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Source: *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Sep., 1959), pp. 225-242
Published by: The University of Chicago Press
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1875584
Accessed: 12-02-2020 07:17 UTC

MAXIME WEYGAND AND THE FALL OF FRANCE: A STUDY IN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS[1]

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WHEN Premier Paul Reynaud announced that he was summoning General Maxime Weygand from Beirut on May 19, 1940, the French public understood but one thing: the heir of Marshal Foch was returning to rescue France from total defeat at the hands of the hereditary enemy. If the French fleet, under the command of a personage described as the most jealous if not cunning of modern naval officers, Admiral Darlan, did not exactly hoist its standards to proclam that "Maxime is back"—as had its ally at Churchill's appointment as first lord—there was, as borne out by innumerable contemporary and retrospective accounts, a universal *haut les coeurs!*[2] Admittedly, the average Frenchman knew very little about Weygand, beyond the not very revealing facts that he had served under the revered Foch as chief of staff during the war of 1914–18 and had also been "head of the army" at some undefined point in the previous decade. The more sophisticated might have been able to add that he was illegitimate, the putative son of Maximilian of Mexico or Leopold of Belgium, that he was an ultra-conservative who allegedly detested the republican regime, and that he had a following in the army opposed to the "clans" of the other two military chiefs, the current commander, Maurice Gamelin, and the apparently indestructible hero of Verdun, Marshal Pétain.[3]

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[1] The basic research for this article, which includes military documents of the French government and extensive interviews with General Weygand and almost all of the principals involved in the defeat of 1940, was made possible by a Fulbright Award and aid from a Townsend Travelling Fellowship from Harvard University in 1950–51.

[2] Léon Blum, untitled article in *Le Populaire,* May 20, 1940, p. 1; Louis Marin, "Gouvernement et commandement (I)," and A. Reussner, "La réorganisation du haut-commandement au mois de mai 1940," in *Revue d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale,* VIII (1952), 8 and X-XI (1953), 49–59, respectively. For a discussion prior to May 10 of the alternative appointment of General Alphonse Georges or General Henri Giraud see the testimony of Paul Reynaud, Dec. 7, 1950, and of General Paul de Villelume, Apr. 17, 1951, in Assemblée Nationale, *Commission d'enquête parlementaire sur les événements survenus en France de 1933 à 1945. Rapport. Témoignages et documents* (Paris, 1951–54) (This work contains reports, documents, and testimony, and will be hereafter cited as *Commission . . . Rapport, Commission . . . Documents,* or *Commission . . . Témoignages.*), VIII, 2388 and IX, 2795–96, respectively. (Hereafter, when the testimony of more than one witness, or testimony of the same witness taken on different dates, is cited, the pages referred to will follow in the same order.); Paul Reynaud, *La France a sauvé l'Europe* (Paris, 1947), II, 96 and 124–28; Gen. Maxime Weygand, *Mémoires* (Paris, 1950–57), III, 85–86; Gen. Maurice Gamelin, *Servir* (Paris, 1946–47), III, 427; Paul Baudouin, *Neuf mois au gouvernement, avril–décembre 1940* (Paris, 1948), pp. 9 and 60; and André Géraud ["Pertinax"], *Les fossoyeurs* (New York, 1944), I, 81–82.

[3] See François Le Grix, *En écoutant Weygand* (Paris, 1949), pp. 7–17; Henry Bordeaux, *Weygand* (Paris, 1957), pp. 1–135 *passim;* R. Mennevée, "Le 'Cas' Weygand; les influences étrangères dans la politique française," *Documents politiques,* XVI (1935), 125–33; Raymond Recouly, "Un chef: Weygand," *Annales politiques et littéraires,* CIII (1935), 456–57; Géraud, I, 9–51 and II, 9–56; and Jacques Benoist-Méchin, *Soixante jours qui ébranlèrent l'Occident* (Paris, 1956), III, 493–519. Cf. Henri de Kerillis, *Français,*

None of this information answered the really essential question on everyone's lips: Did this general possess the qualities necessary to master a revolutionary military situation? This question certainly figured in the public reaction to the widely circulated statement Weygand allegedly made upon assuming the supreme command from the heir of Joffre, Gamelin, on May 20: "I have the secrets of Foch!"[4] The verdict of history is, of course, that Maxime Weygand, while the holder of remarkable talents, did not have the qualities of the hero, revolutionary in thought and deed, who alone could provide the answer at this desperate moment. But at least a hint of the verdict could have been obtained by the interested observer from a brief and dispassionate look at Weygand's record as a military thinker, planner, and politician during the previous ten years. In the most general terms, such a look would have revealed that while Weygand understood the fundamental changes in military doctrine which had developed especially since 1933, he had not recognized the tempo of these developments any more than had the other two members of the inter-war "Heavenly Triumvirate," Pétain and Gamelin, and had failed to implant the expectation of rapid change and the specific outlines of it in his subordinates and colleagues while in command or in retirement.[5] He was not an original military thinker, not a Fuller, Eimannsberger, Guderian, Douhet, or Billy Mitchell; he was not, in the words of the most faithful of his subordinates, the desperately needed "chief who would pound on the table and give orders."[6] He was an intelligent and devoted follower who had, in terms of the problem involved, little sense of urgency.[7]

voici la vérité! (New York, n. d.), pp. 231–46; Gen. Edouard Réquin, *D'une guerre à l'autre, 1919–1939* (Paris, 1949), pp. 206–89; and Gen. Victor Bourret, *La tragédie de l'armée française* (Paris, 1947), pp. 118–46. See also Cdt. Jacques Minart, *P. C. Vincennes, secteur 4* (Paris, 1945), pp. 21–81; Gen. Emile Laure, *Pétain* (Paris, 1941), pp. 361–85; and Georges Loustaneau-Lacau, *Mémoires d'un français rebelle, 1914–1948* (Paris, 1948), pp. 47–160.

[4] This statement, which epitomizes the rivalry between the two men, is affirmed in the testimony of Gamelin (Dec. 23, 1947) and denied in that of Weygand (May 24, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* II, 533 and VI, 1679. See also Weygand's testimony, Aug. 1, 1945, in Haute Cour de Justice, *Compte rendu . . . des audiences. . . . Procès du Maréchal Pétain* (Paris, 1945) (hereafter cited as *Procès . . . Pétain*), p. 156; Gamelin, III, 433–38; and Minart, pp. 197–202 and 222.

[5] Weygand's role in the debate on theory and application, bearing especially upon the questions of armored warfare and the *Instruction . . . tactique des grandes unités* of 1936 was reviewed in the testimony of Gen. Julien Dufieux (Apr. 20 and June 15 and 20, 1948), Gen. Bruneau (July 6, 1948), Gen. Devaux (Dec. 23, 1948), Gen. Marcel Bloch-Dassault (Feb. 10, 1949), and Weygand (Mar. 31 and May 24, 1949) *Commission . . . Témoignages,* IV, 865–98, 1037–76, and 1097–1136, V, 1163–90, 1137–66, and 1459–78, and VI, 1593–1612 and 1673–1718. See also Weygand, *Mémoires,* II, 352–55, 407–8, and 427–28, and *En lisant les mémoires de guerres du Général de Gaulle* (Paris, 1955), pp. 11–17; Charles de Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier* (Paris, 1934), and *Mémoires de guerre. I, L'appel, 1940–1942* (Paris, 1954), pp. 4–25 and 40–41; P. Reynaud, *Le problème militaire français* (Paris, 1937), and *La France,* I, 484–506; and Géraud, I, 21–205. Cf. Philippe Pétain, "La sécurité de la France au cours des années creuses," *Revue des deux mondes,* XXVI (1935), 1–20, and his preface to Gen. Narcisse Chauvineau, *Une invasion est-elle encore possible?* (Paris, 1939), pp. v–xxi; and Gamelin, I, 223–86. See also Gen. Georges Ferré, *Le défaut de l'armure* (Paris, 1948), pp. 49–79 and 160–225; Gen. J. Boucher, *L'arme blindée dans la guerre* (Paris, 1953), pp. 28–63; Henry Contamine, "Vers une réhabilitation du système militaire français en 1939?" *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire moderne,* Nov.–Dec. 1949, pp. 3–7; Gen. A. Laffargue, *Justice pour ceux de 1940* (Paris, 1952), pp. 83–112; and Gen. Alfred Conquet, *L'énigme des blindés, 1932–40* (Paris, 1956), pp. 59–126.

[6] Testimony of Georges (Feb. 26, 1948), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* II, 758.

[7] "When the storm broke, the *instruction* of the armored divisions was so recent that the

Neither was the new generalissimo a revolutionary in the matter of matériel. There were specific mitigating factors, to be sure. During his term as chief of the general staff and designated wartime commander from 1930 to 1935, Weygand had been engaged in an exhausting diversionary battle against parliamentary attempts to reduce the army's cadres, effectives, basic armaments, and budgetary appropriations below the survival limit. The policy of the assembly had prevented him from developing the general structure of modern armaments much beyond the strictly prototype stage.[8] In the rather seminaristic parlance of the French military hierarchy, "never in the confidence" of Gamelin, the post-1935 generalissimo, Weygand had not been informed of current developments in armaments during his retirement.[9] But he had enough general knowledge of the situation to be aware of serious shortcomings in the armaments programs.[10] Nevertheless, obeying a perhaps too narrowly defined code of professional and patriotic duty in which the sense of urgency was again lacking, he had quite deliberately shunned the role of a prophet in the wilderness crying the need for an advanced arms structure before it was too late.[11] He confined himself instead to careful, meticulously balanced judgments concerning the state of the army in brochures, articles, speeches, and private conversations.[12] This complex

executants had not yet had time enough to translate principles into reflexes" (A. Wauquier, "Les forces cuirassées dans la bataille," *Revue d'histoire de la 2e. guerre mondiale,* X–XI [1953], 162). See an implicit admission of faulty judgment in the matter of doctrine in Weygand, *Mémoires,* III, 79, 143–44, and 561; and Gamelin, I, 273, and 373–74. Cf. Brigadier E. D. H. Tollemach, "French military training for defeat," *Quarterly review,* CCLXXVII (1941), 180–91; and Gen. Marcel Boucherie, "Les causes politiques et morales d'un désastre: 1940," *Revue de défense nationale,* XIV (1958), 413–16.

[8] See Weygand's report on the state of the army, dated Feb. 10, 1934, in *Commission . . . Rapport,* I, 92–126; and testimony of Gen. de Sablé (Mar. 29, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1579–92. Also, J-M. d'Hoop, "La politique française du réarmement, 1933–1939," and J. Vial, "La défense nationale: son organisation entre les deux guerres," *Revue d'histoire de la 2e. guerre mondiale,* XIV (1954), 1–26, and XVIII (1955), pp. 45–116 respectively; Jean Fabry, *Février 1934–juin 1940. De la Place de la Concorde au cours de l'Intendance* (Paris, 1942), pp. 88–97 and 126–73; Gen. J. Armengaud, *Batailles politiques et militaires sur l'Europe. Témoignages, 1932–1940* (Paris, 1948), pp. 9–38; Gen. G. Roton, *Années cruciales, 1933–1940* (Paris, 1947), pp. 42–49; and Pierre Cot, *Triumph of treason* (New York, 1944), pp. 177–90 and 301–35.

[9] Weygand, *Mémoires,* II, 445–46 and 514–16, and III, 11. Cf. Gamelin, II, 138–39, 141–49, 261, 306, and 357.

[10] Letter of Weygand to Alexandre Millerand in June, 1939, in Charles Reibel, *Les responsables. Ma déposition devant la cour suprême de justice* (Paris, 1941), p. 57. See also documents in *Commission . . . Rapport,* II, 177–236; testimony of R. Jacomet (July 18, 1947), P. Cot (Aug. 1, 1947), Guy La Chambre (Nov. 25 and 27, 1947), Georges (Feb. 5, 1948), Albert Lebrun (June 1, 1948), R. Dautry (Jan. 11 and 18, 1949), Gen. Rinderknech (Feb. 15, 1949), Gen. Happich (June 2, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* I, 187–214 and 263–86, II, 295–366, III, 625–42, IV, 961–82, V, 1389, VII, 1945–2036, V, 1479–92, and VI, 1717–58. Cf. Gamelin, I, 192–222; Lt. Col. C. de Cossé-Brissac, "Combien de chars français contre combien de chars allemands le 10 mai 1940?" and Col. Pierre Paquier and Cdt. P. Lyet, "Combien d'avons allemands contre combien d'avions français le 10 mai 1940?" *Revue de défense nationale,* V (1947), 75–89 and VI (1948), 740–59, respectively; Gen. Maurice-Henri Gauché, *Le deuxième bureau au travail* (Paris, 1954), pp. 109–60 and 237–39.

[11] Weygand, *Mémoires,* II, 445–46, and testimony (May 24 and June 9, 1949) *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1673–75 and 1774.

[12] See his *La France, est-elle défendue?* (Paris, 1937), *Histoire de l'armée française* (Paris, 1938), "L'état militaire de la France," *Revue des deux mondes,* XXV (1936), 721–36, "L'unité de l'armée," *Revue militaire générale,* I (1937), 15–19, "How France is defended, address at Chatham House, May 16, 1939," *International affairs,* XVIII (1939), 459–77, and preface to Gen. Raymond Duval, *Leçons de la guerre d'Espagne* (Paris, 1938), pp. i-vi. See also Weygand's privately expressed

circumspection on the part of a famous general had carried its own penalties. Following his version of duty, Weygand had got himself into the uncomfortable situation of making at Lille, just before the outbreak of the war, the famous statement: "The French army has greater value than at any other moment in its history."[13] In the context of the situation of May 1940, such a statement could be compared only with Marshal Leboeuf's equivalent "gaiter-button" prognostic of July 1870.

Since the prospective commander was not the revolutionary *deus ex machina* alone capable of winning the hour—and where could one be found in the French military hierarchy at this time?—he was going to face a primarily political, not military, situation. Here, also on the basis of his pre-war record, Maxime Weygand had a reputation. This is not to suggest that he was a military meddler like General Noël de Curières de Castelnau of the anti-masonic committees, nor a military plotter like General E. Dusseigneur of Cagoule notoriety, nor even a military solitary with a hidden but powerful thirst for power like Pétain. In the course of his long military career, however, Weygand had found himself in posts of great responsibility during every major crisis between the civilian and the military authorities since 1914. The first two of these events—the command crisis of December 1916, involving Joffre, Foch, and Briand; and the crisis of authority surrounding the Armistice and the Versailles Treaty of 1918–19, involving Foch and Clemenceau—had developed his attitudes of distrust and disdain toward politicians and the "régime des partis" or what is now called, by like-minded individuals, "le système." The third event, concerning the attack made on the 1928 military laws during the period of leftist cabinets from 1932 to 1934, confirmed these attitudes.[14]

These attitudes and feelings become meaningful when seen within the framework of Weygand's social status, his religious beliefs, and his political ideals. He was, making due allowance for generalization, a successful "climber" into the rarefied circles of the Faubourg Saint-Germain and the Académie Française.[15] The victor over the Bolshevik legions before Warsaw in 1920, he was a militant Catholic with two *idées fixes,* the pernicious influence of the Free Masons and the scourge of "Godless communism."[16] A self-styled *apolitique,* he had nonetheless a political ideal, situated

views on military problems at this time, and comment on his role as a military observer in Géraud, II, 28–30, 45–46 and 53–54; Reynaud, *La France,* II, 427–28; Kerillis, pp. 241–43; André Bellesort, "'L'histoire de l'armée française' du Général Weygand," *Revue des deux mondes,* XLVII (1939), 170–93; "'Ist Frankreich stark genug?'," *Militär Wochenblatt,* CXXIII (1938), 2981; and "Friedenstörer im Orient," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung,* Jan. 21, 1940, p. 1.

[13] *Temps,* July 4, 1939, p. 3. Cf. Reynaud, *La France,* I, 504; and testimony of Weygand (July 31, 1945), *Procès . . . Pétain,* p. 141.

[14] Weygand, *Mémoires,* I, 354–66 and II, 31–60 and 382–409.

[15] Bordeaux, pp. 109–21; H. Bidou, "Le général Weygand," *Revue de Paris,* XXVI (1930), 798–812; and André Maurois, "Le général Weygand à l'Académie," *Annales politiques et littéraires,* XCVI, (1932), 455–56.

[16] Weygand, *Comment élever nos fils?* (Paris, 1937), pp. 2–6 and 30–44, *Histoire,* pp. 163, 288–89 and 307–10, *France?,* p. 45, statement on bolshevism to the press, *New York Times,* Feb. 13, 1920, p. 15, speech to the "Semeurs de Billancourt," (described as an anti-Communist organization of women "de grand coeur et de bonne société"), *Gaulois,* Jan. 29, 1928, pp. 1–2, speech at the twelfth dinner of the Revue des deux mondes, *Revue des deux mondes,* XII (1932), 7–8, and speech at Saumur, *Temps,* Apr. 13, 1935, p. 4. For comment, see Bellessort, *loc. cit.,* pp. 170–93; R. Mennevée, "L'instauration d'une réaction internationale . . . ," *Documents politiques,* XI (1930), 4–46; "Generalissimo," *New Republic,* CII (1940), 714; and Géraud, II, 44–46.

somewhere in the misty reaches of the Moral Order and the Orléanist "République des Ducs."[17] What emerges is the stereotype of the aloof, suspicious officer just shading into the "général de coup d'état" which, indeed, his public personality had become as early as 1930 when Maginot, then minister of war, was able to secure the chamber's approval of Weygand as chief of the general staff only by promising never to give him the powers of vice-president of the Conseil supérieur de la guerre at the same time and by appointing, as a kind of political counterweight, General Gamelin as his assistant.[18] Much more significant than this stereotype from the point of view of what transpired in May and June of 1940, however, is the picture of a man less able than almost anyone else in the military hierarchy to withstand the fantastic pressures shortly to be placed upon him—pressures requiring him to behave totally out of character in a situation where, so to speak, he would be called upon to think and act the part of not only the military leader but also of the arbiter of the political destinies of France.

I

For the purposes of brevity, this article will concentrate on the political struggle between Weygand and Reynaud and will omit discussion of virtually all of the operational questions in what an unfriendly Vichy sharpshooter, M. Benoist-Méchin, has called "the sixty days that shook the west." The elements of this political struggle were laid down by Weygand's two major operational decisions.[19] The first of these decisions was that taken at Ypres on May 21 when Weygand, in what was essentially a duplication of Gamelin's Instruction No. 12, ordered a dual offensive by Allied units southward from Flanders and northward from the Somme across the German-held corridor stretching from Sedan to Abbeville. The second was the Ordre

[17] Weygand, *Comment élever?*, pp. 34–46, and *Histoire*, pp. 288–318. See the background of these views in Weygand's experience as a young officer involved in the Dreyfus Affair and the "Affaire des Fiches" in his *Mémoires* (I, 30–32), the interesting continuation of them in a note submitted to Pétain at Bordeaux on June 28, 1940, advocating a "moral order" version of a "new social regime", in the *Mémoires* (III, 298–99), and also Weygand's testimony of June 30, 1949 (*Commission . . . Témoignages*, VI, 1922–27). Cf. his two formal statements professing loyalty to the Republic as the "only regime possible for France" (France, *Annales de la chambre des députés, Débats parlementaires. . . . 1929–35* [hereafter cited as A. C. Débats], LXII [1930], 84), and his testimony in July 31, 1945 (*Procès . . . Pétain*, p. 144). For comment, see Bellessort, *loc. cit.*, pp. 192–93; Baudouin, pp. 224–25; Maurice Martin du Gard, *La chronique de Vichy, 1940–1944* (Paris, 1948), p. 64; P. A. Bourget, *De Beyrouth à Bordeaux. La guerre de 1939–1940 vue du P. C. Weygand* (Paris, 1946), pp. 178–79; Reynaud, *La France*, II, 442–43; and Paul Coblentz, *Le silence de Sarrail* (Paris, 1930), pp. 48–49.

[18] *A. C. Débats*, LXII (1930), pp. 54–57; *Journal des Débats*, Jan. 2–3, 4, 22, and 23, 1930, pp. 1 and 3; Emile Buré, untitled article in *Ordre*, Jan. 4, 1930, p. 1; J. Debu-Bridel, *L'agonie de la troisième République, 1929–1939* (Paris, 1948), p. 64; Weygand, *Mémoires*, II, 340–45; and Gamelin, II, xxii–xxi. A classic version of the Weygand "stereotype" is found throughout Géraud.

[19] For Benois-Méchin see n. 3 above. Weygand's major published summaries of his military and political action during the crisis of May–June 1940 are: his deposition for the Cour suprême de justice sitting at Riom, dated Aug. 26, 1940, found in *Commission . . . Rapport*, II, 407–13; *Allocution . . . aux officiers des armées de terre, de mer et de l'air à Dakar le 29 octobre, 1940* (Hanoi, n. d.); "Extraits résumés de l'allocution prononcée à Casablanca le 27 novembre 1940 devant les officiers . . . de la garnison . . . ," in Capitaine de Frégate L. J. M. Le Roc'h, *Défaite et redressement de la France* ([Toulon?], 1942) p. 23; Weygand's testimony (July 31 and Aug. 1, 1945), *Procès . . . Pétain*, pp. 130–49 and 154–57 *Mémoires*, III, 77–296; statement read in Weygand's testimony (Mar. 8, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages*, VI, 1547–78, *En lisant les Mémoires de guerre du Général de Gaulle* (Paris,

général d'opérations No. 1184–3 F/T of May 26, originating in a high command conference on May 24 and drawn up in draft on May 25, which established a defense line running along the Somme (from its mouth to the Canal du Crozat), the Ailette, and the Aisne to Longuyon and Montmédy.[20] This line—and these were the fatal words—was to be held at all costs, "sans esprit de recul."[21]

Were there alternatives? A vast literature, stretching from De Gaulle's radio address from London three weeks later to André Truchet's recent masterly examination of the military potentialities of French North Africa in June 1940, has maintained that there were, and a world which has grown accustomed to intercontinental missiles and space satellites has little difficulty in accepting the validity of this interpretation.[22] A somewhat less extensive but equally polemical mass of material maintains that there were not, thus neglecting not only the old professional law that the soldier must exercise his imagination to the breaking point to avoid becoming what Foch styled a "chef battu, chef disqualifié," but also a legion of humble aphorisms pointing out that self-described "realists" are responsible for the majority of the woes of human race.[23]

1955) pp. 38–93 and 147–96; and Cdt. Jacques Weygand, *The role of General Weygand: conversations with his son* (London, 1948), pp. 46–167.

[20] For the Instruction see Reynaud, *La France,* II, 136–37; for the Ordre général see *Commission . . . Rapport,* II, 370. Testimony of Weygand (May 24, 1949), and Gen. Louis Koeltz (Apr. 17, 1951), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1680–93 and 1701–10 and IX, 2802–10 and 2821–23; Major L. F. Ellis, *The war in France and Flanders, 1939–1940* (London, 1953), pp. 103–33; Gen. the Viscount Gort, "Second despatch (covering the period from 1st February, 1940, to 31st May, 1940, with an appendix covering operations of 1st Corps from 6 p. m. 31st May, to midnight 2nd/3rd June)," *Supplement to London Gazette* (Oct. 10, 1941), pp. 5915–21; Col. Robert Villate, "Le changement de commandement de mai 1940," *Revue d'histoire de la 2e. guerre mondiale,* V (1952), 27–36; and Claude Gounelle, *Le mirage de la victoire, 18–19–20 mai 1940* (Aix-en-Provence, 1957), pp. 83–138.

[21] *Commission . . . Rapport,* II, 370; also documents in Albert Kammerer, *La vérité sur l'armistice* (Paris, 1945), pp. 289–335, and in Col. P. Lyet, "La bataille de Belgique et du Nord," *Revue historique de l'armée,* II (1946), 59–92; testimony of Weygand (June 21, 1949), and letter of Koeltz to the president of the commission d'enquête describing the May 24 conference (dated June 25, 1951), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1868–70 and IX, 2820.

[22] Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages, 1940–1946* (Paris, 1946), pp. 3–4; and André Truchet, *L'armistice et l'Afrique du Nord* (Paris, 1955). See also telegrams and documents in *Commission . . . Documents,* II, 416–544; and testimony of Gamelin (Dec. 23, 1947), Dautry (Jan. 18, 1949), Gen. René Bertrand (June 14, 1949), and Villelume (Apr. 17, 1951), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* II, 531–33, VII, 2023–25, VI, 1787–1804, and IX, 2781–89. Cf. Armengaud, pp. 216–46; Contre-Amiral Raymond de Belot, *La marine française pendant la campagne de 1939–1940* (Paris, 1954), pp. 183–88; Adolphe Goutard, *1940, la guerre des occasions perdues* (Paris, 1956), pp. 382–402; De Gaulle, *L'appel,* pp. 45–74; Col. J. Philibert, "Les forces françaises d'Afrique du Nord (septembre 1939–juin 1940)," *Revue historique de l'armée,* IX (1953), 105–10; Louis Marin, "Contribution à l'étude des prodromes de l'armistice," and "Gouvernement (I)," *Revue d'histoire de la 2e. guerre mondiale,* III (1951), 5–11 and 24–26 and VIII (1952), 13–22, respectively; Gen. Paul Ely, "Les leçons qu'il faut tirer des opérations de 1940," *Revue de défense nationale,* IX (1953), 563–82; Gen. *****, *Aux heures tragiques de l'empire* (Paris, 1948), pp. 188–204; Gen. G. Catroux, *Dans la bataille de la Méditerranée, 1940–1944 (Paris,* 1949), pp. 11–28; and Winston S. Churchill, *The second World War* (London, 1948–53), II, 194–96 (reconsideration of an opinion expressed to Georges in Jan. 1944).

[23] Marshal Ferdinand Foch, *Principes de guerre* (Paris, 1903), p. 272. See testimony of Georges (Feb. 26, 1948), Weygand (June 9, 16, and 23, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* III, 738–39 and VI, 1766–85, 1805–15, 1847–55, and 1875–79. Also Baudouin, pp. 106–29 and 140–42; Bourget, pp. 22–23; Benoist-Méchin, III, 261–83; Contamine, *loc cit.,* pp. 3–7; Gen. John F. C. Fuller, *The second World War, a strategical and tactical history (London,* 1948), pp. 77–78; Gen. Heinz Guderian, *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten* (Heidelberg, 1951), pp. 123–24; Maj. Eddy Bauer,

Besides placing heavy reliance on ex post facto arguments, both theories minimize the essential point in the question, namely, that Weygand was the first military commander in World War II called upon to make an extraordinarily difficult, if not revolutionary, departure from the strategic, logistical, and tactical pattern of a war fought against a continental super power. Here, the problem involved the transfer of the military bridgehead from the continent itself to an adjacent but non-European area, and the acceptance of a long, bitter war against Nazi Germany in this area, fought if necessary with a loosely-organized guerrilla force dependent, after an initial period of perhaps two months, upon British and United States supplies.[24] Because Weygand's mind, formed in the matrix of the stable, continental-oriented French concept of the *nation armée,* was not that of a strategical revolutionary or genius (and he admits these limitations while paradoxically rejecting any description of his strategy as a "narrow one"),[25] he found it impossible to make the "leap into the unknown," for that was the measure of the problem as it existed on May 24 and 25, 1940. At this time, he dismissed once and for all any possibility that the non-European world could maintain or defend an operational bridgehead in North Africa, let alone effect an early reconquest of the French homeland. This question does not emerge again until the last two weeks of the campaign: first when Reynaud, encouraged by De Gaulle, finally made an effort to regain control of war policy, and then when Pétain briefly considered a flight to Algiers in case the German armistice terms proved too harsh.

It is only fair to point out that Weygand's tradition-oriented response to his problem was repeated by other professionals involved in similar cases later on in the war, notably by the German commanders and strategists confronting the question of conquering Britain after June 1940. But this comparison cannot obscure the fact that Weygand's response was an extraordinary and fateful step by which, five days after assuming command, he confined the battle within the traditional continental sector, and within a restricted part of that sector as well. As General René Bertrand, *chef de cabinet* of General Auguste Noguès (commander-in-chief in North Africa), commented nine years after the event: "The general staff should never have begun the battle of the Somme without another rear position on which to resist . . . North Africa. Once this possibility was overlooked, it would obviously be extraordinarily difficult to effect a later re-establishment in this area."[26]

In Weygand's opinion, what chances of success did this operation have at that time? Behind his "obligatory optimism,"

La guerre des blindés . . . (Paris, 1947), pp. 112–14; and Admiral Paul Auphan, "The French navy enters World War II," *United States Naval Institute proceedings,* LXXXII (1956), 592–601.

[24] Testimony of Bertrand (June 14, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1800. Cf. Philibert, *loc. cit.,* pp. 105–10.

[25] Testimony of Weygand (June 9 and 16, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1770 and 1804.

[26] Bertrand testified, June 14, 1949: "L'état-major . . . n'aurait jamais dû engager la bataille de la Somme sans avoir une autre position sur laquelle résister derrière . . . l'Afrique du Nord. Du moment que l'affaire n'avait pas été prévue avant, il était évidemment très difficile qu'on arrive à la réussir" (*ibid.,* 1800). See also Gen. Pierre Jacquet, *Essai de stratégie occidentale* (Paris, 1953), pp. 39–40; Richard Challener, *The French theory of the nation in arms, 1866–1939* (New York, 1955), pp. 215–16, 248–55, and 268–77; and Hans Dörr, "Uber den Wert und Unwert von Kriegserfahrungen," *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau,* IV (1954), 396–97. Cf. Fuller, pp. 83–87 and 90–91.

he appears to have had but two faint hopes: (1) that the Germans would allow the French sufficient time to concentrate their forces on the line; and (2) that the British would give massive air support, following this with a 1915-style *levée en masse* in the empire. Since the first depended upon stupidity and the second upon a kind of exalted sacrifice—rare qualities in either enemies or friends—it is possible that Weygand, in his secret heart, was almost ready then to admit, as he would later: "France . . . was destined for defeat."[27] Certainly, the *sans esprit de recul* motif indicated that he believed that he had no more strings to his bow. It signified, as did the appeal to "honor" also used during those tense days, that "everything was lost."[28] The contradiction in the thought of the military professionals between recognition of harsh facts and hopes for a miracle led straight to the atmosphere of unreality in the nation as a whole and specifically in the Reynaud cabinet, where, as Adolphe Goutard wrote later: "No one wished to see the situation as it was and to draw the consequences."[29]

These consequences, in the very likely event that Weygand's holding operation failed, would inevitably be the end of hostilities. At the moment (on May 23 or 24) when the dread possibility of the end occurred to Weygand—and there is no evidence that he considered the end as anything other than definitive, the "temporary suspension" of fighting and the "sword and buckler" motifs being introduced much later[30]—he had hardly the time or the will to reflect upon the timing or upon the nature of the political act which would then become necessary. But neither at this moment of recognition of a bitter eventuality nor at any later time was there a question in Weygand's mind as to what general form this act should take; claims to the contrary, such as that concerning his readiness at Bordeaux on June 15, 1940 to fight to the bitter end without capitulating under orders from a refugee government, come after the event.[31] For him, as for his entire military generation, the political act could be only the traditional one ending a continental war, the one in which he himself had taken so prominent a part in November 1918, when he had handed the famous terms to Matthias Erzberger from the worn leather briefcase he now carried with him constantly: an armistice.[32]

[27] Testimony of Weygand (May 24 and June 9, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1710 and 1769.

[28] Goutard, p. 308. Cf. Ellis, p. 319; and Gen. the Viscount Wavell, *The good soldier* (London, 1948), p. 29.

[29] Goutard, p. 341; De Gaulle, *L'appel,* pp. 39 and 49; and testimony of Georges (Feb. 26, 1948), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* III, 739.

[30] Weygand, *Mémoires,* III, 273–94; J. Weygand, p. 128; testimony of Yves Bouthillier (Dec. 19, 1950), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VIII, 2454; Louis-Dominique Girard, *Montoire, Verdun diplomatique* (Paris, 1948) pp. 497–516; Jacques Isorni and Jean Lemaire, *Requête en révision pour Philippe Pétain* (Paris, 1950) pp. 66–190, 203–6; and Gilbert Renault ["Remy"], *La justice et l'opprobre* (Monaco, 1950). Cf. Maurice Vanino, *Le temps de la honte: de Rethondes à l'Ile de Yeu* (Paris, 1952) pp. 29–51, 319–38; and Marquis d'Argenson, *Pétain et le Pétainisme* (Paris, 1953) pp. 147–67.

[31] Weygand, *Mémoires,* III, 277, *En lisant,* pp. 69 and 73, and testimony (June 21, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1843 and 1846.

[32] Weygand, *Mémoires,* III, 207–8 and 226–27. Support of the armistice by the entire officer corps is indicated in Reynaud, *La France* (II, 345); and testimony of Georges (Feb. 26, 1948), and Villelume (Apr. 17, 1951), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* (III, 742 and IX, 2786). The question of when the possibility of the armistice was first mentioned and by whom is at the heart of the controversy over what actually was discussed in the Comité de guerre of May 25, and is reviewed in Baudouin (pp. 75–77); Marin, "Contribution" *(loc. cit.,* pp. 3–4); Reynaud, *La France* (II, 180); and testimony of Baudouin (July 26,

II

Reynaud, to whom this decision was submitted by noon on May 25, knew that Weygand's operational concept directly affected the political question of the general conduct of the war. Reynaud recognized at the time that it limited him to two strategic and political alternatives; "Armistice or . . . continuation of the war in North Africa";[33] he must also have sensed at this moment that it gravely compromised his ability to put into operation the latter of these two alternatives, evacuation to North Africa. Why, then, did the premier accept a point of view whose immediate consequences he abhorred? The heart of this complex matter lies not so much in Reynaud's specific concern for the *redressement moral* of the nation or in his own infatuation with the "European" strategy as in his instinctive awareness of the army's superior strength in its relations with the state during a military crisis in time of war and especially during a military disaster. He knew that the government's ability to contravene the high command in the question of the general conduct of the war, and to enforce its decision, especially when the command was headed by an obdurate generalissimo notoriously contemptuous of politicians adrift in military seas, was theoretically unlimited but practically very restricted and had been so since the start of the debacle.[34] Reynaud also realized that a military-civil struggle of any importance would immediately result in divided loyalties both in the nation as a whole, concentrating what remained of its shaken confidence in an authoritarian military leader, and in the officer corps, sympathizing with this leader whose solution, allowing "lost honor" to be redeemed on the field of battle, was professionally "acceptable."[35] Finally, it must always be remembered that no adequate substitute for Weygand agreeable to this officer corps could be found in the gerontocracy that was the French high command. Weygand was, literally, the last of the military chiefs.

It is thus small wonder that at the meeting of the Comité de guerre, at the Élysée on May 25, Reynaud should have allowed himself to approve Weygand's general plan for a military *Götterdämmerung* along the water lines north of Paris, a "fight to the death"[36] which was to lead the French military establishment straight to another Sedan. For the premier, caught in the horrifying situation of May 1940, was a man of extremely limited endowments as a war leader in

1949), and Villelume (Apr. 17, 1951), *Commission . . . Témoignages* (VII, 2108 and IX, 2786).

[33] Reynaud, *La France,* II, 175, and *In the thick of the fight* (New York 1955), (trans. of *Au coeur de la mêlée* [Paris, 1951]), p. 382. Reynaud's military aide, Villelume, claims he told the premier at about that time: "France was open to the Pyrenees" (testimony of Villelume [Apr. 17, 1951], *Commission . . . Témoignages,* IX, 2784).

[34] Reynaud, *La France,* II, 175–79. Criticism of Reynaud's actions here and suggestions of possible alternatives are contained in De Gaulle, *L'appel,* pp. 38–39; Philippe Barrès, *Charles de Gaulle* (New York, 1942), pp. 164–65; R. Dautry, "Note au président du conseil (13 juin, 1940)," *Revue d'histoire de la 2e. guerre mondiale,* III (1951), 56–58; and testimony of Gamelin (Dec. 23, 1947), André-Victor Laurent-Eynac (Feb. 8, 1949), Weygand (June 9, 1949), and Villelume (Apr. 17, 1951), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* II, 531–32, V, 1449, VI, 1778–80, and IX, 2783–88.

[35] "For the public, the question of whether to continue the war was a military affair" (Reynaud, *La France,* II, 179). See also Goutard, p. 340; and Gen. Spears' interview with Georges Mandel on May 25, 1940 in Maj. Gen. Sir Edward Spears, *Assignment to catastrophe* (London, 1954), I, 205–6.

[36] Reynaud's statement in Baudouin's draft *procès-verbal* of the Comité de guerre of May 25, 1940, in *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1713.

the great (and, at this point, shrilly self-advertised) tradition of Danton, Gambetta, and Clemenceau. Reynaud had really but one possible course of action to follow throughout the entire crisis. This course was none other than that uppermost in the minds of all the major participants in the drama and, according to the garbled documentary record, explictly suggested at that celebrated meeting of May 25: to resign, after a decent interval of suppressed conflict with the military power.

Tragically enough for Reynaud, the timing of even this gesture of futility and despair was far beyond his control. His political and military opponents had only to wait in the wings during the three weeks following May 25, watching his "Hamletesque" predicament evolve to its inevitable end. It is understandable that, after the event, Reynaud should attempt to minimize his passivity and sense of fatality, to emphasize his "control" of the situation through various plans and hopes, all of them naïve and groundless.[37] It is even more natural that he and other advocates of the "world," as opposed to the "European," strategy should have attempted, also after the armistice, to construct a specific military plot or *coup de force* theory to explain the outcome of the debacle. They are aided and abetted in this fantasy by some of the more prominent of the *Versaillais de Vichy,* especially Paul Baudouin, for whom Weygand is a national hero.[38]. An actual military plot to overthrow the state with Weygand as its sinister instigator did not exist in 1940, however, as the best legal minds of the state concluded in the two instructions preceding the Pétain trial in 1945 and the Weygand case in 1946. Such a plot did not have to exist. The elements of the problem itself made it certain that Weygand's operational and strategical concepts would go virtually unchallenged and that, because of this abnormal situation, Pétain could put into operation his plan for the armistice which alone would give him the "means of seizing the power" he coveted.[39]

III

It is impossible in this article to trace the evolution of the struggle between Weygand and Reynaud from a relatively decorous question of divided counsels in high places to an open rupture. Unfortunately, such fascinating bypaths as the Comité de guerre meeting of May 25, the exchange of notes between Reynaud and Weygand on May 31 and June 10, and the feeble attempts of Reynaud to recapture control of the situation by "suggesting," but not ordering, a withdrawal to the "Breton Redoubt" and retreat to North Africa, must be omitted.[40] By June 13—the date of Rey-

[37] See especially Reynaud, *La France,* II, 124 and 175–81, *Fight,* pp. 379–97, and testimony (Dec. 12, 1950), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VIII, 2425.

[38] Baudoin's adulation is shared by Le Grix and Bordeaux in their works on Weygand (see above, note 3). See also Charles Reibel, *Pourquoi et comment fut décidée la demande d'armistice* (Vanves, 1940); Yves Bouthillier, *Le drame de Vichy. I, Face à l'ennemi, face à l'allié* (Paris, 1950); Henri Massis, *Maurras et notre temps* (Paris, 1951), II, 139–48. Cf. Reynaud, *La France,* II, 452–53; Géraud, I, 243–377; Kerillis, pp. 252–75; Kammerer, pp. 105–60; Jean Giraudoux, *Armistice à Bordeaux* (Neuchâtel and Paris, 1945); and testimony of L. Rollin (Jan. 20, 1949), G. Monnet (Feb. 3, 1949), and Laurent-Eynac (Feb. 8, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* V, 1395, 1426, and 1458.

[39] Louis Noguères, *Le véritable procès du Maréchal Pétain* (Paris, 1955), p. 66. See also the act of accusation and the *arrêt* in *Procès . . . Pétain,* pp. 6–12 and 385–86; *Times* Jan. 9, 1946, p. 3, and Mar. 29, 1946, p. 3; *New York Times,* May 10, 1946, p. 12, and May 7, 1948, p. 12. Cf. Marin, "Contribution," *loc. cit.,* pp. 1-3.

[40] Testimony of Weygand (June 16, 1949),

naud's reply to the last of Weygand's veiled requests, both written and verbal, for an armistice[41]—the moment of control over the general conduct of the war had long since vanished for Reynaud, as had the moment of a *bataille de conduite* for Weygand. The premier was now locked with his commander-in-chief in a struggle for political survival.

There is, then, the question of Weygand *politicien*. Despite his sincerely indignant but typically "military" denial of the very existence of such "degrading" thoughts or actions in his record,[42] the general did apply from June 12, the date of the meeting of the supreme war council at Briare, to June 16, the date of the fall of the Reynaud cabinet at Bordeaux, a variety of techniques of persuasion and pressure which, since they dealt with the political corollary of his military decision of May 25 and unfolded primarily before a political council, can be given only the pejorative if Clausewitzian description. Indeed, the political coloration of all action during this tortured week was so great that the pivotal question of withdrawal to North Africa was treated exclusively on political, not technical or military, grounds; and none of the major participants seemed to be aware at the time of this startling anomaly.[43]

This problem of Weygand's military politics has, curiously enough, been examined solely from the point of view of his personal animosity toward Reynaud and politicians in general, or of the *capitulard* cabal working through him, or of his alleged threats of a military *coup de force*. These elements were undeniably present. Convinced by June 9 that Reynaud had summoned him from Beirut merely to use him as a whipping-boy in a program of defeat and surrender,[44] Weygand exhibited a splendid disregard for the civilized amenities and usages even during a crisis. Nothing could be more explicit on this point than his barracks language and sarcasm in the heat of the hysterical exchanges at Cangé on the night of June 13 (some hint of the general tenor is given in depositions

Commission . . . Témoignages, VI, 1805–6. Baudouin's draft *procès-verbal* of the Comité de guerre meeting of May 25, 1940 is found in *ibid.*, VI, 1711–16. A summary of the tangled documentary history of this gathering is contained in P. Dhers, "Le comité de guerre du 25 mai, 1940," *Revue d'histoire de la 2e. guerre mondiale,* X–XI (1953), 165–83. Additional documents and testimony concerning the Breton Redoubt and two questions affecting North Africa (the mission of Koeltz to Algiers on June 22, 1940 and the protests against the armistice of Gen. Auguste Noguès from June 17 to June 24) are found in: testimony of Georges (Feb. 26, 1948), Weygand (June 9, 1949), Bertrand (June 14, 1949), Weygand (June 16 and 21, 1949), Reynaud (Dec. 12, 1950), Villelume, and Koeltz (Apr. 17, 1951), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* III, 733, VI, 1775–85, 1800–1, 1806–17, and 1850, VIII, 2400, and IX, 2781–83, 2791–92, and 2810–16. See also *Commission . . . Rapport,* II, 381–84 and 416–30. Cf. Klaus-Jürgen Müller, "Französisch-Nordafrika und der deutsch-französische Waffenstillstand von 1940," *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau,* VII (1957), 687–700.

[41] The notes and their import are contained and discussed in testimony of Weygand (June 16, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1808–17; Weygand, *Mémoires,* III, 149–53, 188–91, and 213–14; Reynaud, *La France,* II, 182–87, 293–95, and 331–33. The note of June 10 is specifically treated in Weygand, *En lisant,* pp. 50–51, and his "Rectification à Candide," *Candide,* Dec. 18, 1940, p. 3; Reibel, *Comment,* pp. 16–17; De Gaulle, *L'appel,* pp. 50–51; Reynaud, *La France,* II, 446–47; and Baudoin, pp. 142–43.

[42] See Weygand's curious definition of what constitutes "political activity" in his testimony (June 30, 1949), and compare with that of another "technician," Baudouin, in his testimony (July 12, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1922–27 and VII, 2069.

[43] Testimony of Weygand (June 9, 1949), and Bouthillier (Dec. 28, 1950), *ibid.*, VI, 1781 and VIII, 2521.

[44] Weygand, *Mémoires,* III, 148, 188, and 228; and Bouthillier, pp. 48 and 89–90. Cf. testimony of Pétain (July 10, 1947), and Weygand (Mar. 8, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* I, 183 and VI, 1559.

made later at Riom), his two famous public denunciations of Reynaud and the regime two nights later at Bordeaux, and his use of Foch's old confidant, Senator Charles Reibel, to abuse and threaten the deliberating politicians.[45] Certainly those politicians and officials led by Pétain, who were convinced that the anti-Nazi war lay outside the interests of *la vraie France,* had links with Weygand. Before the flight of the government from Paris, these connections were informal: Pétain sympathized with Weygand's military point of view and approved his letters to Reynaud concerning an armistice.[46] But these links became precise at Bordeaux where Weygand was used as a kind of bogeyman to intimidate Reynaud into playing the political charade of the "Chautemps Proposal" of June 15 and 16, much as he was used by Laval in the similar maneuver at Vichy three weeks later.[47] Finally, the fear of a military coup, as distinct from its actual existence, was important enough to become a virtual obsession of Reynaud by June 15 and a real possibility in the minds of the rest of the politicians in Bordeaux.[48]

But the essential point, that of Weygand's invasion as a military man of the political sphere of the general conduct of the war, highlighted by his specific acts or declarations of disobedience, is often overlooked or minimized. And yet, around this *ingérence* turns the whole drama of the Reynaud cabinet in its agony of the second and third weeks of June. As Louis Marin, a participant in these events and a prominent member of the postwar commission d'enquête parlementaire examining the question, has written: "It played a capital role . . . which has escaped public attention almost completely."[49]

The invasion took place at the cabinet

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[45] See Weygand's deposition at Riom in *Commission . . . Rapport,* II, 407–13. Cf. his *Allocution . . . le 29 octobre 1940,* and "Allocution . . . le 27 novembre 1940," in Le Roc'h; and his testimony (June 9, 16, and 21, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1759–86 and 1805–70. On Reibel, see testimony of Rollin (Jan. 20, 1949), Weygand (June 23, 1949), and Mattéo Connet (Jan. 12, 1950), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* V, 1391, VI, 1874, and VII, 2189–90; Reynaud, *La France,* II, 446–51; and M. M. Tony Révillon, *Mes carnets (juin–octobre 1940)* (Paris, 1945), pp. 44–47.

[46] Weygand, *Mémoires,* III, 150–52 and 190; and Reynaud, *La France,* II, 182.

[47] The activities of this group and of Weygand, especially with regard to Saturday, June 15, when Pétain allegedly attempted to persuade the general to accept the policy of continued resistance overseas, are discussed in the testimony of Weygand (June 16 and 21, 1949), Baudouin (July 12 and 26, 1949), Reynaud (Dec. 12, 1950), and Bouthillier (Dec. 19 [questions of P. Dhers] and 21, 1950), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1823–25 and 1851–56, VII, 2062–67 and 2106–16, and VIII, 2413–14, 2416–17, 2457–58, and 2529–30. Cf. Weygand, *Mémoires,* III, 224, and his testimony (July 31, 1945), *Procès . . . Pétain,* p. 130; Baudouin, p. 165; and Reynaud, *La France,* II, and *Fight,* pp. 533–34. The effects of these actions of Reynaud are treated in Marin, "Gouvernement (I)," *loc. cit.,* pp. 9–10. The episode at Vichy is covered in the testimony of Léon Blum (July 27, 1945), *Procès . . . Pétain,* pp. 77–78, and *L'oeuvre de Léon Blum* (Paris, 1955), II, 84–86; Albert Lebrun, *Témoignage* (Paris, 1945), p. 108; Anatole de Monzie, *Ci-devant* (Paris, 1942), p. 260; Joseph Paul-Boncour, *Entre deux guerres, souvenirs sur la 3e. République* (Paris, 1945–46), III, 284–86; Pierre Laval, *Laval parle: notes et mémoires* (Paris, 1948), p. 51; and Martin du Gard, pp. 55 and 478–79.

[48] Testimony of Rollin (Jan. 20, 1949), Monnet (Feb. 3, 1949), and Laurent-Eynac (Feb. 8, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* V, 1395–97, 1426, and 1458; Reynaud, *La France,* II, 446–53; Kammerer, pp. 178–79; and Spears, II, 269. Cf. Reibel, *Comment;* testimony of Michel Clemenceau (July 28, 1945), and of Reynaud and Weygand (Aug. 1, 1945), *Procès . . . Pétain,* pp. 92–94 and 154–57; and notes of Gen. Joseph Lafont, commandant of the 18th Military Region at Bordeaux, in Louis-Georges Planes and Robert Dufourg, *Bordeaux, capitale tragique, mai–juin 1940* (Paris, 1956), pp. 94–97.

[49] Louis Marin, "Gouvernement et commandement, II," *Revue d'historie de la 2e. guerre mondiale,* IX (1953), 14. Marin was a vice-président du conseil in the Reynaud cabinet.

meetings on June 12 and 13 at Cangé, where Weygand calmly requested and then emotionally demanded an armistice, completely shattering the ministers' "moderate optimism," for until then the dreaded word had never been openly mentioned in an official gathering.[50] The first specific act of disobedience occurred on the second day, June 13, when Weygand forcefully stated: [He] "would refuse to leave the soil of France even if put in irons . . . [should the government] quietly decide to take cover in Africa or elsewhere."[51] Since the government's ability to shackle him was practically non-existent,[52] this statement meant that not only defiance but successful defiance had at last emerged. For the partisans of the armistice, this clear-cut declaration of disobedience signified that the army was formally on their side; for the coward, it furnished an ironclad justification for transferring their allegiance to the armistice under threat of violence; for the courageous and level-headed, it created the sobering prospect of a divided France, with the homeland under the control of a military regime and the colonies under a weak civilian one. Shortly after Weygand, in a huff, left the council room (allegedly because he mistook Georges Mandel's *rictus* for a sneer; if true, a fitting shift from low comedy to high tragedy), Jean Ybarnegaray declared for the armistice because his military "chiefs had spoken."[53] Before Weygand was out of the chateau's grounds, Pétain rose to read an identical declaration of his determination to remain and treat, influencing Charles Pomaret, minister of labor, and Georges Pernot, minister of public health and the family, to join the "soldiers."[54]

The second act of defiance occurred two days later at Bordeaux when, shortly before the cabinet meeting on the afternoon of June 15, Weygand refused to obey Reynaud's "suggestion" that, rather than seek a truce, France follow the Dutch example of surrender of the land forces by the commander-in-chief and the withdrawal overseas of the government, even if Weygand, himself, were allowed to remain in the homeland after the act was accomplished.[55] Overcome with rage, Weygand based his refusal upon a questionable and strictly military interpretation of the concept of honor and justified his refusal by an invidious, if hasty, political comparison between the prestige of Queen Wilhelmina as a

[50] Testimony of Weygand (June 9, 1949 [comments of L. Marin]), and of Villelume (Apr. 17, 1951), *Commission . . . Témognages,* VI, 1768 and IX, 2786. Also testimony of Lebrun (June 1, 1948), Rollin (Jan. 20, 1949), Monnet (Feb. 3, 1949), Laurent-Eynac (Feb. 8, 1949), Weygand (Mar. 8 and June 9, 1949), Mattéo Connet (Jan. 12, 1950), and Reynaud (Dec. 12, 1950), *ibid.,* IV, 996, V, 1392–1408, 1417–25, and 1450–53, VI, 1564–65 and 1763–85, VII, 2185–95, and VIII, 2410–14. Cf. Louis Marin, "Temoignages . . . sur le conseil des ministres tenu à Cangé le 13 juin 1940," *Commission . . . Rapport,* II, 413–15, and his "Contribution," *loc. cit.,* pp. 3–11; Weygand, *Mémoires,* III, 209–21, and *En lisant,* pp. 45–50 and 54–55; Reynaud, *La France,* II, 313–27; De Gaulle, *L'appel,* pp. 53–58; Baudouin, pp. 149–65; Reibel, *Comment,* pp. 18–21; Spears, II, 172–234; Churchill, II, 152–74; Kammerer, pp. 78–104; Jean Prouvost in *Sept jours* (Nov. 10–17, 1940), pp. 10–13; Roger Langeron, *Paris, juin 1940* (Paris, 1946), pp. 35–37; and Bourget, pp. 111–24.

[51] Weygand's deposition at Riom, *Commission . . . Rapport,* II, 411.

[52] Testimony of Bouthillier (Dec. 19, 1950), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VIII, 2456.

[53] Testimony of Lebrun (June 8, 1948), *ibid.,* IV, 1011.

[54] Reynaud, *La France,* II, 324. A list of the cabinet members who favored the armistice, those against it, and those undecided is contained in Marin, "Contribution," *loc. cit.,* p. 23.

[55] Weygand, *Mémoires,* III, 223–28; and Reynaud, *La France,* II, 337–47. See also the testimony of Georges (Feb. 26, 1948), Weygand (June 21, 1949), Reynaud (Dec. 12, 1950), and Bouthillier (Dec. 21, 1950), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* III, 742–43, VI, 1835–56, and VIII, 2416–21 and 2518–19. Cf. Bouthillier, pp. 25–39; Baudouin, pp. 167–71; and Spears, II, 244–75.

national symbol in the Netherlands and Reynaud cabinet's lack of such a reputation in France.[56] In loud and violent terms, which could not fail to impress the vacillating ministers, he repeated this refusal twice within the next few hours: in a most public altercation with Reynaud outside the council room shortly after the end of the afternoon meeting, and, a half an hour later, before President Lebrun, to whom Weygand intimated that Reynaud's suggestion was part of a politicians' plot to transfer the onus of defeat to the shoulders of the military.[57] Behind both public declarations of disobedience loomed a third. It was taken for granted that the generalissimo had no intention of resigning and, if requested by the government to do so, would refuse.[58]

With these three moves—refusal to leave France, refusal to surrender the army if allowed to remain, and certain, though unspoken, refusal to resign despite his disobedience—Weygand had completed his part in the overthrow of the Reynaud cabinet. For, despite the premier's muttered threats of dismissal and the generalissimo's vocalized expectation of disgrace, all the witnesses knew that the government, enmeshed in the fatal Chautemps Proposal to query the Germans concerning the conditions of an armistice, had neither the actual power to replace Weygand nor the person with whom to replace him.[59] This last fact was obvious on general grounds, although the specific attempt to find a replacement, De Gaulle's mission to General Charles Huntziger at Arcis-sur-Aube on June 11 and its failure, was unknown at the time.[60] What transpired on June 16, the day after the cabinet meeting, when Reynaud was actually overthrown, was, from the point of view of the military-civil struggle, somewhat anticlimatic. Weygand's act of disobedience, his refusal at noon before the premier and Lebrun to surrender the army even with the covering order from the government, was a mere recapitulation of the acts of the day before.[61] It was perhaps typical of the whole horrible week that a message of desperation from General Alphonse Georges, commander of the forces of the northeast and Weygand's direct subordinate at the non-existent front ("absolute necessity to make a decision"), sent in by Weygand to Lebrun

[56] Testimony of Weygand (June 9, 16, and 21, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1759–61, 1817–23, 1827–29, and 1841–46. Cf. De Gaulle, *L'appel,* pp. 38–39; Weygand, *En lisant,* pp. 63–75; and Tony Revillon, pp. 214–15.

[57] Weygand's deposition at Riom in *Commission . . . Rapport,* II, 412; testimony of Monnet (Feb. 3, 1939), Laurent-Eynac (Feb. 8, 1949), and Weygand (June 16 and 21, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* V, 1419, 1424–25, and 1448 and VI, 1818–23 and 1846; Lebrun, p. 82; Dirk Forster, "Kapitulation und Fahnenehre: ein exemplarischer Konflikt zwischen Reynaud und Weygand im June 1940," *Aussenpolitik,* VII (1956), 438–45.

[58] Testimony of Laurent-Eynac (Feb. 8, 1949), and Weygand (Mar. 31 and June 21, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* V, 1449 and VI, 1602 and 1844–45.

[59] Testimony of Bouthillier (Dec. 19, 1950), *ibid.,* VIII, 2456. See also testimony of Weygand (June 9 and 21, 1949), and Villelume (Apr. 17, 1951), *ibid.,* VI, 1769 and 1845 and IX, 2791; Weygand's deposition at Riom in *Commission . . . Rapport,* II, 412–13; Bourget, pp. 138–39; Klaus-Jurgen Müller, "Das Ende der Entente-Cordiale," *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau,* Beiheft 3 (1956), 48–49 and 71.

[60] De Gaulle, *L'appel,* pp. 51–53. Cf. Massis, I, 138–50. Also Baudouin, pp. 63 and 115–16; Weygand, *En lisant,* pp. 56–57; letter of Reynaud in *Revue d'histoire de la 2e. guerre mondiale,* XXIX (1958), 105; testimony of Reynaud (June 13, 1947), Laurent-Eynac (Feb. 8, 1949), Weygand (June 19, 1949), and Villelume (Apr. 17, 1951), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* I, 115, IV, 1449, VI, 1827, and IX, 2797.

[61] Weygand, *Mémoires,* III, 232–33, *En lisant,* pp. 69 and 73, and testimony (June 21, 1949); and testimony of Lebrun (June 10, 1948), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1843 and 1946, and IV, 1016. Cf. Reynaud, *La France,* II, 344–47.

during the afternoon session of the cabinet, should have been the last straw.[62] The president called a halt to the proceedings and indicated with some vigor the necessity of making a decision concerning the Chautemps Proposal. Reynaud's answer, again in the traditional peacetime manner, was to resign.[63] The entire political maneuver of the armistice ground to a close with the precision of a military operation in the best *Kriegspiel* tradition of the general staff. Early the next morning, a telegram went out from General André Doumenc at Bordeaux to General Georges at Vichy:[64]

"Mon général, le général Weygand me téléphone à l'instant que le ministère Paul Reynaud a vécu . . . enfin, la première démarche pour cessation des hostilités est en cours. Raison de plus que Besson [commander of Army Group 3] tienne bon."

Thus, as a witness, General Bertrand, was to declare: "When the fate of the country was in question, the premier whose mission it was to direct, abdicated in favor of an irresponsible authority."[65] At the very last, the military and political destinies of France were fused; but then, from the very first—from the start of the campaign of 1940, if not from the conclusion of peace in 1919—the military cart had been before the political horse.[66]

IV

What Weygand's disobedience in 1940 illustrated was the enormous difficulty a democratic government may have, under the severely critical conditions of modern war, in avoiding a major political upheaval resulting from an attempt to enforce its strategico-political decisions upon a recalcitrant commander-in-chief determined to impose those of his own choosing. In an era of nuclear war, the problem is complex; in an age of close international military and diplomatic agreements, it is shared.[67] Weygand's version of it (supported, of course, by the parti-

[62] Lebrun, p. 83; also testimony of Reynaud (Dec. 12, 1950 and Apr. 26, 1951), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VIII, 2422–27 and IX, 2848–49. Cf. Reibel, *Comment,* p. 23.

[63] For this denouement and the recriminations between Reynaud and Lebrun over the responsibilities involved, see testimony of Pétain (July 10, 1947), Lebrun (June 10, 1948), A. Rio (Dec. 16, 1948), Rollin (Jan. 20, 1949), Laurent-Eynac (Feb. 8, 1949), Reynaud (Dec. 12, 1950), and Bouthillier (Dec. 19 and 21, 1950), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* I, 175, IV, 1011, and 1079–90, V, 1321, 1394, and 1454, and VIII, 2423–27, 2478–81, and 2483–86. Also, Reynaud, *La France,* II, 347–64; Lebrun, pp. 83–85; Weygand, *Mémoires,* III, 233–35; testimony of Jules Jeanneney (July 26, 1945), and Weygand (Aug. 1, 1945), *Procès . . . Pétain,* pp. 57–63 and 156–57; Baudouin, pp. 171–78; Edouard Herriot, *Episodes 1940–1944* (Paris, 1950), pp. 74–75; Camille Chautemps, untitled article in *New York Times,* Aug. 30, 1945, p. 8, and "Lettre d'un condamné," *Écrits de Paris,* no. 33 (1947), p. 118; De Gaulle, *L'appel,* pp. 65–66. For the subsidiary question of connections between Reynaud and De Gaulle concerning further resistance overseas, see testimony of Villelume (Apr. 17, 1951), and of Reynaud (Apr. 26, 1951), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* IX, 2788–89 and 2850; Spears, II, 311–23; and especially Lucien Galimand, *Origines et déviations du Gaullisme* (Paris, 1950), pp. 65–76.

[64] Unnumbered telegram dated June 17, 1940, 1:00 a.m., in Bordereau d'envoi, No. 7 CP/SH, Ordres Principales ou télégrammes du Général Weygand du 29 mai, 1940 au 23 juin, 1940, Commission d'enquête parlementaire . . . Bordereaux d'envoi (unpublished).

[65] Testimony of Villelume (Apr. 17, 1951), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* IX, 2787.

[66] Reynaud, *Problème,* p. 88; Admiral Raoul Castex, *Théories stratégiques* (Paris, 1913–33), IV, 509–11; Weygand, "L'unité," *loc. cit.,* p. 15; and *France?,* p. 15; Raymond Recouly, "Les leçons d'une crise," *Revue de France,* XVI (1936), 535–40. Cf. testimony of Pierre-E. Flandin (June 4, 1947), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* I, 143 and his report, "Les leçons du 7 mars 1936," *Commission . . . Rapport,* I, 89; and P. Dhers, "Du 7 mars 1936 a l'Ile d'Yeu," *Revue d'histoire de la 2e. guerre mondiale,* V (1952), 22.

[67] Forster, *loc. cit.,* pp. 444–45. Cf. questions and statements of Marin and Charles Serre in testimony of Weygand (June 16, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1826–28.

sans of the armistice) as a simple contest of wills between "male" and "female" can be classified as merely picturesque, if pungent.[68] And, despite the various suggestions and solutions brought to the problem—extension of governmental powers over operations, automatic resignation of the supreme commander after every unsuccessful major military campaign—it will doubtless remain an intractable one, because it concerns the behavior of men subjected to the extraordinary emotional pressures of war, the most irrational of all social phenomena.[69]

Some safeguards are, however, furnished by a history of harmonious military-civil relationships; and here the French experience of 1940 is most instructive. Weygand's action came as the fatal conclusion to the bitter dialogue between government and command, reaching back at least as far as the origins of the Third Republic. In the most general terms, the conflict arose from the fact that the officer corps, the guardian of ultimate power in the state and the "sublime neutral" in the seven changes of regime from 1814 to 1871, was long dominated by an essentially anti-republican nucleus of ultra-conservative *bien pensants.* It took a stand on the opposite side from the political majority in the great schism at the end of the century and retreated thereafter into dignified, or sullen, silence as the *Grande Muette.* What had been laid down by 1914, in a select and powerful minority of this *Déroulèdiste* officer corps, were at least the elements of what might be called a split image of loyalty; that is, a concept of the nation as distinct from the regime. While it is true that this concept existed primarily as a feeling rather than as an idea, seldom verbalized and then only by rare eccentrics, it was a definite state of mind and carried with it a functional corollary, conditional obedience to the regime.[70]

This potentially dangerous mood deepened during the conflicts between the army leaders and the state over the conduct of the war of 1914–18 and over the terms of the peace that followed. It was reinforced by the difficult relations between the two during what a writer on French military affairs has recently termed the period of "Regrets, 1919–1940."[71] At this time, according to the orthodox military point of view, the "politicians," after having obtained the military institutions they desired in 1928, proceeded first to ignore the threat of a new war these laws created and then to push the country into an unequal conflict before adequate material and spiritual preparation, a *réveil national,* could take place.[72] By 1939, then, the army chiefs were psychologically prepared to

[68] Testimony of Weygand (June 16, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1838.

[69] Testimony of Laurent-Eynac (Feb. 8, 1949), Weygand (June 21 and 23, 1949), Bouthillier (Dec. 19, 1950), and Villelume (Apr. 17, 1951), *ibid.,* V, 1449, VI, 1835–40, 1843–46, and 1880, VIII, 2455–58, and IX, 2787–88; Marin, "Gouvernement, I," and "Gouvernement, II," *loc. cit.,* pp. 1–28, and 1–14, respectively; and an interesting suggestion by Senator Jacques Bardoux in *Commission . . . Rapport,* II, 545–56.

[70] Raoul Girardet, *La société militaire dans la France contemporaine, 1815–1939* (Paris, 1953), pp. 117–60 and 320–28; Pierre Chalmin, *L'officier français de 1815 à 1870* (Paris, 1951), pp. 358–64. Cf. Gen. André Zeller, "Armée et politique," *Revue de défense nationale,* XIII (1957), 499–517.

[71] Henry Contamine, *La revanche, 1871–1940* (Paris, 1957), p. 8.

[72] Actually, this theory blames France's allies for both the war and the defeat. See Pétain's speeches of June 20 and Oct. 11, 1940, and his statement after his conviction in 1945, in Philippe Pétain, *Quatre années au pouvoir* (Paris, 1949), pp. 16, 49, and 60; Weygand's statements in the draft *procès-verbal* of the Comité de guerre of May 25 and testimony of Weygand (June 9, 1949), and Baudouin (July 27, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1713, and 1771 and VII-2107–08; and Laffargue, pp. 225–33.

identify the army in wartime with the nation, to the exclusion, if necessary, of the regime. Thus Weygand, the living symbol of the historic tensions, negative attitudes, and resentments, should naturally come to what he called a *"refus de conscience"* over the question of surrendering the army-qua-nation and of "emigrating" in June 1940; thus Pétain, the personification of the civilian-old-soldier pater familias should "not have been displeased" at the prospect of being called upon to ransom his country.[73]

Finally, it is important to note that Weygand is far from being an atypical commander of World War II. He, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, General Dietrich von Choltitz, Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, and Field-Marshal Bernard Montgomery are similar not only in upbringing, aims, and personal qualities—the French, German, Italian, and British versions of the *parfait soldat*—but also in their nineteenth-century nationalism of the most pure and most narrow variety.[74] The self-interest at the given moment of France as a continental power, so aptly described by Carlton J. H. Hayes a generation ago, and devoid of the "ideologisms" represented by Hitler, Mussolini, or even De Gaulle, formed the core of the conceptual and value system responsible for Weygand's military and political decisions in 1940.[75] Along with the firm belief that conscience ultimately regulates the actions of a highly-placed soldier, it explains why he cannot now consider himself a "subjective traitor," and why he sincerely and doggedly holds to his version of 1940 and its aftermath as a personally painful exercise in man's regrettable penchant for misunderstanding and persecuting essentially noble aims.[76]

And yet, this private interpretation of the great debate, however deeply rooted, cannot be totally satisfactory to a man whose arrogance is paradoxically combined with genuine humility. Weygand wrote as much at the end of his polemical reply to De Gaulle's *L'appel,* the greatest work of art on 1940, when he appealed to De Gaulle to be the magnanimous victor, a Henri IV after Coutras.[77]. (The embarrassing parallel Weygand thus creates between himself and the unsuccessful *pactisant* Henri III must be overlooked.) Weygand's is a life of struggle, struggle against everything, everybody, and ultimately against himself, for we must recognize his courageous mas-

[73] André François-Poncet, "Discours à l'Académie Française," *Le Monde,* Jan. 24, 1953, p. 7. See testimony of Weygand (June 21, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1844–46, and his *Mémoires,* III, 213 and 225–26; note of Admiral François Darlan to Vice-Admiral Félix Michelier, June 18, 1940, in Admiral J. T. Docteur, *Darlan, amiral de la flotte* (Paris, 1949), p. 63. Compare various instances of conditional obedience in the actions of Rossel in 1871, Foch in 1919 and Choltitz in 1944, in Gen. Louis Rossel, *Mémoires et correspondance* (Paris, 1908), p. 291; Maxine Weygand, *Foch* (Paris, 1947), p. 293; Jean Martet, *Monsieur Clemenceau peint par lui-même* (Paris, 1929), pp. 243 and 251; and Gen. Dietrich von Choltitz, *Soldat unter Soldaten* (Zurich and Stuttgart, 1951), pp. 292 and 303.

[74] See Karl Abshagen, *Canaris, Weltbürger und Patriot* (Stuttgart, 1949); Choltitz; Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, *Ho difeso la patria* (Milan, 1947); Alan Moorehead, *Montgomery* (London, 1946); and a penetrating analysis of the role of Weygand, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, Graziani, Pierre Laval, and Franz von Papen in H. Stuart Hughes, "The problem of limited collaboration," *Confluence,* III, (1954), 172–83.

[75] Bouthillier testified, Dec. 19, 1950: "[The question of] victorious resistance by Britain . . . did not govern the basic reflexes of the ministers on June 16" *(Commission . . . Témoignages,* VIII, 2459). See also Weygand, *Mémoires,* I, 644–45; Reynaud, *La France,* II, 176; and Carlton J. H. Hayes, *France, a nation of patriots* (New York, 1930).

[76] Testimony of Weygand (Mar. 8, and June 9 and 30, 1949), *Commission . . . Témoignages,* VI, 1564, 1769, and 1924–29; and the preface by Weygand to A. Laffargue, *Le général Dentz (Paris 1940–Syrie 1941)* (Paris, 1953), pp. v–vi.

[77] Weygand, *En lisant,* pp. 145–46.

tery of a violent and combative temperament in the decision of 1940. His tragedy is that this struggle resulted in the death of the institution he loved and served, the army. As is often observed, disobedience cannot be the monopoly of one man. With "no clearly designated enemy" for four years after 1940, the army could be revived physically but not spiritually. "De mon temps," a reflective officer wrote in a haunting examination of the years since the defeat, "il n'y avait plus . . . de vertu qui pût s'appeler . . . discipline, mais il n'y avait plus d'armée."[78]

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[78] Jules Roy, *Le métier des armes* (Paris, 1948), p. 149.