays at a home in Baden. Clearly, relations between residents of the French zone and France remained uneven, with soldiers, as the embodiment of the occupation regime, more resented than civilians.

In 1954, a poll found that 54% of the French favored rapprochement, while 23% opposed it.<sup>872</sup> If these numbers appear low, they represented a stunning reversal from the immediate postwar years and a remarkable ray of hope for the French-German relationship. Even four years earlier, only 21% of Germans expressed a belief in a “hereditary hostility,” whereas 70% considered that an “out-of-date sentiment.”<sup>873</sup> There is no doubt that BILD played a part in improving French perceptions of the Germans, and indeed, German perceptions of the French. As a testament to BILD’s influence, it would be Jean du Rivau who would conduct the 1967 memorial mass at Notre Dame for Konrad

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<sup>871</sup> AOFAA Bade 4315 No. 2069/2070/CAB/AC R. Bargeton, Confidential Report, “Action de rapprochement franco-allemand à l’occasion de Noël et de Nouvel An” (7 Jan. 1954); AOFAA Bade 4315 No. 072 PH/RW “Les manifestations franco-allemandes à l’occasion de Noël et du Nouvel an” from Jean du Boisberranger [Consul Général de France Commissaire de la République dans le Land Bade-Wurtemberg] to Amb/DGAC (23 Jan 1954).

<sup>872</sup> Réalités, as reported in *Documents* (Aug. 1956): 899.

<sup>873</sup> Discussion of a September 1950 poll in “La Crise des Rapports Franco-Allemands: Une enquête,” *Documents* no. 2/3 (Feb./March 1953): 113-119.

Adenauer, who himself had judged his role in French-German reconciliation—especially the 1963 Elysée Treaty—as his crowning achievement as chancellor.<sup>874</sup>

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<sup>874</sup>In contrast, Germans judged the return of the last POWs in 1955 as Adenauer's most important legacy. See, Moeller, 96. For Adenauer's self-assessment, see Henri Ménudier, "Adenauer, de Gaulle, und der Élysée Vertrag nach Alain Peyrefitte," in *Der Élysée-Vertrag*, ed. Defrance and Pfeil, 93.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### The Comité français d'échanges avec l'Allemagne nouvelle

If there were errors in the past, if the attempts at rapprochement did not succeed, that is no reason not to try again. One can never do enough for peace, and those who have served in war know it better than others.—Lucien Tharradin<sup>875</sup>

What nation, especially with its spiritual and political avant-garde, would be more in a position to provoke a humanization of our relations than France? It depends almost as much on you [the French] as on us that Germany ceases to be a separate problem, that the Germany of today never again becomes the Germany of yesterday but truly a conciliatory and tolerable partner, perhaps even one day a well-regarded partner in the European community.—Eugen Kogon<sup>876</sup>

Many paths led through the tangled thicket of postwar animosities toward international cooperation in general and Franco-German engagement more specifically. Founded in 1948, the *Comité français d'échanges avec l'Allemagne nouvelle* (the French Committee for Exchanges with the New Germany, hereafter CFEAN) put forth a vision of Franco-German cooperation attuned to the spirit of the Resistance. The members of the Comité, limited to those not tainted by collaboration and including many who had served in the Resistance, possessed the moral stature to communicate a more nuanced understanding of Germany to a broader French public, to salvage the notion of cooperation from the wreckage of collaboration(ism), and to stand as a critic of French

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<sup>875</sup>Lucien Tharradin, "Rencontres de maires français et allemands à Stuttgart," *Allemagne*, no. 8 (Aug./Sept. 1950): 3.

<sup>876</sup>Eugen Kogon, "L'Allemagne d'aujourd'hui," *Allemagne*, no. 2 (June/Aug. 1949): 5.



occupation policies that undercut opportunities for French-German cooperation. In contrast to BILD, CFEAN offered not a redemptive vision of reconciliation, but rather a more complex, cautious mission to enlighten.

More public relations task force than any French-German organization since the Mayrisch Comité, the Comité hoped to paint for the French a more complete picture of contemporary Germany than that produced by the harrowing memories of war and occupation, which had only served to exaggerate longstanding clichés about German character and exacerbate ill-will. Just as the Mayrisch Komitee and the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft had tried to demonstrate the complexities of Germany and the diversity of Germans after the trauma of the First World War, CFEAN sought to refine the image of Germany after the cataclysm of the Second. Although the Committee's statutes averred its goal was to improve reciprocal knowledge [*connaissance*] between France and Germany, it was firmly planted in one nation: France. Its name alone made that mission clear. The Comité hoped to foster the French-German relationship by targeting the French public; to the victors went the responsibility to pursue understanding.

Like others before it and BILD alongside it, the Comité counted on the transformative power of knowledge and the primacy of cross-border contacts. Accordingly, it acted as an intermediary to connect individuals to various organizations and events. Often in tandem with public and private efforts, the Committee organized conferences as well as informational trips to France and Germany. In similar fashion, CFEAN acted as a clearinghouse both to help match individuals for exchanges and to find French speakers for German events. In addition, the Comité helped enhance study

abroad efforts, first by acting as a welcoming committee to visiting scholars from Germany, and second by offering guidance to German students in France. The group also harnessed the media to advance its agenda, briefly through a radio program on *Südwestfunk* and above all through its French-language bulletin, *Allemagne: Bulletin d'Information du Comité d'Échanges avec l'Allemagne Nouvelle*.

While the Committee tried to expand French horizons about Germany, it simultaneously shrank the circles welcome to superintend the French-German relationship. In this way, the Committee construed active participation in the construction of a postwar Franco-German community more restrictively than did BILD. Germans, regardless of their relationship to the Nazi state, were precluded from membership. The pointed exclusion of Germans reflected the skepticism of Committee leaders, no less the French public, toward the German population; it had no political legitimacy. Just as CFEAN drew the line as to who could represent Germany after the war, it likewise attempted to delineate those who could speak for France. The statutes of CFEAN indicated that all “members” had to be French, with full political and civil rights; those on the board could not have been “condemned for acts of collaboration with the enemy.”<sup>877</sup> In fact, several had storied careers in the French Resistance. Finally, the Comité barred from its ranks representatives of the French Foreign Ministry, the occupation administration, and the French Commissariat for German and Austrian Affairs.

The Committee’s membership restrictions and its patent reliance on veterans of the Resistance both made it unique and buttressed its claims to change. Here was an easy way to distance itself from the ugly legacy of collaboration. Only by drawing this line

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<sup>877</sup> See AOFAA AC 237 “Statuts.” *Dégradation nationale*, which entailed being stripped of civil rights, was a common sentence for wartime collaboration.

could the organization claim to be different from what came before. The implication, moreover, was that only the purest souls—those true representatives of France—could reach out to Germany to redeem it. With a postwar public wary of any ties to Germany, these men could lend such a mission legitimacy and moral authority. Such an unmistakable association with the spirit of the Resistance would likewise (ideally) garner attention in a crowded postwar landscape teeming with new political parties, journals, and interest groups, each clamoring for attention and promising renewal.

A broad coalition of French citizens united around the desire to build a democratic, humane Germany, CFEAN was committed to fostering a more knowledgeable, less polemical Franco-German conversation. Its statutes referred to the importance of information and the need to encourage the emergence of a “new Germany,” but the group followed no clear manifesto; indeed, a manifesto would have impinged upon its pluralism. Members’ loyalties lay with different political parties, and their stances toward Germany were far from uniform. This diversity of perspective marked a clear departure from Franco-German organizations during the war, but also left the group with a rather woolly mission. As its Secretary General Alfred Grosser explained, “It was never a question of the Comité preparing new political structures, nor even at heart of creating an emotional climate. One could say the Comité does not seek to create the positive but to destroy the negative constituted by ignorance, prejudice (or even yearning for the Nazi past).”<sup>878</sup> With one foot in the past and one foot in the future, CFEAN deliberately grounded its mission in the legacy of war and occupation, while looking forward to both a “new Germany” and a new France.

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<sup>878</sup> Alfred Grosser, “Le Comité a-t-il encore un sens?” *Allemagne*, no. 17 (Feb./March 1952): 1.

## *Origins*

The Comité emerged from the remnants of what Michael Kelly has called the “humanist consensus” that transcended French party lines after Liberation.<sup>879</sup> In the immediate postwar period, the values of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen were paramount;<sup>880</sup> they had both come to stand for the ideals for which the Resistance had fought and to epitomize Frenchness. Applying the humanist logic to Germany after the war, however, was not instinctive. It took over three years for a French organization informed by these ideals to crystallize around the German question, and members, not surprisingly, would sometimes find themselves at odds with the occupation administration. But Committee members considered such values—above all human dignity, individual freedom, and social justice—to be universal and therefore equally applicable to Germany as to France.<sup>881</sup> In this way, Committee members took a civic idealism and civic responsibility born of the spirit of resistance and broadened them to the transnational sphere.

With the end of war, many in both France and Germany saw an opening for a radically new beginning. Although the hopes of many Resistance figures to intervene in and redefine postwar French politics—even to usher in social revolution—had been dashed not long after Liberation and were followed by a period of dissension and disillusionment, a second (and secondary) wave of such hopes arose in the late 1940s

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<sup>879</sup>Michael Kelly, “The Reconstruction of Masculinity at the Liberation,” in *The Liberation of France: Image and Event*, ed. H.R. Kedward and Nancy Wood (Oxford: Berg, 1995), 121-122.

<sup>880</sup>James D. Wilkinson, *The Intellectual Resistance in Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 45-46.

<sup>881</sup>Many, of course, were making a similar argument about colonial questions.

among so-called Resistance intellectuals.<sup>882</sup> In 1948, during this second wind, a number of intellectuals developed the political movement the *Rassemblement Démocratique et Révolutionnaire* (RDR) to rally the French; that same year, a small group (some of whose members overlapped with the RDR) began to focus more closely on the German question and, in that spirit, created CFEAN. Both groups sought to transcend party lines and to breathe new life into the postwar order. CFEAN, though less well-known, proved more enduring. If its members had lost the opportunity to transform their own country, they realized they could perhaps play a part in transforming its relationship with Germany.

By the foundation of CFEAN, these men of the Resistance had brooked disappointment in the postwar order in France. When a grander revolution at home had failed to materialize, they turned instead to other, more modest goals geared toward reshaping the French-German relationship. With their initial post-Liberation enthusiasm for the future of France dimmed, CFEAN members took on the German question with prudence and more than a touch of resignation. They did not, however, relinquish the badge of political engagement that they had proudly worn since they enlisted in the Resistance.

At the war's end—both despite and because much of the world, not least France, viewed Germany as unimaginably evil—a number of French intellectuals pled for the reasonable treatment of Germans and Germany by the Allied occupiers. Writers such as Joseph Rovin and Jean Schlumberger hoped for a careful management of the occupation and believed it was the responsibility of the occupiers to rehabilitate Germany without resorting to retribution. Better to exhibit justice coupled with a sense of humanity than to wreak vengeance upon the vanquished, no matter how monstrous they had shown

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<sup>882</sup>Wilkinson, 51-106.

themselves to be. France and the other Allied occupiers had a moral obligation to help return Germany to the community of nations. France should, in this perspective, offer itself as a model for German emulation and by no means replicate the type of occupation recently imposed by the Germans.

Several intellectuals had already publicly voiced their commitment to such ideals before joining forces to establish the Comité. As we have seen, émigré and former Buchenwald prisoner Joseph Rovin penned a series of articles beginning in October 1945 about France's accountability for postwar Germany.<sup>883</sup> Rovin's muscular petition grabbed the attention of many; indeed, a number of French-German activists, both official and unofficial have cited these articles as the source of their future involvement in French-German relations. Months earlier, the Alsatian Jean Schlumberger, formerly of the Mayrisch Comité, had broken the ice. As early as March of 1945, Schlumberger put the onus on France. Rather than seeking revenge or passively letting postwar Germany "stew in its own juices," France needed to take the more challenging route to re-educate the "inconvenient and invading nation that trouble[d] Europe for 80 years." Schlumberger's "courageous question" asked not what Germany would next "invent to disturb the order" but, "What will we [the French] invent to create order?"<sup>884</sup> If belatedly, the Committee attempted to answer Schlumberger's question.

Journalist and German teacher Élie Gabey, who eventually served for a year as CFEAN's Secretary General, likewise urged the French and the international community more generally to end Germany's "moral isolation." Gabey justified his stance by

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<sup>883</sup>Joseph Rovin, "L'Allemagne de nos mérites," *Esprit* 13, no. 115 (1 Oct. 1945): 529-540; "L'Allemagne de nos mérites: Un an après," *Esprit* 15, no. 12 (Dec. 1946): 787-796; "L'Allemagne de nos mérites (III): La Restauration," *Esprit* 17, no. 5 (May 1949): 657-677.

<sup>884</sup>Jean Schlumberger, "La question courageuse," *Figaro*, 16 March 1945.

thinking in the long-term: “So that Germany ceases to be a home of decay, it is indispensable that it can resume contacts with the progressive elements of the world.”<sup>885</sup> Gabey made a clear case for the postwar integration of Germany into the democratic community of European nations.

Such willingness to move beyond vengeance sprang from two convergent sources. First, there was the (at times implicit) hope that the mistakes of Versailles and the 1920s could be avoided. The shunning of Germany, it was believed, had helped set in motion the rise of Nazi Germany. Second, there was the pervasive hope for a future peace. Such sentiments often intersected with the desire for a united Europe, which Resistance leaders had contemplated even during the war.<sup>886</sup> Improving French-German relations could put a stop to the cycle of wars and advance the European cause.

As a way to help nurture any impulses, initiatives, or developments that promised a break with the past and a more humane future for Germany, Catholic philosopher Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950), best known as the founder and editor of the review *Esprit*, created the Comité. Mounier was not new to the world of controversial political and moral idealism. John Hellman has shown how, in 1945, Mounier believed the moment of revolution had arrived for France. For him, like so many others, Liberation marked an opening for fundamental change.<sup>887</sup> It is not difficult to see how this view could be extended to Germany and to French-German relations more broadly. But this was not the first time Mounier saw an opportunity for the renewal of France. In 1936, he

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<sup>885</sup>Élie Gabey, “Berlin comme observatoire: Y-a-t’il une vie politique en Allemagne?” *Les Temps Modernes* 3, no. 28 (Jan. 1948): 1286.

<sup>886</sup>Wilkinson, 173-177.

<sup>887</sup>John Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left 1930-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 206-208.

looked to the Popular Front, and then in 1940, under the shadow of French defeat, Mounier stood alongside Pétain's National Revolution.<sup>888</sup> Then, too, his hopes were moral in focus.

Hellman has sketched a man more in love with revolution than with a particular cause. The habit of rushing into political minefields—and remarkably different ones at that—has led scholars to debate vigorously whether Mounier sympathized with the fascists, the communists, neither, or both.<sup>889</sup> Mounier considered himself above all a Catholic and a personalist, a philosophy he helped establish that placed primacy on the person, not as individual but as part of humanity; indeed, personalism spurned individualism, materialism, and “bourgeois liberalism.”

Ambiguities within Mounier's philosophical writings, his personal history, and his review *Esprit* have fomented the debates over Mounier's political loyalties. *Esprit* faulted the French for appeasing Hitler at Munich, but then seemed to shift with the political winds by taking a more tolerant position toward Nazi Germany. More damning, *Esprit* continued to publish under Vichy until 1941, and at times lauded the regime and its National Revolution. In this regard, too, scholars have disputed whether the review—and Mounier along with it—were complicit with the regime or whether, as Mounier argued after the war, such articles had acted as a form of “indirect resistance” that proved detrimental enough to Vichy that the government banned the review in 1941. Regardless, by the foundation of CFEAN, Mounier had become known as a Resistance hero. Arrested

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<sup>888</sup>Strickmann, 206.

<sup>889</sup>Contrast the different views outlined in, for example, Seth D. Armus, “The Eternal Enemy: Emmanuel Mounier's *Esprit* and French Anti-Americanism,” *French Historical Studies* 24, no. 2 (2001): 271-304; Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier*, especially pages 248-259; Christiane Falbisaner, “Emmanuel Mounier et l'Allemagne,” *Revue d'Allemagne* 21, no. 2 (1989): 257-258; Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France*, trans. David Maisel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 215-221, 273-282, 288-291.



in 1942 because his name had been linked to the Resistance group Combat, Mounier spent several months in prison, where he carried out a well-publicized hunger strike that burnished his image as a Resistance figure. He spent the rest of the war in hiding.

Although Mounier had expressed a clear interest in Germany before the war—an interest that has led some scholars to tag him as sympathetic to the Nazi regime or to fascism more broadly—the philosopher placed a far more sustained concentration on German politics after the war than before it. Mounier, unlike many members of CFEAN, held no particular expertise about Germany, and indeed did not speak German.<sup>890</sup> But in the belief that the future of Germany would drive postwar Europe, Mounier turned his sights to the neighboring land. In the winter of 1946-1947, Mounier traveled throughout Germany alongside Jean-Charles Moreau, an administrator in the French occupation administration, to determine for himself how contemporary Germany was dealing with the postwar order. Mounier met with a number of German intellectuals, including Walter Dirks and Eugen Kogon, loosely associated with BILD. Shortly after this expedition, Mounier launched a series of articles on the defeated nation and its prospects in *Esprit*, the first French review to resume publication after Liberation.<sup>891</sup> Tellingly, Mounier also published an article in *Figaro Littéraire* entitled, “Germany, France’s Responsibility” that followed the basic thrust of Rovin’s and Schlumberger’s arguments.<sup>892</sup>

That summer, Mounier began to meet with French intellectuals who might be interested in forming a French organization devoted to the German question. The contours of this group had at least in part materialized thanks to two BILD conferences.

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<sup>890</sup>Falbisaner, 263.

<sup>891</sup>Plum, 155; Falbisaner, 257-279.

<sup>892</sup>Emmanuel Mounier, “Allemagne, responsabilité France,” *Figaro Littéraire*, 21 Aug. 1948.

Mounier strengthened his relationship with Eugen Kogon and Walter Dirks at BILD's 1947 Writers' Conference at Lahr, where Mounier had spoken on the importance of political engagement (itself associated with the Resistance spirit).<sup>893</sup> Though membership restrictions precluded Kogon and Dirks from CFEAN membership, they would come to play an active role in the organization. Another BILD conference may have brought more into the fold. BILD's Jean du Rivau and Mounier helped organize the next Franco-German Writers' Conference at Royaumont in early October of 1948, where they encountered Germanists Edmond Vermeil and Robert Minder as well as the student Alfred Grosser. Three weeks later, CFEAN, which included all of these men, was born at a public meeting at the Sorbonne. There, they hammered out the organizational details, including the selection of five co-presidents—Mounier himself, Vermeil, Rémy Roure, David Rousset, and Henri Brunschwig—with Grosser as Secretary General.

As was the case after the First World War, the fraught atmosphere between the French and the Germans after the Second World War had not been conducive to the immediate creation of a group promoting cooperation.<sup>894</sup> But most Comité members were used to working on behalf of an unpopular cause. During the trying years of the war, French resisters, in the words of Claude Bourdet, one of their leaders and a member of CFEAN's board, "needed to believe that the improbable was possible."<sup>895</sup> Resilient optimism came in handy for their involvement with the Comité.

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<sup>893</sup>Falbisaner, 273-274.

<sup>894</sup>BILD was certainly exceptional in this manner. But at first, even BILD announced modest goals and tread carefully.

<sup>895</sup>Claude Bourdet as quoted in Wilkinson, 25.

### *Personalities*

Like the Mayrisch Komitee, the Weimar-era Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft, the Nazi-era Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft/Comité France-Allemagne, and the Groupe Collaboration, CFEAN boasted a roster of celebrities as its public face. Well-known literary figures such as Jean Bruller (pseud. Vercors) (1902-1991), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), and Jean Schlumberger (1877-1968) and scholars like Raymond Aron (1905-1983), Robert d'Harcourt (1881-1965), and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) lent their names to the board. At least as valuable were several giants of the French Resistance, including Henri Frenay (1905-1988), Claude Bourdet (1909-1996), Rémy Roure (1885-1966), Pascal Copeau (1908-1982), André Philip (1902-1970), and Jean Gemahling (1912-2003). Many such icons of civic courage had survived the horrors of camp life or spoken out in some way to defy Vichy or the German occupation. They (and others more so after the war) had made their mark through *littérature engagée*, a commitment to political engagement they would continue through their membership in the Comité. All had been profoundly marked by the war and the Nazi years.

Many had spent part of the war in German camps, whether as POWs (in both world wars) or as political prisoners; others had wives or children imprisoned in German camps. The Gestapo had arrested Bourdet, co-founder of the *Mouvement de Libération Nationale*, leader of the movement Combat, and a director of the *Mouvements Unis de Résistance*; he was eventually sent to Neuengamme, Sachsenhausen, and Buchenwald. David Rousset and Rémy Roure had also been at Buchenwald; Roure's wife died in Ravensbrück. Sartre, of course, had been a prisoner of war in Trier.

Some on the Comité board had a more longstanding (and less negative) connection to Germany. Géraud Jouve (1901-1991), Robert d'Harcourt, Edmond Vermeil, Robert Minder (1902-1980), Henri Brunschwig (1904-1989), Joseph-François Angelloz (1893-1978), and Maurice Colleville (1894-1989) (who joined the CFEAN board in 1951) were trained as Germanists.<sup>896</sup> Jouve, Élie Gabey, and Pascal Copeau had served as press correspondents in Germany in the 1930s. Some had specific ties to prior Franco-German groups. Raymond Aron, Henri Brunschwig,<sup>897</sup> Géraud Jouve, and Sartre had each conducted research at the Institut Français de Berlin, also in the 1930s. In addition, Jouve had served as the treasurer-secretary of the Liges d'Études Germaniques, the teachers' organization associated with the Weimar-era DFG; Germanist Edmond Vermeil had sat on LEG's board. Vermeil and Alsatian writer and co-founder of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* Jean Schlumberger had belonged to the Mayrisch Komitee. Vermeil, Minder, and René Lauret had written for the *Revue d'Allemagne*. Only three years earlier, Jean du Rivau had founded BILD.

In contrast to the Catholic thrust of BILD, the Comité was characterized by religious diversity. Although Mounier was an ardent Catholic, the Committee retained no formal ties to the Church and indeed was not imbued with a Catholic (or even noticeably Christian) ethos. Both Mounier and Robert d'Harcourt were renowned Catholic

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<sup>896</sup>In addition, Henry Frenay had studied at the Centre des hautes études germaniques in Strasbourg.

<sup>897</sup>Henri Brunschwig then served as head of German-language radio for Radiodiffusion française. While at the Institute, he had published a couple of articles on disgruntled elements of the German populace, in particular on youth, in *La Revue des Vivants*. These were penned in 1932, though they did not appear in the *Revue* until early 1933. Residents of the Institute, incidentally, found it amusing that Brunschwig, a blond, blue-eyed Jew, was never presumed to be Jewish by the Nazis, whereas a Corsican Christian *pensionnaire* was often mistaken for a Jew. See Henri Brunschwig, "Ce que m'ont dit les jeunes," *La Revue des Vivants* 7, no. 2 (Feb. 1933): 197; "Maurice de Gandillac, *Le siècle traversé: Souvenirs de neuf décennies* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998), 177. In similar fashion, while at the Institute, Raymond Aron reported his impressions of Nazi Germany for Mounier's *Esprit*. Raymond Aron, "Lettre ouverte d'un jeune français à l'Allemagne," *Esprit* 1, no. 5 (Feb. 1933): 735-743.

intellectuals—d'Harcourt had been elected a member of the Académie Française just two years before—and du Rivau, of course, was a Jesuit. Du Rivau's Dominican counterpart on the Comité, Jean-Augustin Maydiou (1900-1955), had known Mounier from their days at the Vichy leadership school at Uriage, and had a strong connection to Catholic intellectuals from his experience co-directing the review *Sept* with Jacques Maritain in the 1930s. Their Protestant counterpart (and, like du Rivau, a former military chaplain) Pastor Albert Finet (b. 1899) had founded the Protestant review *Réforme*, where he had rejected blind patriotism by condemning the deplorable conditions of German POW camps in France. Raymond Aron and Brunschwig were Jewish, and Alfred Grosser, though born Jewish, was an atheist, as were the Protestant-born Schlumberger and Vermeil, and, more famously, Sartre.

The membership stricture against those in the French Foreign Ministry or in the occupation administration did not preclude politicians or the politically active from joining the Committee. The board included deputies and former deputies alike. Among them, André Philip also served as president of the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe, whose platform included an insistence on German participation in a future Europe. Henri Frenay was a leader of the Union of European Federalists (as was Eugen Kogon, friend to both CFEAN and BILD). Members thus represented different strands of the European movement, just as they represented competing political parties.

Committee members' political activism (often coupled to only fleeting political success) lay bare their desire to shape postwar France. Barthélémy Ott had served as a deputy (MRP) in the provisional government, but lost his seat in 1948. Pascal Copeau, Secretary General of the Movement of National Liberation, had sat on the provisional

Consultative Assembly, then the first and second Constituent Assemblies, representing a Resistance platform. Bourdet served as vice president of the provisional Consultative Assembly. Géraud Jouve, in turn, represented the socialists in the National Assembly. Frenay had helped found the *Union démocratique et socialiste de la Résistance*; Rousset and Sartre had allied in their short-lived leftist (and anti-Stalinist) political movement, the *Rassemblement démocratique révolutionnaire* (1947-1949). David Rousset later emerged as a vocal activist, not in a political party *per se*, but as a denouncer of Stalinist atrocities.

On a superficial level, it may have looked like, as one French occupation administrator later explained, “it was the people who suffered at the hand of Germany, who were the first to say we must open the doors to young Germans.”<sup>898</sup> But the attitudes of those early postwar activists were far more complex and varied than such a supposition allows. Claude Bourdet (1909-1996), who sat on the board of the Comité and had survived both Oranienburg and Buchenwald, may have initially embraced cooperation, but at heart held a less than forgiving attitude toward Germany. Upon signature of the 1955 Bonn accords, Bourdet returned his Resistance ribbon and his Croix de Guerre to the French government as a protest against German rearmament; he remained, however, on the Comité. From the start, Vercors did not think the path to cooperation would be easy. At a speech at the French unveiling of the University of Mainz in 1948, Vercors declared he would not ““suggest falsely that former enemies can now simply embrace.””<sup>899</sup> And Germanist Edmond Vermeil, a member of the Mayrisch Komitee, a contributor to the *Revue d’Allemagne*, and then after the war, a member of CFEAN,

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<sup>898</sup> AOFAA AOR 18 Taped interview with Guy Meston, conducted by Claude Lorenz and Sandrine Einhorn-Heiser (21 Nov. 1997).

<sup>899</sup> Wilkinson, 176.

remained ever wary of Germans. Indeed, it was he who helped draft French re-education policy in the occupied zone. For Vermeil, some Germans could never be unschooled in the ways of Nazism, and even for those young enough to be remolded successfully, it would be a long road because “one does not throw off Nazism like a garment that has gone out of style.”<sup>900</sup>

The diversity of members’ backgrounds—whether religious, political, or occupational—extended not only to their experiences with Germany but also to their outlook on that nation. Even as they worked to enlighten the French public about Germany, some CFEAN activists resorted to stereotypes and inveterate fears. Some, like Barthélémy Ott, firmly believed in Germany’s ability to revert to old ways, and for that reason, expressed the wish for a long occupation both “in Germany’s own interests and to preserve it, as it were, from itself, from the eternal temptations that whisper to it of an old secular dream that already drove it twice to the edge of the abyss.”<sup>901</sup> In his brief stint as Secretary General, Élie Gabey proved skeptical of German ambitions. While acknowledging the vast majority of Germans opposed remilitarization in the framework of a united Europe, Gabey nonetheless put emphasis on former SS and Wehrmacht officers who wanted to resurrect the German military under German command.<sup>902</sup> And Vermeil, even as late as 1954, was recommending “a certain vigilance” to ensure that Germans’ “spirit of domination” did not again rear its ugly head.<sup>903</sup>

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<sup>900</sup>As quoted in Willis, *The French in Germany*, 163.

<sup>901</sup>Barthélémy Ott, “Des malentendus à dissiper,” *Allemagne*, no. 2 (June/Aug. 1949): 8.

<sup>902</sup>Élie Gabey, “A propos de la rémilitarisation,” *Allemagne*, no. 10 (Dec. 1950/Jan. 1951): 1-2.

<sup>903</sup>Comité de Liaison de la Résistance, *L’Accord Culturel franco-allemand du 23 octobre 1954* (Paris: Publications de Documentation de la Résistance, 1955), 5.

Not everyone agreed to join forces with the Committee, and some members chose to leave. Initially—having survived camp life and having immediate family who had not—Rémy Roure found the proposal for the Comité horrifying. When he heard of Mounier’s stewardship, however, Roure not only signed on, but agreed to serve as a co-president.<sup>904</sup> According to Secretary General Alfred Grosser, Nobel Prize laureate Roger Martin du Gard, famed for his cycle of World War I novels, was the only candidate to refuse membership. Martin du Gard excused himself with the simple statement: “I hated them too much.”<sup>905</sup> Those who left—most notably Merleau-Ponty, Vercors, and David Rousset—had become too engrossed in other outlets of political and intellectual engagement to keep on with the Comité; their departures were amicable.<sup>906</sup>

In light of the presence of several of his Germanist colleagues on the board of the Comité, Maurice Boucher’s absence stands out as surprising. It is not entirely clear why Boucher did not join his fellow *Revue d’Allemagne* alumni at the Comité. Boucher still traveled to Germany regularly to give talks, including at the Deutsch-Französisches Institut in Ludwigsburg, a frequent partner of CFEAN; indeed, Boucher’s name appeared more than any other on a list of French professors’ postwar voyages to Germany and Austria.<sup>907</sup> Likewise, Boucher participated in French-German encounters, such as the 1953 Franco-German Young Writers’ Meeting in Paris, sponsored by, among others,

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<sup>904</sup> Alfred Grosser, “Réactions encourageantes,” *Allemagne* no. 52 (Dec. 1957/Jan. 1958): 8.

<sup>905</sup> Alfred Grosser, *Une Vie de Français* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997), 53.

<sup>906</sup> Merleau-Ponty was running *Les Temps Modernes* and teaching at the Sorbonne; Rousset famously plunged himself into the anti-Stalinist cause. Pascal Copeau left at the same time; the reason(s) for his departure are not known, but may be linked to the longstanding hostility between him and Henri Frenay as well as, on a broader level, the conflicts between their Resistance movements. On this rivalry, see Julian Jackson, 455-456.

<sup>907</sup> AN AJ16/6958 “Allemagne-Autriche” List of travels, Nov. 1945-Nov. 1954.



BILD and CFEAN.<sup>908</sup> Boucher was associated with BILD and had even passed the role of Franco-German activist down to his son André, who as a delegate of the French High Commission, for example, organized a 1951 trip to France for 30 German youths.<sup>909</sup> We can only speculate that Boucher *père*, compromised by his contributions to Franco-German organizations during the occupation years, was not welcome within a group insistent on distancing itself from cooperation reminiscent of collaboration.

Some of the most famous CFEAN members showed minimal involvement in its day-to-day affairs; their prime utility lay in their names. Just as the Mayrisch Komitee hinged upon the tireless efforts of its secretariat in the shape of Pierre Viénot and to a lesser extent Gustav Krukenberg (and their eventual replacements Max Clauss and Régis de Vibraye)—so, too, did CFEAN rely upon an unknown, Alfred Grosser, to undertake virtually all of its heavy lifting. Grosser served at once as the Comité's architect, standard-bearer, head writer, editor, grant writer, and secretary; officially, he worked as Secretary General of the Comité and director of its bulletin. What Grosser could not accomplish, his mother often did in a largely unofficial capacity. In 1950, after Mounier's sudden death from heart failure at age 45, Grosser became recognized as the core of the entire enterprise. But unlike the Mayrisch Komitee after the death of Emil Mayrisch, CFEAN did not experience turbulence with its founder's death. Though his spirit

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<sup>908</sup> AOFAA AC 297 1 30/HC/DC. Georges C. Mas, Consul de France à Stuttgart et Tübingen to François-Poncet (21 March 1951); AOFAA AC 302/1a "Lettre aux amis du B.I.L.D." no. 5 (July/Aug. 1953).

<sup>909</sup> AN 70 AJ 30 No. 1131/EDU/AB/TM André Boucher, Délégué du Commissaire pour le Land Rhénanie-Palatinat/ Cercle de Neuwied to Joseph Denis, Office National des Universités et Écoles Françaises (26 May 1951).

continued to guide the group, Mounier had by no means been its driving force.<sup>910</sup> That label belonged to Grosser.

Born in Frankfurt in 1925 to a family of non-practicing Jews, Alfred Grosser left his homeland at a young age. The Grossers fled Germany in 1933 when Grosser's father Paul faced a double rejection, first when he was deemed no longer eligible to practice medicine at his hospital, and second, when he was shunned by his veterans' association. Thanks to his years at the Lycée Français de Berlin, Paul Grosser spoke fluent French; accordingly, he brought his family to the outskirts of Paris, where he set up a children's sanatorium in Saint Germain-en-Laye. Paul Grosser died shortly after their arrival, but according to Alfred Grosser, his father's death likely aided his own assimilation process. Alfred accelerated rapidly in French schools, became active with a Protestant scouting group, and quickly began to perceive himself as French. In the fall of 1937, along with his mother and older sister, Alfred Grosser became a French citizen.

Throughout the war, Grosser managed to slip through the cracks. During the exodus from Paris, Grosser fled to southern France, where he resumed his studies in relative calm. After passing his *baccalauréat*, he briefly served as a math teacher in Saint Raphaël. Because, as a Jew, he was rejected from Marseilles' Faculté des Sciences, Grosser gave up his plan to study electricity in favor of German studies and literature. Grosser took courses at Aix and Nice and received a *certificat* in both literature and philology, but was then compelled to adopt a false identity. The non-believer took cover among a community of Marxist priests, who insisted upon his baptism. At their school in

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<sup>910</sup>Rémy Roure recalled that at difficult moments, the Comité wondered, "What would Emmanuel Mounier do?" See Rémy Roure, "Fidélité à Mounier," *Allemagne*, no. 24 (April/May 1953): 1; Alfred Grosser, "Emmanuel Mounier und das Comité français d'échanges avec l'Allemagne nouvelle," in *Deutschland-Frankreich. Ludwigsburger Beiträge zum Problem der Deutsch-Französischen Beziehungen* vol. 1, ed. Deutsch-Französisches Institut Ludwigsburg (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, 1954): 279-280.

Marseilles, the Catholic convert then taught a wide array of subjects (with the exception of German) through the end of the war. Grosser received a commendation for his participation in the Resistance, but his involvement was limited—as he duly (and embarrassedly) acknowledges—to helping clear bodies from the wreckage of bombed Marseilles. Indeed, he neither participated in the Resistance nor the armed forces. As part of the “forgotten class” of 1945, Grosser was never conscripted. A bicycle accident put an end to his passing thoughts of enlisting at the end of the war.

Instead, Grosser resumed his studies and became a military censor in Marseilles. He then began to work as a journalist, and wrote for a number of papers, including the *Wochen-Kurier*, the French Ministry of War’s journal for German POWs. On behalf of this paper (and by extension the French government), Grosser returned to Germany for the first time in August 1947 for a six-week tour. There, he traveled throughout the three Western zones and interviewed as many people as he could, from mayors to expellees. Upon his return to France, Grosser met with an editor of the celebrated Resistance journal *Combat* to propose a series on German youth. The articles that resulted brought Grosser to the attention of two future leaders of the Comité: Emmanuel Mounier and Henri Brunschwig, who asked Grosser to give broadcasts for *Radiodiffusion française* in Germany on *Südwestfunk*.

When Grosser joined the Comité as its Secretary General and director of its bulletin, he was working on his thesis under fellow Comité member Edmond Vermeil.<sup>911</sup> Although Grosser never completed his thesis on the pietist Philipp Jakob Spener (a topic

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<sup>911</sup>Grosser also had another important tie to a Comité member; he had just prepared for his agrégation under the Rilke specialist Jean-François Angelloz, who recommended Grosser for the position of Secretary General. See Carla Albrecht, “Das Comité français d’échanges avec l’Allemagne nouvelle als Wegbereiter des Deutsch-Französischen Jugendwerks,” *Lendemains* 27, no. 107/108 (2002): 180.

suggested by Vermeil, but of limited interest to Grosser), he continued to publish on other themes, beginning with a scholarly article on Goethe. But above all, Grosser would become known as a specialist on contemporary Germany. In January 1953, Grosser's first book, the well-known *L'Allemagne de l'occident, 1945-1952*, appeared, while he still sat at the helm of CFEAN.<sup>912</sup> In the meantime, he was teaching German at the Sorbonne. He would continue his teaching career at several schools and serve as a commentator for a number of French newspapers as well as for both French and German television and radio.<sup>913</sup>

If Grosser recognized his privileged position as bilingual and well-versed in two cultures, he attributed his abilities to his education in France rather than to his émigré background. Indeed, Grosser so wholly insisted upon his Frenchness that he did not acknowledge his special status as émigré, as both French and German.<sup>914</sup> He has since maintained that his 1947 trip throughout Germany only served to reconfirm his sense of Frenchness. But as a German exile in France, Grosser still straddled the two sides. Grosser did not leave his Germanness behind, but always mediated between the two. On a personal level, his German past and French present were in constant dialogue, and, on a much broader level, he conducted a more important conversation between postwar Germany and postwar France.

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<sup>912</sup>Indeed, aside from one year's leave, when Grosser worked for UNESCO in Geneva, Grosser stayed on as Secretary General of CFEAN until its demise.

<sup>913</sup>Biographical information from Grosser, *Vie de Français*; Noël Copin, *Noël Copin interroge Alfred Grosser. La passion de comprendre* (Paris: Le Centurion, 1977); Emmanuelle Picard, "Médiation franco-allemande ou intégration réussie? Le cas de Joseph Rovin et d'Alfred Grosser," *Cahiers d'études germaniques*, no. 43 (2002): 65-73.

<sup>914</sup>Emmanuelle Picard has argued that Grosser, like Joseph Rovin, only returned to a "dual identity" as both French and German in the 1970s as a way of reinforcing his increasingly public role as "mediator" between the two societies. Picard, "Médiation," 71-72.

Although Grosser felt French, others did not always see him in that light. Grosser purports to have passed as French to the French and German to the Germans. On occasion, French interlocutors asked him whether he was Alsatian. The feat of passing as a native allowed Grosser to appear as “one of us” to whomever he was speaking.<sup>915</sup> His statements, at least spoken word, would not have seemed warped by foreign bias, and his opinions would be taken more seriously in both nations. Yet, at the same time, it risked looking like betrayal to straddle both worlds, if assumed to belong only to one. Grosser did not claim a false identity (except briefly during the war), but he does not seem to have gone out of his way to correct mistaken impressions. The risk, of course, was far greater that he appear German. Grosser has expressed his belief that had a German accent been detectable, it would have compromised the entire venture; as a German, he could have been seen as an infiltrator. As a Frenchman, however, he had more breathing space in French circles, and Germans were simply grateful that he was working on their behalf.<sup>916</sup>

Grosser, in some ways, had come as close as possible to Pierre Viénot’s dictum of “leaving the self.” This path was most evident in his status as émigré and sometime-chameleon, but it also emerged as Grosser’s signature technique in working for cooperation. Frequently and most memorably, Grosser’s style of arbitration approximated that of the *agent provocateur*. Rather than look to complementarity or trying to find some common ground between the two peoples, Grosser instead sought to challenge each side’s preliminary point-of-view. In debates and articles, Grosser encouraged his French or German audience, not to transform the other nation, but to refine its own stance toward

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<sup>915</sup>Copin, 20. Yet Grosser failed the written section of the German *concours* to get into the École Normale.

<sup>916</sup>This analysis draws on Grosser’s telling of his own story; see Grosser, *Vie de Français*; Copin, 20-21; Picard, “Médiation,” 65-73.

that nation. To a group of Germans, for example, he stressed German deficiencies, rather than discussing the shortcomings of the French administration that his audience wanted to hear. Conversely, before the French, Grosser invoked, not German crimes of the past, but French errors of the present. In this way, Grosser—and the Comité more broadly—confronted both the German and French publics with uncomfortable truths.

Behind the scenes, Grosser's mother was the only Comité associate to pull down a full-time salary. As secretary, Lily Grosser has generally gone unnoticed by scholars. Yet not only did she conduct much of the Comité's correspondence (sometimes smoothing out feathers her son had ruffled), she also could be seen as the only German at the heart of the Comité operation. Unlike her son, who had arrived in France at age eight, and who considered himself French not long thereafter, Lily Grosser had immigrated at age 39 with "limited" French language skills and did not go through the assimilating experience of school. Before serving as secretary to the Committee (as well as personal secretary to her son, by typing his manuscripts), Lily Grosser had managed a small children's home upon her husband's death, and during the war, worked in a number of offices. Her work at the Comité, though "modest," without question allowed the Comité to survive on such a small budget and with such an outspoken Secretary General as her son.<sup>917</sup>

If the purely male composition of the Comité board reflected a certain idea of the Resistance, it also revealed a rather old-fashioned notion of political activism.<sup>918</sup> Women

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<sup>917</sup>On Lily Grosser, see Alfred Grosser, *Vie de Français*, 19, 33, 57-58; Copin; and Paul Frank, "Die höchste Form der Hoffnung: Verfolgt, gejagt, aber unbeirrt im Glauben an die Aussöhnung" *Die Zeit*, no. 43 (29 Oct. 1968): 4. According to Frank's obituary, Lily assembled and managed CFEAN's large file cabinet of contacts. In addition, Lily's hand is evident throughout the CFEAN files at the AOFAA. In his memoirs, Alfred Grosser states his mother only earned a part-time salary, but budget records indicate otherwise.

<sup>918</sup>This appears especially retrograde in light of French women's recent (and long overdue) acquisition of the right to vote and appearance on the ballot. The Constituent Assembly, for example, saw 33 women

had played a major role in the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft twenty years earlier, and women had regularly figured among the crowd at events hosted by the second incarnation of the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft and its twin, the Comité France-Allemagne in the second half of the 1930s as well as those held by the Groupe Collaboration. Not surprisingly, women had most often been active in the movement for cooperation as it related to education and student exchange or as it took the form of high society functions (except when explicitly excluded as with many Mayrisch Komitee events). Perhaps the Comité's dismissal of functions perceived as frivolous or elitist kept them from including women (or kept women away). But the Comité was well aware of the potential of women as well as of the interest of many in French-German relations: several women served in prominent positions in the French occupation administration of Germany, including Geneviève Carrez, who as the head of the "International Encounters" division of the Cultural Bureau, controlled the levers on French government funding to the Comité. What is more, the Comité made the effort to organize talks about women in contemporary Germany.

Aside from the board, which included over the years a total of 37 people, 28 of whom served more than two years,<sup>919</sup> it is not possible to determine much in the way of specifics about CFEAN's broader membership. In contrast to the records of several other organizations under review, no membership lists to CFEAN have been located. Budget records from the early-mid 1950s report 1,800 "active members" as well as between 1,000 and 1,200 student members. These 3,000 or so French members enjoyed free

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elected in October 1945. See Hilary Footitt, "The First Women Députés: 'Les 33 glorieuses'?" in *The Liberation of France: Image and Event*, ed. H.R. Kedward and Nancy Wood (Oxford: Berg, 1995), 132. On the "cult of virility" in the Resistance, see Julian Jackson, 507-508. For the postwar minimization of women's roles in the Resistance, see Kedward, *France and the French*, 315-316.

<sup>919</sup>Indeed, many stayed on through the end. Albrecht, 180.

admission to all CFEAN events and an annual subscription to *Allemagne*, the CFEAN bulletin. In addition to these French members, budgets indicate 1,000 to 1,250 foreign (i.e. German) “corresponding members,” who received the bulletin but were not considered full members. Finally, there were at most 300 “benefactors” of unspecified nationality, who contributed at least 1,000 francs annually to the organization.<sup>920</sup> Membership numbers probably remained relatively stable in light of the steady print run of the bulletin. If anything, the Comité witnessed some growth since the French administration noted with approval that CFEAN’s membership and income were on the rise.<sup>921</sup>

### *Coopération à la Résistance*

Notwithstanding the predominance of *résistants* in the Comité, it sometimes proved a challenge to differentiate its vision of cooperation clearly from the collaboration of just a few years before. Slippery rhetoric did not help matters. Moreover, the Committee did not settle on a unified, concrete definition of the cooperation it sought. On occasion, it resorted to negative definitions—finger-pointing at past and present instances of objectionable cooperation. This could serve to reinforce the notion that working with Germans was to be condemned. But, of course, the Comité had taken a different lesson

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<sup>920</sup>For membership statistics, see the following ledgers and budget reports: AOFAA AC 237. Alfred Grosser, *Projet de Budget pour 1953* (1 May 1953); AOFAA AC 380/7 Alfred Grosser, *Projet de Budget pour 1954* (13 Feb. 1954). The 1954 budget records reveal some inconsistencies from page to page in terms of expenses as well as income from both benefactors and associated members. The most significant discrepancy relates to the amount of subscription money flowing in from German corresponding members—400,000 versus 500,000 francs, hence the difference between 1,000 German readers and 1,250.

<sup>921</sup>AOFAA AC 159/35 No. 1608 HC/DC/RI. Carrez to Chef des Services Administratifs de la DGAC (25 March 1954).



from Vichy. Rather than turn away in disgust from all Germans, members sought to reclaim French-German cooperation from the collaborationists.

Though the act of collaboration with the Germans was still roundly condemned, (and, in fact, even CFEAN had to ward off criticism from those who believed the group to be unpatriotically collaborating with the enemy) the word collaboration did not (yet) carry a sting. Surprisingly, the term collaboration had not fallen out of use in France after the war. In 1948, for example, Vercors lectured at an international youth conference about the promise of future collaboration with the French should the Germans show signs of reform. He argued, “if Germany turns over a new leaf and shows its intentions for a loyal collaboration, it could find itself on France’s side.”<sup>922</sup> The Comité’s René Lauret invoked the term collaboration to praise the second annual meeting of French and German mayors in Switzerland in 1949, an early opportunity for municipal leaders from the two nations to interact.<sup>923</sup> Lauret’s positive use of the word “collaboration” between the French and Germans appeared in the bulletin directly above the usual box that listed membership fees, the organization’s leaders, and the fact that these leaders had not been condemned for “acts of collaboration with the enemy.”

Such unexpected juxtapositions reveal that the vocabulary of cooperation was as inconsistent and interchangeable as ever. A representative of the city of Paris expressed concern at a 1950 meeting of French and German mayors that, “One cannot suddenly present the French people with the fact of a close collaboration with Germany.”

Montbéliard mayor Lucien Tharradin responded, “But who dares still deny the necessity

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<sup>922</sup>Quoted by Strickmann, 201.

<sup>923</sup>René Lauret, “Rencontre en Suisse de maires allemands et français,” *Allemagne*, no. 2 (June/Aug. 1949): 3.

for rapprochement? . . . In the darkness of the current hour, we must seek a common path of mutual comprehension.”<sup>924</sup> Here, collaboration and rapprochement became exact synonyms, and even mutual comprehension seemed no different; Tharradin’s argument depended not on these interchangeable nouns, but the verbs and adverbs—the difference between seeking and suddenly placing the French before a fact. The French needed to move gingerly in order to overturn the general opposition to cooperation. The problem was not so much the goal, but how hastily to pursue it.

The Comité’s task proved challenging because of the dubious involvement in postwar Franco-German societies by former Nazis and Nazi sympathizers; to be sure, this development helps explain the Committee’s exclusionary terms for membership.<sup>925</sup> The head of the Propaganda Staffel in Lille—then forbidden from entering France—quietly slipped into the role of Secretary General of Hamburg’s *Gesellschaft Cluny der Freunde deutsch-französischer Geistesbeziehungen* after the war.<sup>926</sup> Similarly, a former editor of the occupation-era *Pariser Zeitung* served as co-president of the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft in Steglitz.<sup>927</sup> More notorious incidents drew the Committee’s ire. CFEAN excoriated a Maison de France event to launch a new French perfume because the

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<sup>924</sup>Lucien Tharradin, “Rencontres de maires français et allemands à Stuttgart,” *Allemagne*, no. 8 (Aug./Sept. 1950): 3.

<sup>925</sup>Indeed, a similar problem plagued the French occupation administration itself. Representatives of the French occupation government did not always have pristine records, free of ties to the Nazis. A number of collaborators served in the administration. See Willis, *The French in Germany*, 80-86. Some had ties to Franco-German organizations then considered pernicious. Maurice Grimault, head of the French military government in Germany from 1945-1947, for example, had belonged to the Comité France-Allemagne in the 1930s. See PA-AA R61396 Mitglieder des Comité France-Allemagne (20 Sept. 1939). Awareness of the problematic nature of such ties sometimes led to inquiries, even removal from posts. In one example, a French assistant’s teaching stint in occupied Germany was put in question because he had taken courses at the Institut Allemand in Paris and accepted a German Humboldt Grant during the war. See AN70 AJ30 Denis to Sauzin (5 Sept. 1946).

<sup>926</sup>The Cluny Society nonetheless was generally assessed quite positively. AOFAA AC 343/2b. Rapport sur la Cluny Gesellschaft—Société franco-allemande de Hambourg (24 March 1953).

<sup>927</sup>AOFAA AC 343/2a 342 MC-HG/HM, Henri Grange to M. Pechoux (3 March 1952).

company's publicity chief in Germany made an appearance: former deputy to Goebbels, Hans Fritzsche, fresh from Nuremberg. While *Allemagne* duly acknowledged the importance of "Rouge-Baiser" for "French radiance" abroad, the journal denounced Fritzsche's involvement that "legitimately scandalizes those German and French people who conceived of contacts between the two cultures in another perspective!"<sup>928</sup>

*Allemagne* likewise issued a sharp condemnation of talks in Stuttgart and Düsseldorf by collaborationists Maurice Bardèche and Alfred Fabre-Luce; its critique extended to the occupation authorities who let the offending intellectuals into Germany to unleash their self-serving propaganda. Collaboration and its attendant idea of Europe, *Allemagne* stressed, "had nothing in common with the democratic Europe that Western nations are trying to achieve today in the face of another totalitarian menace." The editors explained, "It still seems to us that the mission of the Allies in their zones of occupation in Germany is not to resurrect Nazism, even as a form of apologism for collaboration in France (. . .) Former collaborators with Hitler's Germany should not be 'articles for export.'"<sup>929</sup> Here, the legacy of back-to-back occupations became apparent as an obstacle to reconciliation.

Despite repeated efforts to distance itself from Nazi influence, CFEAN was not immune to similarly articulated—if more specious—attack from the French. Not surprisingly, cooperation efforts writ large were rendered suspect by some French nationalists. The moderately right-wing *L'Époque* accused CFEAN of forming "cabals" among what it dubbed "new collaborators." It argued, "The Committee is in favor of exchanges, in favor of love—and having hanged the fathers at Nuremberg, it invites the

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<sup>928</sup>"Culture, nazisme et publicité," *Allemagne*, no. 16 (Jan. 1952): 3 and the response to this critique: P. Arnal, "Culture, nazisme et publicité," *Allemagne*, no. 17 (Feb./March 1952): 3.

<sup>929</sup>Le Comité Français d'Échanges avec l'Allemagne Nouvelle, "Un scandale," *Allemagne*, no. 10 (December 1950/January 1951): 1, 6.

sons for friendly chats.” *L’Époque* proceeded to tie the spirit of CFEAN to that of the infamous Nazi-era Comité France-Allemagne.<sup>930</sup> Cooperation with Germany after the war was thus tantamount to collaboration with Nazi Germany; Germany was always, in this logic, the “bad Germany” of militarism and nationalism.<sup>931</sup> At the same time, this article pointed out the hypocrisies and “short memory” among CFEAN members who at once condemned the collaborators of old and yet were falling into a similar pattern. They had, according to the article, “taken the first step from rue Jacob,” site of their office, to Fresnes, the military prison that housed collaborators. This rather confused argument pitted the traditional “eternal Germany” thesis against the more hopeful wishes of CFEAN to find a better future in cooperation.

In the face of such critiques, the Comité struggled to justify its stance on cooperation; it was compelled to disentangle the notion of cooperation from that of collaboration. To do so, it stressed the idea of working with and toward a “new Germany.” The “new Germany” the Committee referred to had much in common with the 19<sup>th</sup> century notion of the “good Germany,” yet it also sounded a strikingly modern note. Indeed, CFEAN’s “new Germany” was expressly conceived as a force to combat postwar enemies. The Committee statutes explained that it aimed “to support Germans disposed to participate in a work of reconstruction in the international community in their battle against residual and renascent elements of Nazism.”<sup>932</sup> Rather than focusing on

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<sup>930</sup>“Attaques et mises au point. Le Comité au pilori,” *Allemagne*, no. 2 (June/Aug.1949): 6; Verdurin, “Plus ça change,” *L’Époque*, 29 April 1949. “Verdurin’s” article oozes bitterness and suggests a former affiliation with the Comité France-Allemagne as well as an allegiance to Charles Maurras. CFEAN assumed the piece was written by a resentful collaborator, a likely supposition.

<sup>931</sup>A similar accusation would be launched at supporters of the European Defense Community; they were the “new collaborators” for supporting German rearmament. See Rouso, *Vichy Syndrome*, 59.

<sup>932</sup>AOFAA AC 237 “Statuts” of the Comité français d’échanges avec l’Allemagne nouvelle.

reconciliation, the Comité focused on constructing Germans anew and “fight[ing] the return of demons.”<sup>933</sup>

Neither synonymous with the German Democratic Republic nor the Federal Republic, CFEAN’s “new Germany” represented an ideal. Even more than a decade after the war, the Comité maintained that the “new Germany” and the Germany of old still “cohabit and fight each other” as evidenced by the return of former Nazis to prominent positions in the Federal Republic.<sup>934</sup> The Comité, like the French press more broadly, observed alarming instances of militarism, nationalism, and frustration in the Federal Republic. But in pointed contrast to the French press as a whole, the Comité considered it a duty to take note of the strides taken by the so-called new Germany, from efforts toward democratization to the multiplication of contacts with the French.

Even some who wanted to work with the new Germany still harbored reservations about the Comité. CFEAN had to defend itself from those who saw it as “politically obsolete” in the wake of European initiatives such as the Schuman Plan. Surprisingly, the Comité agreed with the overall assessment that “everyone is for exchanges with Germany today,” a statement that flew in the face of BILD’s struggles as well as the Comité’s own political and financial problems. Perhaps this argument aimed to call attention away from the still controversial aspects of its agenda. But this does not explain why the Comité proceeded to mount such an awkward, counterintuitive self-defense. Rather than stressing the need to counterbalance political and economic efforts with social and cultural projects, much less underscoring the ways in which specifically Franco-German ventures could strengthen European ties, the Comité depicted itself as policers of cooperation. Its

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<sup>933</sup>Emmanuel Mounier, “Présentation,” *Allemagne*, no. 1 (April 1949): 1.

<sup>934</sup>Alfred Grosser, “Contrastes,” *Allemagne*, no. 41 (Feb./March 1956): 1.

task involved swimming “against the current that wants exchanges with no matter which Germany.” The Comité intended to enforce clear rules about what constituted proper company for the French. According to this logic, exchange was not an inherent good, and the risk of underwriting resurgent or neo-Nazis ran high. The Comité therefore promoted its ability to keep exchanges in check, not its ability to multiply or enhance such efforts.<sup>935</sup>

This was only one of the ways in which CFEAN differentiated its understanding of cooperation from that of its ally BILD.<sup>936</sup> Although the Committee board included a number of Christian Democrats and three theologians, the group steered clear of a Christian vision of cooperation. References to Western Christendom, Christian fellowship, or Christian values, common to BILD, were absent. Instead, when deploying a moral vocabulary, Committee members stuck to the language of secular humanism. Certainly, both groups saw the need for a return to older values systems after these had been eroded by National Socialism (and after the total discrediting of Nazi ideals).

Aligned by general principles—above all the dignity of the individual and an overriding sense of humanity—but divided by specifics, Committee members presented a nebulous notion of cooperation. Like the Weimar-era *Revue d’Allemagne* and *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau*, and to a much lesser extent, the Mayrisch Comité, CFEAN’s diverse composition and divergent perspectives could cross party lines to appeal to a broad base. Yet, this devotion to the appearance of balance left it to readers to determine

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<sup>935</sup>“L’Assemblée Générale du 27 janvier 1951,” *Allemagne*, no. 11 (Feb./March 1951): 2.

<sup>936</sup>CFEAN and BILD often co-sponsored talks and other events, and each helped publicize the activities of the other. A paucity of sources makes it difficult to determine the degree to which the two organizations worked together, however. In particular, it can be hard to grasp CFEAN’s precise role in various events, due to its often vague characterizations of its level of involvement; for example, the Comité often claimed to have “supported” or “helped” another organization with an event.

what was best for the future of Europe. It also meant that the bulletin, and the Comité alongside it, did not offer a united front; there was balance but not resolution.

*A new Germany and a new France?*

The Committee modeled the content of a reasoned Franco-German dialogue, but not the form; it did not rely upon a collaborative framework. A major tension lay in the fact that the Comité's French leaders in some ways aped the French occupier in their insistence on keeping Germans in a secondary role within the organization. Although the Comité worked together with German organizations, above all the Deutsch-Französisches Institut in Ludwigsburg, the group did not consider Germans as part of its community; they could neither run the organization nor join as ordinary members. Instead, its members advocated for Germany, and incorporated German voices into its broader message. Germans could participate in CFEAN-sponsored activities and exchanges; they could subscribe to its bulletin; they could even give talks and lectures at CFEAN events. In the meantime, Germans affiliated with CFEAN like Eugen Kogon publicly lambasted the Allied occupiers for their heavy-handed policies and their refusal to grant Germans a role in denazification efforts.<sup>937</sup>

Although Comité members—and above all Grosser—swore they rejected the paternalist dynamic between France and Germany embodied in the relationship between occupier and occupied, it is hard not to see some resemblance. Of course the idea that certain Frenchmen could steer Germans to a better future was elitist and more than a little reminiscent of the occupation itself. Grosser himself was only too aware of the

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<sup>937</sup>Speech given by Eugen Kogon at the Sorbonne on 9 May 1949; text reprinted as “L’Allemagne d’Aujourd’hui,” *Allemagne*, no. 2 (June/Aug. 1949): 1.

chauvinism of traditional French cultural politics epitomized by the government-run institutes that spread the glories of French culture and language throughout the world. In fact, the paternalist role of the French in the Comité reflected a certain *dirigiste* managerial style on the part of its members in the realm of culture. These men of impeccable reputation would steer the German sheep and even the German wolves toward the ideal they themselves had modeled. The experts would intervene and plan on behalf of (rather than in tandem with) the Germans. In broad strokes, this approach reflected the philosophy behind the short-lived Resistance Party (*Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance*): to shepherd the masses toward a new order.

But the Comité could point to three ways in which it differed from the government's unilateral cultural politics. First, the initiative for the Comité came from below. Second, CFEAN stressed exchanges (as evident in its name, the French Committee for Exchanges with the New Germany). This emphasis reflected members' beliefs that the Comité, unlike the occupation administration, distanced itself from the mentality of victors and the belief in the primacy of reeducation; instead, they purported to consider Germans as equals.<sup>938</sup> Finally, unlike the Allied occupiers, who tended to import new morals from the outside rather than cultivating German morals from within, the Comité sought to identify, then champion promising figures and trends among the Germans themselves. French members were "to help the newest, the most valuable elements in the state of fermentation in which Germany found itself."<sup>939</sup>

More convincingly, a set of implicit strategies differentiated CFEAN from official efforts and more compellingly addressed the tensions at its heart. Excluding collaborators

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<sup>938</sup> Alfred Grosser, "Emmanuel Mounier," in *Deutschland-Frankreich*, 275.

<sup>939</sup> Alfred Grosser, "Rencontres et échanges," *Allemagne*, no. 2 (June/Aug. 1949): 1-2.



as well as France's agents and spokesmen abroad meant that the Comité was neither complicit with French crimes of the past nor French diplomacy of the present; it therefore exercised the freedom to judge both. Not only did the Comité reject the Nazi model of cooperation out-of-hand, but it also dismissed the French occupation administration's efforts as insufficient. This critique was indicative of a broader agenda: as it guided the Germans, the Comité also wanted to steer the French toward renewal. Grosser explained, "Our Franco-German action is inseparable from our battle to make reason, law and respect for liberties triumph in France."<sup>940</sup> If CFEAN sought a new Germany, it also (less overtly) sought a new France.

When discussing Germany, Comité members often turned the tables and summoned France to account as well. An *Allemagne* editorial decried the French public's "systematic anti-Germanism that could only be a new form of racism" as well as the "attitudes and arguments inspired by a chauvinism analogous to that for which we could reproach the Germans."<sup>941</sup> In similar fashion, Rémy Roure asked the French, searching in vain for the new Germany, to turn inward and examine their own nation:

These old demons of Hitlerism, as we well know, have not been exorcised everywhere, and we are aware that the battle continues. These old demons, are they not [sic] all over the place on our side? Don't the neo-Nazis from across the Rhine find obliging auxiliaries, accomplices even in our country? The battle also continues at home . . . <sup>942</sup>

The Comité even regularly took the trouble to fault the French for their relative disinterest in establishing contacts with Germans and for the characteristic imbalance in

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<sup>940</sup> Alfred Grosser, "Information et politique," *Allemagne*, no. 72-73 (Dec. 1961/March 1962): 2.

<sup>941</sup> Comité Directeur, "Ce qui nous unit," *Allemagne*, no. 28 (Dec. 1953/Jan. 1954): 1.

<sup>942</sup> Rémy Roure, "Fidélité à Mounier," *Allemagne*, no. 24 (April/May 1953): 1.

requests for exchanges. In such cases, the Germans showed themselves more open to reshaping French-German relations than did the French.

Grosser and others on his team purposefully confronted each side, trying to make each side see the error of its ways. Rather than pinpoint common ground or explore the complementary aspects of Frenchness and Germanness as had many predecessors, the Comité mediated between the two peoples in a new, aggressive manner. Postwar renewal, then, was not to be marked by advising or reforming those across the border, so much as by self-improvement. For example, when the French public became outraged at a number of articles on the massacres at Oradour that surfaced in the German press, Jean Schlumberger tried to turn the criticism in the other direction. Whereas these offensive articles had appeared in a local rag (actually, cabbage leaves) with no national presence, Schlumberger argued, the French press as a whole was negligent for failing to report on current problems in Germany, often attributable to the French themselves.<sup>943</sup>

Although the Committee urged the French and Germans to work toward renewal and to stand on equal footing, its process of French-German cooperation was still driven by the French, not the French and Germans side-by-side, much less the Germans themselves. Crucially, this structural imbalance was set in place just before the possibility for truly reciprocal relations at the state level opened up with the foundation of the Federal Republic in 1949. The Comité elected to uphold that older dynamic rather than practicing parity *avant la lettre*, and it would remain a French venture until the organization folded almost two decades later. Although the Committee amended its membership restrictions for the French relatively early, its strictures against German

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<sup>943</sup>On Schlumberger's response, see Alfred Grosser, "Jean Schlumberger, l'Allemagne, et la morale politique," *Nouvelle Revue Française* 17, no. 195 (1 March 1969): 347-348. On the Oradour articles, see Erhard Becker, "La presse allemande depuis 1945," *Allemagne*, no. 9 (Oct./Nov. 1950): 5.

membership stayed in place. The condition barring those French who had been condemned for collaboration, however, quietly passed in October/November 1950 at the beginning of the debates over amnesty in the French Chamber of Deputies and a couple of months before the passing of France's first amnesty law.<sup>944</sup> The Comité, in theory, was more forgiving and more welcoming of French collaborators than of German resisters.

The Comité's perspective on German guilt—and therefore on the suitability of German participation in the French-German community—was more complex than that of BILD, which adamantly opposed the concept of collective guilt. CFEAN's exclusionary membership policies seemed to censure the German population as a whole, yet the Committee fought generalizations—including the concept of collective guilt—tooth and nail. Grosser explained that “the Germany with which we would like to work to prepare the building of an international community does not indiscriminately include all Germans: it would exclude those indisposed to erecting a new Germany.”<sup>945</sup> In this sense, the Committee adopted the general perspective of the two Germanies: that there were “good Germans”—the *Dichter und Denker*—and “bad Germans,” a cliché in French thought since the nineteenth century.<sup>946</sup> Grosser argued that most Germans had found themselves torn between the minority who actively supported Hitler and the minority who actively resisted him. He hoped to woo that uncertain majority.<sup>947</sup> Emmanuel

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<sup>944</sup>The German government similarly lifted some restrictions on former members of the Nazi Party in May 1951; still, CFEAN did not open membership to Germans whatever their personal histories. On this change in the Federal Republic, see Alf Lüdtke, “‘Coming to Terms with the Past’: Illusions of Remembering, Ways of Forgetting Nazism in West Germany,” *The Journal of Modern History* 65, no. 3 (Sept. 1993): 564.

<sup>945</sup>Alfred Grosser, “À contre-courant,” *Allemagne*, no. 14-15 (Oct. 1951): 1.

<sup>946</sup>Claude Digeon, *La crise allemande de la pensée française (1870-1914)*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959); Michael E. Nolan. *The Inverted Mirror: Mythologizing the Enemy in France and Germany, 1898-1914*. (New York: Berghahn, 2005).

<sup>947</sup>Alfred Grosser, “À contre-courant,” *Allemagne*, no. 14-15 (Oct. 1951): 1.

Mounier, who corresponded with Karl Jaspers, negotiated this same tricky terrain by arguing that the phrase “German responsibilities” better suited the postwar situation than “German guilt.”<sup>948</sup> Meanwhile, Eugen Kogon, the editor of the *Frankfurter Hefte* and friend to both CFEAN and BILD, explained to several hundred listeners at the Sorbonne as well as to *Allemagne* readers that he hoped to revise the two Germanies thesis such that it would refer to the conflicted moral compass within all Germans.<sup>949</sup>

Although the Comité did not grant Germans an equal voice, it still presented advantages to Germans associated with the organization, as well as to Germans more generally. After defeat, openness to France and cooperation with the French served to distance Germans from the nationalism, now considered ignominious, prevalent during the Nazi years. In the early stages of the Cold War, moreover, the kinds of contacts promoted by CFEAN helped contribute to West Germans’ anchorage in the West.<sup>950</sup>

The “new Germany” envisioned by the Committee was decidedly not a Communist Germany. At his first appearance for the Comité, Eugen Kogon told the Sorbonne audience that Germans had “no penchant for Communism,” whether in the West or the East.<sup>951</sup> From that point onward, the Committee quietly avoided dealing with the Cold War, East Germany, or the Communist Party. It justified this evasion on two fronts directly linked to the group’s broader ethos. First, the Comité’s reluctance to generalize and moralize meant it would not condemn the GDR out-of-hand. “We no more

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<sup>948</sup>AOFAA AC 33/2 No. 9383 DGAA/EDU 3 November 1947. Rapport sur les deux semaines de Lahr/Baden, 25-29 aout 1947; 1-4 septembre 1947.

<sup>949</sup>Eugen Kogon, “L’Allemagne d’Aujourd’hui,” *Allemagne*, no. 2 (June/Aug. 1949): 1.

<sup>950</sup>Jarausch, *After Hitler*, 105-111.

<sup>951</sup>Eugen Kogon, “L’Allemagne d’Aujourd’hui,” *Allemagne*, no. 2 (June/Aug. 1949): 5.

believe that all is bad in the East,” Grosser explained, “than we believe that everything is good in the West.”<sup>952</sup> Second, CFEAN’s mission to enlighten its readers would founder with regard to the East because information would not be easily verifiable for good or for bad. Aside from occasional objections to the lack of openness and liberties in the GDR, the Comité tended to keep its eyes glued to the West.

Although the Committee claimed to pursue a nonpartisan agenda, it included no Communists in its otherwise politically diverse ranks; moreover, its message spurned Communism. The absence of Communists was particularly glaring in light of the Committee’s makeup of resisters. Mounier, whose sympathies often aligned with the Communists in the early postwar years, had wanted the Communist résistant Robert Antelme to round out the board membership.<sup>953</sup> Grosser has since sketched the outline of his own intervention. In the face of Communist insistence on two Communists as co-presidents (out of five), Grosser called their bluff.<sup>954</sup> Grosser, who frequently has made clear his scorn for those following (any) party line, does not seem to have tried hard to negotiate with the Communist Party spokesman, as Mounier charged him to do. Instead,

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<sup>952</sup>Alfred Grosser, “Information et politique,” *Allemagne*, no. 72-73 (Dec. 1961/March 1962): 2.

<sup>953</sup>Antelme, whose 1947 *L’espèce humaine* (*The Human Species*) drew from his own experiences at Buchenwald, Gandersheim, and Dachau, would have been the third author of a major work on the camps to be associated with the Committee. David Rousset’s 1946 *L’univers concentrationnaire* (*The Concentrationary Universe*) and his 1947 *Les jours de notre mort* set out a political and moral interpretation of the camp system as well as a chronicle of camp life; his gaze centered on Buchenwald, where he had eventually been sent after his arrest for his Resistance activities. Eugen Kogon, affiliated with the Comité (though due to his Germanness not a member), had also written an account of the camps, based on his own experiences, *Der SS-Staat* (1946). Sartre, of course, had recently published *Réflexions sur la question juive* (*Anti-Semitism and Jew*), a completely different meditation on the recent past. Fellow existentialists who likewise addressed recent history, the German Karl Jaspers and the German-Jewish exile Hannah Arendt, never wrote for the bulletin, nor did they have any connection to the Committee more broadly. In 1950, Antelme was forced out of the Communist Party, but he never joined the Committee.

<sup>954</sup>Grosser, *Vie de Français*, 52. The presence of two Communists at the helm would surely have changed the thrust of the Committee. A Communist co-President of CFEAN, for example, would have opposed CFEAN’s change of rules regarding French membership; French Communists rejected the notion of amnesty. See Rousso, *Vichy Syndrome*, 51.

the plan to include Communists languished. Marxists, fellow-travelers, and sympathizers like Sartre, David Rousset, or even Mounier himself apparently were a different matter.

The Comité was, like most of its predecessors, nonpartisan but terribly politicized. Unlike many of its predecessors, however, the Comité did not attempt to couch its activism in apolitical terms: “As we conceive them, ‘cultural’ exchanges are not impartial. They are a political goal: the edification of an international community from where hatreds and national prejudices are excluded.”<sup>955</sup> This, then, was one of the first times an organization geared toward French-German cooperation acknowledged, and even championed, its aspirations as political. Cooperation—even in the form of “‘cultural’ exchanges”—was not relegated to the realm of culture, where it seemed less threatening (though, as we have seen, not always benign). Instead, an international politics was welcomed. At last, in the wreckage of war, culture could be seen as a necessary part of international politics, as heralded by the new charter of the United Nations.<sup>956</sup>

When, on occasion, the Comité claimed to steer clear of politics, it was disingenuous, at best a cover to maintain a semblance of neutrality, both national and party-based. After a brief, but firm critique of the French closure of the border between the Saar and the rest of Germany as well as of the French dismantling of German factories, for example, Grosser hemmed and hawed: “Let’s reiterate: we do not take a position on political questions. But we must say that the psychological consequences of

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<sup>955</sup>Comité Directeur, “Rayonnement culturel et le travail international,” *Allemagne*, no. 12 (April-May 1951): 3.

<sup>956</sup>Iriye, 140-141.

any act, word, or silence in the political domain risk rendering our efforts totally useless.”<sup>957</sup> Declaring neutrality did not make it so.

*Allemagne, Critical Engagement, and the Administration*

Alongside the more general (and more punitive) policies of denazification, demilitarization, decartellization, and reeducation pursued by the Allied occupiers, the French carried out a cultural policy in occupied Germany that relied upon a complex mixture of the traditional method of French cultural diplomacy via “rayonnement français” and a newer emphasis on exchanges and other activities that would help further Germany’s reintegration into the community of nations. In theory, Comité members as well as the French administration considered the CFEAN mission to be aligned with official efforts for exchanges, but in practice, the two parties often found themselves at odds.

The Comité maintained a complicated relationship with both the French occupation administration and its successor, the French High Commission. Like BILD, the Committee retained a large degree of freedom from the occupation authorities yet received much of its funding from their Cultural Affairs Bureau. BILD, however, received about five times as much funding from the French occupation authorities as did the Comité.<sup>958</sup> Moreover, CFEAN, headquartered in Paris, did not benefit so tangibly from the occupation as did BILD; it could not rely on a requisitioned premises or on bargain-basement German prices. The main advantage to a home in Paris was that CFEAN did not have to abide by the complex rules of living in an occupation zone.

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<sup>957</sup> Alfred Grosser, “Obstacles politiques,” *Allemagne*, no. 3 (1 Oct. 1949): 1-2.

<sup>958</sup> Strickmann, 133.

CFEAN, however, constantly struggled to make ends meet. The recently established international organization *Centre d'Échanges Internationaux* lent a barebones office to the Committee, which it in turn could barely afford to heat. More generally, budget troubles led the Comité to cancel its short-lived weekly radio program on *Südwestfunk* and to call off numerous talks and conferences. Regular advertisements for donations in the bulletin attest to the fact that subscriptions (that is, membership fees) alone could not keep the Committee afloat. Members who neglected to pay their dues damaged the organization's already small budget. At times, the Comité threatened those offenders, not with expulsion, but with the fact that their penny-pinching or carelessness placed the fate of the entire bulletin in jeopardy.

The Committee's journal *Allemagne: Bulletin d'Information du Comité d'Échanges avec l'Allemagne Nouvelle*, which aimed to inform the French public about the "new Germany," adhered to a basic newspaper format but only appeared every other month.<sup>959</sup> *Allemagne* not only covered topical affairs, but also publicized a range of Franco-German activities. With a print run of 5,000 copies, it attracted far more readers than did the Weimar-era *Revue d'Allemagne* or the *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau*.<sup>960</sup> Grosser termed the bulletin's circulation figure a success at the outset but conceded that

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<sup>959</sup>C.f. Albrecht, 177-189. Albrecht has noted *Allemagne* only appeared 3-4 times a year. She has characterized its content—unlike *Documents* or *Dokumente*—as reportage about French-German encounters rather than coverage of important developments in Germany. This is a rather misleading distinction; in fact, all three journals dealt with major trends (with regard to, for example, education, religion, and political parties) as well as with French-German encounters more specifically.

<sup>960</sup>For print run in 1953 and 1954, see AOFAA AC 237. Alfred Grosser, *Projet de Budget pour 1953* (1 May 1953); AOFAA AC 237 No. 1792 HC/DC/RI G. Carrez, *Note pour Monsieur le Chef des Services Administratifs de la D.G.A.C.* (27 June 1953); AOFAA AC 237 No. 3527 HC/DC/SA. Note from Spitzmuller to Monsieur le Directeur Général des Affaires Administratives et Budgétaires Services Financiers (15 July 1954). At its January 1951 General Assembly, the Comité noted that circulation then ranged from 4,000 to 6,000. See "L'Assemblée Générale du 27 janvier 1951," *Allemagne*, no. 11 (Feb./March 1951): 2.



its stubborn lack of growth represented a failure in the long-term.<sup>961</sup> Nonetheless, it represented a more stable readership than its contemporary BILD's *Documents*.

With regard to Germany, *Allemagne* staked out a position somewhere between other largely independent journals like BILD's *Dokumente/Documents* and French government-produced periodicals. Both *Dokumente* and *Documents* stood in stark contrast to their contemporaries because, in aiming for reconciliation, they tread carefully around the issue of Nazi atrocities. Publications with a German audience, including *Dokumente*, of course did not want to alienate potential readers by repeatedly calling attention to German crimes. But journals geared to a French audience were different. For that reason, *Documents*' strategic avoidance of condemnation and its hesitancy to draw attention to the power disparity of the occupation stands out. In contrast, administration propaganda like the *Revue d'Information des Troupes Françaises d'Occupation en Allemagne* insisted it would "recall each month the evil done by Nazism and the atrocities committed by its leaders; our readers will see in these painful pages the reasons why we are not allowed to forget that we are in an occupied country."<sup>962</sup> CFEAN's *Allemagne* bridged the difference: it consistently accentuated both the crimes of the past and the mistakes of the present without a sense of moral outrage or heavy-handed propaganda geared at those liable to succumb to sympathy for the Germans.

*Allemagne*, partially subsidized by the administration itself, lay behind much of the friction between CFEAN and the administration. The first issue set a tone for struggle. Alfred Grosser, its editor, boldly asserted that there would be "an entire column

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<sup>961</sup>Grosser, *Vie de Français*, 55.

<sup>962</sup>"Troupes de l'Armée d'Occupation: Voici Votre Revue," *Revue d'Information des Troupes Françaises d'Occupation en Allemagne*, no. 1 (Oct. 1945).

of the bulletin consecrate[d] to the errors and abuses of the French occupation in Germany.”<sup>963</sup> Although this column never materialized, the bulletin—and Grosser in particular—kept a critical eye on the French cultural administration in Germany as well as on independent French cultural efforts in the French zone. In turn, those criticized found the bulletin “polemical.” Accusing CFEAN of “biting the hand that feeds it” with “acerbic” criticisms, some administrators in the Bureau of Cultural Affairs put enough pressure on Grosser that he momentarily caved; Grosser vowed not to publish any more “‘unfounded’ criticism” in the subsequent issue of the bulletin.<sup>964</sup>

Certainly, the Comité more often and more avidly criticized the occupation administration than did BILD; *Dokumente* and *Documents* generally retained a far more diplomatic, less fiery tone than did *Allemagne*. The bulletin displayed a refreshing candor, complete with pointed remarks against the occupation administration, desperate pleas for more donations, reports of awkward and even downright ugly encounters between German and French students, and despairing reports on contemporary arguments over the Saar, the European Defense Community, and the resurgence of German nationalism (in particular among veterans).

Some contributors were quick to argue that the French—or the Allied occupiers more generally—had squandered their opportunity to reform Germany from within. If Joseph Rovin had emphasized the importance of France in shaping Germany’s future in his “*Allemagne de nos mérites*” series in *Esprit*, which began to appear even before the

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<sup>963</sup>As quoted in Strickmann, 310.

<sup>964</sup>See exchange of letters in February/March 1952 between Grosser, Spitzmuller, and Peyrefitte—as well as Edmond Vermeil’s attempt at peacemaking—in AOFAA AC 42/2. For another instance of a “misunderstanding” between Cultural Affairs and CFEAN, see Grosser’s plea of 29 March 1953 in AOFAA AC 380/7. For an example of the differences between Grosser and cultural administrators “on the ground,” see AOFAA AC 297/4 Director of the Institut Français in Stuttgart to M. Pechoux (22 Jan. 1952).

onset of the occupation, André Philip made clear in the bulletin that such expectations had been dashed by the time the Comité began its work. In 1950, this former Minister of the Economy, current deputy of the Rhône, and sitting President of the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe, lamented these lost opportunities, considering that “the German people awaited us with great hopes, truly as liberators rather than as victors, and at that moment everything was possible.”<sup>965</sup> In another example, Eugen Kogon lashed out against the Allied occupation at a talk at the Sorbonne in May 1949 (reprinted in the second issue of the bulletin); allied policies, he argued, were “condemned to failure beforehand.”<sup>966</sup>

Such overt critiques did not go unnoticed in official circles, and Grosser in particular was blamed for his infelicities. Like Otto Grautoff in the 1930s, Grosser had a remarkable gift for rubbing the authorities the wrong way, even those who supported his cause more broadly.<sup>967</sup> In part this was because Grosser tended to fashion the Comité as more committed to the new Germany than the Allied occupiers. In part, it was due to Grosser’s bluntness, both in person and in print. Grosser’s regular editorials in *Allemagne* were feisty and unpredictable; they injected the bulletin with a vitality often lacking in the serious, deliberate (and sometimes stodgy) analysis of its main articles.

In fact, most issues were packed with detailed articles from a fairly technical discussion of occupation costs to be paid by the Federal Republic to a panorama of the

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<sup>965</sup> André Philip, “Conditions du dialogue franco-allemand: Entre Socialistes (S.P.D. et S.F.I.O.),” *Allemagne*, no. 8 (Aug./Sept. 1950): 1.

<sup>966</sup> Eugen Kogon, “L’Allemagne d’Aujourd’hui,” *Allemagne*, no. 2 (June/Aug. 1949): 1.

<sup>967</sup> See, for example, the pointed comments scribbled in the margins of AOFAA AC 380 7 Jean Schlumberger to M. Spitzmuller (21 April 1954). Grosser’s boldness in criticizing the government is especially notable in light of his earlier (if brief) career as a government censor.

postwar German publishing industry.<sup>968</sup> More importantly, the bulletin worked hard to present a diverse array of French and German opinion. In this sense, like the *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* and the *Revue d'Allemagne*, the bulletin operated as a highly democratic forum, which, like its contemporaries *Dokumente* and *Documents*, sought to reintroduce open discourse after years of steady propaganda. A front-page seven-part series on the Franco-German relationship, for example, covered a different party's views from the perspective of one of its own representatives in each issue. An *Allemagne* article criticizing the occupation led board member Barthélémy Ott—who had regularly traveled to Germany on behalf of the National Assembly's foreign affairs commission—to cry foul and offer up his own defense of it.<sup>969</sup> This diversity of opinion was CFEAN's point of pride, a “guarantee of its impartiality [and] the essential element for France's and Germany's rising confidence in it.”<sup>970</sup> Reading *Allemagne* was a liberating experience, but, like those other journals, it offered no unified vision. With members' political differences and without the occupation authorities as a clear foil, *Allemagne* did not point readers to a clear platform.

The bulletin's array of political opinion—with regard to the occupation administration, the Schuman Plan, the European Defense Community—was paralleled by its contributors' varied assessments of the experience of French-German encounters. The voices of students, journalists, and laborers who partook in encounters (whether tied to CFEAN or not) and reported their experiences for the bulletin ranged broadly. If many

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<sup>968</sup>“Les frais d'occupation en Allemagne occidentale,” *Allemagne*, no. 8 (Aug./Sept. 1950): 8. This article was reprinted from *Frankfurter Hefte*; “L'édition en Allemagne,” *Allemagne*, no.11 (Feb./March 1951): 6.

<sup>969</sup>C.f. “De la Zone à la Trizone,” *Allemagne*, no. 1 (April 1949); Barthélémy Ott, “Des malentendus à dissiper,” *Allemagne*, no. 2 (June/Aug. 1949): 6, 8.

<sup>970</sup>Alfred Grosser, “Le Comité a-t-il encore un sens?” *Allemagne*, no. 17 (Feb./March 1952): 3.

articles recorded participants discovering others to be “men like us with whom we could live in perfect community,” others reflected more equivocal, and even quite negative experiences abroad or at encounters. One student complained that a European youth conference in Fritzlar he attended had largely served as excuses for shallow high school students to enjoy a nice vacation and for Americans to propagandize against Communism. Contributors to the bulletin also showed how a careless word could sour the impressions of an entire group and reinforce precisely the ideas such efforts meant to combat. In one example, a seemingly innocent discussion about the Korean War turned into an uncomfortable reminiscence about hunting partisans in the Savoy.<sup>971</sup>

Its wide range of perspectives points to the fact that the Comité enjoyed a more ambivalent relationship with the French administration than that evidenced by their periodic squabbles. One of the organization’s first public acts was to side with the leading newspaper of the French zone, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and denounce as a “stupidity” a recent clarification of French policy. The occupation administration had announced that the death penalty could not be applied to those under age thirteen; the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and CFEAN, hardly six weeks old, were incensed at the administration’s heartlessness. Still, the Comité refused to let the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* off the hook for its polemical and ill-informed assault on the French administration.<sup>972</sup> Even as it censured the occupation authorities, it defended them from the German paper’s faulty reporting.

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<sup>971</sup>C.f. Willi Schneider, “Au chantier international de Blois,” *Allemagne*, no. 14-15 (Oct. 1951): 16; Philippe Dreyfus, “La Semaine de Jeunesse Européenne à Fritzlar,” *Allemagne*, no. 14-15 (Oct. 1951): 15; W. Damberg, “Les contacts peuvent faire du mal...Contacts sans tact,” *Allemagne*, no. 16 (Dec. 1951-Jan. 1952): 7.

<sup>972</sup>Subsequently reprinted as “Ein deutscher Protest und eine französische Antwort,” *Dokumente* 5, no. 1 (1949): 89-91. See also the “Streiflicht” column in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* from 4 Nov. 1948 and 16 Dec. 1948.

CFEAN, moreover, took care to offer praise where it was due. From the start, the Comité publicly recognized the achievements of the occupation administration in the cultural realm. Its criticisms lay, not in the effectiveness of its services, but on the limits of budget and personnel—along with the resistance from the other occupiers to allow French programs in their zones—that prevented the mushrooming of exchanges and cross-border contacts. Mounier himself had signaled his appreciation for the work of the cultural administration in the realm of youth exchanges. In *Le Monde*, he at once praised these efforts and slammed the broader allocation of resources within the occupation administration: “if I were God in the office of German affairs, I would let go many gendarmes and would liberally give power to our office for youth and sports that has already achieved the most admirable—and the most modest—work of the occupation.”<sup>973</sup> More generally, *Allemagne* ceded prime place to the promotion of administration-sponsored programs.

CFEAN’s measured critique of the French administration only occasionally shifted into high gear. When push came to shove, the Comité did not hold back its contempt for policies it viewed as careless or retrograde. If, early on, the Comité regretted the ways in which budgetary constraints precluded the occupation administration from mounting the sheer number of exchanges and programs its members had hoped for, in due time it began to question those initiatives the administration promoted altogether. Due to budgetary cuts in the early 1950s, the French High Commission in Germany chose to reduce the role of its (largely propagandistic) Press Bureau in favor of concentrating its cultural resources on “international encounters”—the

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<sup>973</sup>Emmanuel Mounier, as quoted in Alfred Grosser, “Emmanuel Mounier,” in *Deutschland-Frankreich*, 274.

kinds of activities favored by both BILD and CFEAN—as well as on French cultural institutes. This shift signaled the end of France’s unilateralist policies in Germany and a new emphasis on a more equilateral partnership of exchange.<sup>974</sup> Soon thereafter, however, the administration placed all its eggs in the basket of these cultural institutes. CFEAN, BILD, and other independent organizations lambasted the government’s return to old models of French cultural diplomacy.<sup>975</sup> The Committee’s sustained critique against what it considered traditional (and outmoded) French cultural politics—the famous *rayonnement français* that Hans Manfred Bock has called the “hegemonic view” of cultural politics aimed at cultural penetration<sup>976</sup>—brought the wrath of some in the administration.

If the Committee recognized a certain value in the spread of French high culture, it found it served only a narrow set of goals:

It is justified from the national point-of-view, and (we are weak enough to buy into it) from the point-of-view of the cultural progress of all nations. But we must not delude ourselves about the contribution that such a cultural radiance brings to the construction of peace.<sup>977</sup>

According to this line, the French administration was regressing by falling back upon the chauvinist policies of French Institutes abroad and by ignoring the successes, not only of

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<sup>974</sup>Corine Defrance, “Éléments d’une analyse de la politique culturelle française en Allemagne à travers son financement, 1945-1955,” *Revue d’Allemagne et des Pays de Langue Allemande* 23, no. 4 (1991): 499-518, 509-510.

<sup>975</sup>Corine Defrance, “Les relations culturelles franco-allemandes dans les années cinquante: Acteurs et structures des échanges,” in *Wandel und Integration: Deutsch-französische Annäherungen der fünfziger Jahre/ Mutations et intégration: Les rapprochements franco-allemands dans les années cinquante*, ed. Hélène Miard-Delacroix and Rainer Hudemann (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2005): 243-245; Emmanuelle Picard, “Les réseaux du rapprochement franco-allemand dans les années 1950,” in *Wandel und Integration*, ed. Miard-Delacroix and Hudemann, 258-262.

<sup>976</sup>Bock, “Initiatives socio-culturelles,” 307-308.

<sup>977</sup>Comité Directeur, “Rayonnement culturel et le travail international,” *Allemagne*, no. 12 (April-May 1951): 1, 3.

BILD and CFEAN, but even of its own cultural bureau in Germany that had successfully organized encounters and exchanges, first through the “Youth and Sports” division, then through the “International Encounters” division.

The Comité’s critique brought not only the wrath of the administration, but also protests from other organizations geared toward improving the French-German relationship. The Director of the French Institute of Stuttgart considered CFEAN (as well as its frequent ally, the Deutsch-Französisches Institut in Ludwigsburg) an agitator. Replete with “polemic,” the bulletin, according to the Stuttgart Institute, spread calumnies about the institute’s work. The Committee, it seems, encouraged the broader French public to avoid the various French Institutes so that they could see the authentic Germany; more specifically, it indicted these government-run institutes as “instruments of a tele-directed propaganda.” The Institute singled out Fritz Schenk of the Ludwigsburg Institute for praise, but his Parisian counterpart Alfred Grosser went unmentioned.<sup>978</sup>

From the administration’s perspective, turning its gaze toward French Institutes did not entail giving up on exchanges so much as it meant “pass[ing] the relay” to private efforts to coordinate exchanges; such cuts made sense in light of the occupation administration’s fading role in Germany.<sup>979</sup> Accordingly, the administration was pleased by whatever strides CFEAN and BILD made. By 1954, the administration lauded CFEAN’s “constructive and courageous position in the face of a certain number of delicate problems,” namely the resurgence of French-German hostilities. Even Grosser’s

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<sup>978</sup>AOFAA AC 297/4 No. 242/DGAC/RC/sp Directeur de l’Institut Français de Stuttgart to M. Pechoux (22 Jan. 1952).

<sup>979</sup>Corine Defrance, *La politique culturelle de la France sur la rive gauche du Rhin 1945-1955* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1994), 289-290.



most strident opponent in the administration commended the group's efforts.<sup>980</sup> The French-German dynamic still swayed with the political winds, as made clear by tensions over the Saar and the European Defense Community. CFEAN tried to ensure that when these winds blew, the French-German relationship did not snap altogether. It was at these moments that the Cultural Bureau most appreciated CFEAN's efforts, as it "contribute[d] to maintaining, at a difficult juncture, a necessary dialogue with objectivity and courage."<sup>981</sup> And it was at these moments that the Comité felt the need to redouble its efforts.<sup>982</sup>

Quarrels notwithstanding, the French administration proved a loyal ally to CFEAN, above all by providing regular (if somewhat paltry) subsidies. However it may have balked at CFEAN's apparent duplicity, the administration vastly preferred it to some of its counterparts. Organizations spearheaded by Germans were especially susceptible to French mistrust. A group in the Berlin suburb of Steglitz known as the *Deutsche Gesellschaft zur Pflege der Beziehungen mit Frankreich* [German Society for the Care of Relations with France] was viewed with suspicion by French authorities as an insidious alter ego of CFEAN. Whereas the Comité allowed only French members on its steering committee, the Steglitz association included only German members. Moreover, the Steglitz group fashioned its name as a direct response to the Comité; both concerned themselves with the "care of relations" with the neighboring nation. The German group,

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<sup>980</sup> AOFAA AC 380/7 No. RC. 3RI Baillou (Service de l'Enseignement et des oeuvres) to M. L'Ambassadeur de France (undated letter, 1954); AOFAA AC 380/7 No. 01888 Spitzmuller to Bidault (29 March 1954).

<sup>981</sup> AOFAA AC 159/35 No. 1608 HC/DC/RI. Carrez to Chef des Services Administratifs de la DGAC (25 March 1954).

<sup>982</sup> See, for example, Alfred Grosser, "Après les élections sarroises," *Allemagne*, no. 22 (Dec. 1952-Jan. 1953): 8.

located in the American zone, rankled French authorities because it retained no ties to the French at all.<sup>983</sup> It thus had the potential to misread, or worse, distort French intentions and actions. French officials, of course, did not harbor such concerns over the one-sidedness of CFEAN. Imbalance only presented problems when it favored the other party.

### *Style and Substance*

The Comité sought to tilt the Franco-German conversation away from hatred and love, stereotypes and myths, and even culture and history, and turn instead toward concrete policy issues. Grosser, for one, was pleased to see debates reoriented around specific policy initiatives, such as the Schuman Plan. In fact, he believed the Comité had helped contribute to this new casting of the German question in France. He expressed the hope that CFEAN could help facilitate hard-nosed discussion without itself imposing an agenda:

But we above all have to make an objective discussion possible, to unmask false problems, and to lay down the real facts—without having to recommend solutions. That the discussion turns more and more on economic and social questions, that one speaks of steel, coal, wages, and no more of Eternal Germany or decadent France—that's considerable progress.<sup>984</sup>

Age-old habits, talk of the obscure, the elusive, the abstract—of the qualities of Frenchness and Germanness—would only lead back to the black hole. CFEAN was at heart the product of a political scientist, focused on contemporary issues, and veering between antagonistic and agnostic toward high culture as an instrument for cooperation.

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<sup>983</sup> AOFAA AC 343/2 Telegram from Haussaire Berlin to Haussaire Bonn, D.O.A.F., and to DGAC/Cons. Adm. (18 March 1950). Signed Noblet.

<sup>984</sup> Alfred Grosser, "Le Plan et l'Opinion," *Allemagne*, no. 8 (Aug./Sept. 1950): 1-2.

Whereas BILD's attitude toward the future was noticeably bright, the Committee adopted a harder realist stance. There would be "no sentimental effusions, no lyricism, no overestimation of what has been achieved. We have sometimes been reproached for killing enthusiasm, for discouraging goodwill in this way,"<sup>985</sup> Grosser noted. The Committee promoted a more reasoned, dispassionate approach and spurned the repression of the past. This attitude reflected a point Mounier had expressed as early as March of 1945: the need "to put in parenthesis all sentiment and resentment to consider with coolness and lucidity the problems, the possibilities, the impossibilities" for Germany.<sup>986</sup> Accordingly, the Committee praised a conference at the University of Hamburg in which German and French participants expressed their divergent perspectives on such controversial issues as the administration of the Saar and Ruhr without resorting to "slogans" or "outrageous language." Through such discussions, participants "could convince themselves that only a debate of this kind, conducted without passion or forgetting, could lead to constructive solutions."<sup>987</sup>

Rather than reverse emotions—to transform fear and hatred into curiosity and affection—the Committee tried to filter emotions out of the equation altogether. Whereas BILD operated on two different tracks, on the one hand, analyzing French-German relations in *Documents* and *Dokumente*, and on the other hand, humanizing French-German relations through person-to-person contacts, the Committee supported such contacts but largely pursued the more clinical route. Its insistence on rationality and objectivity reflected a broader postwar trend to steer clear of the excessive emotionalism

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<sup>985</sup> Alfred Grosser, "Numéro 25," *Allemagne*, no. 25 (June/July 1953): 2.

<sup>986</sup> In "Pour une politique allemande," *Esprit* (March 1945): 379 as quoted in Falbisaner, 269.

<sup>987</sup> "Le Congrès Universitaire de Hambourg," *Allemagne*, no. 3 (1 Oct. 1949): 3.

associated with Nazism.<sup>988</sup> The experience of the German occupation further reinforced skepticism of abstract rhetoric.<sup>989</sup> Some have argued that the “generation of 1925,” to which Grosser belonged, embraced a staunch realism and a ““desire for the concrete,”” a direction in evidence at the Comité despite the board’s generally older composition.<sup>990</sup> Grosser in particular insisted that French-German relations be governed by facts, and therefore meted out corrections regularly.

Though perhaps constructive, cool detachment impeded the kind of zeal and affection generated by BILD. Participants in BILD conferences and exchanges often recalled their experience in emotional terms, both in the short and long-term. The Committee’s more empirical approach meant that warm testimonials were few and far between. In light of Grosser’s persistent fear that the French had become indifferent to Germany after the war—a condition as difficult to reverse as hostility—an insistence on measured analysis and dispassion might not have represented the wisest strategy. Yet, at the same time, surely it went a long way to dispel the superficial ardor, the feel-good but hollow gatherings that Grosser and others assumed their predecessors had been. The Committee worried that BILD-like events could seamlessly slip into Comité France-Allemagne-style preening or, equally useless, shameless self-congratulation or empty drivel.

The conviction that Weimar-era groups failed due to an excess of sentimentality—an accusation that would have made those activists blanch as it was

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<sup>988</sup>Lüdtke, 550.

<sup>989</sup>Wilkinson, 53.

<sup>990</sup>Alan B. Spitzer, “Born in 1925,” *French Politics, Culture & Society* 24, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 48. The quotation comes from Jean-François Lyotard. This emphasis on the concrete also informed the key postwar journal for the French intellectual community, *Les Temps Modernes*, run by, among others CFEAN members Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. See Wilkinson, 82.

precisely that reproof that dogged them at the time—drove CFEAN to dismiss emotional strategies. Zeroing in on the perceived fatal flaw of its predecessors allowed the Committee to suggest its own possibility for success. Yet, perhaps unconsciously, the Comité's prosaic view of cooperation borrowed from the perspective of Otto Grautoff, who had similarly distanced his Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft from "sentimentalists" and insisted upon the realist platform of his group.

As a general rule, the Comité pulled its weapons from the arsenal of other Franco-German groups. Like the Mayrisch Komitee, members of CFEAN spent an inordinate amount of energy deconstructing stereotypes and generalizations. The Comité, above all Grosser, refused to boil Germany, Germans, or Germanness down to essentials. Regular reports about contemporary German society, for example, broke down the analysis of "Germans" by class, education, occupation, age, confession, party, and so forth. There was no such thing as a typical German. As Grosser argued, "these collective words—'they,' 'them,' 'the Germans'—correspond as little to today's reality as to that of yesterday."<sup>991</sup>

To be sure, such concerns about entrenched notions of Germanness were even more warranted than in the past; needless to say, the Nazi years had reinforced certain stereotypes about the Germans. Literary critic René Lalou expected more complex reasoning from his compatriots. A few years before the creation of the Committee, he wondered, "are the French to renounce generosity and the critical sense to the point of confusing Mozart with Hitler, Goebbels with Thomas Mann?"<sup>992</sup> The Comité tried to

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<sup>991</sup> Alfred Grosser, "À contre courant," *Allemagne*, no. 14-15 (Oct. 1951): 1.

<sup>992</sup> From *Le Populaire*, 21 Oct. 1944, as quoted in Stuart Atkins, "Germany through French Eyes after the Liberation," *The German Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (May 1947): 182.

show precisely how rejecting all Germans in this way made little sense. Applying the same logic used to exclude many a fellow Frenchman, the Committee scorned the concept of collective guilt for the Germans. Just as not all of France had resisted, not all of Germany was responsible for the sins of the Nazis. This point rang especially true among CFEAN members who had lived in camps together with Germans hostile to the regime.

This refusal to label Germans—and alongside it, a broader fixation with identity—marked the work of many associated with the Comité. Not only did such ideas permeate most of Grosser's writings, they also meshed well with the fluidity of Mounier's self-positioning and the philosophy of Sartre. In 1951, Élie Gabey—a colleague of Sartre's both at the Comité and more prominently at *Les Temps Modernes*—published an interview with the celebrated philosopher in *Allemagne*; the headline tellingly read, “I don't admit the existence of an eternal German because I refuse to be an eternal Frenchman.”<sup>993</sup> As in his *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Sartre decried the condition of being categorized and defined by others.

In its quest to combat reductionist conceptions of Germany, the Committee aimed to unravel myths, for example that of the “eternal Germany.” But it also strived to add nuance to what it viewed as simplistic attempts to resolve the German question. According to the Comité, repressing the past to view all Germans as “good Germans” after 1945—a way to “unite against the common danger” of Communism—represented as gross a generalization about Germans as the old myths. In this way, the Committee sought to cut through quick and easy methods of reconciliation in order to bring about an accurate, logical, and incisive debate.

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<sup>993</sup>Élie Gabey, “Entretien avec Jean-Paul Sartre,” *Allemagne*, no. 10 (Dec. 1950/Jan. 1951): 3.

Some within the Committee held that the effort for cooperation needed to be grounded in a thorough overhaul of language itself—that stereotypes and clichés developed out of words rather than observations. Drawing upon the ideas of Dolf Sternberger, Robert d’Harcourt explained in *Allemagne* the need for “reform of thought, which is at the same time a reform of vocabulary. The negative stereotyped formulas bear a heavy responsibility. Misunderstandings that create a rift between peoples often originate in words.” *Allemagne* therefore championed the erection of an “Institute of Political Philology.”<sup>994</sup> To this end, crafting a new set of linguistic referents to describe those across the Rhine would reframe the terms of debate and ultimately reorient the Franco-German relationship altogether. Absent loaded terminology, French and Germans could have a controlled conversation reined in by this new linguistic ethical code.

Overall, the Comité seemed to prefer the banal to the spectacular as a measure of success. Mainly, it concerned itself with rigorous analysis of the issues of the day (including acting as a watchdog organization) and with the promotion of regular cross-border contacts. The Comité did not set up elaborate exchanges or newsworthy charitable campaigns, so much as it trumpeted the efforts of others and sought to connect individuals to one another or to initiatives of interest. In small, quotidian efforts, the Comité saw authenticity. Certainly, Grosser preferred substance over flash and evinced more edge than affability. CFEAN’s seriousness may also have stemmed from the general discrediting of pomp and spectacle after years of Nazi rule.

It is hard to quantify the effectiveness and scope of the Comité’s work as an intermediary. Blurbs in *Allemagne* attest to a multitude of one-off events and exchanges

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<sup>994</sup>Robert d’Harcourt, “Les clichés malfaisants,” *Allemagne*, no. 3 (1 Oct. 1949): 1. This article was juxtaposed with one critical of the political passions and “violent language” of the German electoral campaign. See Alfred Grosser, “Obstacles politiques,” *Allemagne*, no. 3 (1 Oct. 1949): 1-2.

CFEAN helped arrange. CFEAN brought a group of visiting metal-workers from Suresnes into contact with counterparts from Solingen, for example. It devised educational itineraries for groups traveling on other organizations' dime. It helped find au pairs or host families for individual exchanges. Most of these efforts proved thankless work; CFEAN found itself scolding those who benefited from its services yet did not bother with membership in the group.

The Comité favored exchanges and encounters, especially those that transpired in everyday settings, such as the workplace, where professional interests could help dictate a more concrete conversation. As an intermediary, it therefore helped arrange internships in factories and businesses on both sides of the Rhine, assisted other organizations to put on conferences and exchanges, and facilitated arrangements for those on grants and scholarships. By stressing interpersonal contacts as a means to overcome animosities and to view their counterparts across the Rhine as equal partners, the Committee hoped to orchestrate a conversation outside the context of the power dynamic. Conferences, roundtables, and large lectures with several hundred in the audience at a time aimed at what scholars have (rather inelegantly) dubbed multipliers—individuals such as teachers, clergy, and journalists who would pass along what they learned directly from CFEAN into classrooms, churches, and the media throughout France.

CFEAN tried to target the broadest possible audience. In fact, it scorned cultural events that it viewed as geared toward the “bonne bourgeoisie,” that is to say classical music concerts, theater, and art exhibits. In a similar spirit, it refused to help ordinary tour groups whose itineraries might be confined only to stops at the casino and the Folies Bergère. Grosser's vision of French-German understanding both spurned superficial



contacts among the upper crust and turned away from older notions of achieving understanding through a heightened awareness of high culture. If groups like the Mayrisch Komitee and the Comité France-Allemagne had promoted these—and the more inclusive Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft worked at several levels to boost understanding by increasing contacts between citizens (both ordinary and elite), cultivating their sense of high (and popular) culture, and informing them about contemporary society, CFEAN rejected any variant of cooperation that reeked of elitism. Instead, it encouraged a more “authentic” understanding of contemporary society alone; high culture, according to Grosser, had little power to reshape the French-German relationship. As Grosser explained, “To know a country’s wines, or even its music, is not to know the country, for we also need to know what are the economic and social and political problems which confront it. It is good that since 1945 Brahms is more often heard in France and Ravel in Germany, but mutual ignorance and distrust are not to be dispelled in that way. A French article on the German refugee problem does more to promote understanding than the translation of ten volumes of Goethe.”<sup>995</sup>

Thus, a key thrust of the Comité and its bulletin was to reach out to the masses, if not as members *per se*, at least as participants in French-German contacts. Over and over again, Grosser stressed the need to incorporate a broad base, to avoid the perceived elitism of prior French-German organizations. This democratic outlook was not universally shared. Jean Schlumberger, for one, considered it the function of intellectuals,

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<sup>995</sup> Alfred Grosser, *Western Germany from Defeat to Rearmament*, trans. Richard Rees (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1955), 234.

artists, and experts to improve the public mind.<sup>996</sup> Certainly, public improvement represented another major component of the Comité's efforts. The Comité's work landed between the two philosophies: independent experts would enlighten and guide the masses about Germany. No light entertainment for the masses; this was a pedagogical project.

Though the Comité criticized its forebears for their elitism, even the old-fashioned Otto Grautoff had recognized the power of film in attracting and educating the broader public almost two decades earlier. If such cultural standbys of earlier French-German organizations as classical music concerts, plays, and art exhibits catered mostly to the middle and upper-classes, such events nonetheless attracted crowds. Entertainment, whether in the form of high culture or popular culture, not only would have helped draw an audience, but also could have added another form of enrichment to the Comité's program. Instead, its insistence on rigorous content limited its audience and thereby blunted its potential impact. It is surprising that such a critique of elitism did not lead the Committee to look more closely to popular culture. Surely the Comité could have sponsored jazz concerts (as the Americans did so successfully) or fashion shows to exhibit the allure of French culture to the masses. Barring that, it could have held sporting events to facilitate cross-border interaction. Its main concession to popular culture was to screen short films at the Musée Pédagogique in Paris.

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<sup>996</sup>See, for example, the way in which Schlumberger bemoaned the recent abuse of the subtleties of the French language in Jean Schlumberger, "La Langue Française: Peut-elle encore servir la paix?" *The French Review* 20, no. 2 (Dec. 1946): 113-114. At this time, Schlumberger was also actively involved in debates over revamping the newly nationalized French radio. Schlumberger struck a hard line against appealing to the taste of the masses; instead, he hoped to refine public sensibilities through radio. See Jon Cowans, "Political Culture and Cultural Politics: The Reconstruction of French Radio after the Second World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, no. 1 (Jan. 1996): 146-147, 153, 163. Schlumberger offered up a defense of high culture as a means of bringing about "mutual comprehension" in the bulletin as well, see, Jean Schlumberger, "Difficultés et facilités des rapports franco-allemands," *Allemagne*, no. 30 (April/May 1954): 1.

### *Continuities and Changes*

As much as we can see CFEAN for what it claimed to be—a wholeheartedly new response to the postwar order, informed by a very particular experience of the war and the Resistance—we can also see the group revisiting familiar models from the past. Most notably, CFEAN represented a return to the Weimar idea of understanding as a basis for cooperation. The group’s statutes referred to reciprocal knowledge, and its activities—above all its articles, talks, and debates—promoted the achievement of understanding through a dialectical process. Grosser’s pointed refusal to use words like friendship or reconciliation<sup>997</sup> distanced the Comité from its contemporary, BILD, and at the same time brought it closer to its Weimar antecedents.

Although the Comité drew upon earlier efforts for French-German cooperation, it maintained an ambivalent view of that legacy. CFEAN only acknowledged Nazi-era groups like the Comité France-Allemagne/Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft and the Groupe Collaboration in the negative sense, as foils against which to define its mission. It likewise tended to distance itself from Weimar-era organizations, even as it included several veterans from the Weimar years and tapped into important structural and rhetorical elements from their earlier efforts.

Comité member René Lauret had contributed a regular column, “The Chronicle of Today’s Politics,” to the *Revue d’Allemagne*, a column that he could have neatly transferred into CFEAN’s contemporary-minded bulletin. And yet, by the late 1940s, he treated Grautoff and Boucher’s earlier effort as a mere curiosity. At a 1949 talk, Lauret mentioned “once again leafing through the interesting journal *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau*,” and duly noted the many men of “good will and great talent” who

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<sup>997</sup>Grosser, *Vie de Français*, 81.

contributed (without naming himself as an occasional contributor or referring to his recurring role in the larger project). The *DFR*, explained Lauret, had been filled with French and German explicating, debating, and complaining about the differences between the two peoples without recognition of the other side's perspective. Lauret's dismissal of the effectiveness of the *DFR/Revue d'Allemagne* did not lead to a plea for new strategies. Instead, Lauret braided multiple approaches. He fell back upon the old dictum of the Mayrisch Komitee: the need to cleanse the press of falsehoods that stir up misunderstandings. Lauret joined to that idea a stress on the importance of cross-border contacts (reminiscent of the DFG, the Sohlbergkreis and BILD). The new element in Lauret's argument was to fold that combination into the European framework—and even here, he could not help referencing Weimar-era efforts.<sup>998</sup>

By (rather unjustly) implying that its predecessors had been dupes, the Committee projected success for itself. Barriers to success were not external, but internal, and in that realm, the Committee had taken precautions. Yet not all its members saw the Committee as such a break from previous efforts. Former Mayrisch Komitee member Jean Schlumberger recognized that the context had changed from the aftermath of one war to the aftermath of the next. But he averred that the goal of both committees remained the same: “The sinister Hitlerian parenthesis was closed; there was only to resume the patient work where one had left off some fifteen years earlier at the time of the Mayrisch Komitee and of the tragic series of missed opportunities.”<sup>999</sup> He did not specify whether he referred to missed opportunities on the part of the Komitee, or likelier, on the grander

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<sup>998</sup>Lauret's January 1949 talk to the *Gesellschaft für Auslandskunde* in Munich was reprinted in full as, René Lauret, “Französisch-Deutsche Missverständnisse,” *Dokumente* 5, no. 4 (1949): 293-305, see especially, 295-296.

<sup>999</sup>Jean Schlumberger, *Oeuvres. Tome VII (1944-1961)* (Mayenne: Gallimard, 1961), 81.

political plane. But it was clear in Schlumberger's mind that the work of cooperation had merely been put on hold.

At a meeting to discuss the 1954 Franco-German Cultural Accords, Edmond Vermeil exhibited a tendency among the old guard to muddle past and present efforts. Vermeil noted his pride in belonging to CFEAN, but mistook its founding moment for 1946 (not surprising, given Vermeil's extensive participation in Franco-German projects over the years). More tellingly, he cited Mounier's initial "simple directive" for the organization as "se connaître" (to get to know one another). *Se connaître* had been the journal title for the interwar *Ligues des Études Germaniques*, over whose board Vermeil had presided; it was not a catchphrase associated with the Comité. Throughout his remarks, Vermeil invoked a vocabulary reminiscent of interwar efforts for cooperation. He spoke of better understanding (*se mieux comprendre*), and mutual knowledge (*connaissance mutuelle*).<sup>1000</sup> This slippage between Weimar-era efforts like the *Mayrisch Komitee*, LEG, and even the *Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft* speaks to the many ways in which CFEAN extended the work of its forebears. If the circumstances had changed dramatically since Weimar, some players imagined themselves still playing the same game, on the same team.

Mounier himself was still addressing the difficulty of solving the French-German problem in the same terms Pierre Viénot had invoked in the 1920s. While urging a realist approach, Viénot had also mourned the lack of imagination brought to bear to find solutions. Echoing Viénot, Mounier argued in 1949: "On the one hand, we could have too little imagination and tackle the problems of the twentieth century with the mental

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<sup>1000</sup>Comité de Liaison de la Résistance, *L'Accord Culturel franco-allemand du 23 octobre 1954* (Paris: Publications de Documentation de la Résistance, 1955): 2-5.

[geistig] and political means of the nineteenth;” on the other hand, he worried, fellow activists might suffer from “too much [imagination], in that we believe that some situations have finally come to an end that have not yet been irrevocably resolved by events or which, thanks to similar cycles, could arise again.”<sup>1001</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In its insistence on avoiding all reductionism, the Committee presented a more challenging—and more difficult to absorb—set of core ideas than BILD’s broader, more flexible position. CFEAN approached the Franco-German dynamic in past and present incarnations more realistically, if more confrontationally than BILD. Whereas BILD attracted adherents by setting aside blame in the present (and alleging a past of mutual resistance to the Nazis) and focusing on Christian duty to a brighter future, the Committee relied on mutual purging and dispassionate analysis to address the past, present, and future. BILD aimed for reconciliation, the Comité for truth. The Committee had the luxury of late birth—three years after the war—when outreach could be seen as a bit less revolutionary and such shortcuts were less necessary.

The lag between the creation of BILD and the creation of CFEAN—the difference between 1945 and 1948—was tremendous. Indeed, the first issue of *Allemagne* appeared mere weeks before the birth of the Federal Republic with the signing of the Basic Law in May 1949. Accordingly, the Committee by and large dealt with, not the French military government, but the High Commission. Because of this issue of timing, CFEAN could immediately set its sights on a more forthright conversation between the two peoples; it also could count on a greater willingness among the French to appear at the side of

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<sup>1001</sup>Mounier as quoted in Alfred Grosser, “Emmanuel Mounier,” in *Deutschland-Frankreich*, 271.

Germans. In 1947, both Edmond Vermeil and Robert Minder showed their hesitancy to participate in French-German events by declining (along with others) their invitations to attend BILD's Writers' Conference at Lahr; by the next year, they and many others, chose to go to Royaumont for BILD's second such conference.<sup>1002</sup> That same year, both lent their names to the infant Comité.

Although the Comité adopted the more provocative tone, it was the seemingly less radical BILD that, in the end, provided a more effective model of cooperation. On the surface, with its religious leadership and its calls to revive the Church, BILD appeared the more conservative. But, with teams and members from both sides of the Rhine, and above all, with its activities that captivated a wider public, BILD managed to convince a broader base to consider their former enemies as friends. CFEAN worried about the durability of such emotional ties without having first laid a detached framework for conversation. Its unabashed intellectualism made for a more remote, less inclusive form of cooperation that clashed with its democratic impulses. In the end, the Comité functioned well enough as a watchdog, an intermediary, but its associational side remained relatively undeveloped.

CFEAN's insistence on injecting reason into the public discourse did not mesh well with its desires to attract the everyman. And this was only one of the many blindspots of the group. The Comité reached out to Germany and stood on the side of exchanges, but it was too wary to include Germans in the group itself. It asserted its belief in equality, yet its *dirigiste* approach suggested otherwise. These internal tensions highlight the difficulty of what its members were trying to attempt.

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<sup>1002</sup>Strickmann, 145-151.

The Comité, in effect, was far more successful in defining itself against past models than it was in articulating a specific and comprehensive prescription for the present. Its inchoate vision of cooperation, closely tied to its resolution to display a diverse makeup (on the French side), is indicative of the extent to which proponents of cooperation struggled to figure out how to situate their mission in the first decade after the war. Its loose agenda was symptomatic of postwar disorientation. As the contours of both the Cold War and the European movement were taking shape around them, champions of French-German cooperation had to determine what they could agree on as well as where they fit in the larger political landscape. Caught between chasing the ghosts of the past and plotting a more positive course to the future, CFEAN could not settle on a clear path. In later years, it at last unequivocally latched onto the European project.

CFEAN's ultimate triumph lay in helping to reshape the intellectual landscape. Members went on to publish an array of revisionist histories that recast the French-German relationship. René Lauret's 1960 *Notre voisin l'allemand*, for example, aimed to consign France and Germany's "heavy baggage" to history. Others advocated for expanding the notion of German studies in France beyond literature and high culture to include a more sweeping examination of German "civilization." And Grosser's entire career would be dedicated to carrying on a sophisticated, rational dialogue between the two nations.<sup>1003</sup>

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<sup>1003</sup>René Lauret, *France and Germany: The Legacy of Charlemagne*, trans. Wells Chamberlin (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964), see especially p. 260. On Germanists looking beyond traditional categories of analysis, see August Stahl, "Joseph-François Angelloz (1893-1978)," in *Germanisten im Osten Frankreichs*, ed. Gerhard Sauder (Sankt Ingbert: Röhrig, 2002), 57-83 and Gonthier-Louis Fink, "Robert Minder (1902-1980) Französischer Germanist und Essayist," in *Germanisten im Osten Frankreichs*, ed. Gerhard Sauder (Sankt Ingbert: Röhrig, 2002), 109-153. For Grosser, such works began with Alfred Grosser, *Western Germany from Defeat to Rearmament*, trans. Richard Rees (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1955), followed by a long list of books and regular columns in *L'Express*, *Le Monde*, *La Croix*,



In many ways, the vision of Weimar-era activists had come full circle. If many former résistants dreamed of radical social change, they found in the Committee both a far-reaching vision and modest, concrete action that seemed to chip away at the political reality of Germanophobia. The Comité fostered a critical spirit, geared toward reforming both nations as a way to improve the relationship between the two. Seeking to imbue both peoples with a humanitarian, truth-seeking ethos, it modeled the kind of tempered conversation the two should have. Its humanist, progressive spirit not only drew from the Weimar era, but from the age of Weimar itself; the Comité, according to Rémy Roure, took Goethe's last words to heart: "more light!"<sup>1004</sup>

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*Ouest-France*, and *L'Expansion*; in addition, he often gave commentary on television in both France and Germany.

<sup>1004</sup>Rémy Roure, "Fidélité à Mounier," *Allemagne*, no. 24 (April/May 1953): 1.

## CONCLUSION

When the present fails, the past can usually be counted on to cause friction between France and Germany.<sup>1005</sup>

The tale of cooperation, both in its Franco-German and European variants, seems a straightforward narrative. After a series of false starts such as Locarno, the efforts of Coudenhove-Kalergi, and the League of Nations (and perhaps including wartime collaboration), the Second World War served as a catalyst for change. French-German relations mended as Europe united around that core. But from the vantage point of the late 1940s, it would have been possible to consider cooperation in a different light, one where those past examples were not so much false starts as important way stations.

The older strands of cooperation have had a fainter echo in popular memory. The more dominant narratives of enmity, war, and occupation overshadowed the work of Franco-German activists. Collaboration also seemed to break the link between the Locarno era and postwar efforts at cooperation. Furthermore, proponents of Franco-German friendship helped mask continuities. Each of the groups under question sought to stress its originality, its ability to overcome the alleged failures of its predecessors. Thus, while civic activists recycled personnel, ideas, and methods, they rejected their debts to

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<sup>1005</sup>“Froideur, Angst, or All in the Mind?” *The Economist*, 26 March 1994, 57.

the past. And those who did claim a stake in past efforts at cooperation often did so for less than idealistic motives.

To justify their wartime actions, former Nazis and Nazi sympathizers underlined the connections between their activities in the 1930s/1940s and those undertaken in the postwar period by advocates of European integration. Deploying a language of cooperation they had helped shape, they sought to demonstrate their long-term interest in France and in Europe. French-German cooperation and European integration represented, in this reading, the culmination of their efforts. Otto Abetz, Fernand de Brinon, Friedrich Grimm, and Jean Luchaire, for example, defended their reputations by employing these narrative strategies in their memoirs or in the courtroom. They could easily identify examples of their past activities to promote cooperation and cultural exchange. And in the 1950s, Abetz and Fritz Bran—along with their old friend and Sohlbergkreis colleague Friedrich Bentmann—reinserted themselves into the project for cooperation by joining a small association in Karlsruhe known as the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft. In this way, they, like such members of CFEAN as Jean Schlumberger, renewed old ties to French-German societies. The roads to cooperation, as these individuals demonstrate, were diverse.

These twisted, often circuitous itineraries in part reflect the tumultuous years of the early-mid twentieth century. Advocating cooperation almost always meant swimming against the tide of nationalism. Moreover, the key ruptures of the 1930s and 1940s—the rise of the Nazis, war, the German occupation of France, and the French occupation of Germany—forced multiple reconsiderations of Franco-German relations. For some, 1933, 1940, or 1945 (or some moment in the middle) represented an insurmountable

barrier on the path to cooperation, or at least a significant detour. Others, daunted but not undeterred, continued on the trail of cooperation, adjusting their ideals to evolving geopolitical and ideological circumstances. For some, these forks in the road led not to fruitful engagement, but to the dead end of collaborationism.

Mapping these itineraries is further complicated by the willingness or necessity of activists to reappraise, renew, and recycle their strategies to fit the shifting geopolitical landscape. Most notably, they stretched, compressed, or reshaped notions of cooperation to suit the needs of the present, their ideological perspectives, and their diagnosis of the root causes of the Franco-German antagonism. Cooperation turned out to be an extraordinarily malleable concept that captured a sense of idealism, could imply serving the national interest, and spoke to a variety of people with very different sensibilities.

Franco-German activists were revisionists with regard to the idea of cooperation as well as in their constant reinvention of the project by which to achieve it. Their process of re-fashioning reveals each iteration as less original than contemporaries often claimed. Indeed, these divisions and re-divisions of French-German activists constitute an important narrative. The repeated reincarnations of the movement for Franco-German cooperation are indicative of an essential desire of these groups: to wipe away the burdens of history. Their mission was in part to create Franco-German friendship, which either required the forgetting of the grand narrative of contentious Franco-German relations or the manipulation of this saga into one that left an opening for cooperation. To refer to past efforts that had not somehow changed the Franco-German dynamic (and thereby eradicated the need for any such society) would be to undermine the enterprise. Almost every new group, then, cribbed its concept, but uprooted its sources. In this way,

each new effort would seem a revolution to the uninitiated. An insistence on novelty thus helped legitimate each mission—they were crusaders embarking upon uncharted territory—and reach new converts.

Looking at transnational ties complicates the national narratives that we have become accustomed to in French and German history. Even in calamitous, hostile times, the mental (and sometimes physical) borders between the two peoples remained porous. French and German activists worked together in different ways with the aims of simply getting to know one another and, more ambitiously, trying to achieve entente, understanding, peace, or even reconciliation. Many considered their work as an alternative to reframing French-German relations via the more traditional exercise of hard or even soft power. Through a form of people's diplomacy, they could achieve more than the diplomats by (re)molding public perceptions of the nation across the Rhine.

Fundamental and shifting geopolitical asymmetries had a profound impact on the direction and scope of efforts for French-German cooperation. The fact of imbalance—especially the problem of occupation—meant that despite activists' desires (professed and/or genuine) for reciprocity, true partnership would be difficult to achieve. The cases examined here have each centered on Franco-German dialogue. Often the dominant partner in these conversations paralleled the dominant power. But time and again the dominant partner sought ways to soften or even reframe the larger French-German relationship in ways that seemed more inviting and palatable. And even in this imbalance, the weaker partner still had a say and was invested in the relationship.

In many ways, the history of Franco-German cooperation mirrors a twentieth century Europe marked by long-term continuities despite numerous upheavals. The

challenges of relating this story reflect the kinds of problems our historical subjects faced: how to bridge and ideally overcome tremendous ruptures. In exploring how these activists questioned seemingly impassable divides—national, social, cultural—and then observing how they carried this understanding across the dramatic upheavals of twentieth century life, we can try to determine how they made sense of their world.

This dissertation helps reshape the way we look at cooperation in twentieth century Europe. It complements the scholarship on postwar Franco-German and European cooperation undertaken by economic and diplomatic historians, while arguing that intellectual and cultural efforts likewise played an important role in fostering healthier international relations. At the same time, it offers a corrective to that literature by showing that the quest for cooperation was not simply a postwar construct, but in fact emerged from the Locarno era.

Some scholars—along with some postwar French-German activists—have castigated efforts for rapprochement (whether political or cultural) in the interwar era for their ineffectiveness or have even pegged them as all-out failures. But as Gilbert Krebs has argued in the case of the pacifist movement, this work was not wholly in vain. Though they were a failure in the short-term, those early initiatives provided the “first sketches of a dialogue between France and Germany.”<sup>1006</sup> In similar fashion, Ilde Gorguet has suggested that, while futile at the time, the pacifist movement in the 1920s served as a “conceptual laboratory” for post-1945 efforts for French-German reconciliation.<sup>1007</sup> I argue, in contrast, that by focusing on proponents of cooperation, we can see that the conceptual laboratory never closed and its experiments continued. Not only did French-

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<sup>1006</sup>See Krebs, “La paix par la jeunesse,” in *Sept décennies de relations*, ed. Krebs, 188.

<sup>1007</sup>Gorguet, 297-305.

German activists draw upon the arguments, rhetoric, and approaches methodically worked out during the age of Locarno after 1945, but they also did so in the intervening years. As much as some may have warped the larger intent of Locarno-era activists, those pursuing cooperation in the Nazi era still built on foundations laid in a more democratic age. Postwar champions of cooperation like Alfred Grosser also considered their predecessors as negative, but no less important models. Perhaps more concretely, and equally important, the efforts of the Locarno era were not fruitless; they established ties between specific people both to be continued during the occupation years and thereafter.

Expanding our time frame beyond the interwar period reveals that, in fact, this has been a story of *repeated* failure. Most of these organizations failed both in terms of their specific purpose and in their larger goal of ending the Franco-German enmity. This neither discounts the importance of examining their efforts, nor does it undermine the value of their work. Even in their failure, Franco-German organizations were always sowing the seeds for future entente. Traditional diplomacy seemed to have gone nowhere, and diplomats' efforts always appeared to have been framed reactively and negatively. Civic activists in both France and Germany opened up a space where new, more positively framed discussions about cooperation could take place. Here, they could finesse both their understanding of cooperation and their actual relationships with individuals from the other side of the border. The organizations they built took practical steps toward understanding, and just as importantly, served as laboratories in which to imagine and then test out new forms of cooperation. Such organizations expanded the capacity to view the other nation in a positive, or at least more nuanced, light.

Their repeated attempts point to the overwhelming challenges confronting the project for cooperation. The ability of enmity to overshadow amity is reflected in the ongoing struggle that civic activists encountered both in their repeated failures in the face of war and occupation, and in their inability to become etched into popular memory. Few iconic moments of French-German cooperation can be called to mind: Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer embracing upon the signature of the 1963 Élysée Treaty (Treaty of Franco-German Friendship), François Mitterand and Helmut Kohl holding hands at Verdun in 1984. But Napoleon marching through the Brandenburg Gate, German troops parading down the Champs Élysées in 1871 and 1940, surrenders in the Hall of Mirrors or in the train car at Compiègne make for much more striking images. They are at once more memorable and more frequently reproduced.

Yet surely the history of twentieth century Europe is not only one of conflict, but also of the attempts to overcome those conflicts. Activists laid out overlapping and increasingly dense networks of devotees of cooperation, networks that transcended both national borders and the borders between the worlds of diplomacy, business, media, the academy, and the arts. Independent efforts for cooperation adopted a broader range of strategies and remained far more flexible than official government efforts. These organizations not only promoted the idea of cooperation, they practiced cooperation. In so doing, they cultivated a relationship that over time has developed into friendship. If this friendship still requires constant nurturing, it has at least, since the Élysée Treaty, been stamped with each state's seal of approval.



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