10-31-2015

Paul Reynaud and the Reform of France's Economic, Military and and Diplomatic Policies of the 1930s

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Submitted to Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Liberal Arts

September 2015

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Foreword

Paul Reynaud and Munich

In the early morning hours of September 30, 1938, Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister, and Édouard Daladier, the French premier, signed an agreement in Munich with Adolph Hitler and Benito Mussolini acquiescing to the occupation by Germany of the Sudetenland, a region of Czechoslovakia that was home to three million ethnic Germans. The Sudetenland had been an integral part of Czechoslovakia since the conclusion of the treaties in 1919-1920 that settled territorial issues at the end of the First World War. As the only democracy in Central Europe, and one possessing a powerful army and formidable industrial resources, Czechoslovakia was France's longstanding ally, firmly believing that it was shielded from Nazi aggression by a 1925 defense treaty with France. In the run-up to the meeting in Munich, Czechoslovakia's leaders pleaded with French authorities in Paris and Prague for France to honor its treaty by assisting Czechoslovakia militarily. Daladier was a serious and proud man, a veteran of the First World War who ascended to political prominence from the *France profonde* of its southeastern *département* of the Vaucluse. During torturous discussions with Chamberlain prior to the meeting in Munich, Daladier repeatedly affirmed that France was duty bound to honor its commitments to Czechoslovakia. But France buckled at Munich. Daladier was described by André François-Ponçet, France's ambassador to Germany, as appearing "broken" when he signed the agreement with Hitler that began the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. Afterwards, François-Ponçet remarked bitterly, "So this is how France treats its most faithful ally."[1]

The next day, as the plane returning Daladier to France approached Le Bourget airport outside Paris, Daladier looked down and saw an immense crowd waiting on the tarmac. He turned to his aides and murmured, "They are going to lynch me."[2] Daladier was instead greeted with cries of gratitude and showers of wreathes and flowers by the throng. He stepped into a car that drove him through more cheering crowds as it made its way into Paris. Georges Bonnet, the French foreign minister who was a leading proponent of appeasement, sat next to Daladier, cheerfully complimenting Daladier on having forestalled another war.[3] Daladier, whose nickname in the French press was "the bull of the Vaucluse," brooded as he looked out the window at the crowd.

Unlike Bonnet, Paul Reynaud, Daladier's justice minister, declined to make the trip to Le Bourget to greet Daladier. Reynaud was a prominent center-right politician and a ferocious opponent of appeasement. In the four years preceding Munich, Reynaud had fought for a series of unconventional economic, military and foreign policy initiatives that were designed to strengthen France in its looming confrontation with Nazi Germany. As a self-described "lone wolf," he was stymied at virtually every turn by a political culture in France that resisted Reynaud's heterodox thinking. Even before Daladier had departed for Munich, Reynaud and Georges Mandel, Reynaud's friend and cabinet colleague, considered resigning to protest what they saw as the coming abandonment of Czechoslovakia. Winston Churchill, who sat in political exile on the backbenches of the House of Commons, temporarily dissuaded the two men during a dinner at the Hotel Ritz in Paris. Upon Daladier's return Reynaud and Mandel thought again to present their resignations. In the face of Daladier's characterization of

ministerial resignation as "desertion," the two men decided that this act would only make France look even weaker in the aftermath of Munich.[4]

On the evening of September 30, Chamberlain, who had met with an equally rapturous welcome in London, appeared at the window of his residence at 10 Downing Street, brandishing a slip of paper and proclaiming that he had brought home "peace with honour . . . peace for our time."[5] The document in Chamberlain's hand was a friendship agreement that he and Hitler had signed that morning in Munich behind the backs of the French.

Reynaud had no illusions about dealing with Nazi Germany. Following a meeting with Daladier and General Maurice Gamelin, the French army chief of staff, shortly after Daladier's return from Munich, Reynaud told Gamelin that the only solution to Nazi aggression was "to find another 35 divisions,"[6] the number of divisions in the now-neutralized Czechoslovak army. Reynaud's fierce opposition to appeasement was closer to the views of Léon Blum, the parliamentary chief of France's socialist party, than to the positions of Pierre-Étienne Flandin, the leader of Reynaud's own center-right political formation, the *Alliance démocratique*. After Flandin sent Hitler a telegram of congratulations regarding the Munich agreement on October 1, Reynaud resigned from the *Alliance démocratique.* Reynaud had been for many years a favorite target of the extreme right-wing political movement, *Action française*, which was led by the academician and polemicist Charles Maurras. In response to Reynaud's opposition to the Munich agreement, *Action française* ran a pastiche of the socialist anthem, the *Internationale,* on the front page of the party paper recommending that Reynaud be shot, along with Blum and Mandel.[7]

The humiliation of Munich seemed to restore to “the bull of the Vaucluse” a considerable measure of his patriotic tenacity. In November 1938 Daladier formed a new government in which Reynaud was named to the critical post of Minister of Finance. Reynaud came into the finance ministry at a dead run, fueled in part by an ambition to eventually become premier. This was now his chance to take the steps to resist Germany that he had been advocating for years. This was his chance to prepare France for war.

Chapter 1

The Legacy in France of Two World Wars

In virtually every village in France, however small, there is a *monument aux morts*, a monument originally erected to the dead of World War I. These monuments typically take the form of a stele on which are marked the names of those in the locality who died during the conflict, often topped by a statue of a French infantryman, the iconic *poilu*. The lists of the dead are appallingly long in relation to these villages' population, even as it was in the more rural France of the early twentieth century. The frequent repetition of the same surnames brings home the toll this war took on the fathers, sons, brothers, nephews and cousins of the French families of the era.[8]

Often on another face of the *monument aux morts* is a list of those who died during the Second World War. This list usually has fewer names. The first phase of World War II in France was brutally short: Germany invaded France on May 10, 1940, and by mid-June German forces had crushed the French army. Paul Reynaud, the French premier at the time, resigned from office on June 16, effectively acquiescing in the transfer of power to the aging hero of the First World War, Marshal Philippe Pétain, who went on to agree to an armistice with the Germans and later to become the leader of collaborationist Vichy France. On June 18 a relatively obscure general named Charles de Gaulle spoke on BBC radio from London, issuing his famous *Appel du 18 juin 1940*, a call for resistance by the French people.

The bracketing of 1930s French history by two world wars has formed the backdrop for a contentious historical examination of the troubled political, economic and social culture that was associated with the French Third Republic between the

wars. Among historians the suddenness of France's defeat in 1940 has demanded an explanation and a parceling out of responsibility.[9] One school of thought has characterized France in this era as lacking "the audacity and the willingness to act against the new barbarism represented by international fascism until it was too late."[10] As articulated in Eugen Weber's "The Hollow Years," "if the shadow of 1914-1918 broods over [the 1930s], so does the reader's foreknowledge of 1940-1944."[11] In Weber's reading France was afflicted in the 1930s by decadence, which he identifies as a "mood," an "atmosphere" in which public morality and self-confidence went into such decline that internal troubles laid the groundwork for the disaster of the Second World War.[12] Weber has been one of the principal proponents of the view that France's defeat was attributable to immobility in virtually every sphere, coupled with defeatist pacifism and a corrosive mistrust of the institutions of the Third Republic. In this reading the weakness of the Third Republic in the inter-war years was illustrated by the transitory nature of the succession of governments that ruled France, thirty-five in all between 1924 and 1940.[13] The rise and fall of these governments ostensibly represented the failure of parliamentary politics in the face of the muscular threat of Nazi Germany.

A different view of the reasons for the catastrophic collapse of France was set forth in "*L'Étrange défaite*" ("The Strange Defeat"), written in the summer of 1940 by Marc Bloch, a distinguished French medievalist. Bloch served bravely in both world wars, joined the resistance shortly after France's defeat, and was tortured and executed by the Nazis in June 1944. In "The Strange Defeat" Bloch famously proclaimed, "I belong to a generation that has a bad conscience,"[14] thereby suggesting that the elites of France had failed the nation in the years preceding the Second World War. But rather than

attributing decadence to the Third Republic, Bloch emphasized the weight on France represented by the horrors of the First World War and the resulting desire to return to normalcy: "From the last war, it is true, we emerged exhausted. After four years of enforced idleness caused by war, we were anxious to take up again the rusty tools of our various occupations. We wanted in quick-step to recapture the time we had lost."[15] Bloch's analysis of France's defeat was also based to a significant extent on the French military's failure to equip France with both the strategy and the materiel necessary to counter the mechanized forces of the German *blitzkrieg*.[16] The historian Ernest May, who borrowed the title of Bloch's work and added a twist, asserts in "Strange Victory: Hitler's Conquest of France" that France's defeat was attributable more to German tactical luck than to any "moral laxness" on the part of the Third Republic.[17] May adopts a salutary skepticism regarding the "decadence" school of historical thought by noting that the amorphous and rather sweeping accusation of political and social rot in inter-war France is difficult to refute because "the moral condition of any country or people is hard to gauge."[18]

Apart from its deterministic character and its unappealingly dim view of parliamentary politics, the analysis set forth in "The Hollow Years" is harsh in the respect that it does not give sufficient weight in human terms to the impact of the war on the French nation and the men who led France after the war. In the words of one French observer, "the cause of [France's] deep-seated pacifism was the hecatombs of Verdun and the Somme . . . in a nation of families with a single son."[19] The dehumanizing butchery of war gave rise to a deeply held feeling that war was "pointless, absurd, and murderous on a gigantic scale," as expressed by Louis-Ferdinand Céline in the

nightmarish novel, "*Voyage au bout de la nuit*" ("Journey to the End of Night").[20] During the war more than eight million Frenchmen were mobilized, representing 20% of the total population of France and 75% of men between the ages of twenty and fifty-five. Of those mobilized 16% or 1,310,000 were killed or reported missing, and 1.1 million were permanently disabled. The level of mortality of those mobilized in France was twice that of British and Russian troops and about 10% higher than among German soldiers. 600,000 women were widowed and 750,000 children were orphaned by the deaths of husbands and fathers.[21] Civilian deaths amounted to 200,000, many of them attributable to the influenza epidemic of 1919, which was an indirect consequence of the war. The French economist Alfred Sauvy has estimated the effect of military and civilian deaths on decreased births at 1.4 million. The total demographic impact of the war, summing the military deaths, civilian deaths and foregone births, was 2.9 million lives lost or more than 7% of the population of France.[22]

The foregone births of the war were a serious matter, because the men who would have been born during the war and would have become of age to be conscripted in the 1930s were simply not there – they were the second-generation ghosts of the First World War. This human absence weakened France militarily, but more profoundly contributed to the phenomenon of *les années creuses* or the demographically hollow years, which Weber appropriated to describe the state of "decadence" in France between the wars.[23] Population growth in the 1930s was close to zero.[24] The mortality and foregone births associated with the war accentuated the aging of the French population. In addition, the military deaths of the war disproportionately affected officers, as well as the intellectual elites of France: 833 alumni of the *École*

polytechnique and 230 alumni of the *École normale supérieure* died during the war, representing 41% of the relevant classes at those schools.[25] World War I thus transformed France demographically from what had been known in the nineteenth century as "the mammoth" of Europe into an older and more fragile nation. In military terms the enormous loss of life during the war resulted in a post-war defensive strategy – exemplified by the bunkered Maginot Line – that sought to reconcile the protection of France with the maximum preservation of soldiers' lives. As Reynaud observed it was difficult in the 1930s to rally the French to an offensive stance against Germany due to "the terrible loss of life [France] had suffered in the First World War."[26]

The material destruction wrought by the First World War was huge. France experienced an estimated 137 billion francs ($11.3 billion in 1920 terms) of damage to its industrial and agricultural assets.[27] The major theaters of war in Western Europe were located in northern and eastern France, where much of France's heavy industry was concentrated. In these areas two-thirds of France's textile, mining and metallurgical capacity was destroyed or damaged.[28] The effort to rebuild industry required considerable time and investment, resulting in post-war shortages of essential goods, an increase in imports, and borrowing from foreign creditors.[29] Although the employer organization associated with heavy industry, the *Confédération générale du patronat français* (CGPF), was traditionally anti-German, the experience of destruction during the First World War and the continuing sense of vulnerability in northern and eastern France to another German invasion created a current of hostility to war in this important segment of the French business community.[30] Despite the fact that certain sectors of the economy, such as steelmakers, had benefited from the corporatist

environment of the war, opposition to war in the business community was heightened by memories of the requisitioning and state control of the economy in wartime, phenomena that were perceived as attacks on the traditionally liberal economic views of the CGPF.[31] In addition, the business community suffered from an enduring fear of war because war was associated with social unrest or even revolution, as typified by the general strike that broke out in France in 1919[32] and even more dramatically by the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 in Russia.

The war had the financial impact of reducing France's position as "banker to the world," as French investors reduced their foreign placements in the face of internal requirements for funding the war effort and losses due to the expropriation of French assets in the Soviet Union.[33] London, which had long been a historic center of finance, took on additional importance for France as a market where short-term bonds in particular could be sold to fund budget deficits, although the recourse to volatile and unpredictable markets was a major problem for French governments after the war. Governmental dependence on investor confidence became an underlying theme that channeled much of the debate in the 1930s on economic issues, such the devaluation of the franc and the competitive impact of social reforms instituted in 1936 by the left-wing Popular Front government.[34]

The effort to finance the First World War triggered a huge expansion in France of the money supply, with a consequent increase in prices and a deterioration in the value of the French franc vis-à-vis other currencies, contrary to the expectation of many in France who believed that monetary policy would automatically re-establish the intrinsic strength of the franc to pre-war levels.[35] The collapse of the franc and the

associated experience of inflation during the leftist *Cartel des gauches* governments of 1924-1926 reinforced the belief that a strong franc was necessary to protect the revenues of individuals in the middle class, many of whom were holders of French government bonds, whose value tended to weaken in inflationary times. The economic policies undertaken in the second half of the 1920s by the fiscally conservative Raymond Poincaré bolstered the value of the franc and ushered in a period of prosperity for France, which lasted into the early 1930s and seemed to defy the effects of the worldwide depression. The strong "Poincaré franc" became a totem of stability for the French middle class. Two additional, significant issues created by the war from an economic viewpoint were how French claims against Germany for the payment of war reparations were to be resolved and whether France was to repay loans extended by the United States and Great Britain in order to fund the war effort.

In foreign affairs the "best world" for French diplomats after the First World War was German weakness, Great Britain as a willing ally, and alliances with various Eastern European countries as credible barriers to German ambitions.[36] The French desire for peace, however, resulted in somewhat contradictory policies toward Germany. On the one hand France placed considerable hope in the ideas of collective security and reconciliation with Germany. France regarded the League of Nations as an essential instrument for ensuring collective security, and the admission of Germany into the League in 1926 was seen as a means of engaging France's former enemy in the virtues of cooperation and comity on which the League was built. Aristide Briand, who held the positions of premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs numerous times in the 1920s, was a leading proponent of improved relations with Germany. In addition to favoring

Germany's admission to the League of Nations, Briand negotiated the Locarno Treaties of 1925, which definitively settled border issues between Germany and France and drew in Great Britain and Italy as guarantors of the treaty's arrangements.

On the other hand France was greatly concerned with maintaining German weakness. The Versailles Treaty's "war guilt" clause attributing to Germany full responsibility for the war and the Treaty's imposition on Germany of reparation payments and limitations on the size of its armed forces were critical measures in this regard, but the severity of the Treaty's terms and the reluctance of France and Great Britain to consider a negotiated peace with Germany "encouraged the German military interpretation of . . . war as existential,"[37] a bitter lesson later exploited by the Nazis as a cause of historical resentment. Moreover, France established a system of alliances with Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia as a way of containing possible German encroachment in Eastern Europe. The Versailles Treaty's territorial rearrangements, however, resulted in what has been called "a conglomerate of nationalisms" in Eastern and Central Europe,[38] and the Treaty's principle of self-determination contained the seeds of destruction for a country such as Czechoslovakia, which incorporated a significant number of ethnic minorities, most notably Germans in the region of Sudetenland. In addition, Great Britain was loath to become involved in disputes in Eastern Europe, which were regarded by the British as quite distinct from direct threats to France. France's uncertainty about the conditions under which the British would come to the aid of France militarily meant that French diplomacy wavered as it faced the mounting threat of Nazi Germany. France's military alliance with Czechoslovakia created a conundrum of juggling treaty obligations with a deeply

held desire for peace, against a backdrop of dependence on a reticent Great Britain. This conundrum proved to be insoluble in September 1938.

A profound aversion to war spanned the political spectrum of France in the inter-war era. The exigencies of the First World War had superseded traditional political values of individual liberty and democratic process through the repressive measures of censorship and amplified police powers.[39] In the post-war era these repressive measures were fresh in the minds of the parties on the left wing of the political spectrum, the *Parti communiste français* (PCF), the French communist party, and the *Section française de l'internationale ouvrière* (SFIO), the French socialist party. The PCF was created in the aftermath of the Congress of Tours in December 1920, during which the French left split over the question of adherence to the Communist International (Comintern), which had been created by the Soviets in the aftermath of the 1917 revolution. The SFIO declined to join the Comintern, and the PCF subsequently became a party that reliably followed direction from the Soviets concerning intertwined domestic and foreign policy issues. In the post-war era the SFIO attempted to synthesize the attainment of power through both revolution and elections. The party included a current that adhered to orthodox Marxism, populated principally by the followers of Jules Guesde, and a current that hewed to the more reformist tradition of Jean Jaurès, the great pre-war figure of French socialism who was assassinated on the eve of World War I. Léon Blum was the most prominent figure of the socialist movement in the inter-war period and, as the SFIO's parliamentary leader, embodied the ambitions of the SFIO as an electoral force.

Pacifist sentiment ran deep in the left-wing parties for humanistic reasons. In addition, war was regarded ideologically as a divisive weapon of capital that distracted the working classes from the goal of international proletarian revolution. These sentiments fostered a desire to preserve peace and avoid estrangement from Germany.[40] A corollary to the belief that preservation of peace was necessary for the progress of socialism was the axiom that disarmament must be the ultimate objective of socialism.[41] The attitude of revolutionary defeatism was an article of faith within the PCF and in an important segment of the SFIO, at least until the advent in the mid-1930s of the Popular Front, which constituted an uneasy, defensive alliance among the PCF, the SFIO and the Radical Party to oppose fascism. Teachers, who represented an important element in the left-wing parties, had been killed in significant numbers during the First World War. Post-war teachers carried into the classroom a dedication to educating children about the dangers of chauvinism and glorification of war. Teachers' unions became a major source of support for the policy of appeasement.[42]

On the right-hand side of the French political spectrum were a number of fractionalized parties, led by figures such as Poincaré, the nationalists André Tardieu and Pierre-Étienne Flandin, the Catholic democrat Louis Marin, and the socialist-turned-conservative Pierre Laval. These parties were liberal in the sense that they believed in representative government, sovereignty of the nation and social conservatism; they were "the guilty heirs of the French Revolution."[43] The center-right was closely allied with business interests in France and held a wary view of Germany, especially among personalities of the "realist" right, such as Paul Reynaud, who were very much aware of the Nazi threat and regarded an alliance with the Soviet Union to

counter this threat as a return to the tradition of France's alliance with czarist Russia.[44] The center-right also mistrusted communism, a guardedness that was accentuated by the opportunism of Soviet diplomacy, which switched spectacularly in 1934 from support for a strict policy of "class against class" to the Popular Front strategy of opposing fascism through alliances with sympathetic "bourgeois" parties.[45] More importantly, the center-right's deep-seated fear of revolution resulted among some conservatives in the view that Nazi Germany was a bulwark against the forces of Soviet communism.[46] For conservatives such as Flandin and Laval, accommodating fascism was the price for avoiding a mutually destructive war between international forces objectively opposing Bolshevism.[47] At the extreme end of the right wing were various counter-revolutionary movements exemplified by Charles Maurras's *Action française*, which sought to restore the values of monarchism and religion in France. *Action française* specialized in political and social invective, often directed against the Jews, who were caricatured as war-mongering profiteers. The extreme right fluctuated between an admiration for fascist regimes and a viscerally nationalistic opposition to both German and Soviet ambitions; this opposition was expressed by the extreme-right's crude view that Germans and "Slavs" should be allowed to fight one another.[48]

The pivotal party in French politics was the *Parti radical*, which embodied rural values, laicism, and a desire for democratic order and stability based on universal suffrage and education.[49] The Radical Party's leading figures in the inter-war era were "the two Édouards," Herriot and Daladier, who respectively had a vaguely and variably right-wing and left-wing political coloration, mostly as a result of being in opposition to each other.[50] The party has been characterized as a collection of glad-handing

politicians whose main concern was to hold power.[51] Talk was, for many in the Radical Party, "what [they] did best."[52] An understanding of economic theory was not a strong point among the Radicals – one historian has asserted that Herriot was notorious for his "financial incompetence" and that Daladier was "an economic illiterate"[53] – and the party's economic doctrine represented an amalgam of both traditionally liberal notions, such as support for small business and an antipathy to strikes, and socialist ideas, such as the nationalization of railroads and insurance companies and the demonization of capitalism as the impenetrable *mur d'argent* or the "wall of money."[54]

The Radical Party was a critical player in the political, social and economic life of France after the First World War because its middle-class clientele of professionals and rural notables embodied the longing for preservation of the status quo that emerged from the experience of war. Radicals headed or participated in a variety of governments in the 1930s, such the leftist Popular Front, which instituted social and economic reforms, and the centrist or conservative governments of the early and late 1930s, which applied generally liberal social and economic policies. Given the ideologically disparate elements in the Radical Party and its resulting alliances with both left-wing and right-wing parties, the Radical Party was a volatile and unreliable component of parliamentary majorities throughout the period between the wars. As observed by historians like Weber, this fact helps to explain the succession of fragile governments that were in power throughout the era – sixteen during the period between June 1932 and June 1940 alone – many of which lasted only a matter of months. Nonetheless, these governments broadly shared a set of beliefs – equality before the law, sovereignty of the nation, representative government, lay education – that produced a "Republican

synthesis," which was essentially based on bourgeois values.[55] The positioning of the Radical Party as a necessary element in the parliamentary majorities of many of the governments of the 1930s meant that the Republican synthesis included a heavy influence of that party's outlook.

The notion that France suffered from decadence in the 1930s is premised to a considerable degree on the perceived fecklessness of the parties that dominated the era. According to Weber, the Communists were "dogmatic," the Socialists "bureaucratic," the Radicals "lazy" and "more interested in show than substance," the conservatives averse to ideas that were "too intelligent."[56] Certain observers who lived during the era itself shared this perspective. Jean Jardin and Denis de Rougemont, ideological non-conformists of the 1930s who rejected both communism and capitalism, leveled criticism across the spectrum of conventional parties: "A right that is more concerned with its stock portfolio than action, Radicals devoted to cash stuffed under the mattress, a Socialist program limited to nationalization of that same cash, and finally Communists regularly elected to parliament who pledge allegiance to an obsolete ideology in the midst of general indifference."[57] The sense of frivolity and ineffectiveness of parliamentary politics that underlies this view, however, fails to take into account the responses to France's problems that were proposed by serious politicians, such as Paul Reynaud, who came to the fore in this era.

A perhaps more sympathetic and nuanced version of Weber's view of a "decadent" France is the idea, as expressed by Bloch's longing to recapture the time lost to war, that France wished for a *rappel à l'ordre,* a return to normalcy, traditional ways and the status quo ante in the aftermath of the First World War. The desire for stability

and predictability after the chaos and dislocation of the war was understandable. The Republican synthesis suited this desire for stability by providing for a "politics of safety,"[58] in which parliamentary governance was balanced with "a widely shared understanding that the state would not go too far."[59] The risk of such a balance was that it fostered a stalemated society in which there was strong resistance to an unconventional politician like Paul Reynaud who sought to "push the Republican synthesis . . . out of kilter."[60] Reynaud therefore faced an uphill battle as he challenged several critical premises of the post-war status quo – the strong franc and the defensive military strategy typified by the Maginot Line – and advocated controversial alternatives to the system of collective security represented by the League of Nations.

The pivotal year for France in the inter-war era was 1931, when the "Poincaré prosperity" disappeared. France was no longer insulated from the effects of the worldwide economic depression, as exports plummeted by two-thirds, coal and steel production declined, agricultural prices dropped due to abundant harvests despite protectionist policies, and unemployment began a steady increase. Tax revenues declined, making the balanced budgets of the Poincaré years a thing of the past.[61] The collective security framework of the League of Nations suffered a major blow in 1932 as Japan completed the occupation of Manchuria but avoided sanctions.[62] The deaths of Briand in 1932 and of Poincaré in 1934 symbolized the passing of the hopes for economic and diplomatic stability that had predominated in the 1920s. Hitler became the German chancellor in January 1933. But the undermining of the relative stability of the 1920s opened the way in the 1930s for new personalities to challenge economic, military and diplomatic orthodoxies. Paul Reynaud was a prominent example of such a

personality, as he transitioned from alignment with traditional conservatism to iconoclasm. Underlying Reynaud's efforts was an intensely held belief that dramatic reform was necessary to prepare his nation to counter the threat of Nazi Germany.

Chapter 2

Paul Reynaud, the Maverick

The French intellectual Raymond Aron remarked that Paul Reynaud was "the most intelligent politician of the inter-war era."[63] As Charles de Gaulle noted in his war memoir, "Paul Reynaud faced up to the most difficult of times with a spiritual firmness that could not be denied."[64] But because he was premier[65] in June 1940, Reynaud's historical identity has come to be associated with the ignominy of France's defeat by Nazi Germany. The circumstances surrounding Reynaud's involvement in the fall of France to the Nazis, which will be discussed in Chapter 6, have obscured the fact that Reynaud was regarded in the 1930s as one of the most original and courageous political and economic thinkers in France. Harnessing his powers as a theorist and orator, Reynaud published extensively in the form of newspaper articles and pamphlets and made frequent use of parliamentary debates in the Chamber of Deputies to articulate a unified view of the economic, military and diplomatic strategies that he believed were necessary to strengthen France. For Reynaud a liberal perspective on the world underpinned his ideas, which were in opposition to collectivisms of both the communist and fascist varieties.

Reynaud's personal background established the foundations for his heterodox view of the problems facing inter-war France and the solutions he proposed to these problems. He was born on October 15, 1878 in the town of Barcelonnette, which is located in what was formerly known as the *Basses-Alpes* and is now in the *département* of *Alpes-de-Haute-Provence*. Despite this town's insular location on the lower slopes of the Alps, Barcelonnette's inhabitants, known as the *Barcelonnettes*, were imbued with

an outward-looking sense of entrepreneurship that was unusual for France in the era. In particular, the *Barcelonnettes* made substantial investments in the Mexican textile business.[66] By the end of the nineteenth century, descendants of the *Barcelonnettes* held 55% of the foreign investment in Mexico,[67] and it was in Mexico that Reynaud's father, Alexandre, made his fortune in textiles. Paul's ongoing interest in the family enterprise conferred on him a comfortable income as an adult, a sense of the importance of business, and an enduring reputation as a *grand bourgeois* of international commerce.

Photographs of Reynaud bring to mind an adult version of the cartoon character Tintin.[68] Reynaud possessed shrewd eyes in a smoothly imperturbable face. His voice was reported to be raspy and unimpressive on the radio[69] but was considerably more effective in the close quarters of his habitual forum, the Chamber of Deputies,[70] in which he gained a reputation as a formidable orator. Images of Reynaud suggest a swagger in his walk, which combined with his small size to give him the appearance of a combative bantam.[71] Reynaud was sensitive about his height: he was only one meter 60 centimeters tall (about five foot three inches). In the political cartoons of the time, he was depicted as noticeably shorter than Édouard Daladier, the Radical Party leader who was his sometime political ally and frequent competitor. Reynaud rationalized this caricature on the basis that Daladier was in fact quite short but also heavier in build, so that Daladier gave the appearance of being taller than Reynaud.[72] The concern about relative height evidenced a rivalry concerning comparative political heft, which was to play out publicly in the late 1930s as Daladier and Reynaud jockeyed for power.

In his memoir Reynaud noted, "I am emotionally attached to the Republic by family tradition. In the National Assembly of 1875, one of my uncles was among the 353

individuals who, by a majority of one vote, founded the [Third] Republic."[73] The males in Reynaud's family were strongly republican, as evidenced by their staunch support of Captain Alfred Dreyfus,[74] the Jewish military officer who was falsely accused in the 1890s of spying for Germany. Reynaud inherited a deep respect for the values of the Third Republic, particularly as embodied by the institution of representative government and its parliamentarians, such as Aristide Briand, Alexandre Millerand and Édouard Herriot.[75] In classically liberal fashion he believed that political and economic freedoms went hand in hand.[76] Early in his career Reynaud wrote a tribute to Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau, a French center-right politician of the late nineteenth century who formed a government of "republican defense" in 1899 in the face of both pro- and anti-Dreyfus demonstrations; Waldeck-Rousseau later sought to revisit Dreyfus's conviction. Reynaud's admiring portrait of Waldeck-Rousseau evidenced Reynaud's dedication to the republican values of moderation and tolerance.[77] Similarly, in his 1936 pamphlet about economic, military and political reform, "*Jeunesse, quelle France veux-tu?*" ("Young people, what kind of France do you want?"), Reynaud addressed French youth of all political stripes by imploring, "The other French youth, your brother, who is on the opposite side of the barricade, see how he resembles you."[78] Despite the republican tradition that ran in his family, Reynaud received a religious training that left him notably indifferent. Of his first communion at the church of Saint-Sulpice in Paris, he said, "These mystical moments were marvelous, but that marvelous state of mind only lasted a few hours."[79] Reynaud's rational spirit already contradicted his religious training,[80] which may have accounted for his inability for many years to make common

cause with the *Fédération républicaine*, the Catholic center-right movement led by Louis Marin.

When Reynaud was still a youth, his family moved to Paris, although the family retained important emotional and financial ties to Barcelonnette. The family's comfortable financial circumstances enabled Reynaud to take a long trip around the world and then to train as a barrister before the First World War. Reynaud's father insisted that Reynaud take classes in business at the *École des hautes études commerciales* (HEC) in addition to his legal studies, in the hope that Reynaud would ascend to management of the family enterprise. Reynaud did not especially like the specialized studies required by the HEC and declined to take an active role in the family business, but he respected those willing to take commercial risks and observed in his memoir that alumni of the HEC played an important role in the international standing of France.[81] Reynaud quickly became a prominent figure of the Paris bar, displaying a characteristic independence by representing both an anarchist accused of participating in a murderous bank robbery and the kidnappers of a Communist deputy in Algeria.[82] In 1912 Reynaud married Jeanne Henri-Robert, the daughter of the head of the Paris bar.

Reynaud's legal training was significant not only because it encouraged his skill as an orator, but also because political economy in the era was taught largely in law schools. Economics was an underdeveloped social science in France between the two world wars, weakened by its overly theoretical nature and by poor statistical data and too little influenced by experience.[83] Moreover, political economy was "virtually nonexistent as a discipline" within the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a fact that

hindered the development of trade with other countries.[84] But Reynaud took a keen interest in economic and financial matters, as his initiatives in the inter-war era were to show on the issues of German war reparations, payment by France of war debts, and especially devaluation of the franc. His appreciation for the importance of economics and finance also led him to form relationships with members of the German business community, which facilitated his proposal of novel solutions to the problem of German reparations, such as the taking by France of equity interests in German enterprises. This type of innovation was a forerunner of the ideas on which European union was based after the Second World War, but both Reynaud's political friends and adversaries did not favor his economic initiatives.[85] Similarly, Reynaud had significant relationships in the French business and financial community, particularly with bankers such as Gabriel Le Roy Ladurie of the Banque Worms, Paul Baudouin of the Banque de l'Indochine and André Istel of the Banque Neuflize-Schlumberger, at which Reynaud held his personal accounts. These bankers influenced Reynaud's thinking on financial issues.[86]

Although his brother Albert was killed early in the First World War, Reynaud's involvement in the war was limited to a relatively short stint in the medical corps and later as a member of a French delegation sent on a failed but bloodless assignment to the far east of Russia to support an anti-Bolshevik expeditionary force of the Czechoslovak army. Reynaud thus escaped the dreadful experience of trench warfare and its resulting massive death toll. As a consequence Reynaud emerged from the First World War relatively unmarked by the experience.[87] In this regard he was quite different in outlook from political contemporaries and rivals who fought in the war, such as Daladier, who was wounded several times and vividly remembered stepping

over dead bodies half-buried in mud.[88] Reynaud regarded military theory as another intellectual discipline to be mastered, one that was obviously not only the preserve of military men but of statesmen who were dedicated to the international standing of France. French military leaders, with the notable exception of Charles de Gaulle, did not appreciate Reynaud's intrusions into their domain.

After the end of World War I, Reynaud was elected for the first time to the Chamber of Deputies from the *Basses-Alpes* as a member of a center-right political party that was part of the conservative *Bloc national*, a demographically youthful formation that rejected traditional ideological quarrels and was interested in substantive measures.[89] Although he was subsequently defeated in the 1924 victory of the leftist *Cartel des gauches*, Reynaud became a prominent figure in the generation of conservative political leaders who came to the fore in the 1920s and were publicly and fully invested in the issues of organized political action, partly in reaction to the victory of the *Cartel des gauches*.[90] After taking up residence in Paris, Reynaud was again elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1928, a seat he held until June 1940. Reynaud was associated with various center-right political formations, most notably the *Alliance démocratique* led in the 1930s by Pierre-Étienne Flandin.[91] The *Alliance démocratique* was not a mass party but, like other conservative movements of the time in France, operated through a network of committees that were responsible for bringing otherwise passive supporters out to vote.[92] As a consequence the party has been described as a "grouping of affinities" rather than a real political party.[93] Bourgeois cadres from Paris, Bordeaux, and southeast and center-east France populated the party and were imbued with an independence and lack of organizational discipline that

undermined the creation of a cohesive and expansive political party. The party's members were sympathetic to traditional liberalism, defense of the middle-class, and development of France's colonial empire; they were also resolutely anti-communist.[94]

The organizing principles of the *Alliance démocratique* lacked the "sentimental attachments" that were characteristic of the PCF and the SFIO,[95] and unlike the leftist parties the *Alliance démocratique* refused in general to organize popular demonstrations and the distribution of pamphlets and posters.[96] Reynaud personally expressed misgivings about the power of mass politics, which he stated could lead to the "negation of republican legality" and destabilizing economic and financial errors.[97] In any case no charismatic leader of the French conservative movement emerged in the inter-war era to mobilize a mass movement. Adherents of the center-right were wary of the revolutionary adventurism associated with Napoleonic figures such as the anti-republican general Georges Boulanger,[98] who led a short-lived populist campaign in the late 1880s that threatened to overthrow the Third Republic. Compounding these organizational problems was the fact that the voting power of the *Alliance démocratique'*s deputies was diluted because they sat with a number of different parliamentary groups rather than their own; in addition, these deputies often ignored the commands of their party's whips concerning voting strategy.[99]

Notwithstanding the limitations of the *Alliance démocratique,* Reynaud aspired to the creation of an expansive party on the model of the British Conservative Party by unifying conservatives who occupied the space between left-wing Radicals and the anti-republican right.[100] Reynaud greatly admired Winston Churchill, a similarly independent conservative politician with whom Reynaud developed a friendship

through periodic meetings and letter writing. But the French right-wing's "quasi-metaphysical" concern about splitting apart the body politic made the goal of a broad-based conservative party virtually unrealizable.[101] Ironically, what resulted instead was an often-incomprehensible proliferation of conservative parties, as center-right movements splintered and then re-formed under different names with no noticeable effect of creating a broader appeal. As it became clear in early 1938 that military confrontation with Germany was approaching, Reynaud came to believe that a government of national union was necessary. With Reynaud's encouragement Léon Blum floated the idea of a new government extending from Maurice Thorez, head of the PCF, across the political spectrum to Paul Reynaud. The idea of a government "from Thorez to Reynaud," however, came to naught as a result of opposition from both communist and conservative deputies. This failure was symptomatic of Reynaud's frustrations in gathering together a large political consensus.[102]

Reynaud's relationship with Churchill and his admiration for British and American democracy were characteristic of his affinity for "Anglo-Saxon" politics, with its essentially liberal values.[103] Reynaud's fluency in English was reported to be impressive,[104] and he traveled frequently to the United States and especially Britain. As Reynaud noted in his memoir, "From my first trip to England at the age of thirteen, I was profoundly impressed by the seriousness of the English, their silent orderliness, their power. This impression inspired me during my political life."[105] In an interview with the newspaper *Le Temps* in March 1934, Reynaud expressed the view that a parliamentary regime was the only one that conformed to the French character; the temptations of authoritarian rule must therefore be resisted.[106] Reynaud's respect for

British-style politics extended to the importance of representing the "loyal opposition," as he did during the Popular Front era when he proclaimed, "[parliamentary] opposition is a public service equal to governmental service."[107] Reynaud walked a fine line between encouraging the Popular Front government to rethink its policies while still criticizing its underlying principles. During the debate in September 1936 on the Popular Front's proposal to devalue the franc, Reynaud stressed the need to modify the Popular Front's social reforms if devaluation was to succeed: "I have given from this podium, with moderation I believe, a warning that is friendly advice."[108] The fact that Reynaud never sought to undermine the legitimacy of the Popular Front governments was further evidence of his respect for republican values.

Reynaud's interest in parliamentary government on the British model was based in part on his proclivity to seek national efficiency and governmental coherence, which found expression in issues of constitutional reform. In the Third Republic between the wars, the Chamber of Deputies could be dissolved and deputies sent to their home districts to face voters only if the Senate approved dissolution, which as a practical matter never took place. Deputies instead voted governments down with little responsibility, since a successor government, often composed of essentially the same ministers, could be formed in the absence of an intervening election. In addition, the existence of a two-stage election fostered complicated alliances and electoral back scratching, because all parties could run candidates in the first round but only the top two candidates ran in the definitive second round. The resulting weakness of governments was a dominant feature of French political life in the inter-war era. Although Reynaud opposed authoritarian impulses, he was pushed to consider reforms

to strengthen the government's power by the events of February 6, 1934, when right-wing rioters in the Place de la Concorde in Paris came close to attacking the Chamber of Deputies itself. Together with his political mentor, André Tardieu, Reynaud came to favor the reinforcement of executive power, as exemplified by Reynaud's advocacy of the proposition that the head of government should have the power in his own stead to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies if placed in the minority.[109] Such a measure would give the premier a means of enforcing discipline among parliamentary supporters and therefore diminishing the risk of parliamentary vote-downs of the government on a regular basis.[110] Not incidentally, Reynaud was of the view that enhanced dissolution powers were also necessary for the formation of a broad party of the right,[111] as the precedent of the British Conservative Party had demonstrated. He favored proportional representation rather than the two-stage election, principally as a calculation that proportional representation would have the effect of prying the Radical Party away from socialist voters, whose support was normally required by Radicals in the second round.[112] Moreover, Reynaud opposed the devolution of power from Paris to regional structures on the basis that the result would simply be the interposition of additional layers of bureaucracy. In this regard, Reynaud was "more Jacobin than Girondin."[113]

For the center-right political figures of Reynaud's generation, the fight against communism took the place that had been held by clericalism and nationalism before the First World War.[114] But Reynaud's position was more nuanced: he opposed collectivism of all kinds, whether communist or fascist, and saw France as the guardian of individual values.[115] Reynaud repeatedly warned his followers of the dangers of German fascism as expressed in "*Mein Kampf*," which he noted had the merit of being "very clear; [w]hen

you have read it, you will no longer have the least doubt as to the present German policy."[116] He had no sympathy for racial theory or discriminatory policies against people who were not French by origin, asserting that France should be generous in its immigration policies and pointing out that America had profited from the influx of foreigners. The deportation of immigrants, which became one perceived remedy in France to the economic problems of the depression, was a sign of "the lack of imagination and courage" from which France was suffering.[117] Reynaud's views on immigration were evidence of the internationalist cast of mind that had characterized him since his origins in Barcelonnette.[118]

When Reynaud worked with others, as he was required to do in the role of Minister of Finance during the critical period of November 1938 to September 1939, he turned to technically proficient individuals, such as the free-market economist Jacques Rueff, the economic historian Alfred Sauvy, and the experts on governmental administration and finance Michel Debré and Maurice Couve de Murville, who later became prime ministers in the Fifth Republic. These men would today be characterized as technocrats and were not, at least at the time, prominent political figures. Reynaud's inclination to rely upon such individuals was, as Sauvy observed, emblematic of his empirical style of thinking, according to which action was based on observation and experience rather than theory or doctrine.[119] This approach also fostered a readiness to change one's mind, as Reynaud did on the issue of the strong franc in 1934, when he transitioned from quite strict orthodoxy to the heresy of devaluation. The ability to adapt one's thought to political and economic conditions as they presented themselves was unusual in an era in which French politicians were for the most part strongly

identified with particular ideological convictions. As Reynaud rhetorically observed in looking back over his political career, "Was it my fault to place too much belief in the illusion of the power of reason?"[120]

Reynaud had a pugnacious streak that reinforced his willingness to swim against the political currents of his day. He loved a political fight. In 1926 he ran for deputy in a by-election that was conducted in a strongly working-class district of Paris. Reynaud's memoir features an affectionate description of the evening during the campaign when he and his running mate, Henri de Kérillis, were invited by the local section of the PCF to a debate at the *Salle Japy* in the 11th *arrondissement* of Paris.[121] Kérillis was an iconoclastic figure equal to Reynaud, a World War I air force hero and the only conservative deputy in October 1938 to vote against the Munich accord. Reynaud and Kérillis entered the auditorium surrounded by PCF security toughs and were hooted by the crowd when Reynaud was introduced as "the fascist candidate" by Marcel Cachin, the editor of *L'Humanité*, the Communist Party's newspaper. The crowd whistled derisively at Kérillis because he was reputed to have led a reprisal air force raid in Germany at the end of the First World War. Reynaud elicited a roar of disapproval from the audience and a shaking of fists when he dared to evoke the legacy of the French socialist leader, Jean Jaurès. Even though he and Kérillis lost the election to a communist slate, Reynaud cheerfully observed that the evening was "one of the best memories of my political career."[122] Reynaud's willingness to engage with political adversaries in a setting like the *Salle Japy* meeting was emblematic not only of his courage but also of his conviction that political differences could be bridged by reasoned debate. As he subsequently demonstrated by his advocacy of an alliance with

the Soviet Union in order to counter the Nazi threat, Reynaud regarded communism as another force, albeit a dangerous one, with which France could make pragmatic arrangements.

A complementary side of Reynaud's combative nature was his contentious relationships with individuals who ostensibly shared his political convictions. These stormy relationships did little to advance Reynaud's desire to create a broadly based conservative party. After Reynaud was elected in 1928 as a center-right deputy from the Parisian electoral district encompassing the bourgeois neighborhoods of the 2nd *arrondissement*, he experienced ongoing run-ins with his political patrons. André Tardieu, for example, was a modernizing and dynamic conservative leader of the early 1930s, in whose governments Reynaud served as Minister of Finance and Minister of Justice. Tardieu and Reynaud shared a common view on certain issues, such as constitutional reform of the Chamber of Deputies, but Tardieu was a reflexively orthodox thinker concerning the maintenance of a strong franc. After Reynaud began publicly to advocate for the devaluation of the franc in June 1934, Tardieu wrote him, "What can I say to you? I am terrified to open the papers. I am more and more strongly convinced that you are profoundly in error."[123]

In the same vein Reynaud had more disputes than agreements with Flandin, even though Reynaud was for some time second-in-command of the *Alliance démocratique.* Flandin and Reynaud disagreed on devaluation of the franc, military reform, sanctions on Italy after the conquest of Ethiopia, and appeasement of Germany. The disagreement on devaluation also put Reynaud at odds with the *Alliance démocratique*'s natural allies in the French financial world, such as the prominent

bankers Édouard de Rothschild and François de Wendel.[124] During the debate about devaluation in 1934, the *Alliance démocratique* put out a pamphlet entitled "Everything that one needs to know about devaluation," in which devaluation was depicted as a preliminary to civil war and foreign invasion.[125] Flandin characterized as "idiotic" Reynaud's March 1935 speech advocating legislation for the creation of an armored corps of six divisions, a proposal that was an effort to break out of the defensive thinking of the military high command.[126] Reynaud's resignation from the *Alliance démocratique* in the aftermath of Flandin's congratulatory telegram to Hitler appeared to be the regularization of divorce – Reynaud observed that he "had for a long time avoided contact" with the *Alliance démocratique*[127] – and it had become increasingly likely that in any case Reynaud was to be ejected from the party as a result of his disagreements with Flandin.[128] Marx Dormoy, the socialist Minister of the Interior during the Popular Front, trenchantly observed, "I know how easy it is for Monsieur Flandin to say something stupid. All that is necessary is for Monsieur Reynaud to say something intelligent."[129] Beyond the personal conflicts between the two men, Reynaud saw clearly that Germany was a primordial threat to France in a way that the pro-appeasement Flandin did not perceive.

Similarly, on December 27, 1935, Reynaud provided further evidence of his willingness to antagonize erstwhile allies when he delivered a scathing attack in the Chamber of Deputies on the policy of rapprochement with fascist Italy that had been adopted by the conservative government of Pierre Laval. After Reynaud's speech leftist deputies stood up and shouted "Resign" at the government benches. This speech caused consternation and anger among Reynaud's center-right colleagues, including Tardieu

again, because they considered Reynaud to be responsible for the eventual fall of the Laval government and the coming to power of the Popular Front in June 1936.[130] Tardieu subsequently resigned from the parliamentary group associated with Reynaud, and Tardieu's estrangement from Reynaud became deeper.

Reynaud's friendships tended to be with figures on the other side of the political spectrum or with equally iconoclastic figures. Most prominently, Reynaud formed a warm bond with the socialist Léon Blum. After Reynaud's speech in the Chamber of Deputies in February 1937 urging national unity and firmness toward Nazi Germany, Blum, who was head of the Popular Front government then in power, sent Reynaud a note that said, "[A meeting] prevented me from hearing your speech. [F]riends told me that you were more than up to your usual level – which is saying a lot."[131] Reynaud later remarked of his experiences in opposing many of the measures instituted by the Popular Front, "If [Blum and I] were not in agreement on the means, we were together on essential matters," especially regarding the dangers of fascism.[132]

Reynaud's relationship with Blum was of a piece with Reynaud's circle of other Jewish friends, which included the Radical deputy Georges Mandel, who was Georges Clemenceau's protégé[133] and was assassinated in July 1944 by the Vichy militia, Gaston Palewski, who was Reynaud's factotum in the 1930s and de Gaulle's assistant after the Second World War, and Michel Debré. On November 30, 1935 Reynaud participated in a protest meeting at the *Salle Chopin* in Paris against the racist Nuremburg laws, in the company of Jacques Weil, the chief rabbi of Paris. At this meeting Reynaud denounced the pseudo-science of Nazi claims to Aryan superiority and lauded the opposition of democracy to dictatorship.[134] Reynaud's subsequent interventions concerning the Nazi

threat became more pronounced, because the collectivist and irrational appeals of German fascism were antithetical to his liberal outlook. But Reynaud's position as a frequent outsider in the politics of the Third Republic may also have caused him to identify with Jewish politicians, who were often, as Reynaud was, the target of vicious attacks by the extreme right-wing press. When Reynaud and Mandel became Ministers of Justice and Colonies, respectively, in the Daladier government of April 1938, Charles Maurras of *Action française* put out a headline in the party newspaper that proclaimed, "Two Jews in the New Government," since Reynaud was a Jew "by adoption."[135] Reynaud's business interests in Mexico and his Jewish friendships provided the extreme right-wing press with an ongoing pretext for assimilating Reynaud with Jews as war-mongering agents of international capital.[136] Shortly before Reynaud resigned from the *Alliance démocratique*, members of his own political party accused Reynaud of being "an objective ally of Jews who want to liberate their German brothers"[137] due to his anti-appeasement views.

The very qualities that distinguished Reynaud – independence, a willingness to change his mind based on experience, an enthusiasm for taking unpopular positions – were also his liabilities. Henri de Kérillis had a keen insight into his friend when he criticized Reynaud during the 1934 debate about devaluation of the franc: "I am convinced that you are wrong [on the issue of devaluation], perhaps not on the substance of the issue [because] . . . I myself have doubts about it, but on the form of your action. You've allowed yourself to become transfixed, hypnotized, dominated by the problem. You've neglected all other problems. This is perhaps due to your skill as a technician, but this is not the posture of a statesman."[138] The criticism of Reynaud as an

individual who was perhaps more interested in demonstrating his independence and analytical prowess than in achieving an actionable political consensus goes to the heart of the conundrum presented by the man and his era. There was more than a hint of arrogance when Reynaud observed, "It's unimportant not to be in the majority; if one is right, time will tell."[139]

Reynaud lived in a time when the great threat to France took the form of fascism, a mass movement based on emotional appeals to racial hatred, irredentism and historical resentment. Reynaud was a liberal who brought the reasoned, empirical approach of this tradition to an understanding of the economic, military and foreign policy issues confronting France. Unlike the leaders of the Socialist and Communist Parties in France, Reynaud had no broadly based political movement to back up his convictions. He functioned as an individual, the "lone wolf" of his own description,[140] in a time when an ethos of collectivist political action prevailed. He was a creature of parliamentary culture when many of the critical events of his era were taking place in the streets, in factories, and in barracks. During the Munich crisis Churchill remarked, "France has people who have the correct outlook, Paul Reynaud for example. But does he have the inner strength, the moral fiber to make an impact?"[141] The essential issue presented by Reynaud was how a man with his background and outlook could influence a course of events that was heading for armed confrontation with Nazi Germany.

Chapter 3

The Debate on Devaluation of 1934

Paul Reynaud mounted the first of his challenges to post-World War I orthodoxy by taking on the issue of devaluation in 1934. Although devaluation was by itself a narrow and fairly technical matter – whether French exports could be increased by a governmentally decreed diminution in the value of the franc vis-à-vis gold and competitive currencies – Reynaud's challenge to the policy of the strong franc raised to the surface deeper issues concerning the weaknesses of the French economy. These weaknesses included an intertwined devotion to gold and deflation, an underdeveloped banking system, an industrial sector focused on internal consumption, a producer outlook that regarded increased output as the cause of lower prices, and a reliance on volatile foreign and domestic capital to fund budgetary needs. For Reynaud devaluation posed the twin political problems of creating a broad understanding of a complicated economic issue and rallying public support for his essentially liberal positions in the absence of backing from his own political party.

The French historian Jean-Baptiste Duroselle credits Reynaud, along with Léon Blum, as one of "the few unusually gifted men" who had the insight in the inter-war era that "no effective foreign policy was possible if one was economically the prisoner of the [worldwide economic] crisis and, therefore, economic and foreign policy were intimately connected."[142] The proposition that a strong economy was a prerequisite for strength in diplomacy had abundant historical examples in the form of imperial Great Britain, Bismarckian Germany and the newly emerging industrial powers of the United States and the Soviet Union.[143] As a young adviser to the regional council of the *Basses-*

Alpes at the end of the First World War, Reynaud had already been concerned with the economic streamlining and reform of France in order to create an industrial power that would be competitive with Germany and the United States.[144] Reynaud's originality was that he possessed a sophisticated understanding of economic and financial issues as a result of his training and intellectual disposition. Moreover, he was prepared to take unpopular positions in order to educate his political colleagues and the French public concerning the importance of these issues. Well before the debate on devaluation was launched in 1934, Reynaud had provided hints of unconventional thinking on two other important economic matters: the resolution of German reparation payments to France and the settlement of France's war debts with the United States. Reynaud placed these two issues on a par with problems emerging from the worldwide depression as the causes for the fall of France in 1940.[145]

Negotiations around the time of the Treaty of Versailles initially fixed the amount of German war reparations to France in the amount of 225 billion gold-marks, although informed observers were of the opinion that Germany's capacity to pay was only a little over half this amount. In fact, a Commission on Reparations, in which France, Great Britain, Italy, Belgium and the United States were represented, recalibrated German reparations at an amount equal to 126 billion gold-marks, which represented 2.5 years of German gross national product before the First World War.[146] The British economist John Maynard Keynes estimated that Germany's true capacity to pay was even lower, at 40 billion gold-marks.[147] The disparity between the nominal amount of German reparations and Germany's ability to pay led to a series of crises that produced increasingly unsatisfactory resolutions. The failure of Germany to make

scheduled payments resulted in the 1921 occupation by the French army of the German industrial cities of Dusseldorf, Duisburg and Rührort and, more significantly, in the 1923 occupation of the industrial region of the Ruhr. The theory of the Ruhr occupation was that France could force German industry to produce coal and iron as payments in kind for reparations. German resistance to the occupation in the form of strikes and sabotage increased the costs of the occupation to the point where it became a loss-making proposition for the French, who evacuated the Ruhr in 1925.

As a young politician in the early 1920s, Reynaud recognized the problems inherent in the system of reparations, even though the prevailing view in France was that "Germany (*les Boches*) must pay."[148] The requirement for payment of reparations in the form of gold or foreign exchange meant that Germany would be under constant pressure to increase its exports, which had the potential to depress prices and trigger unemployment in Germany's competitors, Great Britain and France. Reynaud favored the payment of German reparations in kind rather than via exactions on German national revenues.[149] But in an effort to find more creative means than occupation to satisfy German obligations, Reynaud proposed two novel ideas: the transfer of German workers and materials into France to rebuild areas that had been destroyed during the war and agreements directly between the French government and German enterprises under a commercial entente through which France would take shareholdings in these enterprises. These ideas were, as Reynaud later remarked in his memoir, the basis of an early version of European union.[150] Reynaud's contacts with prominent individuals in German finance and industry, such as the industrialists Arnold Rechberg and Hugo Stinnes, undoubtedly inclined him to such ideas, but these relations with personalities

in France's historic enemy made Reynaud suspect in the eyes of French politicians, even of his own ideological bent. Raymond Poincaré, the premier of the conservative government in power at the time of the Ruhr crisis, essentially told Reynaud to mind his own business when Reynaud proposed a trip to Germany to follow up on discussions contemplating transfers of shareholdings in German companies.[151] Reynaud characterized the occupation of the Ruhr as a forcible taking of German capital that could have been achieved by agreement, but Poincaré was obstinately opposed to concluding any kind of structured commercial accord with the Germans, in the process scuttling a nascent possibility for an enduring understanding between the two countries.[152]

The continuing failure of the Germans to pay reparations on time led to the serial renegotiation of the terms of payment through the Commission on Reparations. Payment terms were progressively lengthened, indexed to German economic activity, and offset by loans to Germany under restructuring plans whose patrons were the American banker Charles Dawes in 1924 and the American industrialist Owen Young in 1930. The Dawes Plan and the Young Plan effectively discounted the value of the reparations claim by two-thirds and 17%, respectively.[153] The economic crisis of the early 1930s led to a moratorium on reparation payments as proposed in June 1931 by the American president, Herbert Hoover, and Hitler's arrival in power in January 1933 effectively ended the reparations process. In all Germany paid about 9.5 billion gold-marks of the initially devised claim of 225 billion gold-marks.[154]

The discounting of German reparations was not a small issue for France, because the French placed what proved to be unrealistic hopes in the flow of these payments as

a means of alleviating the burden of their own obligations to repay the debts that had been incurred to Great Britain and the United States during the First World War. In order to fund the war effort, the French had incurred government-to-government loans from the United States of $4 billion and from Great Britain in the sterling equivalent of $3 billion. The French advocated the linkage of reparation payments to the payment of war debts, a position that found some sympathy among the British. The Americans, however, took a hard-nosed approach to France's obligations, regarding them essentially as a commercial and not a political matter.[155] In December 1932 tensions between the United States and France on the issue of war loans culminated in a political crisis in France.

The French premier in December 1932 was the Radical Party's Édouard Herriot, a larger-than-life figure for whom Reynaud had considerable respect,[156] even though Herriot's first two governments were iterations of the leftist *Cartel des gauches*, which came to power in the 1924 election that resulted in Reynaud's defeat as deputy from the *Basses-Alpes*. In addition, Herriot's government of June 1932 acceded to power upon the fall of the third government of Reynaud's political patron of that time, the conservative André Tardieu, in whose cabinets Reynaud had most recently served as Minister of Justice. Nevertheless, Reynaud admired Herriot as a skilled parliamentarian and dedicated republican who was deeply rooted in local politics as mayor of Lyon. In December 1932 Herriot was confronted with a divisive debate concerning the payment of an installment of the American war loan. A significant number of the deputies in Herriot's own Radical Party opposed payment, as did Tardieu and many of his center-right allies.

The debate circled around the question whether the United States could legitimately require repayment when the flow of reparations from Germany had stopped. As a member of the parliamentary opposition in 1929, Herriot had been of the view that payment of reparations and payment of war debts were morally linked, but in December 1932 he reversed position and staked his government's survival on the proposition that payment to the United States must be made whether or not Germany honored its obligations. From Reynaud's perspective and contrary to his own party's views as expressed by Tardieu, the timely payment by France of its war debts was a critical barometer of France's reliability. Reynaud believed that trust in France was essential not only on the purely commercial basis that debts were to be honored but more broadly on a diplomatic level. Great Britain, which similarly owed a smaller installment of war loans to the United States, duly made payment, and Reynaud thought that payment by France was a way of maintaining a common front with an indispensable ally in any future confrontation with Germany.[157] In addition, Reynaud was convinced that tensions with the United States resulting from non-payment would accentuate the growing American aversion to engagement with France, which would be dangerous if war with Germany broke out. In fact, America's growing wariness about entanglements in European affairs was exacerbated by the conflict over the war loans.[158]

Herriot seemed to view the payment of the debt to the United States as a matter simply of honor; his government fell on the issue, which Reynaud viewed as being "to Herriot's [own] honor."[159] Reynaud abstained in the confidence vote, a parliamentary abdication that likely reflected his desire to avoid a split with Tardieu, who voted

against the Herriot government. Reynaud later regretted not supporting Herriot: "I deprived myself of the greatest satisfaction of public service, which is to vote in a manner that is dangerous for one's career by defending a just cause."[160] Regarding a similar issue, Reynaud in April 1933 acted on principle by voting in favor of a budget proposed by the government of the Radical Party's Édouard Daladier, even though the budget was supported mostly by left-wing deputies, because France had to be in a position to fulfill its financial obligations.[161] On top of the purely commercial implications of these issues, Reynaud's related concern about the diplomatic impact of France's reliability in honoring agreements was to come to the fore with a vengeance in September 1938, when Reynaud opposed the Munich accord on the basis that France was obligated to stand by its treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia.

Despite his independent views on reparations and war debts, Reynaud in the early 1930s had publicly anchored himself to a position of financial orthodoxy concerning the strong franc and the policy of deflation. Deflation was premised on the twin principles of a strictly balanced budget, which was understood to mean the reduction of expenditures to the level of revenues, and the maintenance of price stability. The conservative government of Raymond Poincaré, which succeeded the *Cartel des gauches* in 1926, established the definitive reference point in this regard for the French center-right. Under the *Cartel des gauches*, France experienced severe inflationary pressures and a flight from the franc as citizens bought goods, gold, and foreign securities and placed their deposits in banks outside France.[162] In the face of capital flight and a depreciating franc, Poincaré instituted measures that included tax increases, the restoration of the franc to the gold standard, the requirement for gold

reserves against short-term deposits and notes in circulation, and the institution of stabilization transactions on currency markets to establish a consistent rate of exchange for the franc.[163] The "Poincaré franc" that emerged from these measures became, at least in the eyes of the middle class, the inviolable yardstick of stability and economic prosperity. France's financial standing seemed to be validated by the fact that by the end of 1928, its central bank accounted for more than 50% of the total central bank holdings of gold.[164] France experienced considerable growth in the period from 1926 to 1931 and seemed to be immune from the worldwide economic crisis that erupted in 1929. The obstinacy associated with protection of the franc took on a martial tone. Georges Robineau, a governor of France's central bank, proclaimed in the 1920s, "We can say only one thing, which is that we are warriors and will engage in trench warfare for the franc."[165]

Around the time of the irruption of the depression, there was a tentative effort to stimulate the French economy by breaking out of strict budgetary orthodoxy. Shortly after the New York stock market crash of October 1929, Tardieu became premier and led two conservative governments of 1929-1930. Tardieu took the rather unconventional view for the time in France that the state should loosen the purse strings by embarking on a five-year program of public works. The proposed expenditure of 5 billion francs was intended to modernize France's infrastructure and was regarded by some observers as "an excellent idea" although highly unusual, since its Keynesian character was to be expected from a government of a more leftist tilt. The plan, however, was only partially funded and was halted when it began to have an inflationary impact on the economy.[166] Reynaud served as Minister of Finance in

Tardieu's second government of 1929-1930 and, under Tardieu's influence but with some reservations, supported what Reynaud called the "policy of investment."[167] Reynaud seemed at this point to be torn between a willingness to entertain innovative fiscal ideas like those of Tardieu and a concern about the impact of budgetary deficits, a conflict that was to pursue him the next time he became Minister of Finance, in the pre-wartime conditions of 1938-1939.

Even as France was suffering from a decline in industrial production and an increase in unemployment, in January 1933 Reynaud noted with satisfaction the growth in French gold stocks from 29 billion gold francs in June 1929 to 83 billion in October 1932. In commending France on the growth of gold stocks, Reynaud seemed to adhere to what Duroselle characterized as France's retrograde "love of gold."[168] Reynaud attributed the increase in French gold stocks to the stability of the franc based on its convertibility into gold, which also made French bonds attractive to investors.[169] Essentially, Reynaud depicted the influx of gold as a measure of confidence, although he referred somewhat defensively to the fact that France needed to hold large stocks of gold in anticipation of satisfying the claims of foreign creditors, especially short-term investors on whom the French government was uncomfortably dependent.[170] Perhaps for this reason Reynaud did not address the fact that the influx of gold had not spurred expansion of the French economy, even as the economies of other countries affected by the depression had begun to experience early signs of recovery.[171]

Although the economic crisis was worsening in France in mid-1934, Reynaud praised the "stabilization" of the French economy achieved by Gaston Doumergue, the conservative French premier whose government came to power in the aftermath of the

riot of February 6, 1934. Reynaud observed that stabilization had been achieved through the maintenance of a strong franc and the "classic," deflationary means of cutting public expenditures, particularly pensions paid to government workers and veterans of the First World War. He disputed the notion that devaluation of the franc would encourage exports, since the price of imported raw materials would also increase, as well as wages that were indexed to increases in the cost of living.[172] Increases in the price of these inputs would squeeze the margins of producers, nullifying the effect of cheaper prices of French exports. The generally inflationary effect of devaluation, Reynaud argued, would be especially pernicious for holders of French government bonds. Moreover, he argued that a devaluation of the franc would encourage a flight of capital from France and a round of competitive currency devaluations in other countries.[173] Unmentioned by Reynaud was the fact that the Doumergue government had maintained regressive and illiberal policies of predecessor governments of the early 1930s, such as protectionist tariffs, subsidies to politically sensitive sectors, notably agriculture, and the organization of markets through anti-competitive cartels.[174] His summing up of France's strengths – a stable franc, production that was "balanced" between industry and agriculture, a colonial empire that took one-third of France's output, and protection from invasion via "fortifications to its east"[175]– was the perfect expression of conventional thinking of the time, with autarkic overtones not out of keeping with German and Soviet economic policies. At that point Reynaud seemed to fall squarely into the class of French economic thinkers criticized by Keynes, who commented to the British MacMillan Committee in 1930 that

the negative effects of France's obsession with gold were compounded by an "economic science [that] is non-existent [and] is two generations out of date."[176]

Reynaud's views on the French economy in 1933 and 1934, as described above, were set forth in *Foreign Affairs*, a publication in English intended for international readers. This fact may have been a function of Reynaud's feeling that, as a French patriot, he had to put a good face on what was becoming an increasingly perilous situation in France. The index of industrial production had fallen by more than 18% between January 1931 and June 1934.[177] Over roughly the same period, the ranks of the unemployed swelled by more than 1.8 million, a six-fold increase due to a combination of layoffs, withdrawals from the active workforce, and involuntary reductions in working hours.[178] Pressure on the French economy had increased as Great Britain and the United States abandoned the gold standard in September 1931 and May 1933, respectively, resulting in the effective devaluation of the pound sterling and the dollar vis-à-vis the franc and a concomitant decline in the sales of now relatively expensive French exports. Other competitors, such as Germany and the Soviet Union, had instituted exchange controls and autarkic limits on imports in order to shield their currencies.[179] As unemployment rose and industrial production slackened in France, government spending was rolled back, after the modest attempt by Tardieu in the early 1930s to increase expenditures as a means of stimulating the economy.

To make matters worse, a scandal implicating several ministers in governments of the early 1930s erupted in 1933. The scandal was associated with the fraudulent sale of municipal securities by a shady financier named Serge Stavisky. The Stavisky affair reignited latent French suspicions about the rotten nature of the interlinked political

and financial spheres and seemed to be the trigger for the events of February 6, 1934, during which right-wing leagues and veterans' organizations battled the police in the Place de la Concorde and attempted to invade the nearby Chamber of Deputies. These events played an important role in changing Reynaud's thinking about the economic prescriptions to be applied to France. Although his reaction at the time was muted, he cast a social, rather than a strictly political, interpretation on these events, characterizing the rage of the rioters not as a sign of incipient fascist insurrection but as a popular movement motivated by despair.[180] The anger of the rioters in the Place de la Concorde was founded on "the suffering caused by the [economic] crisis" and a sense of disgust with a parliamentary regime that was financially complicit with corrupted individuals like Stavisky.[181] The resignation of the Daladier government in the aftermath of the events of February 6, 1934 and the coming to power of the conservative Gaston Doumergue seemed to clear the way for a broader discussion of economic policy, especially as an acceleration of gold exports from France signaled a crisis of confidence in financial markets.[182]

Although the ensuing economic debate was premised on a general agreement that the events of February 6, 1934 were caused by the impact of the worldwide depression on France, and specifically that French prices were too high, the Doumergue government's response was to institute deflationary cuts in public expenditures, tax increases, and price supports for critical agricultural products, such as wheat, in order to appease French peasants.[183] The export business continued to suffer, as illustrated by the automotive industry, which had exported more than 30% of its production in the 1920s but by the early 1930s was selling only 8% of its production to foreign buyers.[184]

By June 1934, as economic indicators continued to deteriorate, Reynaud was developing doubts about the policy of the strong franc. The economic crisis was made even more ominous by the fact that the Nazis had come to power in Germany. A number of astute French observers, such as Frédéric Jenny, the specialist on economic matters at the center-right newspaper *Le Temps*, and politicians, such as Léon Blum and the independent socialist deputy Raymond Patenôtre, had already broached the subject of devaluation.[185] In addition, a number of Reynaud's contacts in the banking community, such as André Istel of the Banque Neuflize-Schlumberger, shared Reynaud's growing concerns about the economic policies of the conservative governments of the early 1930s.[186] Under the influence of these other independent thinkers and as a result of his own empiricism, Reynaud became the most visible proponent of devaluation, a position that was enhanced by his ability to use the Chamber of Deputies as a forum in which to espouse his views and therefore to open the issue up to public debate.[187]

Consequently, Reynaud's speech of June 28, 1934 in the Chamber of Deputies, in the course of which he argued for devaluation of the franc, was "revolutionary"[188] and represented his "defection from the ranks of orthodox deflationists."[189] Reynaud first situated himself in a semblance of solidarity with the Doumergue government by noting that the Bank of France's holdings of gold were sufficient to establish confidence in the government's ability to continue to finance itself, which would allow devaluation "*à froid"* or in financially calm conditions rather than "*à chaud"* or under financial pressure.[190] He reiterated the importance of maintaining a balanced budget, which he asserted was a separate matter from the issue of monetary policy posed by devaluation.[191]

Reynaud then went on the attack, as he criticized the government's internally contradictory policies of deflation and price supports, particularly for agricultural products. He argued that prices of French goods had to be brought in line with world prices as measured in countries such as Great Britain and the United States, which had devalued their currencies. The alignment of prices could not be brought about by deflationary policies, which would have severe social costs, particularly for the working class and employees of commercial enterprises. Devaluation of the franc, Reynaud asserted, would make French prices more competitive and would particularly stimulate businesses that were dependent on exports. Reynaud observed that devaluation had demonstrated its benefits in the statistically observable recovery experienced by Great Britain and the United States after these countries devalued their currencies.[192]

Léon Blum intervened in Reynaud's speech ostensibly to applaud Reynaud for taking a position that contradicted his earlier positions and that was certainly in opposition to Reynaud's own party, in the same fashion, as Blum noted, that Reynaud had proposed heterodox policies during the debate on modalities of payment by Germany of war reparations.[193] By responding that the issue was not a matter of "left or right," Reynaud sidestepped this somewhat Machiavellian accolade, which had the effect of highlighting Reynaud's isolation from the center-right on devaluation. In a polemical jab at Louis Germain-Martin, the Doumergue government's Minister of Finance, Reynaud noted that although Germain-Martin was ostensibly the guardian of economic orthodoxy, the government's stance opposing devaluation was "anti-orthodox and anti-liberal."[194] Addressing himself directly to the Doumergue government's ministers, Reynaud concluded by declaring that the government's support of the strong

franc must change.[195] Alfred Sauvy later observed that the sophistication of Reynaud's argument, his willingness to observe empirically the economic experience of France and its competitors, and his readiness to profit from this observation by changing his mind on devaluation proved to be "clear-headed and feared by all."[196]

Reynaud's argument for devaluation was met with a number of technical objections that he had himself raised in the earlier, positive appreciation of the French economy in the *Foreign Affairs* articles. Anti-devaluation observers pointed out that a French devaluation, which would itself be a competitive devaluation, might trigger an additional round of competitive devaluations, thereby damaging international financial stability. Moreover, the benefits of devaluation would be fleeting, since import prices would increase, an issue that was particularly thorny for France, which relied heavily on imported raw materials.[197] Increases in raw material costs would compress margins and would in addition have an inflationary effect on internal prices, which experience had shown tended to rise after devaluation.[198] Finally, the ten million members of the middle-class who held French government bonds, often referred to as "small savers," would experience an inflationary erosion of the value of their holdings, raising the specter of social upheaval[199] like the disorder associated with the hyperinflation of 1923 in Weimar Germany. The negative impact of increased import prices on purchasing power and the unfavorable effect on small savers were not negligible objections, because they went to the heart of French anxiety about inflation and the threat of price controls.[200]

The fears that were provoked by the devaluation debate accounted for the violence of the reaction to Reynaud's speech: Léon Daudet, one of *Action française*'s

polemicists, called for Reynaud's arrest or his incarceration in a mental institution.[201] Reynaud's position on devaluation elicited stiff opposition as well from mainstream parties of both the left and the right. As the newspaper *L'Écho de Paris* proclaimed, "The conventional political blocs have been fissured."[202] Because Reynaud's views on devaluation contradicted the deflationary orthodoxy of the center-right, which denounced his views as a "theft of savings,"[203] he incurred the wrath of Pierre-Étienne Flandin, the head of Reynaud's own political party, the *Alliance démocratique*, in addition to a number of business organizations that had been his allies, such as the *Comité des Forges*, the steel-makers' employer organization.[204] Although some left-wing deputies were ideologically inclined in 1934 to see issues relating to the franc simply as a symptom of capitalism's failure,[205] Reynaud was equally opposed by many in the SFIO for the same reason that constituencies of the conservative parties were hostile to devaluation. As Reynaud observed, "Even Frenchmen who are socialists are fundamentally conservative when it comes to their currency, which has a sacred character that is untouchable."[206]

The vociferous nature of the debate about devaluation warrants examination, since it suggests that the controversy was "as much psychological and social as economically rational."[207] Reynaud focused the discussion of devaluation through its impact on French external commerce. Contrary to the views he had espoused in *Foreign Affairs*, Reynaud now argued that it was necessary to re-inflate prices in order to restore profit margins to producers. An overvalued currency like the franc discouraged exports, increased imports, and resulted in an outflow of gold to settle the balance of payments. The lower levels of production in French export industries also resulted in

an increase in unemployment and a related reduction in tax receipts, exposing the government to a greater risk of budgetary deficits.[208] Yet even at the 1929 high point of French economic activity between the wars, exports accounted for a relatively modest 14% of French national production. Several of France's competitors, such as Great Britain, Switzerland, Belgium and The Netherlands were more than twice as dependent on foreign trade than France.[209] Why then was the issue of devaluation so incendiary, triggering a flood of death-threats directed not only at Reynaud but also at his daughter Colette?[210]

In the first place devaluation threatened a volatile and powerful segment of French society, that of the small savers. The money market in Paris was underdeveloped, and banks were subject to runs on deposits and were thus unwilling to take on too much government paper in order to preserve their liquidity. Reynaud, as Minister of Finance in the second Tardieu government of 1929-1930, had the personal experience of averting a financial panic by arranging for the Bank of France to support several insolvent Parisian and provincial banks.[211] Domestic investors in France were suspicious of financial markets, which were regarded by many as "the impersonal domain of abstract forces, parasitical intermediaries and speculators,"[212] and therefore sought the safety provided by government bonds, as long as the value of these obligations was not undercut by inflation or social upheaval.[213] The volatile nature of this investor base and its reliance on the elusive element of confidence meant that the funding of the French state became an increasing preoccupation of governments in the 1930s.[214] Because investors in French government debt desired price stability above all, the pegging of the franc to gold and the convertibility of the franc into gold were twin

financial guarantees underpinning the franc. The maintenance of a fixed relationship of money to gold was regarded as fundamental to economic and social order.[215] Any suggestion of an increase in prices or the devaluation of the franc in terms of gold was anathema to investors and revived bad memories of the inflation-ridden economy under the *Cartel des gauches* of 1924-1926.

The second reason for the controversy surrounding devaluation was the fact that it implicitly challenged a fundamental tenet of many producers in the French economy, which was a focus on quality versus quantity. Many of these producers took the form of family-owned small- to medium-sized enterprises. The management of French companies was dominated by graduates of the engineering- and math-oriented *École polytechnique*,[216] but this style of education, rather than fostering rational commercial thinking, instead reinforced an authoritarian and paternalistic streak among managers and owners, many of whom came from the same social milieu. Businesses were generally financed through retained profits rather than bank loans and were often motivated by standing in the community rather than purely commercial concerns.[217] As a result French businesses tended to be inward looking rather than dynamically focused on expansion and international sales. The conservatism of many in the French business community was underlined, for example, by the fact that the expansion of the availability of credit during the First World War was regarded as a cause of over-supply of goods and therefore as a disruption of economic normalcy rather than as an opportunity for growth.[218]

Expressed in a more technical fashion, the concern about quality over quantity meant that many French producers were focused on margins of profitability, which is

the excess of sales prices over the cost of inputs, such as raw materials, labor, investments in fixed assets, and other expenses of doing business. The overvalued franc might mean that the total volume of sales, especially for export industries, decreased because franc-denominated products were expensive for foreign buyers, but the stability of both output and input prices guaranteed consistent margins. In fact, for certain producers in the French economy, increases in production were synonymous with over-supply and a concomitant depressing effect on sales prices. Although such concerns might be understandable for that portion of the French economy producing luxury or handmade goods in small numbers, significant sectors of the economy in 1930s France, such as textiles, metallurgy and automobiles, were dependent on mass-produced goods and therefore on sales volume. The reluctance to ramp up production, and the related concern with maintenance of margins, became known as economic "Malthusianism" in the inter-war era.[219] Malthusianism was symptomatic of a risk-averse and hermetic economy in France.

Reynaud's arguments in favor of devaluation implied the need for audacity and the willingness to take risks in the face of Malthusianism, particularly as the Nazis were transforming Germany into a command economy oriented toward the maximum production of materials needed in time of war. If one risk of the devaluation of the franc was to compress margins, a solution might be to accept, at least in the short-term, the lower per-unit profit that resulted from the increased cost of imported raw materials but to increase production aggressively so that higher volumes generated more overall profit.[220] The encouragement to higher production was precisely the motivation for devaluing the franc and therefore making prices more attractive to foreign buyers. Even

in the domestic market, where devaluation might exert upward pressure on prices, the prospect of greater profits thrived in conditions of rising prices, not falling prices as was the case in deflationary times.[221] But the ramping up of production required a readiness to take the risks associated with higher levels of investment in plant and machinery and the hiring of more workers. These demands on the capacity to take risk were difficult for many French businesses to accept, particularly due to a related problem, which was the difficulty of rationalizing costs in a fragmented French economy.

The compression on margins that might result from devaluation had a response in addition to increased production, which was a rationalization of the cost base of producing goods. Rationalization could take a number of forms, such as investment in more efficient machinery and methods of production, as well as controls on the cost of labor. Reynaud pointed out that the productivity resulting from increased mechanization of production would lower prices, making goods more readily available to consumers. In addition, investment in efficient methods of production would create a greater number of non-manual jobs.[222] Larger enterprises generally offered more opportunities for rationalization of costs, but in 1930s France, industry was divided between a relatively small number of large companies and a large number of companies that employed fewer than five hundred workers.[223] The bifurcated development of French industry was a function of the lack of a uniform internal market and low levels of growth in the population.[224] Smaller companies consequently lacked the resources for the investments that were required for increased production and rationalized costs. Moreover, the absence of economic sophistication among the Radical Party politicians

who tended to be the political patrons of the owners of these companies meant that policies to encourage this sector of the economy were sometimes lacking. The dynamism of owners of larger businesses was sapped by a corporatist attitude that fostered cartel arrangements mediated by the government. Such arrangements guaranteed predictable levels of business and profitability while barring entry to new competitors.[225]

Devaluation was difficult to explain and harder to sell to the average French citizen, even when placed in the context of wider economic problems confronting France. In the face of the resistance and incomprehension triggered by his speech of June 28, 1934, Reynaud's tone moved from the technical to the moral, as he increasingly framed the issue of devaluation as a courageous choice that was required in order to save France from economic disaster.[226] Reynaud's internationalist cast of mind emerged in his argument that devaluation promoted the circulation of ideas, such as initiative, entrepreneurship and willingness to take risks. These ideas would counter the potential isolation of France resulting from deflation.[227] Deflation was, he declared, "the masochism of old folks,"[228] a jibe that highlighted the ossified thinking of the generation of politicians who ruled France in the 1930s. In addition, as the threat represented by Nazi Germany became more apparent, Reynaud emphasized that devaluation could create the economic conditions necessary for a "gigantic" rearmament effort, as Great Britain had shown after its devaluation earlier in the 1930s.[229] The turn to a more moral, and political, argument in favor of devaluation reflected Reynaud's realization that a purely technical approach to France's economic problems was unlikely to mobilize public opinion behind his positions.

The deeply hostile reaction to Reynaud's advocacy of devaluation exposed a raw nerve touched by the debate. The values promoted by Reynaud in this debate – individual initiative, a readiness to accept the complexity of a problem, the necessity of balancing competing interests in search of a middle ground – were essentially the attributes of classically liberal thought.[230] The fact that Reynaud espoused these values in the context of the workings of financial markets and the realities of day-to-day commerce gave his liberal arguments a distinctly Anglo-Saxon tint.[231] For the ideological extremes of French society in the 1930s, whether of the left in the form of the PCF or the right in the form of counter-revolutionary movements like *Action française*, liberalism was "the true enemy," because it was the intellectual underpinning for bourgeois capitalism and materialistic modernity.[232] But the aversion to liberal thought infiltrated more than the political extremes in France. The French ambivalence about money and risk-taking implicit in the ethos of Malthusianism was reinforced by a sense among influential philosophers such as Raymond Aron and the Catholic *Esprit* movement of Georges Izard and André Déléage that society was undermined by the ill-effects of grasping materialism in both its capitalist and communist forms.[233] The United States was seen in this respect as the enemy, not as a nation *per se*, but as a system of thought and action.[234] The rationalism and admiration for the Anglo-Saxon world displayed by someone like Reynaud only compounded the problem for those who were seeking an alternative to a material understanding of the world.[235] The disdain for liberalism from both the extremes and those who rejected the extremes – the small savers were perhaps typical of the latter group – was symptomatic of what Tony Judt

has called "the peculiar weakness of the liberal tradition in French life, which . . . entails addressing oneself to an absence."[236]

The antipathy to liberalism was not merely an airy intellectual phenomenon, but one with real political consequences. Reynaud had overtly planted the flag of liberalism during his speech in the Chamber of Deputies when he criticized the Doumergue government's policy opposing devaluation as "anti-liberal." The absence of a popular movement in support of devaluation, however, cast a harsh light on Reynaud's inability to mobilize political forces for a proposition that had an economically liberal character. It was here that Henri de Kérrilis's criticism of Reynaud on the issue of devaluation – "You've allowed yourself to become transfixed . . . by the problem . . . [T]his is not the posture of a statesman"[237] – had a particular sting. Reynaud chose to pursue the fight for devaluation in his favored forum of the Chamber of Deputies, but one that was increasingly in disfavor as repugnance mounted against political parties and the compromises and backroom dealings that were perceived as integral to the parliamentary system.[238]

Although Reynaud may well have been correct on the economics of devaluation, he could not find a way to persuade French citizens of the importance of the issue and its underlying implications for a nation that was in the early stages of dealing with Nazi Germany. The social reforms of the Popular Front, which favored the working class through measures such as wage increases, paid vacations, and a reduction of the workweek to forty hours, had a mass appeal that Reynaud was unable to build in the debate on devaluation. It was only in November 1938 that Reynaud, as Minister of Finance in a government led by Daladier, was able to rally the forces for an economic

recovery that surprised many observers. Even in this case, it was because of his ability to inspire confidence in an elite – the community of French business leaders – and to take advantage of a convergence of events – the support of a cross-section of social classes that now saw as real the threat of Nazi Germany – that Reynaud succeeded in re-launching the French economy.

The entrenched views in 1934 of politicians and business leaders concerning devaluation resulted in a front of opposition to Reynaud's proposal that effectively stymied serious consideration of his views. Building on his suggestion that Reynaud should be arrested or incarcerated in a mental institution for his views on devaluation, Léon Daudet accused Reynaud of favoring a weaker franc because his family business interests in Mexico would benefit.[239] Reynaud's views were characterized as "cowardice" by Joseph Caillaux, a powerful right-wing senator and former Minister of Finance who had considerable influence in the Senate's Finance Committee. Because Caillaux was regarded as the guardian of financial orthodoxy between 1932 and 1939, his condemnation was fatal[240] and effectively put an end to further consideration of devaluation until the advent of the Popular Front government in June 1936.[241] Reynaud blamed the policy of deflation and maintenance of the strong franc for the conservative parties' electoral defeat in April-May 1936 at the hands of the Popular Front, criticizing in particular high agricultural prices on the power of the countryside as represented by Radical deputies who had been the allies of earlier conservative governments.[242]

Reynaud's position on devaluation, and his later stances on military and foreign policy issues, isolated him politically from June 1934 until April 1938. He characterized the emotions surrounding the devaluation issue as "a kind of monetary Dreyfus Affair"

in which he saw himself in the role of the unfortunate Captain Dreyfus.[243] The franc was in fact devalued by the Popular Front in September 1936 and June 1937 and again in May 1938 by Daladier's center-right government, in which Reynaud served as Minister of Justice, a position that sidelined him politically and in any event kept him out of economic affairs of state. In the words of Georges Bonnet, who was Minister of Finance in the second Popular Front government that was in power from June 1937 to January 1938, the devaluation of June 1937 was an effort to float the franc as "an abstract unit of account, detached from all material elements, notably gold."[244] Bonnet's attempt to wriggle free of the French metaphysical concern with gold came to naught as the devaluation of June 1937, like that of September 1936, failed to stimulate business activity. Although Reynaud in principle favored the devaluation of September 1936, he voted against it because the social measures instituted by the Popular Front – particularly the workweek of forty hours – were contrary to the efficiencies that Reynaud felt must accompany devaluation. Moreover, the inflationary effects of these social measures would, Reynaud predicted, ultimately hurt the working class.[245] France's economic problems were deeper than devaluation alone could solve, without accompanying structural reform. As a consequence, these various devaluation efforts failed to trigger the intangible element of confidence that would only emerge in force when Reynaud became Minister of Finance in November 1938 and instituted a number of controversial reforms that in particular overturned the social measures adopted by the Popular Front. As will be seen in Chapter 6, Reynaud did not pursue the remedy of devaluation when he came to power as Minister of Finance. His focus was to be on the underlying problems of ramping up industrial production and rationalizing costs.

In the meanwhile, Reynaud turned from his defeat on the issue of devaluation to take on the second issue that would distinguish him during the years of political isolation: the rethinking of France's military strategy and capabilities, in tandem with lieutenant-colonel Charles de Gaulle.

Chapter 4

The Debate on Military Strategy of 1935

In December 1934, six months after Paul Reynaud had unsuccessfully challenged French economic orthodoxy by proposing a devaluation of the franc, he received a visitor in his Paris office. The visitor was lieutenant-colonel Charles de Gaulle, then a staff officer. De Gaulle came to meet with Reynaud to seek political support in the Chamber of Deputies for de Gaulle's ideas on a dramatically different military strategy for France, one that was built around mechanized units manned by professional soldiers. When de Gaulle told Reynaud that he needed a prominent politician to spearhead his ideas, Reynaud responded, "I will find someone for you." De Gaulle declared, "That would be useless, I've already looked; it must be you and no-one else." To which Reynaud replied, "So be it, I will hear you out."[246] Reynaud's willingness to entertain de Gaulle's ideas was clearly based on a feeling that de Gaulle represented someone much like himself, "a thinker imbued with an instinctive combativeness."[247]

The debate about defense issues in 1930s France unfurled in a political environment that was a complicated mix of antipathy by much of the populace, resistance by senior military commanders to reform, and alarm at the potential threat to the Third Republic represented by a professional army. The antipathy to defense matters was a product of the deep strain of pacifism that prevailed in France after the hecatomb of the First World War and the sense that the war had resulted in a settlement at Versailles that few believed in.[248] The attitude of many in France was summarized by the SFIO's general secretary, Paul Faure, who said in January 1937, "Even if we were certain of victory, we would *never* agree to go to war."[249] As described

in Chapter 1, a profound aversion to war spanned the political spectrum of France in the inter-war era. In order to insulate his ideas against attacks from pacifists of both the left and the right, Reynaud attempted to inject into the military debate the notion that for a government to act effectively in matters of defense, it had to be concerned with the protection of both human lives and material assets.[250]

Resistance from senior military officers to a rethinking of French strategy was premised to a considerable degree on the stature of "the hero of Verdun," Marshal Philippe Pétain, who served after World War I in a variety of governmental positions and, although retired, continued to be the most influential military figure on the scene in the 1930s. Pétain's views were largely reflected in the military strategy that evolved after the war, as set forth in the *Instruction provisoire du 7 octobre 1921 sur l'emploi tactique des grandes unités* ("Provisional directive of October 7, 1921 on the deployment of major units"), reiterated in 1936, which stressed the primary role of the infantry and the concept of *le feu qui tue*, the killing effect of firepower.[251] The primacy of the infantry was an outgrowth of the tradition of the *levée en masse,* the egalitarian mobilization of the nation's populace to resist invasion that originated in the French Revolution and implied the overwhelming power of sheer numbers in warfare. The related idea of *le feu qui tue* was that massed firepower from infantry in a defensive position could blunt any attack; under this theory, armored units and airplanes were thought to play a minor, supporting role. The strategy described in the *Instruction provisoire du 7 octobre 1921* resulted in the construction of the Maginot Line, begun in 1930 and completed in 1934 at considerable expense to the French state. The works of the Maginot Line consisted of 196 miles of dug-in forts and guns along France's border

with Germany and embodied the French strategy of slowing down an invasion and allowing time for the industrial force of France's allies to be brought to bear during a "long war," as had been the case during World War I.[252] Pétain became the major patron of defensive military theory after World War I and therefore of the Maginot Line. One lesson of the First World War seemingly ignored by the Maginot Line was the fact that Germany had invaded France through Belgium. Belgium's status as a French ally meant, as a matter of diplomacy, that the border between France and Belgium could not be fortified, but this state of affairs made France once again vulnerable to invasion from the north. Even more critically, there was a fundamental contradiction between the geographic dispersal of fronts implied by France's military treaties with countries such as Czechoslovakia and the defensive immobility of the fortifications and barriers of the Maginot Line.[253]

Early in 1935 Pétain published an article in which he argued that existing military strategy, organized around the Maginot Line, was "untouchable" and conformed "exactly to the political and social state of mind of a nation that has no territorial ambitions and wishes only to protect its patrimony."[254] Pétain's views on mechanized forces were not necessarily hostile but he was a firm believer in the efficacy of French anti-tank artillery to counter armor.[255] The sheer firepower – the theory of *le feu qui tue* – that French artillery and infantry could bring to bear on an invading force, together with the fortifications of the Maginot Line, were considered to be more than a match for the threat from Germany. In addition, the material and human demands of building up the armored divisions later advocated by Reynaud and de Gaulle were of considerable concern to the army general staff, which did not want to

make transformational changes at a time when conscription demographics were weak and the international situation was worsening.[256] The development of a new corps of armored units furthermore represented competition for budgetary resources that were in short supply in the mid-1930s. French military leaders preferred to save their resources for the investments required to complete and maintain the defensive works of the Maginot Line and not for the equipment and maneuvers that would have demonstrated in a practical way the capabilities of armored forces.[257]

The conservative thinking of the French military command, as typified by Marshal Pétain, was consistent with a portrait of the officer corps as a social class apart from the nation, as it had been since at least the Dreyfus Affair.[258] This corps was sclerotic and severely hierarchical and as a result did not reward innovation.[259] The same thinking was passed along to more junior officers, who retained this thinking when they attained positions of leadership, as Generals Maxime Weygand and Maurice Gamelin were to prove when they became chiefs of staff in the 1930s and essentially adopted the same defensive strategy as their former superior officers had. By way of contrast the German military was also subject to a "hierarchical drag," but the experience of the First World War had fostered a spirit of adaptability and tactical effectiveness among German commanders,[260] as they were to show during the invasion of France in May 1940. Reynaud deplored the hidebound attitudes of the military high command, sarcastically quoting in his memoir Marshal Patrice MacMahon, a French military leader during the disastrous Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871: "When I see an officer's name on the cover of a book, I strike him from the promotion list."[261] Reynaud was forced in fact to intervene with Daladier, then the Minister of National

Defense in the Popular Front, to restore de Gaulle to the promotion list from which de Gaulle had been struck on the pretext that his experience in World War I, rather than his controversial views, disqualified him from promotion.[262]

The French military's defensive attitude after World War I was exacerbated by an intelligence system that consistently overestimated Germany's industrial and demographic might and the state of readiness of its military units.[263] Each branch of the French armed forces possessed its *Deuxième Bureau*, an intelligence service that provided assessments of Germany's strategic and tactical goals. The Dreyfus Affair had nearly destroyed French intelligence, since officers in a predecessor of the army's *Deuxième Bureau* forged the documents that led to Captain Dreyfus's wrongful conviction on espionage charges.[264] The service rebounded during the First World War, although its post-war view of Germany as a superior industrial and military force was the product of an awareness by French military leaders that the combined forces of France, Great Britain and the United States had been required to defeat Germany during World War I.[265] The ensuing attitude of weakness infiltrated political thinking and ultimately contributed to the policy of appeasement that increasingly took hold after Hitler came to power in 1933.

The tension between republican values and a professional army had its roots in the sense that the army must be an outgrowth of the popular movement represented by the *levée en masse*; in a republican army all were "equal in the face of the wages of bloodshed."[266] Professional soldiers were to a certain degree identified with officers, and it had been officers who led the forces that ruthlessly suppressed the popular militia of the Paris Commune and were later the conspirators behind the Dreyfus Affair.

The anti-republican sentiments attributed to career soldiers gave rise to a concern, particularly among left-wing politicians, that a professional army would be dangerous for the security of the nation. Staunch republicans who were also knowledgeable on defense issues, like Daladier, firmly believed this.[267] The co-existence of career soldiers and conscripts would create a demoralized "two-tier" army in which career soldiers were the aristocracy and conscripts the equivalent of the working class. There was also a sense, described by Reynaud, that a military oriented toward offense was "reactionary," because it was indifferent to human loss. An army built on defense was sparing of soldiers' lives and therefore "republican."[268] The quasi-class conflicts suggested by the dichotomy between professional soldiers and conscripts found its way into a disdain by French military leaders for the Soviet army, which they judged to be a pure instrument of class warfare.[269] More importantly for Reynaud, the suspicions directed at a reputedly anti-republican professional army proved to be a critical stumbling block for his proposals to reform French military strategy.

Reynaud's interest in military affairs had long lain dormant after he published an article in July 1924 in *La Revue hebdomadaire* entitled "*Avons-nous l'armée de nos besoins ou l'armée de nos habitudes*?" ("Does France have an army of its needs or an army of its past?"). In this article Reynaud urged French strategists to prepare for the possibility of German rearmament by developing an army oriented toward offense rather than defense, especially in light of France's potential need to operate independently of Great Britain. The alliance with Great Britain during the First World War, Reynaud argued, was merely a circumstantial one required by the conditions of that particular war.[270] Amusingly in light of his later views, Reynaud in this article

downplayed the role of mechanized units in favor of the cavalry, which could "demoralize the enemy by massive and lightening-fast action."[271] But the concepts of offense and mobility in military strategy that were emphasized in this article were to come back to the surface in 1935, in opposition to the blinkered thinking of military strategists who were focused on a "fortress France" capable of resisting invasion. In addition, "*Avons-nous l'armée de nos besoins ou l'armée de nos habitudes*?" underlined the need to conform military theory to foreign policy, a view that was later sharpened and given credibility by de Gaulle's thinking on the same issue.

In May 1934, prior to his first meeting with Reynaud, de Gaulle had published "*Vers l'armée de métier*" ("Toward a Professional Army"), in which he advocated the creation of six armored divisions totaling 100,000 men. De Gaulle was not the first military thinker to propose the creation of armored units. Other theorists in France, such as Generals Guillaumat and Estienne, had broached the same ideas in the 1920s.[272] Even Pétain was not opposed to the theory of superior mobility, although Pétain and his colleagues disagreed with young officers like de Gaulle on the means of putting such a theory into action.[273] But de Gaulle was the first military officer to advocate forcefully on a political level for his ideas, a fact that made him quite controversial and exposed him and those who supported him to fierce opposition. Reynaud's decision to align himself with de Gaulle on military matters was based on Reynaud's belief that military policy had to be pursued as a political issue, since the hierarchical nature of the military made it institutionally resistant to change from within.[274] As Reynaud was to learn, though, his alliance with de Gaulle on defense issues represented something of a Faustian bargain: de Gaulle's military theories were brilliantly persuasive but they were

intertwined with ideas that contained a politically risky thread of authoritarian sentiment, as will be seen below.

*"*Toward a Professional Army*"* was significantly premised on the recognition of France's geographic vulnerability to German invasion. In a formulation that typified how de Gaulle thought about France, he characterized France as "a prey that is so near, so beautiful, so easy."[275] The answer to the threat posed by Germany lay in part in what de Gaulle cited as the Taylor system,[276] a theory of industrial management based on standardization and specialization of tasks. The primacy of armored units set forth in "Toward a Professional Army*"* acknowledged the manner in which machines had "transformed every aspect of life."[277] Only professional soldiers who were specially trained for the task could operate the tanks that were the core of the armored units. Moreover, de Gaulle made an efficiency argument that mechanized units were a high-quality weapon allowing for the rapid deployment of forces in pursuit of quick, limited and low-cost victories.[278] De Gaulle also laid out the beginnings of a critically important notion of deterrence by characterizing the armored unit as a device that could achieve the aims of war without a declaration of war through "the effect . . . of a threat posed at the highest concentration and in the most frightening form."[279]

The notion of quasi-industrial efficiency that underpinned many of de Gaulle's strategic theories would have found a sympathetic reception in Reynaud's mind. The debate on devaluation had shown that Reynaud was a proponent of rationalization and optimal use of financial and commercial resources. Where "Toward a Professional Army*"* became much more explosive and politically dangerous was in its characterization of the moral nature of armored divisions, especially in contrast to the

political environment in France. The final third of "Toward a Professional Army" is essentially a paean to the *esprit de corps* that would be born in armored divisions and their commanding officers. Those in command of the armored forces, de Gaulle proclaimed, will be a new kind of officer, less bureaucratic, more expert, and not requiring burdensome consultation or delays.[280] These officers will "show a conspicuous independence from official doctrine."[281] The result of such qualities would be bonds of mutual respect between enlisted soldiers and officers constituting "personal and instantaneous engagement elevated to a principle that prevails at all levels of command."[282] Driving home the point, de Gaulle declared that there is "no more important duty for the State than to nurture in its ranks those exceptional personalities who are its ultimate recourse [in wartime]."[283]

It would not have taken an exceptionally perceptive observer at the time to note that the armored corps' elitism, personalized loyalty and independence from outside interference lent themselves to a characterization of these units as an incipient praetorian guard, with all of the anti-republican overtones connoted thereby. De Gaulle himself underlined that armored units were "a maneuverable instrument of repression and prevention." As a result, these units could be useful in maintaining order and countering independence movements in the colonies.[284] In a letter to Reynaud when the Popular Front was in power, de Gaulle went even further by opining that "specialized units" of a professional army could even be used to suppress public disorder not only in French North Africa but also in metropolitan France.[285] In a provocative swipe at the civilian overseers of the army, the last pages of "Toward a Professional Army" scornfully referred to the "multiple ministers, parliamentary reporters, theoreticians,

orators and lobbyists" who were responsible for the failure to provide adequate resources to the military.[286] De Gaulle indulged in a final burst of unrestrained exaltation of the military by proclaiming that the rebirth of France would begin with the army, which was "the most complete expression of a society's spirit."[287]

"Toward a Professional Army" thus posed novel military solutions to defense problems; in these solutions were embedded controversial political sentiments. On a purely technical level, the military opposition to the development of armored forces harkened largely to the experience of World War I, during which tanks had been used with some effect, although in the minds of French military leaders the prime characteristic of tanks was their unreliability. During the First World War tanks moved slowly and were subject to breakdowns, making coordination with the movement of infantry complicated and unpredictable. Doubts were also expressed by figures like Daladier about the ability of tanks to function in the difficult terrain of eastern France, as opposed to the plains of Central and Eastern Europe.[288] Advances in the reliability of armored units, however, had proceeded apace in the years after the First World War. The Spanish Civil War was something of a proving ground for the use of tanks, as Reynaud observed in 1937, when he argued that the rebel forces led by General Francisco Franco in the battles of Malaga and Guadalajara had deployed armored forces in an effective manner.[289] But these technical matters paled by comparison to the political problems encountered by Reynaud as he came to the fore on military issues.

Reynaud's support for de Gaulle's ideas proceeded from Reynaud's observation that Great Britain was a tenuous ally whose armed forces were in any case essentially naval and not land-based. In his own book on military issues, "*Le problème militaire*

français" ("France's military issues"), Reynaud argued that France, as the continental nation most immediately threatened by Germany, was required to have a strong army, one that was able not only to withstand invasion but to take the offensive in order to provide assistance to its treaty partners.[290] In order to bolster France's military strength, it was necessary to lengthen the term of military service – conscription at the time in France was only for a one year period – and to supplement the regular army with a corps of professional soldiers possessing the technical proficiency to operate tanks and airplanes. The mechanized units represented by tanks combined the strength of armor with speed and maneuverability. Consequently, these units were necessary weapons for a country like France in which both the political capital and the concentration of industry were close to borders that could easily be invaded.[291] The efficiencies afforded by mechanized units would also compensate for the demographic inferiority of France, making obsolete the strategy of human mass used so tragically in World War I.[292] Reynaud's arguments tracked, to a striking degree, very similar theories set forth in the first two-thirds of "Toward a Professional Army".

Following a series of meetings and exchanges of letters with de Gaulle in early 1935, Reynaud decided to enter a draft law for the creation and financing of an armored corps composed of six divisions, which he proceeded to do on March 31, 1935. Once again, as he had done during the debate on devaluation, Reynaud chose the Chamber of Deputies as the venue in which to trigger the debate on military strategy. And again, his stance on this issue ran counter to the views of his own political party, the *Alliance démocratique*, whose leader Pierre-Étienne Flandin was then premier. Reynaud seized the opportunity represented by the *interpellation* (posing of parliamentary questions)

of the Flandin government on March 15, 1935 concerning its proposal to extend military service to two years. Flandin personally arose to defend the government's proposal on the basis that Germany had left the League of Nations and was undertaking a rearmament campaign of "vast proportions." Flandin further justified the increase in the number of active soldiers as necessary in order to sufficiently man and maintain the defensive fortifications of the nation.[293]

The *interpellation* then began with a challenge to the government's proposal by the socialists, led by Léon Blum. Blum assaulted the proposal as a step toward "militarism," at a time when France internally was "fending off the danger of fascism." Blum further argued that the Flandin government's proposal was unnecessary in light of the firepower – here he cited Pétain's article of early 1935 – that could be brought to bear on any invading force.[294] Even though de Gaulle was ostensibly extraneous to the debate, de Gaulle's ideas were clearly on Blum's mind, as Blum worked in an attack on de Gaulle by assimilating the conception of a professional army with the same kind of thinking that prevailed in the hated German *Reichswehr.* In a gesture to his base, Blum insinuated that the "shock troops" of the mechanized units could be used against the working class.[295] Despite the partisan jousting, however, the positions of both the government and the socialist opposition were essentially the same: France would be safe behind the defensive positions of the Maginot Line.

Following a speech by the leader of the Communist Party, Maurice Thorez, during which Thorez advocated revolutionary defeatism as a solution to war – "It is the power of the Soviets that will provide peace to the world"[296]– Reynaud stepped up to the podium of the Chamber. Reynaud began by agreeing that the time of military service

should be lengthened, but he took the debate in another direction by asserting that the entire organization of the military needed to be reformulated in order to deal with the new threat against France represented by Nazi Germany. "Lazy solutions from a general staff lacking in imagination," as Reynaud put it, were no longer viable.[297] Reynaud noted that while the race to rearm could itself trigger a war, he alluded to the value of deterrence by suggesting that the outbreak of war in 1914 could have been averted if nations opposing Germany had built up a sufficient superiority in weapons.[298] In an attempt to fend off the argument that a professional army was anti-republican, Reynaud paid his respects to the tradition of the *levée en masse* of the late eighteenth century, when France was demographically superior to both Germany and Great Britain. Reynaud also displayed a robust attitude about civilian control of the military by reminding the Chamber of Deputies that the military high command was "an organism under the orders of political leaders, and that is as it should be."[299] This reminder of the importance of civilian oversight of the military was useful in neutralizing the argument that a professional army in the mold of "Toward a Professional Army" could become a praetorian guard.

Reynaud pointed out that in addition to colonial units from North Africa, the French air force and navy were already composed largely of professional soldiers, a logical development in light of the sophisticated weaponry used by these two branches of the armed forces. Armored units in the army would require the same level of expertise and professionalism. Reynaud noted that the Radical Édouard Herriot and the independent socialist Joseph Paul-Boncour had in 1932 presented the idea of a specialized unit attached to the League of Nations, which could intervene rapidly and

preemptively with "brutal" force, if war threatened. Reynaud observed that France's border with Belgium was undefended; only a unit like the one proposed by Herriot and Paul-Boncour could repel an invader through Belgium, although in the present circumstances, Reynaud argued, France was compelled to rely on itself and no longer on collective security arrangements like the one represented by the League of Nations.[300] Putting even more distance between himself and Flandin, Reynaud finished by declaring that the government's proposal on military service was only a starting point and not the end of the discussion: "[The government] will do itself honor by . . . acknowledging that it has been instructed by this debate. It will honor itself especially by drawing the necessary conclusions."[301] At the end of Reynaud's peroration, Flandin is reputed to have turned to his ministers and muttered, "This is idiotic."[302]

In addition to Flandin's hard feelings at being undermined by someone in his own political party, there was an element of institutional resentment on the part of the military concerning the interference in military matters of a Third Republic politician like Reynaud, as ironically echoed by de Gaulle's own suggestion of the desirable independence of officers from irksome civilians. Coming on the heels of the controversy surrounding devaluation, Reynaud's intervention in matters of defense was hard for the military to swallow. General Louis Maurin, Flandin's Minister of War during the March 1935 debate, remarked sardonically afterwards, "So, Monsieur Reynaud is now occupying himself with military questions. What would he say if I meddled in financial matters?"[303] More substantively, the high command in France was seriously concerned about the risks associated with an offensive strategy, as demonstrated by Maurin's characterization of the theories of de Gaulle and Reynaud as "a mad adventure."[304]

It is true that there were a number of risky ambiguities unaddressed by Reynaud and de Gaulle as the theory of professionally staffed mechanized units evolved. Were these units intended to have an explicit deterrent effect or were they to be used as part of a forceful counter-attack in case of invasion? The offensive and dissuasive character attributed by Reynaud and de Gaulle to these units implied the former, although the conditions in which an offense might be threatened were left unclear. How were these units to be deployed in the event of a threat against one of France's treaty allies, notably Czechoslovakia, which was located a considerable distance from France's own borders and access to which was possible only via transit through hostile or neutral countries like Italy, Switzerland and Austria? Moreover, difficult budgetary questions lay behind the development of mechanized forces: how was the money to be found for capital-intensive equipment in a time of straightened economic conditions in France, especially when a strict balancing of the budget continued to be an article of faith among the French politicians who were then in power? And finally how were the values of the Third Republic to be reconciled with the elitist, freewheeling nature of armored forces as conceived by de Gaulle?

These questions may be usefully examined in the context of the Rhineland crisis of March 1936, which was the first direct confrontation between France and Germany after the 1923 occupation of the Ruhr. The Rhineland was a region of western Germany on the left bank of the Rhine River that encompassed major cities and industrial areas and had been demilitarized under the Treaty of Versailles. The Locarno Treaties of 1925 further provided that Great Britain and Italy were guarantors of the Rhineland's demilitarized status. The Rhineland was strategically important in two related ways.

First, its demilitarized status created a buffer zone between Germany and France that helped to neutralize the threat of an offensive strike by Germany into France from the northeast. Second, the absence of German troops and military installations in the Rhineland created a corresponding vulnerability to an offensive thrust by France into the industrial heartland of Germany. In March 1936 German troops re-occupied the Rhineland in response to the signing of a treaty of mutual assistance between France and the Soviet Union. France had no military reaction to the reoccupation; in the absence of a rapid response force like de Gaulle's armored units, General Maurice Gamelin, the French army chief of staff, claimed that France could in theory have responded only after a general mobilization requiring at least eight days of preparation.[305] In any case the British, whose support as the Rhineland's guarantor was thought by the French to be critical, were reluctant to commit to any military action against Germany.[306] Moreover, the caretaker government of the Radical Albert Sarraut then in power was preoccupied with the recurring problem of a collapsing franc, an upcoming, divisive election that was to see the victory of the Popular Front, and bad memories of the occupation of the Ruhr.[307]

Ordered by Hitler over the misgivings of his generals, the reoccupation of the Rhineland represented a huge bluff by Hitler in a series of gambles that continued through the *Anschluss* with Austria in March 1938 and the annexation of the Sudetenland in September 1938. Reynaud later quoted Hitler as admitting in relation to his pre-World War II territorial conquests, "Each time that I made a decision, I was running a 90% risk of failing, but instead I won!"[308] Although French intelligence accurately predicted the reoccupation of the Rhineland, the army *Deuxième Bureau*

overestimated German military strength, as it had done in the past. In fact the German army in 1936 was not especially well prepared for war; its officer training was insufficient and its own armored forces were underdeveloped and therefore not ready for offense.[309] In addition, the passivity of the French in the face of the German reoccupation of the Rhineland caused Belgium in October 1936 to reassume a posture of neutrality, implicitly putting Germany and France on a par as potential threats[310] and elevating the risk of an attack on France through Belgium.

Reynaud later attributed the remilitarization of the Rhineland simply to the defensive posture of the French army,[311] but at the time of the crisis itself, he made no public statements about France's inertia in the face of Germany's action.[312] In his memoir he claimed that France could have resisted Germany with the assistance of the Soviet, Polish and Czechoslovak armies.[313] There was an element of incoherence or perhaps *post hoc* self-justification in this view, since the premise of Reynaud's ideas on military strategy, at least in 1935, was that France could only rely on itself. Reynaud's draft law on the creation of an armored corps, like his proposal to devalue the franc, went nowhere in the Chamber of Deputies. Although it involves an element of speculation, it is nonetheless useful to highlight those aspects of the military theories jointly espoused by de Gaulle and Reynaud that might have made a difference during the Rhineland crisis.

An important underlying fact is that German military commanders were quite concerned about the state of their western defenses, an anxiety that continued through the later 1930s even as the defensive Siegfried Line was built after the reoccupation of the Rhineland.[314] The massing of strong and mobile armored divisions in eastern

France could well have had a deterrent effect on German action to reoccupy the Rhineland. Even if one discounts the effect of deterrence due to Hitler's willingness to gamble in the face of poor odds, de Gaulle's theory of the utility of an armored corps in a local war might have established the basis for a limited but powerful incursion into the Rhineland to attack the reoccupying forces.[315] The premise of this theory was that the weeks-long general mobilization traditionally associated with the commencement of hostilities was unnecessary if France had an armored division at its disposal. France could take action more quickly with a mechanized unit manned by professional soldiers who did not need to be called up to the front. The problem was that France in March 1936 had made little progress toward the development of mechanized units. Once the Rhineland was re-occupied, the possibility of a French strike into the industrial heartland of Germany was pre-empted. [316] Moreover, the failure of France to take effective military action against Germany was perceived by some observers to be a sinister omen for the structure of France's alliances in Central and Eastern Europe.[317] If France could not resist or dissuade Germany in an area so close to France, how would France react in a crisis involving allies much farther away?

The failure to make progress on the development of an armored corps was attributable to the continuing aversion in France to war and the resistance of the military establishment, exacerbated by the fear articulated during the March 1935 debate on defense issues that an armored corps of professional soldiers was a kind of praetorian guard all-too-ready for armed conflict. In his later defense of the development of an armored corps, Reynaud depicted these units as the *fer de lance* or spearhead of an army in which the infantry of conscripts would constitute the major

part; armored units were not to be a separate part of the army but integral to it.[318] But in 1935 resistance to a professional army seized on fears of danger to the republic, which subsequently led to recriminations on Reynaud's part for de Gaulle's "imprudence" in naming his book "Toward a professional army." Reynaud noted that he personally had never used the term "*armée de métier*."[319] The problem, though, was much deeper than a matter of semantics. Reynaud's own error was in underestimating the attachment across the French political spectrum to the *levée en masse* and the army as conceived in the hard-won victory of World War I.

An additional factor undercutting the viability of the strategy advocated by de Gaulle and Reynaud was financial. The considerable expenditures required by the development of an armored corps were difficult to accommodate in a budget that was strained by the effects of the economic slowdown of the mid-1930s and the deflationary policies of conservative governments during that time.[320] In addition, once the Popular Front came to power in June 1936, competition for budgetary resources came from the social measures promised to the working class. Questions revolving around rearmament – the amounts to be devoted to military build-up and the fashion in which these amounts were to be allocated – were central issues affecting Paul Reynaud when he became Minister of Finance in November 1938, as will be seen in Chapter 6. But the failure to create a credible offensive force within its army came back to haunt France during subsequent diplomatic crises triggered, most fatally, by the attack on Czechoslovakia's sovereignty in September 1938.

The matter of France's obligations to Czechoslovakia under the treaty of 1925 was the great-unanswered question during the debate on military issues in 1935. How

was France to come to the aid of its closest continental ally, located hundreds of miles from France's borders and surrounded by hostile or unreliable countries? As it became clear that the system of collective security represented by the League of Nations had broken down and that France did not have the military will or resources to go it alone in resisting Germany, Reynaud turned to the next critical question facing France: how to organize and maintain a system of alliances in order to resist German aggression. The issue of alliances represented the third of Reynaud's challenges to economic, military and diplomatic orthodoxy in the 1930s and was to culminate in the crisis of September 1938 in Czechoslovakia.

Chapter 5

The Search for Alliances Against Nazi Germany, 1935-1938

As Paul Reynaud once asserted, "The only way to destroy France is to isolate her."[321] He saw the need for external allies as the third of France's critical challenges in the 1930s, together with reforming its economy and modernizing its army.[322] The issue that emerged in earnest in 1935 was the degree to which France could establish reliable alliances with other European powers in order to counter the threat of Nazi Germany. The failure of the League of Nations to take effective action against Japan when Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 had seriously undermined the League's credibility. The concept of collective security that underpinned the League was dealt further blows by the withdrawal of Germany and Japan from the League in 1933. The focus on French military preparedness that had been triggered by Reynaud's legislative proposal of March 1935 for the creation of armored divisions demonstrated the extent to which France was now concerned with the possibility of conflict with Nazi Germany. As it became increasingly apparent that the League of Nations was not to be an effective institution for guaranteeing a stable peace, France turned to a search for diplomatic security through bilateral alliances with a reticent Great Britain and, most problematically, with fascist Italy and an enigmatic and opportunistic Soviet Union. Reynaud placed his hopes on Great Britain and the Soviet Union, and not on Italy; these hopes met with a series of disappointments leading up to the crisis in Czechoslovakia of September 1938.

The search for alternatives to the League was exemplified by the skillful and energetic Louis Barthou, a moderate conservative who became Minister of Foreign Affairs in the government of Gaston Doumergue that came to power in the aftermath of the riot of February 6, 1934. Barthou's diplomatic principles were first, that Germany was France's enduring enemy, and second, that alliances, even with the Soviet Union, were necessary to counter Germany in the absence of collective security.[323] In October 1934 it was France's misfortune that Croat gunmen in Marseille assassinated Barthou, along with King Alexander of Yugoslavia, thereby ending "a period of vigor in French foreign relations."[324] But the diplomatic principles laid down by the deeply republican Barthou became the organizing basis for anti-appeasement elements in the SFIO, Radical Party and center-right formations, as they searched for arrangements to resist Germany.

Reynaud's admiration for the British and their parliamentary system led him to take the view that France should do whatever was necessary to draw closer to Great Britain, the other great democracy of Europe. Winston Churchill represented for Reynaud the values of "resistance, tenacity in the face of odds, and victory"[325] that were essential in dealing with Germany. Unfortunately for Reynaud, Churchill did not become prime minister until May 10, 1940, the very day that German forces invaded France. Another British conservative in the form of Neville Chamberlain occupied the position of prime minister from May 1937 until May 1940, a critical three-year period in Anglo-French relations. Although Reynaud and Churchill shared a common struggle, as Reynaud put it, "to awaken our rulers and people to the danger threatening their liberty from Nazism,"[326] British policy under Chamberlain was considerably more cautious.

Reynaud was frustrated by France's subordination to British policy, a situation in which Great Britain was the "imperious governess" and France the "compliant charge."[327] Reynaud was to find that his desire to establish a firmer alliance with Britain worked at cross-purposes with his goal of resisting Nazi Germany.

France's sense of insecurity in its dealings with the British in the 1930s was the result of Great Britain's long-standing reluctance to be drawn into conflicts in continental Europe. British reticence about Europe dated back to the resolution of World War I under the Versailles Treaty and beyond. The measures agreed upon at Versailles conflicted to a considerable degree with the interests of Great Britain. Although Britain was in agreement with the principle that Germany must pay for the reconstruction of Europe, the British were also concerned with post-war resuscitation of international trade, which was a significant contributor to the British economy.[328] Because Germany was a major trading partner of Britain's, the British took a more flexible view of the reparations issue than the French in an effort to maintain Germany as a viable economic power. In addition, Great Britain was preoccupied with the preservation of its empire and therefore sought to calm tensions in continental Europe that might spill over into conflicts about overseas colonies.[329] British conservatives like Chamberlain also shared with their counterparts in France a fear of communist revolution, which led the British conservative governments that were in power between the wars to perceive Germany as a barrier against Bolshevism.[330] The concern about social disorder buttressed Chamberlain's genuine aversion to war, which reflected, as Reynaud described it, British fears of losing men again on the fields of France.[331]

British policy was to come to the aid of France only if French territory itself was invaded. Short of an invasion, the precise circumstances under which Britain would aid France militarily were not clear, particularly if hostilities broke out due to France's honoring of a treaty to a third party like Czechoslovakia.[332] This ambiguity was consistent with a British policy that was characterized by the French political observer André Giraud as "empirical with no fixed rule."[333] France was skittish about supporting its own treaty obligations with military action in the absence of assurances of British backing.[334] France consequently adopted a position of diplomatic passivity for a good portion of the years leading up to the Second World War, as France assessed and reassessed Britain's readiness to come to the aid of the French during a series of crises starting with the March 1936 reoccupation of the Rhineland through Austria's March 1938 unification with Germany in the *Anschluss* and ultimately to the effective dismemberment of Czechoslovakia at Munich in September 1938. Stefan Osuky, the Czechoslovak ambassador to Paris, characterized France at the time of the Munich crisis as being a "hostage to British demands" in foreign affairs.[335]

France stumbled into a diplomatic estrangement with Great Britain when the two countries split on the consequences to be imposed on Italy for its invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935. Italy had been for some time the subject of French diplomatic overtures, particularly by center-right governments that succeeded Doumergue's. The main proponent of rapprochement with Italy was Pierre Laval, a conservative politician who became Minister of Foreign Affairs upon Barthou's death in October 1934 and held on to this position until January 1936. Laval's willingness to engage with Italy was based on the fuzzy notion of a commonality of interests among "Latin" countries and

the more plausible theory that Italy was a potential ally in case of an attack by Germany,[336] because Italy might desire insurance against eventual Nazi designs on German-speaking regions of the Italian Tyrol. For Italy this region was located disturbingly near an Austria that was itself an obvious target of German expansion. Laval's approach to Italy was also consistent with the view of many French conservatives that Italy, as the conqueror of communism domestically, was another potential firewall against the forces of Bolshevism.[337] These conservatives naively thought that France could restrain Germany by uniting with Italy and, later, with "Latin" Spain under the right-wing rule of Francisco Franco.[338]

In April 1935 Laval seemed to be making progress when he negotiated the so-called Stresa Front with Great Britain and Italy, which reaffirmed the post-World War I territorial arrangements embodied in the Locarno Treaties of 1925. The Stresa Front had the practical consequence of guaranteeing Austrian independence, at least from the perspective of the three nations that were party to the arrangement, but the chimera represented by rapprochement with Italy was dealt a dose of hard reality when Italy invaded Ethiopia. The question posed for Great Britain and France by the invasion of Ethiopia was whether Italy should suffer economic sanctions. The proposed form of sanction was specifically an embargo on the import by Italy of oil, which would be imposed through the League of Nations. The Laval government opposed the imposition of sanctions, and Laval instead negotiated a secret agreement with Sir Samuel Hoare, the British Foreign Secretary, providing for the partition of Ethiopia as a means of appeasing Italy. Hoare's willingness to agree to such a pact was inconsistent with Britain's abiding concern about Italian naval strength in the Mediterranean, which had

made the British wary about Italian aggression.[339] In part for this reason, many of Hoare's fellow conservative MPs opposed the pact. Even more disastrously for Hoare, British public opinion reacted violently to the notion of British acquiescence in the dismemberment of a weak country by an aggressive power. The uproar that ensued after the British disavowal of the Laval-Hoare pact created a strong sense of resentment by the British against the French.

Reynaud was no enthusiast of Laval's economic policies, which trod in an even more draconian way the deflationary path that Reynaud had begun to criticize in June 1934.[340] On the diplomatic front, Reynaud was skeptical of Laval's fascination with Italy, since Reynaud believed that the ideological affinities between fascist Italy and Nazi Germany prevented Italy from ever constituting an effective counter-weight to Germany.[341] In addition, Reynaud thought that the Laval government's clumsy handling of the sanctions issue, and its attempt to appease Italy via the Laval-Hoare pact, had the result of alienating the British public just as the British were re-engaging in European affairs.[342] Finally, Reynaud was convinced that any tacit agreement by France to the Italian conquest of Ethiopia would be sure to raise later doubts about France's readiness to stand by its treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia.[343] In 1935 Laval was both premier and Minister of Foreign Relations in a center-right government supported by Reynaud's own *Alliance démocratique*, which meant that Reynaud's speech in the Chamber of Deputies on December 27, 1935, during which he publicly criticized the government's Italian policy, "created a bombshell," in the words of the Parisian daily *L'Écho de Paris.*[344]

In this speech Reynaud began by evoking the danger represented by Hitler's desire to drive a wedge between France and Britain, which would mean that "France . . . would find herself isolated."[345] Stressing the importance to French security of the dominant British fleet and air force, and an army that was "beginning to be mechanized," Reynaud noted the profound moral affinities that had drawn Great Britain, as well as the United States, into the fight against Germany during the First World War.[346] Reynaud acknowledged Great Britain's "distaste at getting involved in the quarrels of the small countries of Central Europe," but he predicted that the day would come when Germany attacked Austria, then Czechoslovakia, justifying its actions by the claim that German-speaking populations wanted union with Germany.[347] The backlash in Great Britain to the Laval-Hoare agreement was a reflection of the British public's repugnance against aggression by strong nations against weak ones. The result of Laval's desire to maintain a friendship with Italy was a dangerous estrangement between France and Great Britain. Reynaud declared that it was now time to choose: Italy or Great Britain. Reynaud observed, quite intentionally, that the embarrassment of the abortive Laval-Hoare agreement had caused Samuel Hoare to disclose his decision to resign before a full session of the House of Commons, creating the implication that Laval should do the same.[348] Conscious of the political risk he was running by criticizing Laval so forcefully, especially as elections were looming that would bring the Popular Front to power, Reynaud finished his peroration by stating, "Do not forget: our strong link with the Anglo-Saxon world is based on our being a free nation. In any case, if speaking the truth, if declaring a mortal danger to my country is to run a risk, for my

part, I accept the risk!"[349] The end of Reynaud's speech triggered shouts of "Resign" at the government benches by leftist deputies.[350]

The irritation of conservative leaders at Reynaud's scorching attack on the Laval government was extreme. Even Reynaud's friend and political ally Henri de Kérillis accused Reynaud of helping the Popular Front accede to power when the coalition of communists, socialists and Radicals won the elections of April-May 1936. André Tardieu demanded that Reynaud resign from the parliamentary group to which both Tardieu and Reynaud adhered.[351] In its inimitable fashion *Action française* characterized Reynaud as "the Prussian deputy of the Second Arrondissement,"[352] due to the bellicose tone of his speech. In fact Reynaud blamed Laval's deflationary economic policies as the real cause for the advent of the Popular Front.[353] Alfred Sauvy asserted in support of Reynaud that the Popular Front would never have come into existence but for "the impetus of the indignation aroused by the [Laval] government's decrees" implementing severely deflationary policies, which had a particularly drastic impact on the wages of the working class.[354]

There was more provocation to come from Reynaud on foreign policy. The conflict over Laval's attempts at rapprochement with Italy had brought home the fact that many conservatives in France feared revolution at home more than they feared the threat of fascist Italy and Germany. As Reynaud later observed, "It was always internal politics that controlled . . . the attitude of most Frenchmen toward foreign policy."[355] The fear of communist revolution dominated the next major issue relating to France's search for security, which was whether France should conclude a military alliance with the Soviet Union – Reynaud was a major proponent of precisely such an alliance. The

prospect of military cooperation between France and the Soviet Union was all the more incendiary in France because the debate unfurled in earnest as the Popular Front came to power in June 1936.

It was in fact Pierre Laval who took the first step toward an alliance with the Soviet Union, when he was Minister of Foreign Affairs in the government of Pierre-Étienne Flandin. The French and the Soviets signed a preliminary agreement on a treaty of mutual assistance in December 1934, which was followed up in May 1935 by an actual treaty. In February 1936 the Chamber of Deputies approved the pact, which attracted the vote of eighty deputies of the "realist" right, including Reynaud.[356] But this treaty lacked an all-important military convention, which would specify the steps to be taken by the two nations' armed forces in the event of the outbreak of hostilities with a third-party, which clearly was Nazi Germany. The threat of a two-front war against Germany that was implicit in a military convention between France and the Soviet Union would put teeth into the treaty of mutual assistance. Reynaud observed that a two-front war was the classic nightmare for German military planners, as the experience of World War I had shown, when German armies were forced to fight against both the Anglo-French armies on the western front and the Czarist Russian army on the eastern front, at least until the outbreak of the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917.[357]

Laval intentionally temporized on the conclusion of a military convention with the Soviets, since he and his allies perceived the mutual assistance treaty as a defensive measure that sufficiently pre-empted the threat of cooperation between Germany and the Soviet Union.[358] In addition, conservatives like Laval were deeply suspicious of the

Soviets, as were the French military high command and the business interests that supported the conservative parties.[359] The Soviets had changed their policy from a "class against class" strategy of revolutionary agitation and intransigent hostility toward "bourgeois" regimes to a popular front strategy of establishing coalitions, including electoral alliances, with other left-wing parties in order to counter the threat of fascism. This transition began to take place in 1934, in reaction to Hitler's accession to power in January 1933 and, relating specifically to perceived threats from the extreme right wing in France, the riot of February 6, 1934. The change in Soviet policy was implemented through the Comintern, whose loyal following of orders from Moscow, including via the PCF, marked "the predominance of Soviet interests over all other issues confronting the international Communist movement."[360] The obvious use of the Comintern as a tool of Soviet policy reinforced the tendency on the part of many French conservatives to favor Hitler as a means to halt the spread of communism.[361] The opportunism of the Soviets and the PCF also led to a suspicion among certain French politicians that the Soviet Union was actively fomenting a war between France and Germany in order to exhaust two enemies of communism; this belief was prevalent even among politicians like the Radical Yvon Delbos, who became Minister of Foreign Affairs in the first Popular Front government.[362]

Reynaud did not share his center-right colleagues' view of Hitler's appeal as an enemy of communism and a champion of order in Europe. In a typical example of Reynaud's views in this regard, Reynaud disapprovingly cited a headline in the newspaper *L'Ami du peuple,* which was sponsored by the reactionary cosmetics mogul, René Coty: "France first! With Hitler against the Bolsheviks!"[363] Reynaud's opinion on

the issue of military cooperation with the Soviet Union was in the tradition of Léon Barthou's hostility toward Germany and Barthou's belief in the need for alliances, even with the Soviet Union, as measures to bolster the weak collective security arrangements represented by the League of Nations.[364] Reynaud supported the establishment of a military convention with the Soviets because he viewed Nazi Germany as the more important threat: "It is no longer a question of finding out whether a nation is pleasing or displeasing to us. It is one of saving our skins."[365] In addition to creating the threat of a two-front war against Germany, a military agreement with the Soviets was critical, in Reynaud's view, to support France's allies in Central Europe – most importantly, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Such an agreement would compensate for the difficulties in transporting French forces over great distances to the east and through hostile or neutral nations. Reynaud believed that the essential aspects of a military convention with the Soviet Union included the dispatch of Soviet troops to France by sea, the commitment of Soviet aviation to the French and Czechoslovaks, the launch by France of offensive operations against Germany if the Germans attacked the Soviets, and free passage by Poland and Romania of the Soviet army in order to reach Czechoslovakia.[366] Furthermore, the Soviet Union possessed formidable industrial capabilities, which Reynaud thought must be yoked to military force when war broke out.[367]

The requirement for transit of the Soviet army through Poland and Romania, however, quickly ran into serious obstacles, as elements of the French military had predicted.[368] Poland and Romania were wary, to say the least, of the consequences for their own regimes of allowing Soviet troops onto their territory. Although Reynaud castigated Józef Beck, the notoriously difficult foreign minister of Poland, for his refusal

to allow free passage to the Soviet army,[369] Beck's refusal was part of an understandable effort to maneuver between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in order to preserve the independence of Poland. As typified by the concerns of Poland, a military convention between France and the Soviet Union was caught up in a fundamental contradiction, which was that the strategic advantages for France of such a convention would be offset by the risk of disintegration of France's alliances with the smaller countries of Eastern Europe, who could conceivably be driven into arms of the Germans as a result. The Popular Front ultimately decided that this contradiction could be resolved through the maintenance of the 1935 pact with the Soviets but without a military convention.[370]

In addition to the external difficulties encountered by the idea of a military alliance between France and the Soviet Union, domestic circumstances in France converged to scuttle any deeper cooperation between the French and the Soviets. Ironically, it was the advent of the Popular Front government in June 1936 that made such cooperation even more difficult. Laval's government had fallen in January 1936, a victim of the failed Italian policy attacked so violently by Reynaud. Reynaud was consequently regarded as a gravedigger of this government, a fact that Laval was to remember in 1940 when he conspired to undermine Reynaud as Reynaud became premier under extremely difficult circumstances.[371] After Laval's fall a caretaker government headed by the Radical Party's Albert Sarraut marked time – among other things remaining inert in the face of the German reoccupation of the Rhineland in March 1936 – until the regularly scheduled elections of April-May 1936, which were won by the Popular Front coalition of communists, socialists and left-leaning Radicals.

Erstwhile allies of Reynaud's, such as Tardieu, were convinced that Reynaud's undermining of Laval had opened the way to the Popular Front. The resulting antagonism from fellow conservatives complicated Reynaud's re-election bid to the Chamber of Deputies in April-May 1936.

Reynaud's electoral district in the 2nd *arrondissement* of Paris encompassed the commercial areas of the *Bourse* and *Sentier*, as well as the middle class neighborhood of *Bonne-Nouvelles*. His advocacy of devaluation and alliance with the Soviets was unpopular in this district. Furthermore, Reynaud had alienated political allies, such as Tardieu, Flandin and Laval, in the debates about devaluation, military policy and Italy. In Reynaud's own words his maverick positions were "the baggage" that he presented to voters.[372] According to one journalist quoted by Reynaud at the time of the election, Reynaud's views could be summarized as follows: "(1) The governor of the French central bank understands nothing about monetary problems; (2) the army's central command understands nothing about military problems; (3) the *Quai d'Orsay* [the French foreign office] understands nothing about alliances."[373] In addition to his "self-created" problems, Reynaud faced a formidable electoral alliance in the form of the Popular Front. Even if he won the most votes in the first round of the two-round election, his adversary in the second round would have the support of PCF, SFIO and Radical Party voters.

With a margin of only 27 votes in the second round, Reynaud was able to win re-election despite the convincing victory of the Popular Front in the overall election. He achieved this victory by rallying his base through a series of monthly banquets organized around a *pot au feu*, the classic French stew of beef and root vegetables.[374]

These gatherings over a homely dish provided the occasion for Reynaud to discuss issues with the voters and demonstrated that he knew how to garner popular support when he needed it, despite the "profound disagreements" separating Reynaud from his constituents.[375] But he received little support from the *Alliance démocratique* and was forced, in his words, "to swim against the stream,"[376] which in any case was how he liked to operate. In the second round Reynaud defeated his PCF opponent thanks to the votes of loyal supporters, many of whom were members of the Radical Party.[377] Reynaud's re-election permitted him to become "an antagonist of the Popular Front," although Reynaud's underlying attitude was that the Popular Front was "well-intentioned and as anti-fascist" as Reynaud himself.[378]

Unlike Reynaud most French conservatives took a somewhat exaggerated view of the Popular Front. Rather than seeing the Popular Front for what it was – a circumstantial and ideologically disparate coalition for defense of the republic and in favor of reform – many conservatives feared that the Popular Front was the harbinger of insurrection in France, a view that was shared by the business community that supported the center-right. These constituencies believed that the Popular Front stood for "revolution, war, state socialism, and suppression of private property."[379] The early months of the Popular Front in fact saw significant social unrest, in the form of the strikes of June 1936 that resulted in the Matignon agreements awarding workers wage increases of 15%, two-week paid vacations, and a forty-hour workweek.[380] But the Popular Front's fractious nature led to a tendency to pursue domestic reforms, not revolution, and to adopt a cautious foreign policy. Even though Reynaud was adamantly opposed to the forty-hour workweek, which he believed would render French

businesses less competitive, he voted in favor of the Popular Front's proposals for paid vacations and enhanced collective bargaining arrangements.[381] Reynaud also acknowledged publicly that the Popular Front's victory represented the will of the people and that loyal opposition to this government was a public service.[382] In passing he minimized the threat of communist revolution supposedly represented by the Popular Front. He noted that the PCF had become a patriotic party and that communist deputies were "hearty young fellows chosen for the power of their lungs, and quite without social prejudices," resulting in what Reynaud jocularly characterized as "a delightful spectacle."[383] These attitudes were the last straw for Tardieu, who broke with Reynaud for good.[384]

By the time the Popular Front came to power, the mutual assistance agreement with the Soviet Union had become "something of a dead letter" due to the French reluctance to conclude a military convention.[385] Reynaud expected the Popular Front to be more sympathetic to a military convention with the Soviet Union, but he was disappointed. The preservation of the alliance with Great Britain was a "keystone of the Popular Front's foreign policy," and the British government made it clear that it was not well disposed to closer relations between France and the Soviet Union.[386] Reynaud was thus caught in a cruel contradiction between his sympathy for Britain and his desire to conclude a military alliance with the Soviets. Additional problems accumulated for the military convention between France and the Soviet Union during the Popular Front era. Édouard Daladier, who was Minister of National Defense in the Popular Front governments, was opposed to an alliance with the Soviets, a position that was abetted by senior French military officers, who had serious doubts about the capabilities of the

Soviet army.[387] During testimony after World War II before a parliamentary investigating commission, Blum testified that the French general staff had not considered "Soviet military aid as a fact of prime importance." This view was an outgrowth of the French military's reliance on defense and the stalemating security of the Maginot Line, which would allow for the mobilization of allied industrial resources in a long war.[388] The historical precedent of Russian withdrawal from the First World War in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution also negatively influenced French military leaders. Stalin's "Great Purge" of 1936-1938 accentuated doubts about Soviet capabilities, as Soviet military commanders like Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky and eight of his high-ranking colleagues were executed. Moreover, as Reynaud noted, a considerable segment of French political opinion was uneasy allying itself with a foreign power that was so clearly manipulating the Comintern and, by extension, the PCF to its own political ends.[389] Further complicating matters, the Czechoslovak intelligence service reported to the French that officers of the Soviet general staff had "suspicious relations" with the Germans; these fears were to be validated when the Soviets and the Germans signed a non-aggression pact in August 1939.[390] Reynaud nonetheless lamented the Popular Front's failure to seize on Soviet diplomatic feelers seeking military cooperation: "[T]he Russians took the initiative in giving life to their alliance with us! Once more, they found among us only hesitation, apathy, and antipathy."[391]

The Popular Front showed a similar reluctance to becoming involved in the Spanish Civil War, which had broken out in July 1936 when rebel forces in Spanish Morocco led by General Francisco Franco and other insurgent generals rose against the

Spanish Republic. The Spanish Republic was itself governed by a *Frente Popular* with a political composition that was rather more radical than the French Popular Front. Blum and the Popular Front government came under considerable pressure from their own left-wing constituents to intervene on behalf of the Spanish loyalists, who were defending the republic, but divisions within the Popular Front, Great Britain's distaste for intervention, and Blum's cautiousness restrained the government, particularly as the Soviets became increasingly involved in furnishing both equipment and commissars to the loyalists. By the same token French conservatives argued that France should support Franco's army, which they saw as opposing the forces of international communism at work in Spain. There was much intemperate rhetoric among both French leftists and conservatives to the effect that a failure to intervene in Spain on behalf of the side favored by them would result in the opening of a "third front," in addition to those with Germany and Italy, against France on its southern border.

Reynaud, who had no sympathy for collectivism of any political stripe, essentially supported the Popular Front's policy of non-intervention in Spain on the basis that taking sides would antagonize the eventual victor in a country that was for France a strategic "bridge to North Africa."[392] More fundamentally, Reynaud believed that intervention in Spain would be a sideshow distracting France from the reforms that he had advocated in 1934 and 1935. During his re-election campaign of 1936, Reynaud told a rally that, unlike France, "Spain is fortunate, behind the protection of the Pyrenees, because it can indulge in an internal revolution without running the risk of an external danger."[393] Reynaud acknowledged the emotions aroused by the Spanish Civil War, but he remained focused on France's issues: "What a burden it was for me to

address [France's] great problems at a remove from the passions that obscured the facts [surrounding Spain]."[394] These passions created divisions in political opinion that made it more difficult to put into effect the alliances, particularly with the Soviet Union, necessary to resist Nazi Germany.[395] Finally, Reynaud quite possibly recognized that the concerns about a "third front" against France were not well founded, since underdeveloped Spain was unlikely to emerge from a destructive civil war with any appetite for foreign adventures, regardless of which side emerged as the victor.[396]

Even though the Popular Front was reticent in general to take aggressive action in its foreign policy, Blum and Vincent Auriol, Blum's Minister of Finance, embarked on a significant program of rearmament in order to begin to prepare France for an eventual confrontation with Germany. Reynaud credited Blum ("the Léon Blum of good intentions") and Auriol with the courage in August 1936 of authorizing rearmament expenditures of 14 billion francs, which represented a dramatic increase in defense spending from levels established under preceding governments of the center-right. Reynaud noted, with some irony, that the beginnings of the mechanization of the army were associated with the arrival in power of the Popular Front.[397] Military expenditures were not popular with a considerable portion of the Popular Front's pacifist base, which regarded defense spending as "death credits."[398] In addition, the burden of rearmament expenses contributed to a significant growth in the budget deficit and therefore to the February 1937 "pause" imposed by Blum in economic and social reforms. Nonetheless, the Popular Front continued to ramp up the rearmament campaign during its relatively short existence, an effort that Reynaud characterized as a necessary deterrent to the mounting threat of Nazi Germany.[399] As Reynaud reported in an article directed to

British readers, "Léon Blum will not touch the French army, unless it be to improve it."[400]

The first government of the Popular Front, headed by Blum, fell in June 1937 and was succeeded by two Popular Front governments led by Camille Chautemps, a veteran member of the Radical Party, whose tenure as premier ran from June 1937 until March 1938. Blum led a final Popular Front government for less than a month, from March 13, 1938 until April 8, 1938. The Popular Front governments after Blum's first government were quite constrained by an economy in which production was faltering, arguably due to the reduced workweek, and by hostile investors who were reluctant to purchase the short-term bonds that were critical to the government's financing efforts. In February 1937 Blum's "pause" in the program of economic and social reform drew a tart comment from Reynaud: "This is unusual in the history of this legislature in the thirties. We used to change governments all the time but we never changed policy. Now we never change the government but we change policy all the time."[401]

In February and March 1938, during the second Chautemps government, Germany engineered the ouster of the Austrian chancellor, Kurt von Schuschnigg, and the absorption of Austria into the Reich. The Austrians welcomed the entry of the Nazis into Vienna with open arms; the *Anschluss* seemed to be an example in action, albeit brutal and cynical, of the Versailles Treaty's principle of the right of self-determination. The inaction of the Chautemps government during the *Anschluss* was distressingly reminiscent of the failure of Sarraut's government and the French military to react to the German reoccupation of the Rhineland in March 1936. According to Reynaud, the conditions were ripe for a more aggressive response from the French, since the

Chautemps government was backed by a solid majority and a relatively healthy financial position.[402] Reynaud blamed the opposition to the military convention with the Soviet Union, acting under the supposed "fight against the Comintern," for leaving the way clear to the *Anschluss.*[403] As Reynaud had predicted during his speech of December 27, 1935 attacking Laval's Italian overtures, the next target on Hitler's list was Czechoslovakia, which posed a different order of problem from Austria. Other than the dissident elements under German control in the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia wanted nothing to do with Hitler's Germany.

After the fall of the short-lived second Blum government in April 1938, Édouard Daladier became premier in a government in which Reynaud was given the portfolio of Minister of Justice, rather than either of the prized ministries of finance or foreign relations. Although these two ministries had acquired "a kind of senior status" and were therefore politically the natural preserve of Daladier's fellow Radicals,[404] informed observers of the time nevertheless asked "why so brilliant a man as Monsieur Reynaud was relegated to the relatively unimportant post of Minister of Justice, when he was obviously cut out to be either Finance Minister or Foreign Minister." The answer seemed to be that his financial policies were "too harsh for the Left" and that he was too robust an opponent of Nazi Germany "to suit Mr. Chamberlain's taste."[405] Reynaud's friendship with Churchill, described by one historian as Chamberlain's *bête noire*, presumably did not improve Reynaud's chances.[406] During the short-lived second Blum government, Joseph Paul-Boncour, an independent socialist who firmly opposed appeasement, had made a point of stating publicly that Czechoslovakia was an island of democracy in the totalitarian sea of Central Europe, in addition to being a "supremely

valuable military ally of France."[407] When Paul-Boncour was summoned by Daladier to set forth his views as potential Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paul-Boncour expressed his support for an alliance with the Soviet Union and his opposition to the false security of the Maginot Line.[408] The British government "made known its displeasure at such an appointment," which effectively vetoed Paul-Boncour as Minister of Foreign Affairs, an indication of the extent to which Daladier was aware of the need to avoid antagonizing a presumptive ally.[409] Instead, Daladier chose Georges Bonnet for the position. Bonnet was widely known for his pro-appeasement views and his desire to curry favor with the Italians, which resulted in the Daladier government's decision to carry on the policy of non-intervention in Spain.

The influence wielded by the British in Daladier's choice of foreign minister reflected the extent to which French diplomats were sailing in the wake of the British by 1938.[410] Reynaud's respect for Great Britain prevented him from criticizing the British openly. Instead, he expressed his confidence in British support in the event of war and continued to argue for France to enforce a balance of power in Europe through alliances rather than allowing itself to be isolated.[411] But Daladier's failure to take concrete measures to dissuade the Germans grated on Reynaud, who chafed under a justice ministry that sidelined him from economic and diplomatic affairs. Reynaud began to jostle Daladier about preparing France economically for a confrontation with Germany. In reaction to rumors in May 1938 about an imminent German move against Czechoslovakia, Reynaud urged Daladier to defer public works not related to defense, to gear up civil defense systems, to negotiate with union leaders to allow for increased industrial production, and to requisition certain critical non-defense enterprises, such

as the automobile industry, for military purposes.[412] In mid-August 1938 Reynaud prodded Daladier into addressing the French people on the radio, a medium in which Daladier was quite successful, since he expressed himself in a clear and blunt way that the common citizen could understand. In a not-so-veiled jab at the Popular Front's forty-hour workweek reform, Daladier told the French people that an increase in production was critical to France's strength; as will be discussed in Chapter 6, this was a prelude to measures that were to be taken after the Munich agreement to increase the workweek to forty-eight hours, especially in national defense industries. To the extent that Reynaud was allowed to express his views on foreign policy, he and Mandel argued in September 1938 that France should be steadfast in standing by its agreement to defend Czechoslovakia, especially since the Soviets would then also come to the aid of the Czechoslovaks. Reynaud's advocacy in favor of honoring France's treaty obligations with Czechoslovakia was consistent with his long line of firmness against the expansionary designs of Nazi Germany. But Czechoslovakia posed a particular set of problems for France.

France's alliance with Czechoslovakia was emblematic of the contradictions between a geopolitical strategy that was designed to create the maximum number of fronts against Germany and the defensive posture of the military.[413] France and Czechoslovakia had entered into a mutual-defense alliance in 1925, which seemed like a low-risk proposition at the time, particularly in the context of a German nation that was then politically weak and had been disarmed. Czechoslovakia possessed a powerful industrial base – 75% of which was located in the Sudetenland – and a well-equipped army. In addition, France had important economic interests in Czechoslovakia, in the

form of Schneider–Le Creusot's holdings in Skoda and French banks' investments in the Anglo-Czechoslovak and Prague Credit Banks.[414] But the question how France could in fact come to the aid of its ally in the event of an actual conflict was not addressed and became a major problem in the run-up to the crisis in Czechoslovakia. As Germany's military force grew in the 1930s and France's superiority of the 1920s waned, the contradiction between the system of alliances in Eastern Europe and France's defensive military posture could no longer be tolerated.[415]

Czechoslovakia also embodied the unease associated with two of the fundamental principles of the treaties that ended the First World War, which were the territorial reorganization of Eastern Europe into nations based on ethnicity and the related notion of the right of peoples to self-determination. The dismantling of the Hapsburg Empire, which had included a large number of different ethnicities within its pre-World War I borders, resulted in a multiplicity of new nations that were themselves not especially coherent if ethnicity was to be their organizing principle. Czechoslovakia was an excellent example: the nation included significant numbers of Hungarians and Poles within its borders, but most importantly a substantial minority of three million Germans in the region of Sudetenland. The unease associated with these arrangements was reflected by Daladier, who allegedly told Mandel, Georges Clemenceau's chief of staff during the First World War, that Daladier would "not sacrifice the entire youth of France merely to whitewash the criminal errors that had been committed by you [Mandel] and your friend Clemenceau . . . during the Paris Peace Conference."[416] The drive by the Nazis to reunite German-speaking peoples found a convenient object in the Sudeten Germans.[417] For France the situation in Central Europe became a conundrum of

squaring its defensive military posture specifically with its obligations under the alliance with Czechoslovakia and generally with the goal of countering German aggression.

During meetings between the British and French prior to the Munich conference, Daladier was subjected to considerable browbeating by Chamberlain and his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon, who treated the discussions with Daladier and his advisers as an opportunity for a kind of cross-examination concerning French intentions vis-à-vis Czechoslovakia.[418] Daladier contented himself with moral posturing via statements that France would honor its obligations to Czechoslovakia, but he made no moves to mobilize French forces or otherwise to take concrete action. After the first meeting between Chamberlain and Hitler on September 15 in Berchtesgaden, Daladier and Chamberlain agreed in principle to guarantee the remainder of Czechoslovakia against German invasion to counter-balance the cession of the Sudetenland to the Germans. Reynaud and Mandel vigorously opposed Daladier, arguing that such a measure was fundamentally incompatible with France's treaty with Czechoslovakia.[419] It was at this point that the two men thought about resigning from Daladier's cabinet. Although Churchill dissuaded them, both Reynaud and Mandel continued to be bitterly opposed to the Munich agreement. Moreover, Reynaud noted later that the exclusion of the Soviets from the Munich negotiations contributed to the non-aggression pact concluded in August 1939 between Germany and the Soviet Union. In addition, the lag between the Nazi attack on Poland in September 1939 and the invasion of France in May 1940 was evidence, Reynaud argued, that the German army was not so well prepared in September 1938, which would have justified aggressive military support by

France of Czechoslovakia.[420] In fact, the German minister of war, Field Marshal Werner von Blomberg, and the army commander-in-chief, Freiherr von Fritsch, were opposed to an attack on Czechoslovakia because they feared the strength of the Czechoslovak army and the relative unpreparedness of German forces.[421]

After Daladier returned from the Munich meeting at which the French and the British capitulated to German demands for annexation of the Sudetenland, Daladier put the treaty to a vote of the Chamber of Deputies. As a member of Daladier's cabinet, Reynaud was honor bound to resign or to vote in favor of the treaty. During the October 4 debate about the Munich agreement in the Chamber of Deputies, Henri de Kérillis mounted a withering attack on the agreement, accusing Daladier of having been responsible for the abandonment of "unchangeable and sacred commitments" to Czechoslovakia.[422] That the weakness of the French army was a reason cited for the capitulation at Munich, Kérillis said, was evidence of Daladier's personal failure to reform the French military, since Daladier had been Minister of National Defense for the preceding two years.[423] Kérillis noted that France had let slip away opportunities to draw the British into a closer alliance, had squandered the threat, so feared by Hitler, of arranging via a military convention with the Soviet Union for the stationing of Soviet warplanes in Czechoslovakia, had allowed itself to be distracted diplomatically by Italy, and had overestimated the readiness for war of the German army.[424] Echoing the Labour MP Clement Atlee's comments in the House of Commons, Kérillis said that France now found itself "relegated to the position of a second-class power."[425] The peace achieved at Munich was, according to Kérillis, a "triumph for Hitler . . . and for international fascism," even if this peace was favored by popular sentiment – at which

cries of "No, no" were heard from the ranks of communist deputies.[426] In what must have been a wrenching moment for Reynaud, Kérillis declared that in expressing his forceful disagreement with the Munich accord, "I am obeying my conscience, [and acting] against my own political interest and against the sentiments of some of my best friends."[427]

Kérillis's criticisms of French policy, which the *Journal Officiel* noted were applauded during the debate mostly by left-wing deputies, were themselves a trenchant summary of Reynaud's own views on foreign policy in the 1930s. The political observer François Le Grix reported that Reynaud nodded his head and openly applauded as Kérillis, Reynaud's long-time friend and political ally, made one devastating point after another.[428] Kérillis, true to his form as a contrarian member of France's center-right, was the only conservative deputy to vote against the Munich agreement.[429] In compulsory solidarity with Daladier, Reynaud did not participate in the debate and voted in favor of the accord.

Munich was the point of low ebb for Reynaud in his efforts to deal with Nazi Germany.[430] In October 1938 Reynaud found himself in a sadly familiar position of ineffective isolation, without allies within the Daladier government except for Mandel and one or two others. His gravest concerns about France's foreign policy had been realized: there was no military alliance with the Soviet Union, a situation that was to become dramatically more threatening when the Soviets and the Germans concluded a non-aggression pact in August 1939, and a pro-appeasement Britain had led France into the sacrifice of its most valuable ally in Central Europe. The French economy was

deteriorating. Insufficient progress had been made on the development of armored units in the French army.

The relief felt by many in France after the conclusion of the Munich agreement – what Blum called a "cowardly relief," the product of a mixed sense of joy at preserving the peace and a profound sorrow at having sacrificed the people of Czechoslovakia[431] – faded quickly. Daladier was pessimistic, an attitude that was reinforced by a worsening of the economy, as evidenced by a decline in the value of the franc against sterling in October. Having decided in November on a reshuffling of his cabinet, Daladier operated a swap of portfolios between Reynaud and Paul Marchandeau, who had been Minister of Finance. Marchandeau became Minister of Justice in Reynaud's place, and Reynaud took on the finance ministry. The cabinet reshuffle re-invigorated Reynaud after the deep disappointment of Munich. He was finally in a position to put into effect the economic reforms that he had been advocating since 1934. The question for Reynaud, during his time in office as Minister of Finance from November 1938 until March 1940 and then as premier in March-June 1940, was whether he had the political and moral constitution – the issue of "moral fiber" that Churchill had referred to in regard to Reynaud[432]– to rally France in its looming confrontation with Germany.

Chapter 6

Paul Reynaud's Exercise of Power, November 1938 to June 1940

Paul Reynaud occupied two critical positions when in power between November 1938 and June 1940: Minister of Finance from November 1938 until March 1940 and premier from March 21, 1940 until June 16, 1940. His experience in these two functions was a reflection of his underlying strengths and weaknesses, as well as of the external conditions in which Reynaud was operating. As Minister of Finance, Reynaud found himself squarely in a realm of personal expertise. His background in economics and finance had prepared him well to take on the challenges of a faltering economy, especially as France prepared in earnest for a likely confrontation with Nazi Germany. When he assumed the responsibilities of Minister of Finance, Reynaud brought with him very firm ideas about the reforms that were necessary to reinvigorate the French economy, and he surrounded himself with a cadre of recognized experts in finance who could assist him in implementing these reforms. Despite a wave of strikes that erupted early in his tenure as Minister of Finance, Reynaud was helped by divisions within the working class, which seemed to reflect a realization that a mobilization of all of France's human and material resources was necessary in order to deal with the Nazi threat. Most importantly, and despite his personal rivalry with Édouard Daladier, Reynaud benefited from Daladier's strong support in Reynaud's first year as Minister of Finance. To a significant degree Daladier's political skills, and the solid parliamentary support that buttressed Daladier's government, paved the way for Reynaud to achieve the reforms he believed were so essential. The confluence of these factors contributed to a restoration of confidence and a related upswing in the French economy between

November 1938 and September 1939, a recovery that gave France the leeway to continue the costly rearmament campaign started under the Popular Front.

Reynaud's experience as premier was quite different. France was at war with Germany in March 1940, although active hostilities had not yet broken out in Western Europe. Reynaud's government suffered from an extremely weak parliamentary majority and survived only thanks to support from the deputies of Blum's SFIO, rather than from Reynaud's notional allies of the center-right. Certain of Reynaud's choices for cabinet ministers and military leaders were poor, since he selected several individuals, such as Marshal Philippe Pétain and General Maxime Weygand, whose faith in the Third Republic was weak and who did not share Reynaud's conviction that Germany must be resisted by all means. France's military organization was incompetent and reeled in the face of a surprise attack in May by the German army through the Ardennes forest. The rapid advance of the German army forced Reynaud's cabinet to retreat from Paris to Bordeaux under increasingly chaotic conditions, making concerted and well-considered governmental action quite difficult. And Reynaud's weaknesses as a politician were exposed when, dedicated parliamentarian that he was, he vacillated at critical moments that required strong executive action, such as demoting defeatist cabinet ministers and fighting back against those who advocated an armistice with the Germans. These factors contributed significantly to the disaster experienced by France in May and June of 1940.

In the years leading up to the installation of the first Popular Front government in June 1936, the SFIO expended a considerable amount of intellectual energy on the issue of the *exercice du pouvoir*, or the exercise of power. The theoretical issue for the SFIO was the manner in which an ostensibly revolutionary party, once elected as part of

a parliamentary majority, would use the institutions of the Third Republic to implement economic and social reforms and to prepare for eventual revolution, whether achieved violently or by legal means.[433] By contrast Reynaud had no intellectual qualms about taking power – he seized it in the face of a French economy that was stagnating, a situation made all the more troubling in light of the demands on production implied by the rearmament effort. In October 1938 indicators of industrial activity and working hours were at about the same level that they had been when the Popular Front came to power more than two years earlier.[434] The number of unemployed workers had increased by 40,000 over the year preceding October 1938, and the 1939 budget showed an anticipated deficit of 8.5 billion francs.[435]

Upon arriving at the offices of the Ministry of Finance on the rue de Rivoli, Reynaud put together a powerful group of colleagues and advisers, including the economists Jacques Rueff and Alfred Sauvy and the experts on government finance and administration Maurice Couve de Murville and Michel Debré. Reynaud and his team were assisted in a crucial way by the fact that in October 1938 the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate conferred on Daladier's government *pleins pouvoirs,* or the power to issue laws by decree as opposed to seeking the approval by parliament of laws on a case-by-case basis. The power to govern by decree-laws had precedents going back to the 1920s, especially in the midst of financial crises like the 1926 collapse of the franc and the related flight of capital from France. By 1935 considerable expansion of the government's ability to implement economic measures by decree had occurred, with the result that "the use of decree powers was now taken for granted."[436] After an intensive two weeks of review and consultation, Reynaud and his team emerged with a

list of 42 decree-laws, which were adopted on November 12, 1938. These decree-laws provided for the imposition of new taxes, the reduction of infrastructure spending, the dismantling of price controls, and an increase in rearmament expenditures.[437] Finally and most squarely in Reynaud's line of sight was a rollback of the Popular Front's forty-hour workweek, which was achieved by extending the workweek to forty-eight hours with a modest 5-10% wage supplement for the additional hours.[438] Reynaud's goal was to create incentives for investment that would allow the rearmament campaign to proceed – he stated that the measures implemented by the decree-laws amounted to a "directed economy in a framework of freedom,"[439] a verbal contortion that attempted to reconcile what Reynaud admitted was a frankly liberal regime with the steps necessary to guarantee France's national salvation in a time of incipient war.[440] Others, principally on the left wing, saw the decree-laws in a different light, as a reestablishment of the power of employers and investors. The PCF and the SFIO reacted in an extremely negative fashion to what they saw as a nullification of essential features of the Popular Front's social reforms, particularly the forty-hour workweek.[441] The conflict over the forty-hour workweek became the signal social event of Reynaud's tenure as Minister of Finance.

The Popular Front's reform of the workweek had been simple: a reduction of the workweek to forty hours and an increase in the hourly wage of 20% as compensation for the reduction in hours. In addition to granting more leisure time to the working class, the argument in favor of this reform was that it would create work for the unemployed and therefore stimulate greater consumer demand as more workers disposed of higher levels of buying power.[442] The fundamental problem with this

argument was that skilled labor was simply not fungible, an issue highlighted by Reynaud early in the debate.[443] The *Comité des Forges*, as the representative of employers in France's technical industries, was of the same view.[444] The practical impact of the forty-hour workweek was to increase the cost base of French businesses, squeezing operating margins and making export industries even more uncompetitive, particularly as the Popular Front, at least early on in Blum's first government, disclaimed any intent to devalue the franc.[445] Over time, worker retraining and productivity gains might have mitigated the effect of higher prices, but the Popular Front was forced to act quickly in order to satisfy the demands of its base.

Reynaud had never made a secret of his hostility to the forty-hour workweek. The reform's resulting higher costs were inconsistent with Reynaud's long-held desire for efficiency and structural reform of the French economy, as he had shown during the 1934 debate on devaluation. Reynaud's concerns were exacerbated by an industrial war-machine in Nazi Germany that was, in Reynaud's words, "working night and day to forge weapons."[446] In the face of such a threat, Reynaud asked the French people during a radio address, "Do you believe that . . . France can maintain her living standard, spend 25 billions [of francs] on armament, and have two days off every week, all at the same time?"[447] The application of the forty-hour workweek was especially detrimental to industries involved in rearmament, in which there was a shortage of specialists that military engineers estimated caused production decreases of 15 to 20%.[448] But the modification of the forty-hour workweek triggered an angry reaction on the part of the French trade unions, which rejected the Daladier government's proposals for elements of flexibility, such as establishing a work year of two thousand hours with interim

variability of hours or a workweek of six days totaling forty hours.[449] The conflict over the forty-hour workweek quickly veered from being a purely economic matter to one that implicated the restoration of confidence in the French state, particularly on the part of investors who were critical sources of the capital needed for rearmament.[450] To counter Reynaud's decree-laws, the CGT decided to call a series of strikes in the last two weeks of November 1938, culminating in a general strike on November 30.

Although the communist leader Jacques Duclos called Reynaud's decree-laws "a shameful attack by big capital on [the Popular Front's] social reforms,"[451] Reynaud was not necessarily eager for a confrontation with France's working class. His stated view was, "Today it is impossible to prepare for war without the total support of the working masses."[452] During a radio address on November 26, Reynaud noted that three essential reforms of the Popular Front had been left intact: enhanced collective bargaining rights, paid vacations, and the forty-hour workweek. Reynaud's assertion about the workweek was disingenuously based on the argument that the Daladier government was only imposing a certain level of flexibility in the application of the forty-hour workweek.[453] In addition, the decree-laws of November 1938 imposed a significantly higher level of taxation on the additional hours worked in rearmament industries, a measure that was not designed to garner the favor of the working class.[454] Nevertheless, Reynaud had an abiding concern with maintaining national unity, as demonstrated by his willingness to participate in Blum's idea for a government "from Thorez to Reynaud" in early 1938. Reynaud believed that only a consensus government could proceed with an aggressive rearmament program.[455] In Reynaud's view the patriotic allegiance of the working class was critical in presenting a front of domestic solidarity against Germany – for example,

around the time of the 1938 celebration of the French national holiday on July 14, Reynaud sent a message of unity to *Marianne*, a leftist revue.[456] Reynaud believed, perhaps based on the experience of World War I, that "in the last resort, national sentiment would always be stronger than class sentiment."[457] But when it came time to deal with the threat of labor action by the CGT, both Reynaud and Daladier reacted vigorously.

Notwithstanding Reynaud's appeals to the public in November, it was Daladier who now demonstrated his effectiveness as "a personification of the middle class success story that was so central to the social and political mythology of the Third Republic."[458] Daladier provided political cover to the decree-laws by promoting their effectiveness in public speeches, while Reynaud swung from the peremptory tone of the decree-laws to a more pedagogical approach in the Chamber of Deputies, where he explained the necessity for harsh measures in light of the external threat to France.[459] Daladier and Reynaud were united in their determination not to amend the decree-laws in any respect, and their determination extended to breaking the November strikes in a most forceful way. Daladier put the army and police forces on alert, vital services were requisitioned, and those violating the requisition orders were prosecuted. In sensitive industrial facilities such as the Renault factories, troops were deployed to evict strikers forcibly.[460] Daladier and Reynaud were aided by the fact that the November 30 general strike was not well organized – the CGT, the principal union leading the strike, incorporated the *Syndicats* faction that was not in favor of the strike and was in addition strongly opposed to the influence of the militant PCF within the CGT.[461] The leader of

the CGT, Léon Jouhaux, was lukewarm about the strikes, as he searched for a compromise with the government.[462]

By the time the general strike was to take place on November 30, the CGT had decided to limit the strike to twenty-four hours and not to occupy any factories or conduct mass demonstrations, in order not to frighten public opinion. Workers in unions representing service sectors, such as public transport, municipal government and railways, were particularly reticent about the general strike and participated only in small numbers.[463] The CGT was further undermined by the divided reaction of its members to the Munich agreement. The CGT's pacifist wing perceived the strike unfavorably as a political move against the Munich agreement,[464] while its anti-appeasement elements supported the strike for exactly the same reason.[465] The anti-appeasement elements' militant ardor, however, was sapped by second thoughts about the weakening effect of labor conflict in France, which "would have serious consequences for the economy and the defense effort" at a time when the threat of fascism was growing more apparent every day.[466]

One historian has asserted that the failure of the general strike opened the way for the long-term realization of Reynaud's economic plan.[467] This is a debatable proposition, but it is reasonably clear that the Daladier government's intervention in the strike buoyed the economic dynamism of French businesses. The *patronat* was happy to see the strike positioned as a conflict between the state and the working class, rather than as an ideologically uncomfortable struggle of workers against capitalist employers.[468] This positioning enabled French employers to take a stronger hand in managing their labor relations, including the laying off of union leaders and the

evacuation of factories when strikes took place. At the same time employer organizations, such as the CGPF, sought to depoliticize the class struggle by channeling it into negotiations between unions and owner associations on a corporatist basis.[469] French business turned back from the Malthusianism that had hindered production prior to 1938. Critical sectors, such as the textile, automotive, metalworking and aeronautic industries, began to restructure their operations by modernizing their facilities and investing in new machinery and equipment.[470] Reynaud's appreciation for the day-to-day issues faced by employers caused him to include in the decree-laws technical but highly important financial measures, such as the favorable tax treatment of depreciation on the basis of replacement cost rather than historical value, which created incentives to modernize assets that were well received by business owners. The confidence inspired by the strong executive tandem of Daladier and Reynaud created a mutually reinforcing sense of dynamism between owner organizations and the government.[471] The stability that followed the suppression of the strikes of November 1938 also satisfied a need for investor confidence, whose support was critical to financing the rearmament program.[472]

The result of the measures contained in the decree-laws was an economic upswing that Alfred Sauvy, admittedly a partisan observer, called "a quite brilliant recovery."[473] But more objective analysts also described the results as "spectacular"[474] and as having "saved the franc . . . and France."[475] The value of French government bonds and the franc increased significantly, even as interest rates dropped. An influx of capital followed and gold reserves increased, enriching France's treasury. Industrial production rebounded by 15% between November 1938 and June 1939,

unemployment decreased, and prices rose at a moderate pace. Export sales improved, even as the franc remained strong, suggesting that French industry had become more competitive.[476] The ramping up of the rearmament effort that accompanied Reynaud's economic program undoubtedly provided a strong stimulatory spur to the French economy. Amid the good economic news, an essential question remained: was the economic recovery helping France to prepare for war, while maintaining the standard of living of the working class that was so critical to the rearmament effort?[477]

While crediting Reynaud's decree-laws with a significant recovery in the French economy, the historian Jean-Baptiste Duroselle asked whether the liberal nostrums of Reynaud's economic program were equal to the requirement of "a war economy."[478] Duroselle's question is consistent with a line of historical thought that has criticized Reynaud for not being more *dirigiste* during his time as Minister of Finance.[479] Such criticism has extended to arguing that Reynaud's liberal economic policies of 1938-1939 actually undermined the effort to prepare France for war, largely because the reliance on a free market to set prices and the lack of coordination implied by *laissez-faire* in sourcing and allocating raw materials resulted in an unfair burden on the working class and slow reactions to rearmament needs.[480] In this line of thinking, World War I had demonstrated that only state authority could provide the direction and planning required for the coming war effort, especially given France's dispersed industrial sector and fractious unions.[481] Public power was required to supplant "liberal empiricism" with the "rational and intelligent forecasting of economic matters."[482]

There are a number of significant counter-arguments to this criticism of Reynaud's actions relating to the rearmament campaign. The first is that as Minister of

Finance, Reynaud agreed to increase the amount of spending on arms quite substantially. In the middle 1930s the average age of existing military equipment in France was twenty years versus seven years in Germany and three years in America,[483] which suggests that the deflationary policies of Reynaud's predecessors had created a very substantial backlog of investment that needed to be made in order to modernize France's armed forces. Increases in spending were not an easy proposition within the budgetary constraints that Reynaud was required to observe in order to satisfy investors in French government bonds, who covered more than 50% of the funding needs for defense in 1937-1939.[484] Because Reynaud believed that the next war with Germany would be a "long war" in which a solid economy was critical, he was careful to avoid any measures that would undermine the economy.[485] The highly successful launch in May 1939 of a long-term bond specifically for defense seemed to validate Reynaud's concern about preserving financial room to maneuver.[486] In fact, the military budget increased from 14.8 billion francs in 1936 to 93.7 billion francs in 1939, with much of the increase occurring from April 1938 to March 1939, when military expenditures leapt by almost 65 billion francs.[487] In addition, the rollback of the forty-hour workweek advocated by Reynaud was a critical factor in allowing French industrial production to increase: by May 1939 35% of workers were working overtime as opposed to 3% in November 1938.[488] Many of these workers were employed in industries related to arms, for which a new set of decree-laws adopted by the Daladier government in March and April 1939 fixed the workweek at sixty hours.[489]

The second problem with the criticism of Reynaud's support for the rearmament program is that Reynaud was responsible for allocating funds, not for how funds were

to be spent. These decisions were the preserve of the military high command and Daladier, who had kept the portfolio of national defense when he became premier in April 1938, after having held the same portfolio during the Popular Front governments. Daladier conspicuously did not invite Reynaud to participate in the military planning meetings of the supreme allied councils of France and Great Britain in 1938 and 1939.[490] Reynaud's input into decisions about how funds allocated to the military were to be expended was therefore quite limited. For example, to the extent that France invested in mechanized units, there was a perception of trade-off between speed and armoring,[491] a proposition that Reynaud fundamentally disagreed with, since he had always highlighted the strategic advantages of mechanized units that were both fast and powerful. Furthermore, analyses of the French rearmament effort have suggested that there were a number of social attitudes and bureaucratic blockages that slowed the program down. Business owners may have perceived orders for military equipment as a source, not of profit, but of risk in light of the social disorder that war might bring.[492] Military leaders who sometimes complained of not receiving sufficient credits for spending were themselves often incapable of presenting coherent plans for how credits were to be disbursed, a lacuna that was exacerbated by dysfunctions in the Ministry of National Defense. One absurd example was the fact that a prototype of an anti-tank cannon was rejected by the French arms procurement agency on the basis that the prototype produced an ordnance velocity of 900 meters per second rather than the required 920 meters per second.[493] Lags in production were attributable to decisions about how money was to be spent, not lack of credits.

A third problem with the criticism of Reynaud's support of the rearmament program is that several observers have argued that by May 1940 France had virtually all the weaponry it needed,[494] other than adequate armored units. In 1939 France decided to order one thousand airplanes from the United States in order to supplement the production of France's own aeronautic companies. When Reynaud raised budget issues that required a concomitant reduction of credits to French companies, these credits were cut by one-third, but were made up by subsequent orders to French companies. The military controller-general testified after the war that as a practical matter, "No production [of military equipment] was slowed down or interrupted by a lack of credits."[495]

Finally, the "command" nature of a *dirigiste* approach to the rearmament effort would have implied an economy in which unpopular privations, such as "rearmament taxes" and exchange controls, would fall heavily on French workers and businesses. Reynaud's liberal approach resulted in a slowing of price increases, which bolstered the purchasing power of consumers, while the additional working hours required by the rollback of the forty-hour workweek stimulated demand. Alfred Sauvy has argued that the recovery would have been even more dramatic, had it not been for the fact that rearmament expenditures supplanted other productive investments that might have been made by the Daladier government.[496]

The financial support provided by Reynaud for the rearmament program, and the amplitude of the resulting program, are by themselves strong arguments against the idea that France was decadent in the late 1930s. Daladier and Reynaud formed a governmental tandem that "displayed a great deal more energy and resolve in

preparing the nation for war than [has] been acknowledged" by historians, a preparation that was as much moral as material.[497] But by September 1939, when France and Great Britain declared war on Germany upon the invasion of Poland, the uneasily competitive relationship between Daladier and Reynaud took a more contentious turn. In his memoir Reynaud castigated the failure of the French general staff, and by implication of Daladier as the Minister of National Defense, to launch an attack against Germany's vulnerable western defenses when Poland was invaded.[498] As had been the case during earlier crises in the Rhineland and Czechoslovakia, the French military took no action in September 1939. Reynaud and Daladier increasingly were mentioned in the same voice as engines of the government. Reynaud took the lead in negotiating agreements with Britain covering economic, monetary and financial cooperation during the war. By the time war was declared, Reynaud seemed to believe that France's economic and financial turn-around had been completed, so he began to take more overtly political positions, such as proposing wartime rationing, which Reynaud asserted was necessary to avoid social conflict and inflation. Daladier reacted by appointing Daniel Serruys as "high commissioner of the national economy" in order to surveil Reynaud's activities in the Ministry of Finance. By the beginning of 1940 Reynaud and Daladier were in open conflict.[499]

In March 1940 Daladier's government fell after Daladier lost a confidence vote due to France's failure to come to the aid of Finland when that country was invaded by the Soviet Union, despite a promise made in December 1939 that France would assist Finland in the event of invasion. On March 21 Reynaud was designated to form a new government. After Reynaud made a short, colorless speech on March 22 sounding his

persistent theme of firm wartime resistance to Germany, his proposed government drew a hostile reaction from virtually all segments of the political spectrum except for the SFIO. Speakers in the Chamber who opposed Reynaud insinuated that Reynaud had plotted with Blum to bring the Daladier government down and to assume power in Daladier's place with the help of the socialists.[500] One deputy accused Reynaud of incorporating in his government elements sympathetic to the recently disbanded PCF,[501] whose foreign patron, the Soviet Union, had betrayed France by signing the non-aggression pact with Germany. The Radical deputy Vincent Badie asserted that Reynaud's government "might be capable of conducting politics . . . but is not the war cabinet so ardently hoped for by the nation."[502] Badie was not the only speaker who emphasized the necessity of constituting a cabinet capable of conducting a war – Louis Marin and others did the same. There seemed to be a subtly damaging suggestion that Daladier, who had served in the First World War, was more capable of leading France in wartime than Reynaud, who had not served in the same front-line capacity as Daladier.

In response to the attacks on his government, Reynaud was reduced to stating that "none of us [in the Chamber of Deputies] have forgotten the sorrowful lessons of the last war" and that he respected Daladier, who was "sparing of soldiers' blood." He justified the overtly political distribution of posts within the cabinet and admitted that unlike Daladier he did not have "the strong base of a political party."[503] The proposed government was able to win a victory in the March 22 confidence vote by a single deputy – 268 in favor against 267 opposing or abstaining[504]– largely as a result of socialist support. Most Radical deputies either abstained or voted against the Reynaud government, and a majority of the *Alliance démocratique*'s deputies, as well as virtually

all deputies of other center-right parties, did not support Reynaud.[505] Reynaud retained Daladier as his Minister of National Defense, a sign of weakness in the eyes of British observers and an indication that Reynaud was desperate to retain political support from any source. In addition, his cabinet included ministers who had been openly in favor of appeasement, such as Ludovic-Oscar Frossard, the Minister of Information, Anatole de Monzie, the Minister of Public Works, and Henri Queuille, the Minister of Supply and Provisioning. Paul Baudouin became Reynaud's chief of staff; Baudouin admired the authoritarian Salazar regime in Portugal[506] and had in the past expressed the sentiment that Germany represented "the established order."[507] The tough-minded Georges Mandel, who should have been named Minister of the Interior, was instead relegated to the ministry of the colonies.[508] In the end the cabinet was composed largely of Radicals and independents.

In March 1940 France was still in the midst of the "phony war," the *drôle de guerre*, in which the German and French armies stood off against one another. Shortly after Reynaud became premier, the French and the British governments agreed that "during the present war they will neither negotiate nor conclude an armistice or treaty of peace except by mutual agreement,"[509] which gave a diplomatic backbone to the alliance between France and Great Britain. In an effort to demonstrate France's readiness to take offensive military action and to act in concert with its ally, Reynaud persuaded the British in April to participate in an expedition to seize or blockade the Norwegian port of Narvik, which was a point of transit to Germany for supplies of Swedish iron ore that Reynaud believed were critical to the Nazi war effort. The French army chief, General Maurice Gamelin, opposed this operation. Although the British navy

sank a number of German vessels in the port, a half-hearted effort by the allies to occupy Narvik with land forces turned into a fiasco when German troops converged on the town, requiring the abrupt evacuation of the allied forces. The action in Norway may be seen in retrospect as consistent with Reynaud's historic desire to open multiple fronts against Germany in an attempt to exhaust Germany in a "long war," but the Narvik expedition had a desperate character.[510] In his memoir Reynaud inflated this effort into a grandiose cutting off of the "route for iron ore" that "saved the allies,"[511] but the Narvik expedition was in fact a distraction and a sign of impetuous decision making that created unneeded tensions with the British.[512] Perhaps the most significant outcome of this adventure was that Reynaud lost confidence in Gamelin, which led Reynaud to think about an eventual replacement for Gamelin.[513]

When Germany invaded France on May 10, Reynaud reshuffled his cabinet and introduced a staunch supporter of resistance to Nazi Germany in the form of Louis Marin of the Catholic *Fédération républicaine.* But in the period of May 17 to 19, Reynaud also brought in Philippe Pétain as a minister of state and replaced Gamelin with General Maxime Weygand as head of all French forces. Reynaud's thinking seemed to be that as France was under attack, it was essential to muster personalities who had been associated with military success against the Germans, as Pétain and Weygand had been during the First World War.[514] The introduction of Pétain and Weygand into the inner circle of wartime decision-making was a fateful choice on Reynaud's part. Weygand was "a known anti-Dreyfusard" who had sympathized with the right-wing rioters of February 6, 1934, while the marmoreal Pétain expressed his doubts about the wisdom of fighting on within 10 days of his appointment.[515] Reynaud, who had also

taken the portfolio of foreign affairs when he became premier, moved Daladier to foreign affairs and took over Daladier's portfolio of national defense. The fact that Daladier continued to occupy any position at all in Reynaud's government reflected a surprising lack of incisiveness of Reynaud's part, although Reynaud did finally appoint Mandel as Minister of the Interior. Meanwhile, Pierre Laval was scheming in the shadows of Bordeaux, supposedly with Daladier and then with Pétain, to "overthrow" the Reynaud government and to open negotiations with Italy, Laval's favorite diplomatic interlocutor.[516]

The German attack through the Ardennes was an astonishing success, causing French forces to resort to disorderly retreat. Portions of the French army and most of the British expeditionary force that had been dispatched to France were cut off in northwestern France and forced into a makeshift evacuation from the port of Dunkirk. In early June Reynaud further reshuffled his cabinet as it became increasingly clear that the government would be forced to leave Paris and move south, away from the rapidly advancing German army. Reynaud ejected Daladier. Charles de Gaulle's small armored unit had acquitted itself honorably in May against superior German forces, so he was brought into the cabinet as under-secretary for national defense. In addition, Yvon Delbos, a fierce supporter of resistance to the Germans, was given the portfolio of education. However, these decisions were again balanced by the choice of Jean Prouvost and Yves Bouthillier as Minister of Information and Minister of Finance, respectively, while Baudouin was designated under-secretary for foreign affairs. Prouvost later became a minister in the Pétain government that succeeded Reynaud's, and Bouthillier was reputed to be an Anglophobe and a follower of Charles Maurras.[517]

The internally contradictory nature of the various cabinet reshufflings worked by Reynaud in May and June 1940 reflect the extremely difficult circumstances under which the government was functioning in the aftermath of the German invasion. Within a week after the initial German thrust, it became clear that the German forces would move deeply into France. Accompanied by Albert Lebrun, the president of the Republic, Reynaud and his cabinet were on the move for much of June in an attempt to stay ahead of German troops. Communication and coordination among various ministries were consequently chaotic and unpredictable, unfavorable conditions that were exacerbated by the emotion of desperation, the sense of failure, and the limited choices inherent in retreat.[518] In these circumstances Reynaud's instinct was to call on individuals known to him, such as Baudouin and Bouthillier, who had been advisers to Reynaud during his time as Minister of Finance under Daladier, or Prouvost, who came from business circles familiar to Reynaud. These men represented the kind of administrative elites that Reynaud had confidence in, "reputed for their brilliance and administrative skills," even though it turned out that they were hostile to the Third Republic and seized on an opportunity to undermine it.[519]

After an interim stop at the city of Tours in the region of the Loire, Reynaud's government arrived in mid-June in Bordeaux, where critical and controversial decisions were made concerning France's further resistance to the Nazis. As the French army was progressively pushed back by German forces, Weygand grew more pessimistic about continuing the fight and broached the possibility of seeking an armistice, even though such a step was in violation of the March agreement between the French and the British that neither side would conclude a separate peace with the Germans. Reynaud was

firmly against seeking armistice terms, declaring that French honor was irrevocably committed to the March agreement with the British. Reynaud emphasized that France's navy and her colonies were still intact. He argued that France must remain in the war and, if necessary, continue the fight from North Africa in order to preserve the alliance.[520]

As the government debated its alternatives in Bordeaux, Weygand persisted in overtly supporting an appeal for armistice, supported behind the scenes by Pétain. In addition to the human toll of what Weygand perceived as futile military resistance, he asserted that continuation of the war would raise the possibility of communist insurrection in Paris.[521] Weygand even had Reynaud's phones tapped during this period in order to learn of Reynaud's positions in advance of cabinet meetings. One of the historical criticisms leveled against Reynaud has been why he did not discharge Weygand. The failure to do so was particularly puzzlingly from a politician who had made a point during the March 1935 debate on military policy of asserting the importance of civilian control over the military. In mid-June, when Reynaud aired his frustration about Weygand with Mandel and mooted the possibility of discharging Weygand, Mandel retorted, "That's what I would already have done if I were premier."[522] Reynaud's hesitations in this regard conceivably had its roots in a lack of confidence about dealing with a military superior officer, an insecurity springing from the fact that Reynaud had not seen the kind of combat duty during the First World War that other politicians, such as Daladier, had experienced and for which Reynaud had been indirectly criticized during the March 22 vote of confidence. Reynaud's most trenchant political biographer has concluded that Reynaud was in a kind of thrall to the

army and its traditional heads.[523] A more blunt assessment has asserted that Reynaud uncharacteristically allowed himself to "be bullied in his dealings with Weygand and Pétain."[524]

During the cabinet deliberations in Bordeaux, Reynaud's concern about republican legitimacy seemed as well to work against him as he considered the arguments for moving the government to North Africa, a step that was strongly opposed by the defeatist elements in the cabinet. Weygand and Pétain did not believe in leaving metropolitan France, which was in part a reflection of their concern about maintaining order in mainland France. But the opposition to leaving metropolitan France also seemed to reflect an atavistic attachment to the French soil that brought to mind the political sentiments of the extreme right-wing. During a June 15 confrontation between Reynaud and Weygand about moving the government to North Africa, Reynaud said to Weygand, "What about Algeria, is it not three *départements* of France?" To which Weygand responded, "It's not the same thing."[525] This Maurassian sentiment was echoed by Baudouin, who asserted, "France does not reside in its colonies but in its home soil."[526]

There was also the related concern of what the legal basis would be for a French government in exile. Unlike the Dutch government that had gone into exile in London under the umbrella of legitimacy represented by its sovereign, Queen Wilhelmina, Reynaud's government was a product of parliamentary procedure. A sense of Reynaud's feelings about this issue emerges from an exchange on June 15 with Weygand about the Dutch precedent, during which Weygand argued, "There is no similarity between a monarch and a premier. The former could justifiably represent a nation in which its

dynasty reigned, from father to son. What similarity is there between a monarch and a premier, of which the Third Republic has already had more than one hundred in seventy years of existence?"[527] For Reynaud this train of thought represented the sentiment that France "had to be punished for being a republic,"[528] but he may have doubted whether a government in North Africa would have the requisite legitimacy in the face of a rival government led by Pétain, duly designated by the president of the Third Republic and remaining on France soil.[529] Reynaud's hesitations may be contrasted with de Gaulle's later *Appel du 18 juin 1940,* in which de Gaulle invited military officers and enlisted men, as well as workers and technicians in the armament industry, to join him in London in order to keep alive "the flame of French resistance."[530] Although de Gaulle was proven by subsequent events to be on the right side of history, historical examples in the French past of insurrectionary figures, especially among military men, could well have given Reynaud pause. Reynaud was reported to be ambivalent about de Gaulle's call for resistance, since he could not accept that de Gaulle represented a legally constituted government, particularly given de Gaulle's status as a general.[531]

Although strongly opposed by several ministers, such as Mandel and Marin, the idea of seeking an armistice began to gain currency in Bordeaux within Reynaud's cabinet. Camille Chautemps, who was vice-premier, floated the idea of an approach to the Germans regarding possible armistice terms via a diplomatic *démarche* by a third-party that would not irrevocably bind the French and would therefore technically not violate the agreement with the British. Chautemps' idea seemed to be that if the armistice terms were moderate, France could ask Britain to consider them seriously. If

the terms dictated by the Germans were so harsh as to be unacceptable, they would justify rejection and a continuation of the war effort. Reynaud opposed the Chautemps proposal because he understood quite clearly that it was the first step in an irreversible slide to formal negotiations with the Germans.[532]

On June 15 Reynaud decided to poll the cabinet on the Chautemps proposal. This was itself a highly debatable decision.[533] Due to the flight of French governmental organisms before the advancing Germans, the Chamber of Deputies was not in session, so Reynaud had his hands free. In addition, Jules Jeanneny, the president of the Senate, and Édouard Herriot, the president of the Chamber of Deputies, both of whom had irreproachable republican reputations, supported Reynaud's stance to continue the fight against Germany by transferring the government to North Africa.[534] Reynaud could have exercised the executive power that was in his possession as premier to declare that the Chautemps proposal was unacceptable and that France would continue to fight, whether from North Africa or elsewhere. Instead, Reynaud treated the consideration of the Chautemps proposal as a kind of parliamentary exercise, in which he was required to act at the behest of a majority of the cabinet. When Reynaud polled the cabinet, thirteen of his ministers voted in favor of the Chautemps proposal and only six against, including Marin, Delbos and Reynaud himself. A fascinating reflection of Reynaud's personality is evidenced by the facsimile of Reynaud's notebook in which he tallied the vote. This page shows that Reynaud's vote was voiced by another minister, Alphonse Rio, as if Reynaud believed that he was required as premier to maintain a kind of Olympian distance from the issue at stake, which was effectively the survival of the Third Republic.[535]

In a later wartime letter to Blum, Chautemps expressed the opinion, perhaps in a self-serving way, that Reynaud could have rallied his ministers to a decision that he strongly recommended.[536] Reynaud arguably could have achieved this result by placing the proposition under consideration to be not the Chautemps proposal, which was by its terms a diplomatic trial balloon, but a more direct question about whether the cabinet was for or against armistice, thereby preventing wavering ministers from sheltering in the ambiguous nature of the Chautemps proposal.[537] Reynaud's reluctance to place his cabinet directly before its responsibilities seemed to be based on a parliamentarian's instinct to seek compromise or consensus, but it highlighted his lack of firmness and tenacity at a most critical moment in the enormous crisis faced by France.

As the cabinet convened on June 16 to determine what further action should be taken regarding the Chautemps proposal, a diplomatic *coup de théâtre* intervened. Reynaud had been pleading constantly with Churchill during the military setbacks of May and June to supply additional troops and airplanes, to which the British had responded in moderate measure. Churchill was well aware of the risk of invasion of Britain if France fell and did not want to risk a repeat of the close call of annihilation experienced by the expeditionary force at Dunkirk. But the British were intent on keeping France in the war against the common enemy and especially on preventing the French fleet from falling into German hands, so British diplomats conceived an offer of political union with France that would preempt any French request for permission to negotiate a separate peace.[538] The offer of union was unprecedented in its breadth, essentially proposing supranational integration through a single government with

"joint organs of defence, foreign, financial and economic policies" and a single citizenship.[539]

The terms of the union were conveyed to de Gaulle, who was now in London. When de Gaulle reviewed the draft of the declaration of union with Churchill, Churchill exclaimed, "But it is an enormous mouthful." De Gaulle responded, "Yes, that means that its realization would involve a great deal of time. But the gesture must be immediate."[540] De Gaulle phoned Reynaud to advise him of the offer, which Reynaud received in a state of high excitement. For the inveterate Anglophile Reynaud, the offer of union was a sensational realization of the years of hope that he had devoted to drawing France closer to the British model. Union with Great Britain would guarantee the independence of France, in Reynaud's words, "at exactly the time when [France] had only the choice between union and certain slavery under the German jackboot."[541] But the offer of union received a chilly and incredulous response from the French cabinet, especially the defeatist faction, which had been lobbied by Weygand, who learned of the offer through the taps on Reynaud's phone. Chautemps argued that union would relegate France to the status of "a British dominion," while Pétain characterized the idea as "fusion with a corpse."[542] Other ministers saw the offer as a grab for France's colonies. Although Mandel and Marin were sympathetic to the offer, as was Lebrun, Reynaud was deflated by the negative response of the majority of the cabinet and said later that this response was "the cruelest disappointment of my political career."[543] Mandel likened the reaction of the cabinet to "pressing the trigger and the cartridge not going off." It has been argued that the offer of union with Britain did not receive serious consideration by the French because a discouraged Reynaud failed to make vigorous

arguments to his cabinet in support of the offer – Mandel further said Reynaud spoke "without heat or fire, like a lawyer defending a cause he did not believe in and for which he had been promised an inadequate fee"[544] – but it is questionable whether the proposal could have succeeded, given its last-ditch character and the deep mistrust of the British in an important faction of the cabinet.

The British offer of union having been scuttled by his cabinet, Reynaud decided that he could not carry on as premier, given his cabinet's decision to pursue the Chautemps proposal. Reynaud resigned on the evening of June 16, and Pétain, who had stepped down from the government earlier in the day, was then called upon by Lebrun to form a government with Reynaud's acquiescence.[545] Reynaud appeared to believe that any armistice terms would be so harsh that he would be called back to form another government. He was mistaken. As a consequence, as one historian has put it, Reynaud's "personal abdication . . . paved the way to a defeatist Government headed by Pétain . . . and put the finishing touch on the downfall of France."[546] Louis Rollin, Reynaud's Minister of Commerce and Industry expressed a different view during testimony before an investigating commission in January 1947. When asked, "Was it possible for Paul Reynaud, with the few allies who remained faithful to him, to continue to govern," Rollin responded, "I believe that premier Paul Reynaud, who had given proof from the beginning of much courage, energy and firmness, was unable to govern from the moment when he was abandoned by his two vice-presidents of the Council of Ministers, Pétain and Chautemps."[547] The opinions and actions of men like Weygand, Pétain and Baudouin had now fatally undermined Reynaud's ability to carry on the fight, leading one historian to declare that Reynaud's fall was not due to his weakness

("though more might have been hoped for from a man so able") as due to a "palace coup" led by individuals who had no faith in the Third Republic.[548] In his own defense Reynaud quoted de Gaulle's memoir concerning the choices confronting Reynaud during the crisis of mid-June: "To take back the reins, it would have been necessary to pull out of the maelstrom, to go to Africa, to begin anew from there. Paul Reynaud saw this. But it implied extreme measures: changing of the high command, discharge of [Pétain] and half of the cabinet ministers . . . resigning oneself to the total occupation of mainland France, in short, in an unprecedented situation, operating at great risk outside the normal framework and procedures."[549] For Reynaud, the liberal parliamentarian deeply rooted in the values of republican legitimacy and respect for the law, the risk of "operating outside the normal framework" proved impossible to take.

In July 1940 the French parliament convened in the French spa town of Vichy, suspended the constitution of the Third Republic and gave full powers to Pétain. Pétain became the president and Pierre Laval the premier of the collaborationist Vichy regime, which subsequently deported 75,000 Jews to concentration camps. The Third Republic, to which Reynaud had devoted so much of his energy and ideas, essentially committed institutional suicide in July 1940. France entered four dark years of occupation, the antithesis of everything that Reynaud had worked for in the previous six years.

Conclusion

Paul Reynaud and the Liberal's Dilemma

Paul Reynaud spent the rest of World War II in prisons first in France and then in Germany and Austria. His friend Georges Mandel accompanied Reynaud for much of this time. At one point during the captivity of Reynaud and Mandel in the French prison at Portalet, British and French friends of Reynaud concocted an escape plot that would have required Reynaud and Mandel to lower themselves by rope from their cells, although the plot was foiled when the Vichy authorities learned of it.[550] During his imprisonment in Germany and Austria, Reynaud was placed with other prominent personalities of the Third Republic, such as Blum, Daladier, Jouhaux, Gamelin and Weygand, which complicated seating arrangements at meals, since Reynaud refused to sit with Weygand, as did Gamelin.[551] The men who participated in the events of May-June 1940 did not soon forget them.

Reynaud was liberated from his Austrian prison by the American army and returned to Paris in the private plane of General de Gaulle. He subsequently was elected as a deputy from an electoral district in the north of France, served briefly as Minister of National Economy and Finance in the late 1940s, and joined a nationalist political movement, the *Centre nationale des indépendents et paysans*. Reynaud was recognized as an expert in constitutional matters and participated in the deliberations that gave birth to the Fifth Republic in 1958. In 1962 and in the tradition of his past conflicts with erstwhile allies, he broke with de Gaulle, who was then president of the Fifth Republic, over the issue of direct election of the president of the Republic by universal suffrage. Reynaud opposed this measure because it was inconsistent with what he regarded as

an authentic parliamentary regime; Reynaud was the first signatory of an unsuccessful motion of censure against the proposal.[552] True to form, rather than supporting de Gaulle in the presidential election of 1965, Reynaud endorsed a centrist candidate, Jean Lecanuet, in the first round and then a socialist, François Mitterand, in the second round. When Reynaud died in September 1966, the shadow of June 1940 and his disputes with de Gaulle continued to follow him – he was not given the state funeral that would normally have been accorded to a political figure of his standing.

In death as in life, Reynaud embodied the contradictions inherent in being both an outsider and an intimate participant in the politics of a Third Republic that faced the mortal danger represented by Nazi Germany. Reynaud brought to bear the attributes of a classic liberal in dealing with this danger: empiricism, ideological flexibility and a readiness to change one's mind, all in the service of strengthening France. His independence and willingness to take unpopular positions were the embodiment of freedom of expression in the Third Republic. His respect for representative government, individual liberties, and the rule of law provided a firm foundation for his opposition to collectivism's extreme certainties, stifling of debate and resentment of the past. His vigorous and innovative ideas for the reform of France in the 1930s belied the notion that the Third Republic was decadent. His thinking on economic and foreign policy contained the germ of what became the institutions of European union in the years after the Second World War.

The burden of the past, however, weighed heavily on Reynaud's attempts to reform France's economic, military and foreign policies in the inter-war era. The orthodoxies that emerged from the experience of the First World War were not easily

overcome, especially by a politician who was a contrarian by nature and lacked the force of a popular movement to back him up. The incisive socialist, Marx Dormoy, recounted in a conversation with Reynaud how Blum once told Dormoy, "We didn't listen enough to Paul Reynaud." Dormoy went on to say to Reynaud, "You should have been with us [in the SFIO]. Imagine the authority you would have had if you had been speaking from a podium in the name of a mass party instead of speaking in your individual name!"[553] Perhaps Reynaud would not have been able to advocate the unorthodox positions that he took during the 1930s if he had been tied to a large political party, and he was certainly no socialist in his economic views. But the fact remains that although Reynaud was largely right on the issues, he was successful only for a relatively brief period between November 1938 and September 1939 in effecting the reforms that he thought were critical to prepare France for a confrontation with Germany. Unlike Flandin, Daladier and Mandel, who were experts at "working the corridors" of the Chamber of Deputies, Reynaud chose not to lobby his colleagues to garner support for his positions.[554]

The collectivism that Reynaud opposed presented a crucial dilemma for a liberal: how does an individual who values moderation, independence of thought, and parliamentary consensus deal with a fascist threat that respects none of these things? Indeed, these values may work against a liberal in confronting such a threat, but Reynaud resisted the temptation to apply authoritarian methods in order to deal with a totalitarian threat. At the moment of greatest crisis, in June 1940, Reynaud was subject to enormous pressure to make decisions that were well outside the bounds of the system that he was used to operating within: whether to discharge military leaders and

cabinet members who had resigned themselves to defeat, whether to move the government into exile from metropolitan France, whether to take strong executive action to fend off the possibility of a collaborationist successor in the form of Marshal Pétain. "Deserted by his friends and harassed by his enemies," Reynaud fell back on his parliamentary instincts in this moment, maneuvering and temporizing, seeking compromise when there was none to be found.[555]

In "The Strange Defeat," Marc Bloch commented, "It is good to have heretics."[556] He may well have had Reynaud in mind. The story of France's defeat in June 1940 might have been different if France had sufficiently reformed its economy to rival Germany's industrial output, if France had developed adequate armored units to counter the *Panzar* forces that swarmed through the Ardennes forest, if the Soviet Union had been an ally of France at the outbreak of the war. De Gaulle implicitly validated Reynaud's ideas in the *Appel du 18 juin 1940*, when de Gaulle evoked the immense industrial force of the United States that had not yet come into play, the prospect for superior mechanized forces to defeat the armored units that had crushed France, and the reminder that France was "not alone," because it had a powerful ally in the form of Great Britain.[557] But it took hard men like Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin and all of the human and material resources of the nations they led to defeat Nazi Germany.

In May 1944 authorities in Berlin ordered that the trio of Blum, Mandel and Reynaud were to be executed in reprisal for the killing of a former Vichy minister in Algeria,[558] thereby bringing to brutal fruition the recommendation of *Action française* in the aftermath of the Munich accord. Reynaud and Blum avoided this fate, supposedly through Laval's intervention, but Mandel was shot to death on July 7, 1944 by the Vichy

militia in the forest of Fontainebleau. Toward the end of his memoir, Reynaud said of Mandel and the circumstances of his death, "Mandel took my place. We worked together for the good of France. He is dead, but before history he has won. In Paris there is an *Avenue Georges Mandel*."[559] The *Avenue Georges Mandel* cuts a wide and prominent swathe through the fashionable 16th *arrondissement* of Paris. Also in Paris is a small square, tucked into an inconspicuous corner of the 16th *arrondissement.* This is the *Place Paul-Reynaud*. The judgments of history are often cruel and without nuance. De Gaulle may have best summed up Reynaud's career when he described Reynaud as a "man of great character [who] offered a tragic spectacle, unjustly clouded by extreme events."[560] Paul Reynaud represented all that was best and most flawed in France's Third Republic.

Notes

[1] Faber, David. *Munich, 1938: Appeasement and WWII.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008. Print. 412.

[2] Martin, Benjamin F. *France in 1938.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005. Print. 177. There is some disagreement among historians as to whether Daladier called the people gathered at Le Bourget "those God-damned fools" ("les cons" in impolite French), when he realized that the crowd was celebrating his arrival and was not a lynch mob. Martin credits this story, Raymond Krakovitch refutes it. Krakovitch, Raymond. *Paul Reynaud: dans la tragédie de l'histoire.* Paris: Tallamendier, 1998. Print. 163.

[3] Georges Mandel, Paul Reynaud's colleague and political ally, said of Bonnet, "His long nose sniffs danger and responsibility from afar. He will hide under any flat stone to avoid it." Martin, *France in 1938,* 96.

[4] Tellier, Thibault. *Paul Reynaud, Un indépendent en politique*. Paris: Fayard, 2005. Print. 427-428, 431-432. Both Daladier and Bonnet disputed Reynaud's statement that Daladier called the threat of resignation an act of "desertion." Ibid. 427-428.

[5] Faber, *Munich, 1938,* 7.

[6] Reynaud, Paul. *Mémoires, Tome II*, *Envers et contre tous.* Paris: Flammarion, 1963. Print. 219.

[7] In relevant part, the pastiche went as follows: "S'ils s'obstinent, ces cannibales/À faire de nous des héros,/Il faut que nos premières balles/Soient pour Blum, Mandel et Reynaud." ("If those consigning us as cannon-fodder insist/On making heroes of us/Our first bullets must be/For Blum, Mandel and Reynaud"). Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 217. All translations in this thesis from French into English are the author's own.

[8] Maurice Tazé, the maternal grand-uncle of the author of this thesis, died at Verdun.

[9] "A defeat of such dimensions – not just massive but also unexpected – cried out for explanation." Nord, Philip. *France 1940: Defending the Republic.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. Print. xii.

[10] Greene, Nathanael. *From Versailles to Vichy, The Third French Republic, 1919-1940*. Arlington Heights: AHM Publishing Corporation, 1970. Print. 3.

[11] Weber, Eugen. *The Hollow Years, France in the 1930s.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994. Print. 8.

[12] Weber, *The Hollow Years,* 7.

[13] Weber, *The Hollow Years,* 111.

[14] Bloch, Marc. *L'Étrange défaite.* Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1957. Print. 215.

[15] Bloch, *L'Étrange défait,* 215.

[16] Bloch noted that German tanks and airplanes had "outclassed" the French. Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite*, 66. For French military strategists, "[t]his war was a perpetual succession of surprises." Ibid. 74.

Bloch further argued that France was lacking in mechanized forces, and the mechanized forces that did exist were not sufficiently exploited. Ibid. 79-80.

[17] If the allied commanders had anticipated an attack through the Ardennes rather than through Belgium, "it is almost inconceivable that France would have been defeated when and as it was." May, Ernest R. *Strange Victory: Hitler's Conquest of France.* New York: Hill and Wang. 2000. Print. 5. Philip Nord's recent work is also in the same vein: "[W]hat sealed France's defeat was not a failure of national nerve or character as much as a poor operational and tactical decision-making on the part of the nation's military elite." Nord, *France 1940,* 100. Also Frankenstein, Robert. "À propos des aspects financiers du réarmament français." *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.* 26ième Année. 102 (1976): 1-20. Print: "Nowadays . . . in order to explain the sudden and total collapse of France, [historians] place the blame less, it appears, on France's inferiority in military equipment than on its lack of psychological, moral and intellectual readiness." 1.

[18] May, *Strange Victory*, 6.

[19] Sauvy, Alfred. *Histoire économique de la France entre les deux guerres, De Pierre Laval à Paul Reynaud, 1931-1939.* Paris: Fayard, 1967. Print. 322.

[20] Weber, *The Hollow Years,* 19.

[21] Sauvy, Alfred. *Histoire économique de la France entre les deux guerres, De l'armistice à la dévaluation de la livre, 1918-1931.* Paris: Fayard, 1965. Print. 20-21.

[22] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931*, 22.

[23] Weber, *The Hollow Years,* 7.

[24] Caron, François. *An Economic History of Modern France*. Trans. Barbara Bray. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979. Print. 183-186.

[25] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931*, 22-23. The *École polytechnique* trained engineers, while the *École normale supérieure* produced academicians and governmental officials. Admission to both of these institutions was highly competitive.

[26] Reynaud, Paul. "Churchill and France." *Churchill by His Contemporaries.* Ed. Charles Eade. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954. 263-276. Print. 263.

[27] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931*, 24-25.

[28] Martin, *France in 1938,* 18.

[29] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931*, 27.

[30] Vinen, Richard. *The politics of French business, 1936-1945.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Print. 93-94.

[31] Vinen, *The politics of French business,* 94. "Corporatism" was the institutionalized cooperation between business owners and labor unions that was mediated by governmental organisms. Imlay, Talbot C. "Democracy and War: Political Regime, Industrial Relations, and Economic Preparation for War in France and Britain up to 1940." *The Journal of Modern History* 79.1 (2007): 1-47. Print. 4.

[32] Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 28.

[33] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931*, 296.

[34] The Popular Front was a coalition of the French Communist, Socialist and Radical Parties that came to power in June 1936. The idea of the Popular Front was to be a bulwark against the threat of fascism, but its essentially defensive nature, combined with the differing ideological and social orientations of its constituent elements, meant that the Popular Front was "basically an unstable political alliance of temporary duration." Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 81.

[35] Wolfe, Martin. *The French Franc Between the Wars, 1919-1939.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1951. Print. 196.

[36] Martin, *France in 1938,* 2.

[37] Hull, Isabel V. *Absolute Destruction, Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005. Print. 327.

[38] Loubet de Bayle, Jean-Louis. *Les non-conformistes des années 30.* Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969. Print. 186.

[39] Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 21-22.

[40] Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 100.

[41] Greene, Nathanael. *Crisis and Decline, The French Socialist Party in the 1930s.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969. Print. 22.

[42] Weber, *The Hollow Years,* 20.

[43] Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 8-9.

[44] Duroselle, Jean-Baptiste. *France and the Nazi Threat, The Collapse of French Diplomacy 1932-1939*. Trans. Catherine E. Dop and Robert L. Miller. New York: Enigma Books, 2004. Print. 81.

[45] Micaud, Charles A. *The French Right and Nazi Germany 1933-1939: A Study of Public Opinion.* New York: Octagon Books, 1964. Print. 225-226.

[46] Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 77.

[47] Weber, *The Hollow Years,* 22.

[48] Micaud, *The French Right,* 72-73.

[49] Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 9.

[50] Larmour, Peter. *The French Radical Party in the 1930s.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964. Print. 49-52.

[51]Larmour, *The French Radical Party,* 4.

[52] Weber, *The Hollow Years,* 114.

[53] Larmour, *The French Radical Party,* 71-72.

[54] Larmour, *The French Radical Party,* 7.

[55] Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 8-11.
[56] Weber, *The Hollow Years,* 114, 115, 118.

[57] Loubet de Bayle, *Les non-conformistes,* 202.

[58] Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 33.

[59] Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 13.

[60] Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 13.

[61] Loubet de Bayle, *Les non-conformistes,* 16.

[62] The League of Nations was weakened at its inception by the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union were not parties to its founding. The Soviet Union joined only in 1934 and was expelled in 1939; the United States never joined.

[63] Krakovitch, *Paul Reynaud,* 115.

[64] Guichard, Jean Pierre. *Paul Reynaud, Un homme d'état dans la tourmente, Septembre 1939 – Juin 1940.* Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008. Print. 9.

[65] There was no contemplation of the existence of a "premier" in the Third Republic's Constitution of 1875, as Reynaud himself noted. Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 437. The Third Republic's parliamentary governments were embodied by a Council of Ministers (*Conseil de ministres)*, a cabinet headed by a president. The Third Republic also had a largely ceremonial president of the Republic, in addition to presidents of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Senate. In order to avoid confusion among the various presidents, the president of the *Conseil de ministres* is often referred to as the premier or even prime minister in history written in English, although that individual's formal title was *president du Conseil de ministres*, an appellation commonly shortened to *president du Conseil* in French historiography. This thesis hews to the "premier" usage; the use of "prime minister" can create the impression that the French parliamentary system in the Third Republic was closer to the British system than it was in fact.

[66] Reynaud, Paul. *Mémoires, Tome I, Venu de ma montagne*. Paris: Flammarion, 1960. Print. 23-25.

[67] Krakovitch, *Paul Reynaud*, 27.

[68] The Belgian Georges Prosper Remi, whose pen name was Hergé, created the cartoon character Tintin. Tintin is an intrepid and eternally young cub reporter whose adventures were collected in more than twenty graphic novels written by Hergé. The Tintin books were popular in France in the 1930s and have continued to be so to this day.

[69] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat*, 171.

[70] The French parliament consisted of a lower house, the Chamber of Deputies, and an upper house, the Senate.

[71] See, for example, the photograph of Reynaud on the cover of Thellier, *Paul Reynaud.*

[72] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I*, 41. Reynaud's explanation was that for cartoonists, "Weight contributes to height. So Daladier was often depicted as being taller than me, even though he was in fact shorter."

[73] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 470.

[74] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I*, 53.

[75] Krakovitch, *Paul Reynaud,* 62.

[76] Reynaud, Paul. *Jeunesse, quelle France veux-tu?.* Paris: Gallimard, 1936. Print. 25.

[77] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud*, 41. Reynaud's homage to Waldeck-Rousseau was originally scheduled to take the form of a speech before the Paris bar association but was cancelled due to opposition from lawyers associated with the anti-republican *Action française*.

[78] Reynaud, *Jeunesse,* 95.

[79] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 39.

[80] Krakovitch, *Paul Reynaud,* 31.

[81] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I*, 53.

[82] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I*, 94-101.

[83] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931*, 7.

[84] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 215, 172.

[85] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I*, 162-164.

[86] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 445-447.

[87] Krakovitch, *Paul Reynaud,* 56.

[88] May, *Strange Victory,* 113-114.

[89] Pinol, Jean-Luc. "1919-1958, le temps des droites?". *Histoire des droites en France 1, Politique.* Ed. Jean-François Sirinelli. Paris: Gallimard, 1992. 291-389. Print. 296.

[90] Le Brequec, Gilles. "Le parti." *Histoire des droites en France 2, Cultures.* Ed. Jean-François Sirinelli. Paris: Gallimard, 1992. 13-59. Print. 14.

[91] Flandin was a centrist politician and businessman originally from the town of Avallon in the Yonne, a *département* in the region of Burgundy. He was first elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1914 at the age of twenty-four after starting his career, like Reynaud, as a barrister. Unlike Reynaud, who was socially a Parisian bourgeois, Flandin identified with provincial France, as evidenced by his preference for agricultural fairs over urban dinners. Flandin's provincial roots oriented him to political views more characteristic of the pivotal Radical Party than Reynaud's structured conservatism. These differences partially explain the rivalry of the two men for influence in the *Alliance démocratique*. Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 135, 138.

[92] Anderson, Malcolm. *Conservative Politics in France.* London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1974. Print. 57.

[93] Audigier, François. "L'Alliance démocratique de 1933 à 1937: Ou l'anachronisme en politique." *Vingtième Siècle, Revue d'histoire* 47 (1995): 147-157. Print. 148.

[94] Sanson, Rosamonde. "L'Alliance démocratique." *La France et les Français, 1938 en 1939*. Ed. René Rémond and Janine Bourdin. Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1978. 327-339. Print. 330.

[95] Jackson, Julian. *The politics of depression in France 1932-1936.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. Print. 16-17.

[96] Audigier, "L'Alliance démocratique," 153.

[97] Reynaud, Paul. "Le régime des masses en France et en Italie." *Paris-Soir.* 22 aôut 1936. 4.

[98] Anderson, *Conservative Politics*, 168-169.

[99] Audigier, "L'Alliance démocratique," 149, 152. The lack of party discipline in the *Alliance démocratique* was highlighted in May 1936 when members of the left-leaning wing of the party allied themselves with the Radical Party and became part of the Popular Front alliance contrary to the efforts of their parliamentary chief to achieve exactly the opposite result of detaching elements of the Radical Party and unifying these elements with the opposition to the Popular Front. Ibid. 153-154.

[100] Le Brequec, "Le Parti," 51.

[101] Le Brequec, "Le Parti," 13.

[102] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 199-200.

[103] During the colonial exposition of 1931 in Paris, Reynaud, as Minister of Colonies in a government of Pierre Laval, made a public point of his Anglophilia by toasting Rudyard Kipling. Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 310-312.

[104] "Successful Annual Meeting Crowns Year of Real Accomplishment." *American Bar Association Journal* 18.11 (1932): 705-706. Print. 705. In this summary of proceedings, Reynaud is described as having a "command of English [that] added to the effectiveness" of the remarks he made as a foreign visitor to the meeting.

[105] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 470-471.

[106] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 401.

[107] Pinol, "1919-1958," 316.

[108] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 373.

[109] Tellier, Thibault. "Paul Reynaud et la réforme de l'État en 1933-1934." *Vingtième Siècle, Revue d'histoire* 78 (2003): 59-73. Print. 68-69. Reynaud's positions on the reinforcement of executive power eventually found their way into the constitution of the Fifth Republic, which was principally authored by Michel Debré, Reynaud's ministry of finance colleague in 1938-1939. Ibid. 73. Largely at the behest of Charles de Gaulle, who subsequently became the first president of the Fifth Republic, this constitution conferred real powers on the presidency, which had been a figurehead position under the Third and Fourth Republics. In the words of one historian of the era, the "official duties [of the Third Republic's president] were largely confined to presiding at racetracks and flower exhibitions." Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 3.

[110] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 368-369.

[111] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 170.

[112] Tellier, "Paul Reynaud et la réforme de l'État," 66.

[113] Krakovitch, *Paul Reynaud,* 58.

[114] Pinol, "1919-1958," 292.

[115] Reynaud, *Jeunesse,* 10.

[116] Reynaud, Paul. "The New French Parliament and the Financial and International Situation." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1931-1939)* 15.5 (1936): 710-715. Print. 708.

[117] Reynaud, *Jeunesse,* 21. Reynaud's views on immigration were quite different from the xenophobic attitude of the *Alliance démocratique*, as exemplifed by Flandin's warning, "It is folly to think that the deficit in births can be made up by allowing foreigners to enter France and become nationals . . . It is high time to finish with the colonization of France by undesirable foreigners." Sanson, Rosamonde. "La perception de la puissance par l'Alliance démocratique." *Revue de l'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 31.4 (1984): 658-665. Print. 661.

[118] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 146-147.

[119] Guichard. *Paul Reynaud,* 15.

[120] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 487.

[121] The by-election in question concerned two seats that had to be filled, which therefore required an electoral list, in this case composed of Reynaud and Kérillis. The two men were encouraged to run together by Alexandre Millerand, a prominent center-right politician and former president of the Third Republic. At the time Reynaud knew Kérillis only by reputation. When Reynaud remarked to Millerand, "Isn't [Kérillis] rather far to the right?", Millerand responded, "He has his base, you will add yours." Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I*, 214.

[122] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I*, 214.

[123] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 243.

[124] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I*, 402.

[125] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 252.

[126] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 211.

[127] Reynaud, Paul. *In the Thick of the Fight.* Trans. James D. Lambert. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951. Print. 194.

[128] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 435-436.

[129] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 246.

[130] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 295-296.

[131] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 188.

[132] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 188.

[133] Mandel's candor and tough-mindedness seemed to have been at least in part products of being mentored by Clemenceau, France's premier in 1917-1920. Clemenceau's nickname in the French press was *le Tigre* ("the Tiger"). Reynaud admiringly recounts in his memoir that Clemenceau once told Mandel, "I forbid you from writing a sentence that has more than one subject, one verb and one direct object. If you're thinking about adding an indirect object, see me first." Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 140.

[134] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud*, 186-188.

[135] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 410.

[136] One of *Action française*'s favorite epithets for Reynaud was *le bazardier de Mexico* ("the wheeler-dealer of Mexico City").

[137] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 436.

[138] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 266.

[139] Krakovitch, *Paul Reynaud*, 47.

[140] Reynaud, *In the Thick of the Fight,* 1: "In French public life between the two wars, I was a lone wolf."

[141] Krakovitch, *Paul Reynaud*, 162.

[142] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat*, 171. Interestingly, Duroselle asserts that "perhaps" Georges Bonnet was also among the "few unusually gifted men" who had the insight about the connection of economics to foreign policy. Bonnet was the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time of the Munich agreement and was one of the main proponents of the policy of appeasement of Nazi Germany. Duroselle was quite critical of developments in French economic, military and foreign policy that gave rise to appeasement. At least one contemporary observer agreed with Duroselle's evaluation of Reynaud's linking of economic and diplomatic issues: "Among the major tragedies of this war has been the failure of the leaders of the great democractic powers (with the exception of M. Paul Reynaud, who arrived in control too late) to bring to the vital economic issues the same sagacity and understanding that they have brought to the political and general strategic issues." Pumphrey, Lowell M. "Planning for Economic Warfare." *Military Affairs* 5.3 (1941): 145-151. Print. 145 note 1.

[143] Nazi Germany was itself an example of "a steady evolution . . . in the understanding of the relationships of economics to modern warfare"; this evolution was a product of the experience in World War I of "the exhaustion of a limited German [economic] potential that was ultimately responsible for the military collapse of Germany." Pumphrey, "Planning for Economic Warfare," 146.

[144] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I*, 105-107.

[145] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 148.

[146] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931*, 142.

[147] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931,* 135, 137.

[148] Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 34.

[149] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 153.

[150] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 164.

[151] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 172-173.

[152] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931*, 146.

[153] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931*, 154, 161.

[154] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931*, 165.

[155] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931*, 169-171.

[156] Although Reynaud admired Herriot's energy and commitment to the Third Republic, Reynaud criticized Herriot's accumulation of positions (*cumul de mandats*) as both deputy and mayor of Lyon, which in Reynaud's opinion exhausted Herriot to the point where he could no longer think straight and led to his abdicating important economic matters to government functionaries. Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 483.

[157] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 346.

[158] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 349-350.

[159] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 348.

[160] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 347.

[161] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud*, 222.

[162] Wolfe, *The French Franc Between the Wars*, 40.

[163] Wolfe, *The French Franc Between the Wars,* 44-47, 52-53.

[164] Nurske, Ragnar. "The gold exchange standard." *The Gold Standard in Theory and History.* Ed. Barry Eichengreen and Marc Flandreau. New York and London: Routledge, 1997. 262-287. Print. 271.

[165] Mouré, Kenneth. "'Une Eventualité Absolument Exclue': French Reluctance to Devalue, 1933-1936." *French Historical Studies* 15.3 (1988): 479-505. Print. 480.

[166] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931*, 108-113.

[167] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 298. Reynaud's guarded view about economic stimulus programs persisted. In 1936 Reynaud traveled to the United States and met with Franklin Delano Roosevelt in Washington D.C. Reynaud came away with the view that devaluation had saved the United States rather than the program of investment represented by the New Deal. Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 88.

[168] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 165.

[169] Reynaud, Paul. "France and Gold." *Foreign Affairs* 11.2 (1933): 253-267. Print. 254-256.

[170] Reynaud, "France and Gold," 258-259.

[171] Wolfe, *The French Franc Between the Wars,* 105-106.

[172] Reynaud, Paul. "The French Financial Outlook." *Foreign Affairs* 12.4 (1934): 610-621. Print. 616-618.

[173] Reynaud, "The French Financial Outlook," 618-619.

[174] Caron, *An Economic History*, 263.

[175] Reynaud, "The French Financial Outlook," 621.

[176] Mouré, "'Une Eventualité Absolument Exclue'," 479. By 1936 only three of Keynes's works had been translated into French. Jackson, *The politics of depression,* 14.

[177] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1931-1939,* 528.

[178] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1931-1939,* 114.

[179] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 49.

[180] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 205.

[181] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 366-367.

[182] Jackson, *The politics of depression,* 80.

[183] Jackson, *The politics of depression,* 82.

[184] Caron, *An Economic History,* 256.

[185] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 238. In April 1934 Blum had attacked the "monetary fetishism" of the Doumergue government and its ideological predecessors. Ibid.

[186] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 418.

[187] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 239.

[188] Jackson, *The politics of depression,* 180

[189] Mouré, "'Une Eventualité Absolument Exclue'," 487.

[190] République française. *Journal officiel.* Chambre des députés, débats parlementaires. (JO). 1934 No. 60. 29 juin 1934. Séance du 28 juin 1934: 1835-82. Print. 1841.

[191] JO. 1934 No. 60. 29 juin 1934. Séance du 28 juin 1934, 1845.

[192] JO. 1934 No. 60. 29 juin 1934. Séance du 28 juin 1934, 1842. Sauvy remarked that of "all the parliamentarians Paul Reynaud was the only one to make use" of "numerous comparative indices and tables." Sauvy, Alfred. "The Economic Crisis of the 1930s in France." *Journal of Contemporary History* 4.4 (1969): 21-35. Print. 33. Although Reynaud did not make a point of this, the measures instituted by Poincaré in the late 1920s resulted in an effective devaluation of the franc once the franc stabilized at lower levels. This devaluation helped French exports and established a favorable balance of payments. Wolfe, *The French Franc Between the Wars,* 71. A robustly profitable period of business activity ensued until 1931, largely because the low exchange value of the franc tended to divert French consumers away from foreign goods and services to domestic goods and services, thereby increasing demand in France. Nurske, "The gold exchange standard," 273.

[193] JO. 1934 No. 60. 29 juin 1934. Séance du 28 juin 1934, 1845.

[194] JO. 1934 No. 60. 29 juin 1934. Séance du 28 juin 1934, 1843.

[195] JO. 1934 No. 60. 29 juin 1934. Séance du 28 juin 1934, 1846.

[196] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1931-1939,* 174, 308.

[197] Jackson, *The politics of depression,* 11.

[198] Wolfe, *The French Franc Between the Wars,* 68-69.

[199] Mouré, "'Une Eventualité Absolument Exclue'," 488-490.

[200] Jackson, *The politics of depression,* 189-190.

[201] "La place de M. Paul Reynaud est à la Santé." ("Monsieur Reynaud belongs in a mental asylum.") Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 390.

[202] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 390.

[203] Krakovitch, *Paul Reynaud*, 111.

[204] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud*, 236, 252.

[205] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud*, 244.

[206] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 384.

[207] Jackson, *The politics of depression,* 189.

[208] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 352-360.

[209] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931*, 301-302.

[210] In his memoir Reynaud took a perverse pleasure in quoting at great length the largely anonymous death threats against him. A sample: "In this matter of devaluation, you are risking not only your own skin but that of your daughter . . . You are now our hostage . . . We will have the satisfaction of avenging ourselves against you and those close to you." "The day [devaluation is put into effect], your head will be smashed like a walnut." "I've saved a bullet for you and another one if possible for that no-account Blum." Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 410, 407, 406.

[211] Wolfe, *The French Franc Between the Wars,* 81.

[212] Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes*, 221. In the inter-war era business supplanted the Catholic Church as a favored target of popular hostility. Vinen, *The politics of French business,* 10.

[213] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931*, 37.

[214] Jackson, *The politics of depression,* 21-23.

[215] Mouré, "'Une Eventualité Absolument Exclue'," 490.

[216] Marc Bloch noted that graduates of the *École polytechnique* "obeyed a law of automatism that was quasi-mechanical." Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite,* 202-203.

[217] Vinen, *The politics of French business*, 19-20.

[218] Mouré, "'Une Eventualité Absolument Exclue'," 483.

[219] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1918-1931*, 430. In a similar vein Reynaud was a member of the pro-natalist movement, the *Alliance nationale*, which sought to combat Malthusian notions about population growth. Tomlinson, Richard. "The 'Disappearance' of France, 1896-1940: French Politics and the Birth Rate." *The Historical Journal* 28.2 (1985): 405-415. Print. 405-406.

[220] This was essentially the argument made by Reynaud during the Popular Front, which he accused of discouraging increases in production. Reynaud, Paul. "Comprenons que nous nous sommes trompés." *Paris-Soir.* 6 juillet 1937. 4.

[221] Wolfe, *The French Franc Between the Wars,* 135.

[222] Reynaud, *Jeunesse,* 86-87.

[223] Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy*, 50-51.

[224] Vinen, *The politics of French business,* 14.

[225] Vinen, *The politics of French business,* 59.

[226] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 253.

[227] Reynaud, *Jeunesse,* 92.

[228] Reynaud, *Jeunesse,* 91.

[229] Reynaud, Paul. "Seule la verité peut nous sauver comme elle a sauvé l'Angleterre." *Paris-Soir.* 25 decembre 1937. 2.

[230] Judt, Tony. *Past Imperfect, French Intellectuals, 1944-1956.* New York: New York University Press, 2011. Print. 244-245. Notwithstanding its title, Judt's book reaches back into the inter-war era and beyond to discuss the history of sympathy for ideological extremism, especially in the form of communism, and the related antipathy to liberalism evidenced by the most influential French intellectuals in the decade after the Second World War.

[231] Judt, *Past Imperfect,* 193.

[232] Judt, *Past Imperfect,* 16-17, 189.

[233] Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes,* 129, 138.

[234] Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes*, 259.

[235] Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes,* 92.

[236] Judt, *Past Imperfect,* 230-231.

[237] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud*, 266.

[238] Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes,* 199.

[239] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud*, 242. The absence of any intelligible financial basis for this scurrilous attack was apparently not an impediment to *Action française*, which had already accused Reynaud during the 1932 debate on repayment of war loans from the United States of favoring payment because he needed to curry favor with American banks in order to obtain loans for the family business in Mexico. Tellier, *Paul Reynaud*, 181.

[240] Vinen, *The politics of French business,* 19.

[241] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 417.

[242] Reynaud, "The New French Parliament," 701.

[243] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 419.

[244] Wolfe, *The French Franc Between the Wars,* 175.

[245] JO. 1936 No. 41. 7 juin 1936. Séance du 6 juin 1936: 1315-1358. Print. 1352.

[246] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I*, 421.

[247] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 195.

[248] Judt, *Past Imperfect,* 220.

[249] Greene, *Crisis and Decline,* 110 (emphasis in original).

[250] Reynaud, Paul. *Le problème militaire français.* Paris: Flammarion, 1937. Print. 91.

[251] Connors, Joseph D. *Paul Reynaud and French National Defense.* Diss. Loyola University, 1977. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1978. Print. 4-5.

[252] Nord, *France 1940,* 69. Certain politicians in France, such as the powerful conservative senator Joseph Caillaux, believed that Germany could not compete in an arms race because the economic demands of such an effort would lead to financial failure and rebellion by German youth. Frankenstein, "À propos des aspects financiers," 6.

[253] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat*, 190.

[254] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 280.

[255] Connors, *Paul Reynaud and French National Defense,* 175.

[256] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 286.

[257] Connors, *Paul Reynaud and French National Defense,* 181-182.

[258]Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 116-117.

[259] In Marc Bloch's words, "Our high command was a high command of old men." Bloch, *LÉtrange défaite,* 161.

[260] Hull, *Absolute Destruction,* 320. It was the absence of German war aims at the outset of the First World War that caused strategy to dissolve into "remarkably effective" operations and tactics involving progressively higher levels of violence. Ibid. 325-326.

[261] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 439. Reynaud quoted Pétain: "Ideas are too often divisive."

[262] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 439-440.

[263] Jackson, Peter. *France and the Nazi Menace, Intelligence and Policy Making 1933-1939.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print. 12-13. The attitude of French intelligence contrasted with the German inability to estimate accurately the strength of its enemies, which was a product of a cultivated disregard of the possibility that the adversary might possess professional superiority. Hull, *Absolute Destruction,* 333.

[264] Jackson, *France and the Nazi Menace,* 49-51.

[265] The argument has been made that the German army was in fact subject to significant material constraints, which contributed to the single-minded development of operational efficiency. Skill at producing the material goods of war, which is an activity based on rational analysis, did not necessarily contribute to the nonrational, socio-psychological factors that made for an effective fighting force. van Creveld, Martin. *Fighting Power, German and U.S. Army Performance 1939-1945.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982. Print. 164, 32-33.

[266] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 423.

[267] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 283.

[268] Nobécourt, Jacques. *Une histoire politique de l'armée.* Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967. Print. 184.

[269] Nobécourt, *Une histoire politique,* 258.

[270] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 271.

[271] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 271.

[272] Nobécourt, *Une histoire politique,* 192.

[273] Nobécourt, *Une histoire politique,* 196.

[274] Reynaud, *Le problème militaire,* 83.

[275] de Gaulle, Charles. *Vers l'armée de métier.* Paris: Éditions Berger-Lavrault, 1944. Print. 17.

[276] de Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier,* 47.

[277] de Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier,* 46-47.

[278] de Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier,* 85.

[279] de Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier,* 83, 151.

[280] de Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier,* 185-188.

[281] de Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier,* 198. The attributes of a professional army noted by de Gaulle were strikingly similar to the German army's "mutual trust, willingness to assume responsibility, and . . . duty of subordinate officers to make independent decisions." van Creveld, *Fighting Power,* 165.

[282] de Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier,* 189.

[283] de Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier,* 203.

[284] de Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier,* 109, 91-93.

[285] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 134.

[286] de Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier,* 207.

[287] de Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier,* 210-211.

[288] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 138.

[289] Reynaud, *Le problème militaire,* 79.

[290] Reynaud, *Le problème militaire,* 18, 28.

[291] Reynaud, *Le problème militaire,* 35, 39-40.

[292] Reynaud, *Le problème militaire,* 42.

[293] JO. 1935 No. 32. 16 mars 1935. Séance du 15 mars 1935: 1015-62. Print. 1021-1022.

[294] JO. 1935 No. 32. 16 mars 1935. Séance du 15 mars 1935, 1024.

[295] JO. 1935 No. 32. 16 mars 1935. Séance du 15 mars 1935, 1025.

[296] JO. 1935 No. 32. 16 mars 1935. Séance du 15 mars 1935, 1040.

[297] JO. 1935 No. 32. 16 mars 1935. Séance du 15 mars 1935, 1041.

[298] JO. 1935 No. 32. 16 mars 1935. Séance du 15 mars 1935, 1040.

[299] JO. 1935 No. 32. 16 mars 1935. Séance du 15 mars 1935, 1041.

[300] JO. 1935 No. 32. 16 mars 1935. Séance du 15 mars 1935, 1042.

[301] JO. 1935 No. 32. 16 mars 1935. Séance du 15 mars 1935, 1042.

[302] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 430.

[303] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 430.

[304] Reynaud, *Le problème militaire,* 27.

[305] Nobécourt, *Une histoire politique,* 209.

[306] The British reluctance to provide support to the French at the time of the Rhineland crisis was consistent with a general policy of reticence about guarantees of any kind, which the British regarded as potential traps that could draw them into continental European disputes. As expressed during meetings between the British and the French during the crisis in Czechoslovakia of September 1938, the British view was that "it was quite impossible to allow the direction of British policy to be placed in the hands of any other country," which by its terms referred to any guarantee of Czechoslovakia's territorial integrity, but could have equally referred to undertakings to France itself. Record of Anglo-French Conversations Held at No. 10 Downing Street on September 18, 1938, British Foreign Office archives. C10729/1941/18, at 394.

[307] Jackson, *France and the Nazi Menace,* 177.

[308] Reynaud, *Le problème militaire,* viii. The strategy of bluff had a long history in German military and diplomatic thinking that went back to World War I and pre-First World War "Wilhelminian foreign policy." Hull, *Absolute Destruction,* 221-222.

[309] Jackson, *France and the Nazi Menace,* 169-174. A lack of preparation on the part of the German military represented a theme that was to be repeated during the *Anschluss*, when the only contingency plans prepared by the German army concerned measures to be taken in order to prevent a restoration of the Hapsburg monarchy. Faber, *Munich, 1938,* 125.

[310] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 114-115.

[311] Reynaud, *In the Thick of the Fight*, 123.

[312] Tellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 309.

[313] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 55.

[314] Faber, *Munich, 1938*, 216-218.

[315] Duroselle posited that such an incursion could have been launched from the Maginot Line. Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 193.

[316] Micaud, *The French Right,* 86.

[317] Werth, Alexander. *France and Munich: Before and After the Surrender.* New York: Howard Fertig, 1969. Print. 21.

[318] Connors, *Paul Reynaud and French National Defense,* 47.

[319] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 423. Reynaud later said that he regretted not having brought a figure like Churchill into the debate on armored forces, because this would have helped when Reynaud pleaded with the British in May and June 1940 for additional military assistance. Reynaud, "Churchill and France," 267-268.

[320] Jackson, *France and the Nazi Menace,* 137. A desire for more funds to build up the army may have been at the root of the *Deuxième Bureau's* persistent overestimation of German forces. May, *Strange Victory*, 163.

[321] Werth, *France and Munich,* 59.

[322] Reynaud, *Jeunesse,* 11.

[323] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 55-57.

[324] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 76.

[325] Reynaud, "Churchill and France," 263.

[326] Reynaud, "Churchill and France," 263.

[327] Nord, *France 1940,* 5-6.

[328] Martin, *France in 1938,* 20.

[329] Nord, *France 1940,* 22-23.

[330] During a November 1937 meeting in Berchtesgaden between Hitler and Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, Halifax praised the Nazi system for keeping communism out of Germany and therefore blocking its passage west. Halifax also gratuitously offered Hitler the possibility of "alterations in the European order." Faber, *Munich, 1938,* 36, 38. Duroselle described Halifax as being one of the British "big four" of appeasement, along with Chamberlain, Samuel Hoare, one of Halifax's predecessors as Foreign Secretary, and John Simon, Chamberlain's Chancellor of the Exchequer. Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 266.

[331] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 230.

[332] Martin, *France in 1938,* 38. British attitudes about Eastern Europe were succinctly expressed by Chamberlain when he said about Czechoslovakia, "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing." Nord, *France 1940,* 54.

[333] Martin, *France in 1938,* 105. As Reynaud reported in his memoir, Georges Bonnet, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time of the Munich crisis, expressed his belief in September 1938 that Great Britain would not support France until there was a direct attack by Germany on France. Reynaud, *In the Thick of the Fight,* 184. This point of view, along with a conviction about French military inferiority, were at least in part at the root of pro-appeasement views like Bonnet's. Anderson, *Conservative Politics,* 64. Concerns about British wavering also infiltrated the views of more robust opponents of Nazi Germany, such as Yvon Delbos, the foreign minister under the Popular Front. Jackson, *France and the Nazi Menace,* 243.

[334] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 272.

[335] Martin, *France in 1938,* 109.

[336] Micaud, *The French Right and Nazi Germany,* 61.

[337] Micaud, *The French Right and Nazi Germany,* 61-62.

[338] May, *Strange Victory,* 151.

[339] Notwithstanding the British concern about maintaining their naval dominance in the Mediterranean, the British tolerated the sinking by Italian submarines and airplanes of British merchant vessels during the Spanish Civil War. This tolerance was indicative of a continuing British desire not to cut off possible cooperation with Italy as a counter-weight to Germany. Werth, *France and Munich,* 164-170.

[340] Reynaud, "The New French Parliament," 701.

[341] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 447. Reynaud had clearly evolved from his earlier view of 1933, when he expressed support for a "desirable amelioration of France's relations with Italy." Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 192.

[342] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 471.

[343] Reynaud, *In the Thick of the Fight,* 69-71.

[344] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 296.

[345] JO. 1935 No. 83. 28 décembre 1935. Séance du 27 décembre 1935: 2799-2844. Print. 2812.

[346] JO. 1935 No. 83. 28 décembre 1935. Séance du 27 décembre 1935, 2812.

[347] JO. 1935 No. 83. 28 décembre 1935. Séance du 27 décembre 1935, 2813.

[348] JO. 1935 No. 83. 28 décembre 1935. Séance du 27 décembre 1935, 2814.

[349] JO. 1935 No. 83. 28 décembre 1935. Séance du 27 décembre 1935, 2816.

[350] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 296.

[351] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 302-303.

[352] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 297.

[353] Reynaud, "The New French Parliament," 701.

[354] Sauvy, "The Economic Crisis," 25-26.

[355] Reynaud, *In the Thick of the Fight,* 62.

[356] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 116.

[357] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 55. The Germans and the Russians ceased hostilities in December 1917 and signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, which definitively ended the war between the Germans and what was now Soviet Russia.

[358] Micaud, *The French Right and Nazi Germany,* 47.

[359] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 86-87.

[360] Brower, Daniel R. *The New Jacobins: The French Communist Party and the Popular Front.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968. Print. 2.

[361] Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 77.

[362] Dreifort, John E. "The French Popular Front and the Franco-Soviet Pact, 1936-1937: A Dilemma in Foreign Policy." *Journal of Contemporary History.* 11.2/3 (1976): 217-236. Print. 218.

[363] Reynaud, *In the Thick of the Fight,* 34.

[364] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 312-313.

[365] Reynaud, *In the Thick of the Fight,* 169.

[366] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 161-162. Reynaud cited these conditions as having been the subject of discussion between Blum and Vladimir Potemkin, a Soviet deputy foreign commissar of the 1930s.

[367] Reynaud, *Le problème militaire,* 16-17, 22.

[368] Dreifort, "The French Popular Front," 220.

[369] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 154.

[370] Dreifort, "The French Popular Front," 228-229.

[371] Warner, Geoffrey. *Pierre Laval and the Eclipse of France, 1931-1945.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968. Print. 159.

[372] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 22.

[373] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 23.

[374] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 24-25.

[375] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 25.

[376] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 27.

[377] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 35.

[378] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 36, 17.

[379] Greene, *From Versailles to Vichy,* 14, quoting the independent republican Gaston Moreau.

[380] Sauvy, "The Economic Crisis," 28.

[381] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 343-344. Alfred Sauvy noted that the Popular Front's reforms were intended to increase consumer spending, but the increase in costs created "an internal contradiction," because these reforms ignored the impact of higher costs on the export trade and on the value of the franc. Sauvy, "The Economic Crisis," 27. The latter issue became a fatal problem for Blum's first government, which fell when the Senate refused to give Blum's government the power to deal with economic problems via decree-laws.

[382] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 334.

[383] Reynaud, "The New French Parliament," 702.

[384] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 335-337.

[385] Dreifort, "The French Popular Front," 217.

[386] Dreifort, "The French Popular Front," 224-225.

[387] Guichard, *Paul Reynaud,* 38-39.

[388] Dreifort, "The French Popular Front," 219, 225.

[389] JO. 1936 No. 68. 1 août 1936. Séance du 31 juillet 1936: 2289-2352. Print. 2307.

[390] Dreifort, "The French Popular Front," 222.

[391] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 162.

[392] JO. 1936 No. 97. 5 décembre 1936. Séance du 4 décembre 1936: 3299-3338. Print. 3324-3325.

[393] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 26.

[394] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 26.

[395] JO. 1936 No. 68. 1 août 1936. Séance du 31 juillet 1936, 2307.

[396] Szaluta, Jacques. "Marshal Pétain's Ambassadorship to Spain: Conspiratorial or Providential Rise toward Power?". *French Historical Studies* 8.4 (1974): 511-533. Print. 514. When it came time in early 1939 to deal with the issue of recognizing Franco's regime as the legitimate government of Spain, Reynaud's position was that France should aid Spain in order to separate Spain from its erstwhile external supporters. Such aid extended to the restitution by Reynaud of Spain's gold reserve, which was in French custody, as a means of encouraging Franco to take a more conciliatory stance toward France. Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 474-477. Franco's response was to begin building fortifications along Spain's border with France. Szaluta, "Marshal Pétain's Ambassadorship," 513.

[397] "L'Actualité politique vue par M. Paul Reynaud." *Le Figaro.* 3 octobre 1936. 2. Print.

[398] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 133. As Marc Bloch later observed, there was more than a little irony to see French leftists oppose credits for rearmament at the same time that they supported "cannons for Spain." Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite,* 193.

[399] JO. 1936 No. 68. 1 août 1936. Séance du 31 juillet 1936, 2306-2307.

[400] Reynaud, "The New French Parliament," 711.

[401] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 107.

[402] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 192.

[403] Reynaud, Paul. "Le verrou." *Ce soir.* 21 mars 1938. 4. In this article Reynaud optimistically predicted that the *Anschluss* had fortified the resolve of both Britain and France to resist further encroachments by Germany.

[404] Butterworth, Susan Bindorff. "Daladier and the Munich Crisis: A Reappraisal." *Journal of Contemporary History* 9.3 (1974): 191-216. Print. 194.

[405] Werth, *France and Munich,* 134. Butterworth, in "Daladier and the Munich Crisis," attributes Reynaud's failure to be appointed Minister of Finance or Foreign Affairs to Reynaud's personal ambition, because he did not want a major role in a government that would be a short-lived failure and was in any case heading into a major crisis regarding Czechoslovakia. 200-201. Although Reynaud was not short on personal ambition, this analysis seems inconsistent with Reynaud's patriotism and his vigorous pursuit of policies that were intended to strengthen France.

[406] Butterworth, "Daladier and the Munich Crisis," 211.

[407] Werth, *France and Munich,* 131.

[408] Butterworth, "Daladier and the Munich Crisis," 199.

[409] Butterworth, "Daladier and the Munich Crisis," 200. Butterworth sets forth the putative text of Daladier's call to Paul-Boncour advising Paul-Boncour that he would not be chosen as Minister of Foreign Affairs: "I have been thinking. The policy you outlined to me is a very fine policy, thoroughly worthy of France. I do not think we are in a position to undertake it. I am going to have Georges Bonnet." Ibid. 199. Butterworth, who takes a rehabilitative view of Daladier's efforts as premier in 1938, describes the relationship between Daladier and Bonnet as being marked by "the indifferently successful attempts of the former to keep the latter under control, and the efforts of the latter to subvert the authority of the former without actually pushing him out of office." Ibid. 204.

[410] As Léon Blum, who was out of power at the time of the Munich crisis, wrote in the SFIO's party paper, *Le Populaire,* in September 1938, "Paris must no longer act in Prague but in London." Werth, *France and Munich,* 242.

[411] Martin, *France in 1938,* 62-63.

[412] Guichard, *Paul Reynaud,* 63.

[413] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 190.

[414] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 308-309. On the other hand, elements of the French financial community, such as officials of the Lazard Bank and the Banque de l'Indochine, favored abandonment of Czechoslovakia because Germany represented "the established order." In addition, they wanted France to refocus on its colonies. Ibid. 307.

[415] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 190.

[416] Buttterworth, "Daladier and the Munich Crisis," 206 note 36, citing an unsourced remark by Daladier.

[417] Fernand de Brinon, a journalist who was associated with the *Comité France-Allemagne*, which worked for rapprochement between France and Germany, wrote an article after the Munich treaty was concluded in which he justified the treaty on the basis that it respected the right of self-determination. Werth, *France and Munich,* 230. Brinon went on to become a collaborator with the Nazis during the Second World War.

[418] Charles Corbin, France's ambassador to Great Britain, described a September 25 conference between the British and French cabinets before the meeting in Munich as "a veritable corrida." Martin, *France in 1938,* 163.

[419] Faber, *Munich, 1938,* 305-306.

[420] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 220-221.

[421] Faber, *Munich, 1938,* 16. As had been the case during the reoccupation of the Rhineland in March 1936, German military leaders in September 1938 were concerned about a French response to the crisis in Czechoslovakia involving offensive action against the German "West Wall" defenses, which these leaders believed were quite vulnerable. Faber, *Munich, 1938,* 216-218.

[422] JO. 1938 No. 52, 5 octobre 1938. Séance du 4 octobre 1938: 1525-1600. Print. 1536.

[423] JO. 1938 No. 52, 5 octobre 1938. Séance du 4 octobre 1938, 1536.

[424] JO. 1938 No. 52, 5 octobre 1938. Séance du 4 octobre 1938, 1536-1537.

[425] JO. 1938 No. 52, 5 octobre 1938. Séance du 4 octobre 1938, 1537.

[426] JO. 1938 No. 52, 5 octobre 1938. Séance du 4 octobre 1938, 1538.

[427] JO. 1938 No. 52, 5 octobre 1938. Séance du 4 octobre 1938, 1538.

[428] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 431.

[429] As a consequence, most observers of the time thought that Kérillis would lose his safe seat as deputy from Neuilly, the well-to-do suburb of Paris. Butterworth, "Daladier and the Munich Crisis," 213. Kérillis was joined in his vote against the Munich treaty only by communist deputies and a handful of maverick Radicals. Martin, *France in 1938,* 187.

[430] Churchill was similarly discouraged. In a letter to Reynaud, Churchill compared Munich to the position England was in after the loss of its American colonies and to France's situation after the catastrophic Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. "The extent of this disaster leaves me in the blackest frame of mind," wrote Churchill. Krakovitch, *Paul Reynaud,* 166.

[431] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 223.

[432] Krakovitch, *Paul Reynaud,* 162.

[433] Greene, *Crisis and Decline,* 14-15.

[434] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1931-1939,* 528, 550-551.

[435] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 233.

[436] Kirchheimer, Otto. "Decree Powers and Constitutional Law in France under the Third Republic." *The American Political Science Review* 34.6 (1940): 1104-1123. Print. 1107. Kirchheimer makes the point that the delegation of power to the premier and his cabinet raised a constitutional issue of balance of powers between the legislative and executive branches of government. These concerns were brushed aside as the delegation of *pleins pouvoirs* became a convenient method of coping with financial difficulties, regardless of the political coloration of the government in power. Prior to the Daladier cabinet of November 1938, conservative governments led by Poincaré, Doumergue and Laval had benefited from *pleins pouvoirs*, as had, on a limited basis, the Popular Front government in which Camille Chautemps was premier for the first time. Both of Blum's Popular Front governments fell when the Senate denied decree powers requested by Blum. Daladier's cabinet of April 1938 was granted a first round of decree powers, which lapsed in June 1938. By November 1938 the repeated delegation of *pleins pouvoirs* had resulted in parliament's loss of "almost all significance as a legislative body." Ibid. 1109. Kirchheimer further argues that the use of *pleins pouvoirs* hastened the degradation of parliamentary government by relegating parliament "to a mechanism recording votes of confidence and authorizing enabling bills [for *pleins pouvoirs*]." Ibid. 1123. Kirchheimer asserts that the granting to the Daladier government of decree powers on four different occasions came to be regarded as unhealthily necessary to withstand "the competition of fascism's unrestricted governmental action." Ibid. 1112.

[437] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1931-1939,* 327-328.

[438] Asselain, Jean-Charles. "Une erreur de politique économique: La loi des quarante heures de 1936." *Revue Économique 25.* (1974): 672-705. Print. 692.

[439] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 237-238.

[440] Reynaud, *In the Thick of the Fight,* 200.

[441] Kirchheimer, "Decree Powers," 1110.

[442] Asselain, "Une erreur de politique économique," 672-673.

[443] JO. 1936 No. 44, 13 juin 1936: 1525-1600. Séance du 12 juin 1936, 1420.

[444] Asselain, "Une erreur de politique économique," 686. Also Sauvy, "The Economic Crisis," 31.

[445] Asselain, "Une erreur de politique économique," 675-677.

[446] Reynaud, *In the Thick of the Fight,* 139.

[447] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 240.

[448] d'Hoop, Jean-Marie. "La politique française du réarmament: d'après les travaux de la commission d'enquête parlementaire." *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.* 4ième Année 14 (1954): 1-26. Print. 13.

[449] Asselain, "Une erreur de politique économique," 691-692.

[450] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1931-1939,* 334.

[451] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 455.

[452] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 150.

[453] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 247.

[454] Garraud, Philippe. "L'ombre portée de 1914-1918 dans les années 1930: La définition d'une conception différente de la guerre." *Vingtième Siècle, Revue d'histoire* 104 (2009): 17-27. Print. 25.

[455] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 381.

[456] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 384.

[457] Anderson, *Conservative Politics,* 65.

[458] Jackson, Peter. "Recent Journeys Along the Road Back to France, 1940." *The Historical Journal* 39.2 (1996): 497-510. Print. 505.

[459] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 458-460. The left-wing parties were not the only ones to oppose the decree-laws of November 1938. Certain elements of the conservative parties found the tax increases in particular to be repugnant because they were perceived as stifling growth. Flandin was quite vocal concerning this issue on behalf of the *Alliance démocratique's* constituency of small- and medium-sized businesses, although he approved of the overall thrust of the decree-laws, especially the rollback of the forty-hour workweek. Sanson, "La perception de la puissance," 662-663.

[460] Martin, *France in 1938,* 207-208.

[461] Rogliano, Marie-France. "L'anticommunisme dans la CGT: 'Syndicats'." *Le mouvement social* 87 (1974): 63-84. Print. 68, 76.

[462] Bourdé, Guy. "La grève du 30 novembre 1938." *Le mouvement social* 55 (1966): 87-91. Print. 88. For public consumption, Jouhaux declared that Reynaud's rollback of the forty-hour workweek was aimed "much more at the restoration of the employer's authority than at any economic restoration." Werth, *France and Munich,* 368.

[463] Bourdé, "La grève," 89.

[464] Rogliano, "L'anticommunisme dans la CGT," 77.

[465] The occupation of the Renault factory in November 1938 coincided with a visit to Paris by Neville Chamberlain and was justified by a portion of the CGT as an anti-Munich movement. Vinen, *The politics of French business,* 81.

[466] Brower, *The New Jacobins,* 214. By the time of the full takeover of Czechoslovakia by Germany in March 1939, the CGT voted a no-strike pledge on the grounds of preparing France's national defense. May, *Strange Victory,* 191.

[467] Bourdé, "La grève," 91.

[468] Vinen, *The politics of French business,* 82.

[469] Fridenson, Patrick. "Le patronat français." *La France et le Français, 1938 en 1939*. Ed. René Remond and Janine Bourdin. Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Polytechniques, 1978. 139-154. Print. 146, 143.

[470] Fridenson, "Le patronat français," 139-141.

[471] Fridenson, "Le patronat français," 139, 150-152.

[472] Vinen, *The politics of French business,* 218-219.

[473] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1931-1939,* 344. In the second volume of his economic history of inter-war France, Sauvy remarked, "Between the two wars, Paul Reynaud was right on every point without exception." Ibid. 472. It should be noted that Sauvy was referring to economic questions and not political dealings.

[474] Caron, *An Economic History,* 266.

[475] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud*, 496, quoting the British newspaper "Financial News" in August 1939.

[476] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1931-1939,* 335-342. Also Caron, *An Economic History,* 266.

[477] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1931-1939,* 332.

[478] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 374.

[479] *Dirigiste* is understood as describing a policy that involves direct governmental decision making regarding the economy, as opposed to allowing market forces to allocate resources. For those criticizing Reynaud for being insufficiently *dirigiste*, see for example: Imlay, Talbot C. "Paul Reynaud and

France's Response to Nazi Germany, 1938-1940." *French Historical Studies* 26.3 (2003): 497-538. Print; Imlay, "Democracy and War" (in which France's performance is unfavorably compared to Great Britain's); Jackson, "Recent Journeys" (discussing Vinen, *The politics of French business*); Ehrmann, Henry W. "The Trade Union Movement in the Framework of French War Economy, 1939-1940." *The Journal of Politics* 6.3 (1944): 263-293. Print. Reynaud noted that at the time of the implementation of the decree-laws the newspaper *Le Figaro* criticized him for being too *dirigiste*, while another paper, *L'Oeuvre*, complained that Reynaud was too liberal. Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II, 243.* Thellier describes the decree-laws of November 1938 as having "two faces," one liberal and the other *étatique.* Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 444.

[480] There are certain internal contradictions in the analysis of historians who believe that France should have brought a *dirigiste* approach to bear on preparing for war. One tool in such an approach would inevitably be the requisitioning of labor, which workers "regarded . . . as a device for abolishing the elementary rights of a free labor movement." Ehrmann, "The Trade Union Movement," 267. Requisitioning, whether of capital or labor, ran the risk of creating counter-productive resentments and consequent slowdowns in the war effort.

[481] Imlay, "Paul Reynaud," 507. There is a parallel between this line of economic thinking and the argument, as criticized by Kirchheimer in "Decree Powers," for the delegation of power via *pleins pouvoirs* by the legislature to the Council of Ministers, which was that democracies are at a disadvantage, whether in the economic or political realms, when competing with the unrestrained, centralized power of totalitarian states like Nazi Germany. In March 1938 Daladier expressed the view that "it is no longer possible to remain within . . . liberal formulas [.] France must resolutely embark on the path taken earlier by Germany and Italy." Imlay, "Democracy and War," 21.

[482] Imlay, "Democracy and War," 11. In return for support of the rearmament effort, the CGT demanded an alliance with the Soviet Union and the adoption of "planning measures." Ibid. 12.

[483] d'Hoop, Jean-Marie. "La politique française du réarmament," 7. "The situation was so bad that the army's field maneuvers for 1935 had been cancelled due to equipment shortages and lack of funds." Jackson, "Recent Journeys," 501.

[484] Frankenstein, "À propos des aspects financiers," 11.

[485] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 483.

[486] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 494.

[487] Frankenstein, "À propos des aspects financiers," 3.

[488] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 257.

[489] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 490. Thellier notes that Blum became concerned at this time about the demands on the working class and wondered whether Reynaud recognized the need for social cohesion in preparing for war. Ibid. Contention remains around the question whether the "crushing of the labor movement" by the Daladier government might have undermined "national unity" and have functioned "as a prelude to defeat and the authoritarianism of Vichy." Jackson, "Recent Journeys," 507.

[490] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 468.

[491] d'Hoop, "La politique française du réarmament," 7-8.

[492] Frankenstein, "À propos des aspects financiers," 19.

[493] d'Hoop, "La politique française du rearmament," 4, 8.

[494] E.g., Nord, *France 1940*, in which the author asserts that France in 1940 possessed a material readiness that was close to Germany's, in addition to a redoubtable ally in Great Britain, access to American arms, sound finances, and skillful and well-meaning parliamentarians. 56-57. Also d'Hoop, "La politique française du réarmament," in which both Daladier and Blum are quoted to the effect that the rearmament program scheduled to be completed by the end of 1940 had been virtually accomplished by the time France was invaded by Germany, which was six months in advance of schedule. 18-19; Frankenstein, "À propos des aspects financiers" in which French military capabilities are characterized as having been "far from negligible." 1. D'Hoop also notes that the effort to produce tanks was largely successful, although there was a shortage of heavy tanks, and the units that did exist were not well organized, lacking refueling and repair logistics and effective radio transmitters. d'Hoop, "La politique française du réarmament," 20. Marc Bloch made the same observations, based on his experience on the battlefield in May-June 1940. Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite,* 79-80.

[495] d'Hoop, "La politique française du réarmament," 9-10. A contrary view is presented by Imlay: "There is no doubt that the chaotic state of resource allocation had a negative impact on war production," although Imlay admits that "its precise effect is impossible to gauge, since production levels depended on a host of long-term and short-term as well as local, regional, and national factors." Imlay, "Democracy and War," 28.

[496] Sauvy, *Histoire économique, 1931-1939,* 344-345.

[497] Jackson, "Recent Journeys," 498, 506.

[498] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 291. Reynaud quoted German General Alfred Jodl during the Nuremberg trials: "In 1939 a catastrophe was avoided only because 110 British and French divisions did not take action against our 25 divisions in the west." Ibid. One recent historian has agreed, citing this failure as indicative of the defensive thinking of French military commanders. Nord, *France 1940,* 78. Another historian has asserted that the *Wehrmacht* was not prepared for war in 1939, which by Hitler's own timetable was four years earlier than the desirable outbreak of war. In 1939, even within *Panzar* divisions, two-thirds of tanks were designed for training only. van Creveld, *Fighting Power,* 4-5.

[499] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 510-513.

[500] JO. 1940 No. 29. 23 mars 1940. Séance du 22 mars 1940: 595-618. Print. 596 (*interpellation* of Lucien Galimand): "The speed with which [Monsieur Reynaud] has formed his government could cause certain cynical observers, among whom I do not wish to be counted, to think that he had formed his cabinet before Daladier's cabinet resigned." Galimand went on to state that the Reynaud government's reliance on socialist support would make of it a "cocktail of the *Marseillaise* and the *Internationale.*" Ibid. 597.

[501] JO. 1940 No. 29. 23 mars 1940. Séance du 22 mars 1940, 606 (*interpellation* of René Dommange).

[502] JO. 1940 No. 29. 23 mars 1940. Séance du 22 mars 1940, 599.

[503] JO. 1940 No. 29. 23 mars 1940. Séance du 22 mars 1940, 602-603.

[504] Weber, *The Hollow Years,* 270.

[505] Reynaud, who kept careful notes about such things, reported in his memoir that 80 out 116 Radical deputies either voted against his government or abstained, while 36 out of 43 deputies of the *Alliance démocratique* did the same. Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 309 note. The PCF had been disbanded

in the aftermath of the German-Soviet non-agression pact of August 1939 and the declaration by France of war against Germany in September 1939. Reynaud's reliance on socialist support caused the extreme right-wing newspaper *Je suis partout* to characterize Reynaud as "a protectorate of Léon Blum." Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 535. The SFIO was itself divided between the pacifist faction represented by Paul Faure and the resistant faction represented by Blum, further weakening Reynaud. Imlay, "Paul Reynaud," 524-525.

[506] Nord, *France 1940,* 117. In a conversation with Weygand, Baudouin said, "The moral force of this country has been reduced to ruins . . . What we need is a thorough-going labor of reconstruction." Ibid.

[507] Duroselle, *France and the Nazi Threat,* 307.

[508] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 525-527, 541.

[509] Shlaim, Avi. "Prelude to Downfall: The British Offer of Union to France, June 1940." *Journal of Contemporary History* 9.3 (1974): 27-63. Print. 32.

[510] Imlay, "Paul Reynaud," 529.

[511] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 325-328.

[512] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 562.

[513] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 323.

[514] Nord, *France 1940,* 113-114. Pétain was famously the hero of Verdun, a battle that was won at the cost of an exorbitant number of French soldiers' lives. Weygand was a deputy of Marshal Ferdinand Foch, the leader of French forces during the later, victorious phase of World War I. Weygand notably did not serve as a front-line commander during the First World War; his reputation seemed to have flourished in Foch's reflected glory.

[515] Nord, *France 1940,* 114.

[516] Warner, *Pierre Laval,* 159, 162-163. Warner is careful to note that "[i]n the light of available evidence, it is impossible to say with certainty" the degree to which Laval was involved in the "machinations" to undermine Reynaud's government. Ibid. 162. Another historian has tended to credit Laval's machinations, although the evidence cited is largely Reynaud's own memoir; this historian cites clear evidence of Pétain's manueverings. Szaluta, "Marshal Pétain's Ambassadorship," 522-523.

[517] Nord, *France 1940,* 137, 117.

[518] Reynaud's desperation was reflected in the calls and messages he sent in June, often on a daily basis, to Churchill and Roosevelt pleading for military and diplomatic support. Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 393-411.

[519] Nord, *France 1940,* 116, 104. There has been some historical speculation concerning the influence on Reynaud at this point in his career of his mistress, Hélène de Portes, who was the daughter of a wealthy Marseille ship-builder and was introduced to Reynaud by André Tardieu. De Portes was well known for her right-wing views, hated de Gaulle, and supposedly urged Reynaud to appoint individuals like Baudouin, Prouvost and Bouthillier. Thellier attributes to General Edward Spears, Churchill's personal representative in France during the German invasion, stories about Reynaud as being subject to the "insidious influence" of his mistress, a view of de Portes shared by the American ambassador to France, William Bullitt. Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 545. Reynaud does not mention de Portes in his memoir,

and Thellier does not express a definitive view about de Portes' role in Reynaud's political life. About de Portes' "insidious influence," one historian has commented: "This is a stereotypical image: when a woman gets involved in politics, misfortune follows." Gaspard, Françoise. "Les femmes dans les relations internationales." *Politique etrangère* 65.3/4 (1999-2000): 731-741. Print. 733. Shortly after Reynaud resigned as premier in June 1940, an automobile driven by Reynaud in which de Portes was a passenger ran into a tree in southern France, killing de Portes and injuring Reynaud.

[520] Shlaim, "Prelude to Downfall," 34.

[521] Shlaim, "Prelude to Downfall," 37. Weygand's false reports of communist takeover were firmly refuted by Mandel after a phone call to the prefect of Paris confirmed that no such event was taking place.

[522] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 646.

[523] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 648.

[524] Nord, *France 1940,* 126.

[525] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 418.

[526] Nord, *France 1940,* 121.

[527] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 418.

[528] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 418.

[529] Nord, *France 1940,* 126-127.

[530] de Gaulle, Charles. "Appel du 18 juin 1940." Texte et circonstances. *Charles-de-Gaulle.org.* Fondation Charles de Gaulle, n.d. Web. 17 August 2015.

[531] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 662. It was not a small point that de Gaulle issued his call as "I, General de Gaulle." de Gaulle, "Appel du 18 juin 1940."

[532] Shlaim, "Prelude to Downfall," 41.

[533] Reynaud claimed in his memoir that Lebrun pressured him to put the Chautemps proposal before his cabinet. Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 433.

[534] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 424.

[535] Plate captioned "Ont pris la parole, le 15 juin sur la proposition Chautemps," following page 366 of Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*.

[536] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 656. During their years of imprisonment together after the fall of France, Mandel once said to Reynaud, "You didn't hold firm when you were head of the government." Reynaud responded, "You're being hard on me, my friend." Ibid. 694.

[537] Shlaim, "Prelude to Downfall," 55. Shlaim argues that the "testimony of the participants and the conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry of 1946 leave little room for doubt that there existed in fact a majority against the armistice." Ibid.

[538] Shlaim, "Prelude to Downfall," 43.

[539] Shlaim, "Prelude to Downfall," 50.

[540] Shlaim, "Prelude to Downfall," 48. Shlaim comments, "There was something ironical about these two patriotic statesmen, the symbols of independence and nationalism, agreeing to this scheme of supranational integration." Ibid.

[541] Reynaud, *In the Thick of the Fight,* 538.

[542] Shlaim, "Prelude to Downfall," 53.

[543] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 430.

[544] Shlaim, "Prelude to Downfall," 57.

[545] In the later words of Marin, "One continues to wonder by what mystery and what aberration . . . the premier [who was] hostile to armistice, after having consulted the presidents of the Senate and of the Chamber of Deputies, called upon a man whose first move would be a request for armistice." Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 639.

[546] Shlaim, "Prelude to Downfall," 60-61.

[547] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 432.

[548] Nord, *France 1940,* 130-131.

[549] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II*, 437.

[550] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud, 691.*

[551] Reynaud, *In the Thick of the Fight,* 652.

[552] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 473.

[553] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome I,* 484.

[554] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 814-815.

[555] Shlaim, "Prelude to Downfall," 60.

[556] Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite,* 195.

[557] "[France] can . . . utlitize without limit the immense industrial force of the United States." "Struck down today by a mechanized force, we will be victorious in the future due to a superior mechanized force." "France is not alone! She is not alone! She is not alone! She can stand together with the British empire, which still rules the sea and is continuing the fight." de Gaulle, *Appel du 18 juin 1940*.

[558] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 697.

[559] Reynaud, *Mémoires, Tome II,* 455.

[560] Thellier, *Paul Reynaud,* 642.

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Chronology

N.B. The numeration of the governments of Poincaré, Chautemps and Doumergue does not take into account earlier governments in which these individuals were premier but that are not relevant to this chronology.

October 15, 1878 – Reynaud's birth in Barcelonnette (*Basses-Alpes*), France

August 1914 – November 1918 – First World War

January 1919 – Paris peace conference begins, culminating in Treaty of Versailles
November 1919 – Reynaud elected to Chamber of Deputies from the *Basses-Alpes*

December 1920 – Congress of Tours, split of French socialist movement into PCF and SFIO

January 1922 (to June 1924) – Poincaré governments II and III
October 1922 – Mussolini takes power in Italy

January 1923 – occupation of Ruhr by French army
January – November 1923 – hyperinflation in Weimar Germany

January 1924 – death of Lenin, beginning of consolidation of power by Stalin
May 1924 – Reynaud defeated in election in *Basses-Alpes* for Chamber of Deputies
May 1924 – victory of left-wing *Cartel des gauches*

March 1926 – Reynaud and Kérillis defeated by communist slate in Paris by-election
July 1926 (to July 1929) – Poincaré governments IV and V (Poincaré also Minister of Finance)
October 1925 – treaty of mutual assistance between France and Czechoslovakia

May 1928 – Reynaud elected to Chamber of Deputies from Paris

October 1929 – beginning of Great Depression
November 1929 (to February 1930) – Tardieu government I

March 1930 (to December 1930) – Tardieu government II (Reynaud Minister of Finance)

January 1931 (to February 1932) – Laval government I (Reynaud Minister of Colonies)

February 1932 (to May 1932) – Tardieu government III (Reynaud Minister of Justice)
May 1932 – Reynaud re-elected to Chamber of Deputies from Paris

January 1933 – Hitler becomes German Chancellor

January 1933 (to October 1933) – Daladier government I (Paul-Boncour Minister of Foreign Affairs)
October 1933 – German withdrawal from League of Nations
October 1933 (to November 1933) – Sarraut government I (Paul-Boncour Minister of Foreign Affairs)
November 1933 (to January 1934) – Chautemps government II (Paul-Boncour Minister of Foreign Affairs)

January 1934 (to February 1934) – Daladier government II (Paul-Boncour Minister of Foreign Affairs)
February 1934 – right-wing riot in the Place de la Concorde of Paris
February 1934 (to November 1934) – Doumergue government II (Barthou to October 1934, then Laval, Ministers of Foreign Affairs; Germain-Martin Minister of Finance)
June 1934 – Reynaud speech in Chamber of Deputies urging devaluation
September 1934 – Soviet Union becomes member of League of Nations
November 1934 (to May 1935) – Flandin government (Laval Minister of Foreign Affairs)
December 1934 – preliminary agreement on Franco-Soviet treaty of mutual assistance

March 1935 – Reynaud speech in Chamber of Deputies urging creation of armored corps
April 1935 – Stresa conference among Great Britain, France and Italy guaranteeing territorial integrity of Austria
May 1935 (to January 1936) – Laval government II (Laval also Minister of Foreign Affairs)
October 1935 – Italy invades Ethiopia
December 1935 – Hoare-Laval pact on partition of Ethiopia
December 1935 – Reynaud speech in Chamber of Deputies criticizing Laval's Italian policy

January 1936 (to June 1936) – Sarraut government II (Flandin Minister of Foreign Affairs)
February 1936 – Chamber of Deputies approves Franco-Soviet treaty of mutual assistance
March 1936 – German reoccupation of the Rhineland
April-May 1936 – general elections in France and victory of Popular Front
May 1936 – Reynaud re-elected to Chamber of Deputies from Paris
June 1936 (to June 1937) – Blum government I (Delbos Minister of Foreign Affairs; Auriol Minister of Finance)
June 1936 – Matignon agreements granting French workers pay increases, paid vacations and forty-hour workweek
July 1936 – outbreak of Spanish Civil War

February 1937 – "pause" in Popular Front social and economic reforms
May 1937 – Neville Chamberlain becomes British prime minister

June 1937 (to January 1938) – Chautemps government III (Delbos Minister of Foreign Affairs)

January 1938 (to March 1938) – Chautemps government IV (Delbos Minister of Foreign Affairs)
March 1938 – Austrian unification with Germany in the *Anschluss*
March 1938 (to April 1938) – Blum government II (Paul-Boncour Minister of Foreign Affairs)
April 1938 (to March 1940) – Daladier government III (Reynaud Minister of Justice to November 1938, then Minister of Finance to March 1940; Bonnet Minister of Foreign Affairs to September 1939)
September 1938 – meeting among Germany, Italy, Great Britain and France concluding Munich treaty and cession of Sudetenland to Germany
October 1938 – Flandin telegram of congratulations to Hitler
November 1938 – Reynaud decree-laws rolling back Popular Front social reforms
November 1938 – wave of strikes against Reynaud decree-laws, failure of general strike

March 1939 – Germany establishes protectorate over remaining portions of Czechoslovakia
March 1939 – Franco's troops enter Madrid, ending Spanish Civil War
May 1939 – German-Italian alliance is signed
August 1939 – German-Soviet non-aggression pact is signed
September 1939 – Germany invades Poland; Great Britain and France declare state of war with Germany

March 1940 (to June 1940) – Reynaud government (Reynaud also Minister of Foreign Affairs, then also Minister of National Defense)
April 1940 – Franco-British expedition to blockade Narvik, Norway
May 1940 – Churchill becomes British prime minister
May 10, 1940 – Germany invades France
June 16, 1940 – Reynaud resigns as premier, Pétain assumes power
June 18, 1940 – de Gaulle issues *Appel du 18 juin 1940*

Glossary

Action française – French counter-revolutionary movement headed by Charles Maurras, in which Léon Daudet was a polemicist

Alliance démocratique – center-right party headed by Pierre-Étienne Flandin, in which Paul Reynaud was a leading figure

Anschluss – unification of Austria with Germany in March 1938

Bloc national – conservative political grouping of early 1920s

Cartel des gauches – leftist political grouping of 1920s

CGPF – *Confédération générale du patronat français*, the organization of French employers

CGT – *Confédération générale du travail*, the principal trade union in France in the 1930s

Comintern – Communist International, the association of world communist parties under the leadership of the Soviet Union

Comité des Forges – the employer organization for steel-makers and technical industries

Deuxième Bureau – intelligence service attached to French armed forces

Fédération républicaine – center-right Catholic party headed by Louis Marin

HEC – *École des hautes études commerciales*, French business school

Internationale – anthem of the international socialist movement

Interpellation – posing of questions to the government in the Chamber of Deputies

Journal officiel – authoritative record of proceedings of the French parliament

Lévée en masse – popular mobilization for defense of France, dating from French Revolution

Parti radical – centrist political party variably allied with leftist and conservative governments in the inter-war era

PCF – *Parti communiste français*, the French communist party

SFIO – *Section française de l'internationale ouvrière*, the French socialist party