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Democratic crisis of 1934 in France.

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Dissertation

DEMOCRATIC CRISIS OF 1934 IN FRANCE

by

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PREFACE

(Abstract)

What was the significance of February Six, 1934 in French history? The answer to this question has never been adequately provided by an American scholar in the field, although the French and the English historians have devoted several monographs to the subject. The present study is an attempt to bridge this gap. Beyond the inquiry into the events that brought on the Sixth of February and their impact on French civilization, this study aims at an analysis of the governments set up by the Cartel des Gauches from 1932 through 1934, of the Stavisky Affair, and of the riots of January and February, 1934.

The source material extant in the United States proved to be inadequate, and it became imperative for the author to do much of his research in France. Of the many available records that were scrutinized, the most valuable were the Chamber of Deputies' debates, annexes, and documents. The newspaper and periodical archives of Paris, the varied resources of the Bibliothèque Nationale, and the records of the French police also were useful.

The majority of the French and English historians who have attempted an interpretation of the Sixth of February, 1934, have seen in these dramatic events an attempted fascist coup d'état. This interpretation was adopted by most American authorities interested in French internal affairs, who appear to have followed the line of argu-

mentation presented in the books of Alexander Werth, Which Way France? and France in Ferment. The fascist coup d'état theory was based primarily on three assumptions: (1) France had a strong fascist minority in Paris by January, 1934; (2) a political league named the Croix de Feu under the masterful leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel François de La Rocque dominated the rioters on the evening of February Six; and (3) the Daladier Government then in power successfully checked a fascist coup d'état through decisive action.

The primary sources revealed that the fascist interpretation was extremely inaccurate. Even though, in fact, the Third Republic was faced on that day by one of the most serious threats to French democracy in its annals, the historical records show that France had no strong fascist minority in Paris by January, 1934, that the Croix de Feu was only one of many political leagues active on February Six, that the largest and the dominating political league on February Six was the non-fascist Union Nationale des Combattants (U.N.C.), and that the theory of an alleged fascist coup d'état was the interpretation propagated by the French Socialist Party and Premier Daladier.

February Six was the climax of a democratic crisis which had begun as early as the elections of 1932. During the "chronic phase," the democratic structure of France was criticized by men who kept their arguments on a high intellectual plane. These criticisms by themselves were not potent enough to bring about the overthrow of French democracy, for many of these had been under discussion for years in intellectual circles. This "chronic phase," therefore, was one of

increased intellectual exercise against the weaknesses of French political democracy and involved such prosaic matters as the interpellations, the parliamentary questions, the ministerial instability, the parliamentary committee system, the multiparty system, the value of a limited suffrage, and the disappointing results of the elections of 1932. Especially vigorous was André Tardieu, a Rightist deputy and a former premier, who felt that French democracy was too brittle to hold up before the international dangers that came with the collapse of collective security.

In 1933 the Great Depression struck France and the democratic crisis entered its "acute phase." As unemployment figures increased, as the farmers found the markets closed, and as the Government seemed unable to keep its Treasury in good order, the "capitalist offensive" began. This offensive, led by outstanding big businessmen, distinguished itself by the viciousness with which French parliamentary institutions were attacked. The royalist press, seeing the opportunity to re-establish the monarchy, released a devastating series of articles against French democracy. Moreover, the French became apprehensive over the threat to sécurité made by Nazi Germany and also joined the royalists and capitalists in blaming the Cartel for the country's troubles. This antiparliamentary attitude gradually became overshadowed by a general atmosphere of antipathy ~~for~~ things as they were. This repugnance became associated with anyone working for the Third Republic.

When the Stavisky Affair exploded over France on December 23, 1933, the democratic crisis entered the "violent phase." Alexandre Stavisky

was a naturalized Jew who had built up a criminal career as early as 1909. By 1926 Stavisky was finally imprisoned but soon he was "provisionally released" to receive medical treatment. From 1927 to 1934 Stavisky made good use of shysters, questionable medical authorities, police connections, and bribed parliamentarians to secure nineteen postponements of his case. During this period he swindled 500 million francs from the Orléans and Bayonne Municipal Pawnshops. In January, 1934, when these facts were publicly revealed, it was also announced that Stavisky had committed "suicide" in a villa somewhere in the Alps.

The French public, agitated by the French press, now began demanding the names of those responsible for the Stavisky Scandals. Thousands of Frenchmen, led by the political royalist league, joined actively the antidemocratic forces when the names of the French judges, deputy-lawyers, police, and Cabinet members implicated with Stavisky were revealed in January, 1934. On January 7 the royalist league, the Action Française, gave the first "call to action" which was answered by nine serious January Riots in Paris. The Chautemps Cabinet was forced to resign by the "forces in the street."

Édouard Daladier became Premier. His mishandling of the Chiappe Affair (the dismissal of the popular Prefect of Police) and other administrative changes brought the opponents of French democracy back on the streets. This time the crowd was noticeably much more numerous and aggressive.

This "violent phase" reached its climax on the evening of February 6, 1934. All the major political leagues had called out their adherents to

demonstrate against the Government and to seize the Palais-Bourbon-- the symbol of French parliamentary life. During a tumultuous Chamber sitting, a vast mob invaded the Place de la Concorde. By night time this crowd had become dominated by political leaguers who tried to seize the Concorde Bridge on their way to the Palais-Bourbon. A cordon of police kept the rioters in check. Early in the evening the Municipal Councillors in Paris actually entered the Palais-Bourbon, but they failed to convince Daladier that he should resign. By 7:30 P.M. the police opened fire on the Concorde crowd to prevent the enraged political leaguers from seizing the barricaded Concorde Bridge. Throughout the night two leagues were especially violent in their assaults against the police; namely, the Rightist organization called the Solidarité Française and the large veteran group of the U.N.C. The much-discussed Croix de Feu was disorganized; it paraded up and down the streets near the Chamber; and it later took credit for leading the leaguers that evening. The Great February Six Riot ended after several serious attempts to seize the Concorde Bridge had failed and after 4,000 people had been wounded or killed.

The "men on the streets" on February Six had no clear and coherent program to follow; they had lost faith in democracy; in their government leaders, and in themselves. Their long, pent-up emotions broke out into full expression during the Great February Riot, and the result was an unusual amount of blood spilt needlessly. Almost as soon as the riot was over, the rioters realized what a threat to their democracy the event had been and this fact led the leaguers to be ashamed

of their conduct and to blame the fascists for their misbehavior. This change in attitude brought an end to the "violent phase" of the democratic crisis.

A bit horrified of what they might have done to their democracy if circumstances had taken only a slightly different turn, the rioters wanted to make amends. Except for a few die-hards, all of France now entered the "recuperative phase" of the crisis. This period saw a whole day of repentance given to "pledging oneself to the ideas of liberty and French democracy." The French Communists tried unsuccessfully on February Ninth to change this return-to-democracy movement. On February 12, 1934, France celebrated its return to the democratic faith by staging a Great General Strike.

Thus February Six was a real antidemocratic crisis for on that day a mob of 100,000, united by a desire to overthrow the Third Republic, made three major unsuccessful assaults against the police cordon guarding the Palais-Bourbon. Earlier this mob had been organized into numerous antiparliamentary political leagues which declared themselves "against those who rule." These leagues, forgoing the use of the peaceful means provided by democracy, accepted the reliance on force to bring about the removal of the Daladier Cabinet--the executive power selected only a few days previously. Even many of the country's duly elected deputies, during a very tumultuous Chamber sitting, and the Municipal Councillors of Paris assisted the leaguers on the Sixth of February in this serious attempt to overthrow French democracy. Only the poor coordination among the leagues, the lack of strong leaders

on the rioters' side, the determined and loyal police guarding the approaches to the Chamber, and the use of gunfire against the Concorde mob during the Great February Riot saved the Third Republic from falling on that historic day.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Elections of 1932

Background.-- After World War I, it would appear to a superficial observer that France, from a governmental viewpoint, could be classified as a strong democracy. Yet there were doubts to be encountered if one took the time to probe deeper. There was a cancer slowly eating towards the vitals of la belle France. This malady had many ramifications, but it remained subacute as cabinet after cabinet was replaced in the early 1920's. The parliamentary side of French democracy was especially revealing. During the years 1926 to 1929 under the decided control of Raymond Poincaré, the parliamentary democracy could be seen slowly dying. But, true to the remarkable French ability to surprise its most acute observers, French democracy in the early thirties seemed to have resisted malignancy in its structure. In this atmosphere, we approach the elections of May, 1932.

Results of the elections of 1932.-- The elections of 1932 had, as was usual in the French post-World War I politics, returned a Left majority. The Radical-Socialist Party emerged as the largest single party having captured 26 per cent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies. The Right had gathered five seats for the Conservative Party, seventy-six seats for the U.R.D. (Republican-Democrats), twenty-eight seats for the Independent Republicans, and sixteen seats for the

Popular Democrats--a total of 125 Rightists. The Center shared 134 seats about equally between the Left Republicans and the Independent Radicals, while the Radical-Socialists and the Socialists took 323 seats in the Chamber. This left some twenty-three seats for the Extreme Left--twelve going to the Communists.¹

A deeper analysis of the election returns brings out the fact that 303 votes out of 605 were needed for a majority within the hemicycle--a name used to refer to the room where the deputies met when in official session. With this point in mind, it will be noted that the Radical-Socialists, alone, could never muster a majority vote. This could only be done if they could count the Socialists on their side. Events were to show that a Socialist-Radical coalition in the 1932 Chamber never became a reality.

Importance of the Socialist Party.-- The Radical-Socialists had won a victory in 1932 only because the Socialists and their party had united their forces during the campaign. Taking advantage of the requirement that a second poll must be held whenever no candidate received 50 per cent of the votes cast, the Radical-Socialists and the Socialists had agreed to pool their votes on the second ballot. Thus was the Right defeated. Almost as soon as the balloting was completed, the rupture between the two erstwhile allies occurred. The division was basically a deep one, as we shall see.²

¹Alexander Werth, France in Ferment (London, 1935), pp. 64-65; also Le Temps, July 14, 1932.

²Alexander Werth, Which Way France? (London, 1937), p. 40.

The Socialists had met at the Salle Huyghens on May 28, 1932, and in the "spirit of 1789" had drawn up a minimum government program called the Cahiers Huyghens, which they offered as the solution to France's ills. It was an ambitious list of proposals which included a reduction of French military expenditures to the 1928 level, the forty-hour week without decrease in wages, unemployment insurance, nationalization of railroads and insurance companies, and control of French banking. The Socialists especially emphasized disarmament and military budget cuts.³

The focus of attention was Édouard Herriot at this point. He was the Radical-Socialist leader, and he was assigned the task of deciding whether he could accept the Socialists' proposals. The stakes were high for they involved future Socialist-Radical cooperation, the possibility of giving France a stable government, and the feasibility of introducing "socialist and untried measures" into the French democratic structure. Herriot, the Premier-elect, was a conservative on the issues mentioned in the Cahiers Huyghens. The Socialists' demands, especially those on disarming unilaterally to the 1928 level, were distasteful to him. In consequence, soon after the elections of 1932, the breach was reached.⁴ There was to be no alliance between the Radical-Socialists and the Socialists in the Chamber!

A glance at the four cabinets which succeeded one another from May, 1932, to January, 1934, shows that none of them was able to hold

³Werth, Which Way, p. 40.

⁴L'Europe Nouvelle, June 11, 1932.

together a majority. This was mainly because, on the personal level, Herriot's views were incompatible with those of Léon Blum, leader of the Socialists, who with 21 per cent of the seats constituted the next largest group in the Chamber.

The Radical-Socialist Party theoretically stood committed to a social reform program, but, in reality, its political maneuvers after World War I proved that it was hostile to socialistic measures. The Radical-Socialists, therefore, being unable to agree with the Socialists on the political plane, resorted to the formation of a loosely-knit Cabinet in 1932 under Édouard Herriot. The new Premier refused to consider a union with the Center parties because he felt that such a move would alienate too much support on the Left.⁵

It became obvious that the Radical-Socialist leaders would have to spend much energy in trying to consolidate antagonistic political elements. In the next few years, they were forever trying to satisfy the contradictory forces on both the Right and the Left as well as within their own party. The latter point should not be overlooked. The Left-Wing of the Radical-Socialist Party included many young men of the type like Pierre Cot and Gaston Bergery who felt that Herriot was too slow.⁶ These many political vectors resulted in the impossibility of bringing about a consistent government policy. It created a "weak Left" which became known as the Cartel des Gauches.

⁵John C. DeWilde, "Political Ferment in France," Foreign Policy Reports, X (July 18, 1934), 123.

⁶Werth, Which Way, pp. 41-42.

The Social Atmosphere and Foreign Affairs

Monarchy versus parliamentary rule.-- The French political philosophies, as they existed in 1932, could be said to revolve around the two poles of "monarchism" and parliamentary rule. Now the term "monarchism" not only connotes the return of a monarch, but also of a government ruled by monarchical principles. As to what these principles were in France in the period after World War I, there existed but nebulous agreements. Since the early days of the Third Republic, "monarchism" had been the main contending idea used to oppose the Republic; but by 1919 and throughout the twenties, it became considerably weak.⁷

In the twenties such proroyalists as Charles Maurras and Léon Daudet decided to bring renewed vigor to the "royalist movement" in France. Both men desired to channel their efforts so as to make "monarchism" again the leading challenge for French democracy. There was no doubt that Maurras was a brilliant writer and could be successful in any propaganda campaign he undertook. He detested democracy, and he gave vent to his feelings on this matter--as well as on many others--in the royalist newspaper organ, L'Action Française. Léon Daudet, working with Maurras, was then the foremost user of invectives in France. Both men had employed their remarkable intellectual talents in writing a series of books dealing with the philosophical sides of monarchy.⁸

⁷ Werth, Which Way, pp. 8-9.

⁸ Lowell Joseph Ragatz, Background of the February Riots in Paris (London, 1934), pp. 3-5.

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of Maurras and Daudet when considering the royalist cause in post-World War I France. For a while they were the mainspring of the movement. In 1924, a little more flesh and blood was added when Maurras and Daudet began a propaganda campaign for the "King"--Jean, Duke of Guise. The Duke's very existence had been unknown to most Frenchmen before then. In 1926, a coronation was arranged. Soon Maurras and Daudet were making the happenings in the new court in Palermo, Sicily, "top news." Their majesties, "King Jean III" and "Queen Isabelle" became the subject of daily comment throughout France. Henri of Orléans became the "Dauphin." The marriage of the latter to Isabelle, Princess of Orléans-Braganza was celebrated widely in the royal circles in France.⁹

Besides the creation of a "royal house" in exile, Maurras and Daudet brought further attention to the royal cause by the publicity they received. Maurras, for instance, was arrested for the illegal possession of arms. Maurras did not praise the "democratic arresting officials" when the dangerous weapons turned out to be rusty dueling pistols. The event made him a national hero for a while. Again, in 1926, Maurras made the headlines, for he had threatened the life of the Minister of the Interior Schrameck. A court of appeal released Maurras of a two-year sentence given for this act. Daudet, on the other hand, had lost his son Philippe in 1925. Much mystery surrounded the latter affair. The story circulated that radicals had incited the

⁹Ragatz, Background, pp. 3-5.

younger Daudet to commit suicide. Daudet charged that he had been slain by enemies of his among the police. Such sensational events involving these two guiding spirits of "monarchism" in France added to their following.¹⁰

To the "royal house" and "colorful personalities" rungs were added more steps in the monarchical ladder by the causes that L'Action Française supported. Maurras and Daudet's newspaper was antisocialist, anticommunist, antisemitic, and antimason. Others, who found France to have been too cautious in the field of policy-making since Versailles, made up the majority of the discordant elements who supported the strongly nationalist views expounded by the monarchists. Especially popular on the royalist bandwagon were the unmerciful attacks made on the members of the Chamber of Deputies.¹¹ Thus the labors of Daudet and Maurras could be considered as revealing the "monarchical principles" of the times.

In spite of what has been said so far, it must be recorded that the royalists in France since World War I were small in numbers.¹² However, among these, were the strongest antidemocratic intellectual forces. With Maurras and Daudet, "monarchism" was not only a royalist movement, it was an attitude of intense opposition to whatever could be labeled French democracy. Serving as a focus for the discontented elements, their constant lashing at the Republic made the royalist

¹⁰ Ragatz, Background, pp. 4-6.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Walter Rice Sharp, Government of the French Republic (New York, 1938), p. 44.

leaders a menace to the Third Republic. By 1932, the "monarchist attitude" was gaining momentum.

The Third Republic was not unaccustomed to such opponents and critics. It bears repetition that French Democracy had had strong monarchical opposition in its early days, but after the Boulanger and Dreyfus Affairs and the anticlericalism of Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes, the Republic had been stabilized. Its prestige, furthermore, had been enhanced by the laurels it received during World War I.

Postwar France more and more connected the Third Republic with parliamentary rule of the Chamber of Deputies. This was considered the center of French democracy, and parliamentary rule was accepted by the overwhelming majority of the French people as the best form of government. The great majority of the Rightists and the Socialists were not antiparliamentarians in 1932, and the average Frenchman took democratic government for granted.¹³

Distrust of the Republic's machinery.-- In this period, two democratic constitutional schools were distinguishable in France. We will label them the "traditional school" and the "radical school." These two groups were to be observed throughout France; they cut right through the bonds of political party make-up. The "traditional school" defended the existing form of government. It was willing to work within the limits of the loi constitutionnelle de 1875. It approved, if not intellectually at least outwardly, by its political activities, the concentration of French political power within the Chamber of Deputies,

¹³ Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 12-13.

and the weakened position of the French executive. Édouard Herriot and Édouard Daladier were outstanding members among those upholding this category in the period under focus. Anyone acquainted with the general history of modern France knows this school too well for us to linger any longer on it.

The spotlight should be turned rather on the "radical school"-- especially as exemplified by M. André Tardieu. Tardieu had been in Clemenceau's "war cabinet," and, in the early 1930's, had been Premier for a short while. During our period of interest, he was to leave Parliament and undertake a crusade for a drastic change in the French Constitution. Tardieu was in many ways a follower of the Clemenceau and Poincaré legend. His departure from the political arena led him, at first, on what appeared to be a one-man campaign whose objective was to point out the decadence of the French political institutions. His experience as a parliamentarian had given him a distaste for the intrigues carried on by the French political parties. He questioned the techniques used in the running of the French government and he felt that the parliamentary system was not so democratic as was supposed.¹⁴

Tardieu was to gather a numerous following who saw in the former premier the symbol for the scepticism which many Frenchmen entertained regarding Parliament. Tardieu pointed to the apathy of the French electorate towards their institutions. The crusading deputy became

¹⁴ Jacques Debu-Bridel, L'Agonie de la troisième république 1929-1939 (Paris, 1948), p. XI.

the powerful voice of experience which warned that the "Revolution had to be reevaluated" to fit the times.¹⁵ Tardieu published his devastating attacks, first in a series of articles printed by the French periodical, L'Illustration. In January, 1934, his thoughts and "program" for reform appeared in an explosive and exceedingly important work entitled: L'Heure de la décision (Hour of Decision).¹⁶

In the introduction to L'Heure de la décision, Tardieu succinctly presented his basic demands as follows:

It involves the restoration in France of a minimum of executive authority, a minimum of parliamentary liberty, a minimum financial order, a minimum of electoral dignity, a minimum of civic morality--the reason why the democracies can so easily become controlled by anonymous dictators or by those using government offices for personal benefit. It is the Hour of Decision! If the régime is allowed to go on as it is now it will not last very long.¹⁷

Tardieu died still fighting for what he believed to be right and best for France. While developing his thesis, not only did Tardieu reveal the corruption and the reasons why, but he offers solutions. He asserted that the body politic reacted unfavorably in shouldering and solving modern problems. He pointed with emphasis to the social lag existing between the bureaucratic institutions of the Third Republic and the tackling of major perplexing questions. As the press and the French people later made use of Tardieu's ideas in our work, they will

¹⁵ Debu-Bridel, L'Agonie de la troisième république, p. 201.

¹⁶ André Tardieu, La révolution à refaire: volume II: la profession parlementaire (Paris, 1937), pp. 192-194.

¹⁷ André Tardieu, L'Heure de la décision (Paris, 1934), pp. VII-VIII.

be developed below.¹⁸

The first parliamentary evil attacked by Tardieu was that of the "interpellation." The "right of interpellation" was given to every French deputy; that is, he has the privilege of asking the government to clarify its position on any issue considered paramount at the moment. Here, Tardieu avers, can be seen in all its evil spectral divisions, how the particular and individual political interests can dominate over the general interests of the Chamber. One deputy's desire can smash the whole government machinery by using the "interpellation," for the premier and the cabinet are required to give replies to the inquisitors.¹⁹

Besides this "holding of the interpellation club over the government's head," in the same breath can be brought out the deputy's use of the "question." "The question" was a parliamentary trick, whereby any deputy could pose any question to the French administration and which was answered orally or in writing. Thus by the "interpellation" and the "question," one man could keep the French executive very busy and could cut its time needed to face some pressing problems. Tardieu presented a revealing and shocking picture when he divulged:

If I am permitted to cite an example that I am well acquainted with, I would recall that, in 1930, I had within thirteen months' time, of which eight months saw the Chamber in session, to be present for 329 sittings, undergo the presentation of 327 interpellations and of sixty-two questions; to debate at the tribunal the acceptance or the refusal of 101 of these; to fight to the finish on 155 others; to speak, at great length, 172 times; to ask for a "vote of confidence" sixty times; to appear

¹⁸Tardieu, Révolution à refaire, pp. 192-194.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 193-194.

fourteen times, during whole afternoons, before committees of the two chambers--all this taking place in a period when I had to negotiate either inside France, or outside France, in La Hague, in London, in Geneva, the problem of world disarmament, the problem of naval limitations, the reparation problems, and those of the defenses for the East and South-east of France.²⁰

Lingering longer on the "interpellation," Tardieu directed attention to the fact that the "interpellation" was used selfishly by "despotic parliamentarians" who hoped to feather their political nests. This unlimited power as used by the deputies, asserted Tardieu, should be determined within certain limits; otherwise, the French executive was weakened to such an extent as to hamper the normal government machinery from operating--and could only result in further cabinet instability.²¹

This very articulate critic then struck at the very essence of French democracy; namely, the electoral system. Tardieu declared that the electoral system in its effectiveness actually represented less than 10 per cent of the French population. He was puzzled by a system under which women were not allowed the suffrage, because they rendered no military service, whereas the soldiers were prevented from voting, because they did give this service. Tardieu explained further that the many political parties, under a multiparty system, often made it impossible for many voters finally to vote for the representatives actually reflecting their political thoughts. Under the "scrutin uninominal," continued the former premier, a candidate needed an absolute

²⁰Tardieu, Révolution à refaire, pp. 194-195.

²¹Tardieu, L'Heure, Ch. V.

majority on the first ballot or a run-off election was held. Many voters thus could not vote for the nominee who best represented them and, Tardieu concluded, the net result was that only about 10 per cent of France were represented in Parliament.²²

Tardieu's remedies to improve the condition of French parliamentary life were: (1) the Government should be allowed to dissolve Parliament without the intervention of the Senate; (2) the people should resolve, through the ballot box, any conflict existing between the executive and legislative branches of the Third Republic; (3) the Chamber of Deputies should lose the right to initiate the French budget (to be discussed below), or to pass "pork barrel legislation"; and (4) the civil servants should be prevented from bringing unjust pressures on the government and the parliamentarians. As a climax to this "minimum program," Tardieu proposed a radical change: the institution of a "national referendum," which would be established so that French citizens could express their opinions on French laws. As a part of the last proposal, the right of woman suffrage was included.²³ It should be noted by the reader that all these suggestions aimed at creating a strong executive power in France.

The diagnosis made by Tardieu of the role of the parliamentarian, and especially the significance of that role, in French democracy made a resounding impact in every French canton. Tardieu typified the critical Frenchman at his best, for he was accustomed to attacking his

²²Tardieu, Révolution à refaire, p. 212.

²³Tardieu, L'Heure, Chs. V-X.

problem directly and with an assured manner. In our period, he headed an intellectual movement which made it a duty to point out the defects in the French democratic machinery. In this crusade, Tardieu himself was an intriguing figure. His voice was a sharp one, his gestures were brief, and after he had expounded his ideas with all their imagery, much discussion was engendered.²⁴

It would be unjust to Tardieu and his followers to consider them enemies of French democracy because of their sharp criticisms of the parliamentary behavior patterns. This "democratic radical school" was constructive in viewpoint and sincerely believed France needed a strong executive and a minimum revision of the constitution. It would be unjust and inaccurate to read into this any suggestion for a fascist type of control.²⁵

It would similarly be unfair not to grant the same reservations to Joseph Barthélemy. In a much milder tone than Tardieu's, this scholar presented materials for the building up of the "radical constitutional school" of thought. Barthélemy had much experience when it came to the internal mechanics within the Chamber of Deputies, for he was for a considerable period a Committee Chairman in that body.²⁶ In the early thirties, he was the leading authority of the French Committee System. His arguments and opinions were to crystallize a

²⁴ Georges Suarez, Les heures héroïques du Cartel (Paris, 1934), p. 133.

²⁵ Some authors believe that this "authoritarianism" has influenced the thinking of Charles de Gaulle in the formation of the Fourth Republic.

²⁶ Joseph Barthélemy, Essai sur le travail parlementaire et le système des commissions (Paris, 1934), Introduction.

certain intellectual core around him in 1933, and the latter, mostly scholars, soon were repeating digested versions to fellow Frenchmen.²⁷

Defined briefly, a parliamentary committee in France under the Third Republic was composed of a definite number of parliamentarians chosen because of some competence in the subject at hand. Its composition reflected the political appearance of the Chamber, and it usually ended the question before it, by presenting a rapport to the Chamber. This rapport was usually written by one of the committee's youngest members (the rapporteur) to help him make a name for himself. The committee, in principle, could make no final decisions; it could only prepare the systematic analysis of a problem. Technically speaking, the committee's role was only to prepare the decision for the Chamber on a particular issue; the Chamber alone could make the final decision. The rapport usually gave heed to the opinions of the majority of the committee members, and the minority did not give a rapport but could make its opinion known on the floor of the Chamber.²⁸

In reality, the committee power was the source of much of the parliamentary strength. Poincaré had brought out that the twenty or so permanent committees in the Chamber of Deputies really were "executive committees."²⁹ Barthélemy underscored the fact, and he noted that no text could be brought up for discussion before the Chamber and the French

²⁷See Le Temps, 1934 series; also Revue Politique et Parlementaire, 1933-1934 series.

²⁸Barthélemy, Essai, p. 14.

²⁹Tardieu, L'Heure, p. 124.

Senate either by one member of Parliament or even the Government. The basis for deliberations in the Chamber was the rapport presented by a committee. This report could, but did not necessarily have to, agree with the demands of the executive. A deputy who saw his proposition rejected by the committee could propose amendments or offer a counter-measure. Thus a deputy devoted to the administration in power could propose the Government's project.³⁰

However, it can be seen from the above that if the Chamber opposed a premier, unless he carried the votes on the important committee under discussion, he might as well take the exit. Sometimes the committee itself could become deadlocked on an important issue, and could retard the vote on such a subject indefinitely. Most important was the Finance Committee--the agency for preparing the French budget--for without its support, no government could stay in power for long. Furthermore the deputies felt no responsibility or need for accounting before their constituents for their behavior while "in committee"--no stenographic records were kept, and the discussions were not opened to the public.³¹

The "radical constitutional school," moreover, pointed out that the traditional French "individualism" could bring little but chaos when released on the political plane. French individualism has made tremendous contributions to French culture, but, in the field of politics, it has often led to disaster, to disunity, to failure to cooperate, and to a shaky adhesion to a political point of view. To the

³⁰Barthélemy, Essai, p. 15.

³¹Ibid., pp. 177-178.

caustic critic, a French parliamentary session often became confusion at its worst.³²

The responsibility for governing France was vested in the Cabinet. The Cabinet could do fairly well, usually, if it had the support of the Chamber, or if the Chamber granted it "extraordinary powers"--the so-called décrets-lois. More often than not, however, a Ministry had to give in to the whims of the French politicians, who in turn were ruled by the much too well-publicized French individualism. If a deputy brought the government tumbling down, he felt irresponsible and had no remorse. He knew that he was only one out of six hundred, and his individualism was given expression in the fact that the Chamber which should control was itself uncontrolled.³³

Thus, intellectuals such as Tardieu and Barthélemy harped on the need for stronger controls within their democracy. Attention was especially centered on the desire for strong national leadership. Many Frenchmen were ready to agree with Georges Viance, in this period, when he declared: "It is exactly such leadership that France desires deeply; all one has to do to become convinced is to listen to the sincere voices of the cities, of the countryside, in the homes,...."³⁴

It can be seen that the proponents of the "traditional constitutional school" and the "radical constitutional school" kept French democracy in a state of flux. This was true even when these ideas were

³²Sharp, French Republic, p. 46.

³³Tardieu, Révolution à refaire, pp. 260-261.

³⁴Georges Viance, La France veut un chef (Paris, 1934), p. 239.

unexpressed vividly from the Election of 1932 to December, 1933. The social atmosphere was receptive to French democracy only as long as it did not reveal its faults in a dramatic light at the improper time. Within the democratic body, there was active disagreement as to where power should reside but, as a whole, democratic institutions were not in any greater danger than they had been after World War I. But in less than twenty months, the events that transpired within France were to change this optimistic attitude towards democratic institutions to one charged with pessimism. It is now our assignment to see how doubts entered many Frenchmen's minds and shook their "deep faith" in French democratic institutions."

French parliamentary life: May, 1932-December, 1933.-- It will be recalled that immediately after the Election of 1932, the Socialists refused to join the Radical-Socialists in keeping the wheels of government turning in a positive direction. This greatly handicapped the "Cartel des Gauches" governments in their attempts to command a stable majority in Parliament. From June, 1932 to November, 1933, four Radical-Socialist cabinets were overthrown after a brief tenure of office. These were:

Édouard Herriot.....	June 4, 1932-December 14, 1932
Joseph Paul-Boncour.....	December 18, 1932-January 28, 1933
Édouard Daladier.....	January 31, 1933-October 23, 1933
Albert Sarraut.....	October 26, 1933-November 23, 1933

During this period, the struggle pursued by the various Radical-Socialist ministries to adhere to any clear-cut policy amounted to little being accomplished. Parliamentary life from June, 1932 to December, 1933 was indeed gasping for breath. The government, more

often than not, appeared completely confused and hesitant. Parliament, on the other hand, was extremely mobile and unable to steer along a consistent road.³⁵

Édouard Herriot, the head of the Radical-Socialist Party, was the first to take up the reins on June 4, 1932. From the beginning, the Herriot Ministry found declining tax receipts, higher governmental expenditures, and a deficit which had seen yearly markers of 6,707 and 5,611 million francs respectively in the past two fiscal years. As the Treasury recorded more and more expenditures, the chance of balancing the budget became more and more remote. Ill omens appeared along this course with the additional requirement that the Treasury had to cover the deficits of the French railways, which reached a total sum of 12,567 million francs in the red from 1929 to 1933.³⁶ Herriot was in a quandary.

For suggestions on how to solve this perplexing puzzle of declining revenues and mounting deficit, Herriot turned to his financial advisors. These were conservative men and gladly revealed their opinion on the matter. When all the contributions were chalked up, they amounted to the suggestion that the budget must be balanced. This, the consulting experts felt, could be done by a reduction in governmental expenditures. They realized that this was no easy undertaking, for France by 1932 had reached a disproportion between expenses, which had

³⁵ DeWilde, Political Ferment, pp. 123-124.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 123; also Le Temps, April 30, 1934.

more than doubled since 1913, and national income, which was scarcely greater than before World War I.³⁷

The conservative financiers argued that by balancing the budget a certain chain reaction would take place: (1) business confidence would be restored; (2) the taxpayers would be more satisfied; (3) export trade would go up; and (4) the tourist trade would be revived. Pressure was brought to bear by commercial and industrial lobbies for their point of view to dominate. These groups desired drastic cuts in the cost of government; and, like the majority of the Radical-Socialists they preferred this deflationary policy as preferable to one devaluating the franc. In the past, this last solution had always hurt many businesses.³⁸

The Socialists and their sympathizers felt that a "balanced budget" was a "fetish." They asserted that this could only be achieved at the expense of government personnel and war veterans, and that such a move would lead to decline in purchasing power by these two well-regimented groups. Furthermore, they offered a tonic of their own: A "new deal"; that is, a program that would stimulate economic activities by the government supporting extensive public works. This point of view, of course, was in direct opposition to that proposed by the Radical-Socialists.³⁹ This basic variance in opinion within the Left was to be the main reason why the Radical-Socialist cabinets to the end of 1933

³⁷Alibert Raphael, "La déflation et le budget," Revue Politique et Parlementaire, 40th Year (June, 1933).

³⁸DeWilde, Political Ferment, p. 123.

³⁹Ibid., p. 124.

fell asunder.

Besides this lack of cooperation within Parliament, the Radical-Socialists found strong and capable opposition coming from the Civil Servants. The latter made up a considerable vote bloc, for the Civil Service had constantly mounted from 619,000 in 1914 to 857,000 in 1933.⁴⁰ Their total yearly compensation of 12 billion francs was, in the same vein, double that paid before the war. These government employees, the majority of whom were organized into powerful syndicates, did their own lobbying and applied pressures such as occasional strikes, to prevent any reduction in their salaries and pensions. The impact of these facts took on more weight when it is realized that the Socialist Party was above all the party of the "fonctionnaire."⁴¹

The wedge of opposition was driven deeper by the diffused, but the very constant, pressures being engendered by the united war veterans. The monetary side here showed that civil and military pensions required over four billion francs annually. This was a considerable disbursement, when it is brought up for analysis that this had doubled since 1913. In particular, the expenditure for war veterans amounted to 2,511 million francs in 1932, as compared with 910 million in 1929.⁴² The Herriot Government was unable to make any sense out of this "Socialist-

⁴⁰Le Temps, April 6, 1934.

⁴¹J. F. Compeyrot, "Les conditions de l'assainissement budgétaire," Revue Politique et Parlementaire, 40th Year (October, 1933).

⁴²Chambre des deputes, Journal Officiel de 1933, 15 ième Législature, Rapport sur le Budget Général (Paris, 1933), pp. XV-XVI.

Civil Service-Veteran" maze, and the Cabinet fell on its attempt to "balance the budget."

The succeeding Paul-Boncour Cabinet was in existence only a little more than a month. In his memoirs, Jean Paul-Boncour blamed the budget for the impotence of his Ministry. He felt that the budgetary deficit was slowly "choking the Government's throat and that few were willing to loosen their grips." The Chamber's Financial Committee slashed Paul-Boncour's budget beyond recognition. This had been presented on January 28, 1933, and on the same day, the Premier led the Cabinet to see the President of the Republic--they resigned! The reason for his fall was clear: the Socialists and the conservatives had combined their forces to get rid of him.⁴³

For a few days afterwards, President Albert Lebrun went hunting for a Cabinet. The search ended on January 31, 1933, when M. Édouard Daladier headed the reshuffled Radical-Socialist group selected to resolve the financial problem. The question: "Could Daladier succeed where others had failed?" could not be answered because Monsieur Daladier was an unknown quantity politically.

Daladier was born on June 18, 1884, in Carpentras in Provence. Young Édouard attended the local schools and his scholarship brought him a stipend to study in Lyons where he met Professor Édouard Herriot, the future Radical-Socialist leader. After a brief interruption to give a year's military service, Daladier returned to his books to major

⁴³ Jean Paul-Boncour, Entre deux guerres, Vol. II (Paris, 1945), pp. 273-274.

in history and politics--often the first step in a brilliant political career. His formal education came to an end in 1908-1909, when Daladier received the much-coveted "agrégé d'histoire"--an honor then granted to less than twenty individuals in France annually.⁴⁴

Daladier's educational efforts brought him an appointment to a history teaching post in Nîmes. Here he carried on historical research, taught, and developed his leanings towards politics. In 1912 he undertook his first political role as mayor of his home town, Carpentras. He served, with distinction, in the French army during World War I, until in 1919 his military career came to an end. The year of his discharge he married a Parisienne of great wealth who became quite an inspiration in his life.⁴⁵

In 1919, in Vaucluse, Daladier's friends encouraged him to enter the national political ring and, by December, we find him a deputy in the Bleu horizon Chamber. In a very talkative assembly he soon became noted as the man who said little. This silence was interpreted as a sign of wisdom and became a trait associated with his personality. From 1919 to 1933 he held many cabinet posts, but he was kept from the main political office--the premiership. Then, suddenly, he found himself the Premier.⁴⁶

By 1933 Daladier had given journalists and politicians alike the

⁴⁴Yvon Lapaquellerie, Édouard Daladier (Paris, 1940), pp. 13-31.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 32-133.

⁴⁶Lapaquellerie, Daladier, pp. 133-134.

impression that his taciturnity was a cover for his cornucopia of ideas. His background, furthermore, was a humble one and set him up as a man of the people.⁴⁷ A leading historian of the Cartel des Gauches said Daladier's silence was the key to the understanding of the impact he made in politics in 1933, and later gave these acute comments on the subject:

His realization that he was an inferior orator had made him mad at himself, during critical periods when he could have untangled the issues with ease. At times he became so irritated that he lost his self-control. Nevertheless, his brief but biting words, the sharpness of his mannerisms had slowly built for him a reputation of being a strong type in this special world that attended the salons, in the Chamber's halls which claim to make it a business to give one man of genius to France per week.⁴⁸

Thus Daladier's "strength of character" and his "silence" were to make of him a myth. The legend was that his silence was that of a "man of action." Daladier managed to keep this vision dangling before the French public during his first premiership.

When Daladier assumed leadership of the Ninety-Second Cabinet of the Third French Republic, hopes were high that he could wrestle successfully with the plaguing budgetary problem. This First Daladier Cabinet offered the semblance of being one of the best governments France had had for quite a while, and this attitude was largely due to the favorable impression Daladier made in France as well as in French political circles.

⁴⁷ André Simone, J'Accuse (New York, 1940), pp. 32-33.

⁴⁸ Suarez, Les heures héroïques, p. 137.

"The strong man mystique" baffled and divided the Socialists and, against even the approval of their National Congress, the Socialists in the Chamber decided to cooperate with the Premier. But this cooperation soon ended when, in July, 1933, the Socialist Party Congress, voted to stop dealing with Daladier. The orthodox majority preferred to follow the Party, but the so-called Right-Wingers refused to be bound by the decision and formed the Neo-Socialists. The former, nevertheless, included some ninety-odd deputies who returned to the Chamber in October, 1933 with the main purpose of challenging the Daladier Government.⁴⁹

The budget impasse had been circumvented on May 31, 1933 only because the Daladier Government yielded to the Chamber and gave up the Radical-Socialist ideal of balancing the budget. In the fall, the Radical-Socialists renewed their offensive against the budgetary deficit and suggested a bill called Article 37 to remove the irksome condition existing in the French Treasury. Article 37 demanded a reduction of the fonctionnaires' salaries by approximately 6 per cent. Monday, October 23, proved to be selected for the encounter on the issue by the Radical-Socialists and the Socialists. The Daladier Government had given orders for the Chamber to be encircled by a protective cordon, so as to avert any help or demonstration that the teachers, civil servants, and taxi drivers might decide upon. It was a well-known fact that the first two groups had aligned themselves against

⁴⁹Werth, France in Ferment, p. 64; also DeWilde, Political Ferment, pp. 124-125.

the pay cuts; while the taxi drivers did not relish idea of the extra gasoline tax inserted in the government's bill.⁵⁰

Discussion inside the Chamber became more heated as the session lengthened. Around midnight, the public galleries were still bulging, and the air was a portentous one as Premier Daladier asked for a vote. He spoke for the adoption of the measure written by Georges Bonnet, his Finance Minister; and the Premier threw out a call for parliamentary unity on the matter. Paul Reynaud, the leading spokesman for the Center, had been alienated and announced he would vote against the measure. In spite of this setback, Daladier was hopeful, for during his nine months in office, the Socialists had not seriously opposed the "bull of Vaucluse"--as Daladier was now called secretly. Besides, the Lasalle Amendment had considerably toned down the Government's demands for a straight 6 per cent cut, by accepting a substitute cut on a sliding scale. But this hope was shattered when the Socialists decided to vote against the bill. Daladier was dumbfounded.⁵¹

The crowd watched with great interest the beginning of the political execution. The first major swing came when Léon Blum, the Socialist leader, stood up and announced that his followers would vote "no." He then called the "balancing of the budget" idea a fraud, and refused to allow a salary cut which would place the Socialist Party in opposition to its ideals. Daladier had enough! He tore into Blum's

⁵⁰ Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 67-68.

⁵¹ Chambre des députés, Journal Officiel d'octobre 24, 1933, 15 ième Législature, Débats Parlementaires (Paris, 1933); also Le Temps, October, 1933.

arguments and demanded why Blum had been so friendly up to now. The Premier, living up to his "man of action" legend, allowed just enough time for M. Renaudel to try to bring calmness by appealing to "parliamentary government and democracy." A futile series of exchanges between Blum and the "bull of Vaucluse" followed and ended with the Daladier Government being defeated by 329 votes to 241. The ninety Blum Socialists had voted against the Ministry. The Daladier Government passed into history at 3:00 A.M.⁵²

The fall of the First Daladier Government was the last of a chain of events that led to a complete rift between the members of the Cartel. The parliamentary régime seemed incapable of solving the budgetary problem and brought on Daladier's fall. With the latter came an amazing destruction of confidence in democracy as a sound technique to rule France. This change in the socio-political atmosphere can, even by a cursory reading of the materials, be felt by browsing through the French newspapers and periodicals of the period. The Third French Republic now had really entered "the period of tumults."⁵³

Another group of political marionettes led by Albert Sarraut followed Daladier. Within a month this Sarraut Government had fallen on the same issue as its predecessor. Thus once more ministerial instability had become chronic in France. The deadlock produced by the prolonged parliamentary wrangling over the budget was critical in

⁵² Journal Officiel d'octobre 24, 1933; also Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 67-68.

⁵³ Jean Pierre Maxence, Histoire de dix ans (Paris, 1939), pp. 227-231.

bringing about the public's disgust and distrust. It accelerated the popular distaste with parliamentary government as then practiced in France. Especially disheartening to many was the fact that the Government was not even considering "pump priming" of the economic system. By the end of 1933, the weakness of the Cartel des Gauches promised but a dark future for French democratic life.

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Foreign affairs and dominance of the German Question.-- This dismal social atmosphere was increasingly darkened by the results obtained in handling foreign affairs. The rapid decline of government authority in France corresponded with a similar low point in international affairs. For our purpose, which is to understand the causes of the Democratic crisis in this period, it will suffice only to give this subject the briefest analysis.

It is usually agreed by the experts on the subject that after World War I Germany was saddled with an impossible war debt. Throughout the twenties, Germany concentrated on chopping down the payments. In 1931, bankruptcy had arrived in Germany, and by June, the Hoover Moratorium. France, unable to face the fact that Germany would not pay the debts, was shocked by the Lausanne Agreement (July, 1932) which brought the end of reparations. As a last hope, Germany's creditors declared that they would be satisfied with the final token of 714 million dollars--but even this was never paid. In December, 1932, Premier Herriot became very unpopular in France when, overlooking the German War Debt matter, he insisted on paying the December install-

⁵⁴ Le Temps, November, 1933 issues.

ment of \$19 million on the American war debt.⁵⁵

Many Frenchmen felt that their country had been struck out by their former Allies on the question of war debts, and they felt the same treatment was being given on the uppermost French desire for sécurité. The French after World War I hoped to achieve a lasting peace by following three policies: (1) by seeing that Germany was kept disarmed; (2) by keeping France militarily stronger than its neighbors; and (3) by using the League of Nations as an instrument to preserve the status quo. This approach had been identified as satisfying what France called its "minimum security."⁵⁶

Then, as if a bomb had shattered the sécurité dream, by the end of December, 1933, France discovered to her chagrin that she was isolated from her former friends. In October, while Daladier was struggling with the budgetary problem, Germany removed itself from the League. French public opinion had been conditioned to the idea that sécurité was anchored to upholding the League's principles, and it was given quite a jolt, as the weaknesses of collective security became apparent. During the final months of 1933, French public opinion was starting to echo the Right in pouring ridicule on the efforts still being made to believe in the League.⁵⁷

The energy spent in trying to check the growth of armament also

⁵⁵Tardieu, L'Heure, pp. 20-32.

⁵⁶Elizabeth Cameron, Prologue to Appeasement (Washington, 1942).

⁵⁷Ibid.

proved in vain. The General Disarmament Conference which met in Geneva in 1932 had ended in obvious failure by 1933. France was especially worried lest Germany rearm. In the early period of the Cartel des Gauches, the French watched with tragic interest not only the continued rise of Italian prestige, but also the spectacular rebirth of Germany as a Nazi state. On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of the Third Reich, and the growth of the German menace brought a certain English coolness towards France, which gave French opinion international jitters.⁵⁸

As the Christmas vacation arrived for the Chamber in 1933, power politics thus had turned against the Third Republic in the areas of German reparations, in the upholding of treaties with the League's support, and in the attempts to bring disarmament. These external failures, when joined to the internal developments, added up to much bewilderment, confusion, and irritation. This charged atmosphere could become very dangerous if it were directed into the wrong channels.⁵⁹

A long, involved delineation of the French position in world politics is not necessary for our purpose. The realization that she was isolated in international politics resulted in a depressed mood of the nation. As the Chamber appeared incapable of following a consistent line of policy, the dynamism of such movements as Nazism in Germany, Fascism in Italy, and the New Deal in America strengthened the belief that France also needed modernization. One thing was sure: French democracy had better provide some answers--and prompt ones if the public was to calm down and renew their faith in those who ruled!

⁵⁸Le Temps, 1932-1933 series.

⁵⁹Ibid; also Tardieu, L'Heure, p. 47.

CHAPTER II

THE DEEPER CAUSES

The Economic Crisis

The many economic crises.-- French economists do not use the same guiding posts as does the Anglo-American world in the division of their study of "French economics" in this period. The French subdivide the economic problems in the early thirties into a study of the "financial crisis," the "monetary crisis," the "budgetary crisis," and the "banking crisis." Of all these problems, it will appear, the budgetary was predominant.

In France, what was termed "the financial crisis" really had its roots in the twenties. As was true in the United States, the "roaring Twenties" saw France going through an outstanding period of speculation and conspicuous accumulation of wealth. The financial experts declared French finances in excellent condition, especially after M. Poincaré had succeeded in balancing the government budget in the mid-twenties. The economic depression which struck the world in 1929 left France untouched, and many Frenchmen were proud to be living in such a blessed land.¹

The financial situation, however, was not so rosy as it appeared. France had, for instance, almost become self-sufficient in wheat; but

¹Paul Einzig, France's Crisis (London, 1934), pp. 2-3.

this was brought about only by establishing a high tariff wall and by introducing a set of complicated milling regulations. By such artificial means, the French farmer had been assured a high price for his labors. Thus in truth he had become independent of world prices offered for his crops. He traded in a protected domestic market and for a while he reaped benefits by such arrangements.² Then a huge wheat surplus was thrown onto the French market, and the farmer found that he had either to sell his wheat at a ridiculously low price or keep his grain. Whatever alternative the farmer decided upon, he was unhappy. He looked for someone to blame for his troubles, and he soon made the government the scapegoat.³

Statistics on the income of urban workers in this period reveal that the hourly earnings of skilled industrial labor in towns were the first to decline--3.99 francs in 1932 per hour to 3.89 francs per hour in 1934. This was especially bad because this condition occurred when the standard of living reached its highest peak. Although the same statistical tables beamed out that Paris workers kept the same pay--6.34 francs per hour--the latter were also dissatisfied with the rise in prices of necessary commodities. These workers, furthermore, felt that the government did not care about their precarious status and began taking their wrath against the public officials they knew.⁴

²Louis Pichat, "La question du blé," Revue Politique et Parlementaire, 39th Year (December, 1932).

³Joseph de Pesquidoux, "La crise du blé," Revue Des Deux Mondes, Vol. CIV (April 15, 1934), pp. 904-912.

⁴Einzig, Crisis, pp. 3-4; also United Nations, Statistical Yearbook, 1948 ed.

The tottering economic frame received yet another jolt when the disgruntled consumers began to complain more vigorously than usual. The consumer argued that his cost of living was slowly dipping downward, while his spending income was slipping faster. In contemplating the world situation in the early thirties, the Frenchman was well aware that he was better off than in some other countries, but he was apprehensive that trouble was ahead. The following figures show that trouble was not too far in the future:

Cost of Living Indices (In towns over 10,000)	National Income at Market Prices (In 100 million francs)
1932 94	1930 243
1934 83	1932 206
	1934 184

Source: United Nations, Statistical Yearbook, 1948 ed.

That France was living under a false prosperity was obvious when such matters as the artificially bolstered wheat prices and the declining wage scales were studied. Besides these indications, there was an unhealthy state existing in the export industry. A declining trade began suffering from a lack of demand for luxury goods--a key export in France. The world tended to stay away from such luxuries as perfumes, model clothes, and wines during a period of depression--especially when they were offered at excessively high prices. Moreover, the protected French market with its overvalued franc did not attract the

tourist trade.⁵

By 1933, the general economic picture in France (or the "financial crisis" as the French called it) looked bad. All the artificial controls such as the high tariff, the government control of wheat prices, the quota restrictions on imports, the taxes on import licenses, and the high franc which seemed to have "economically isolated France" from 1929 to 1933, became useless. French debtors were grumbling about the high wheat prices, which by 1934 were four times as high as those in the United States, the high cost of living, and the overvaluated franc. The debtors wanted something done about the latter problem but quick. This last thought was enough to get the creditors all frustrated about the "financial crisis." All these discordant elements blamed the government for their economic plight.⁶

Actually, by the time the Great Depression hit France in 1933, the so-called "banking crisis" had run its course; but it should not be neglected if we are to have a clear understanding of why the government was to get into financial straights during this period of economic decline. At all times French banking was in an unusual position because of the French habit of hoarding gold. If rumors circulated that banks were unsafe, the average Frenchman would rush to the bank to take out his gold. When such "bank runs" occurred, the banks with little gold on hand sometimes were embarrassed. This peculiar behavior pattern, which saw haphazard mass withdrawals by bank depositors, sent many

⁵ Einzig, Crisis, p. 4.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 63-65.

bankers scurrying to the French Treasury for government help.⁷

When the Great Depression came in 1929, many worried Frenchmen made frequent runs on the banks. This chaotic condition made it impossible to accumulate bank deposits, and many banks, therefore, sought government succor. Government gold was given to many banks, which made it possible for the banks to weather the "banking crisis" by 1933-1934. But this government disbursement was to cost the French Treasury dearly, for it depleted its gold reserve to a very low point. Yet the government had given the banks such help many times in the past and had not been the worse for doing so.⁸

This "bank-Treasury relationship" just described above was a reciprocal one. The banks repaid the government for its help during a "banking crisis" by buying and floating many of the Treasury bonds representing the national debt. Especially during difficult periods when the market was slow in picking up government bonds was this help from the banks appreciated. Many times in the past, a disconcerted Treasury had replenished its dwindling gold reserve by receiving the bankers' help. Thus the "banking-Treasury tie" worked for the benefit of both sides.⁹

This banking-Treasury relationship, in our period of interest, is presented to be as follows by the British economist, Paul Einzig:

⁷ Germain Martin, La politique économique et financière de la France (Paris, 1946), pp. 4-8.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 5-8.

⁹ Einzig, Crisis, pp. 40-41.

At the end of 1933 the total deposits and current accounts of the nine leading banks amounted to 41 milliard francs, while the total savings-bank deposits were 59½ milliard francs, making a total of a little over 100 milliard francs. The greater part of the savings-bank deposits are invested in government securities, while a large but fluctuating part of the commercial bank deposits are invested in Treasury bills.¹⁰

Thus the actual situation in 1933-1934 in France confirms the observations that the typical Frenchman hoarded his gold, that he invested very little in the government floating debt, and that by constant withdrawals he kept banking conditions in a precarious state. The French bankers and financiers usually were asked by the government to revitalize or replace the weak French investors by themselves absorbing government securities. In 1932 and 1933, as the French Treasury became empty, the government asked the banks for the "usual help." The bankers were unable to give aid, because even the gold given to them during the "banking crisis" had dwindled. So the French Treasury did the inevitable--it reluctantly borrowed from abroad on foreign bankers' terms. The result was an "unbalanced budget" and a "monetary or Treasury Crisis"--as well as a tremendous increase of the foreign debt.¹¹

The growth of the Treasury Crisis brought on the "budgetary issue" which kept plaguing the Radical-Socialist governments more and more after the Election of 1932. This "budgetary crisis" soon became the bête noire of not only the finance ministers, but of French politicians as well.

¹⁰Einzig, Crisis, p. 41.

¹¹Martin, Politique économique, pp. 6-10; also Einzig, Crisis, pp. 41-42.

Our attention must be given for a moment to the understanding of the peculiar French governmental money market. Government spending depended on two factors: (1) the amount of taxes collected, and (2) the French politician's attitude towards spending. Frenchmen resisted paying taxes and, after World War I, tax evasion became a chronic malady throughout France. On the other hand, French politicians kept spending the public's funds at a rate not commensurate with the revenues coming into the Treasury. Again Einzig spoke searchingly when he declared:

Because the French are not prepared to submit to crushing direct taxation to the same degree as the Englishman, they are accused of lacking patriotism. To anyone who knows how ultra-nationalistic are Frenchmen of all shades of opinion, from Royalists to Communists and Anarchists, the suggestion that they lack patriotism seems absurd.

The reluctance of Frenchmen to pay taxes is largely due to their general reluctance to spend. The French are probably the most thrifty of all nations, much more so than the Scots.

Another reason why direct taxation is unpopular in France lies in the essentially individualistic character of the nation. Frenchmen strongly resent every form of government interference with their affairs, but most of all the attempt on the part of the authorities to ascertain their incomes.¹²

This French opposition to tax paying made the spectacular increase of public expenditures in the thirties a dangerous move. Therefore, deficits only became larger deficits, and the only hopes for balancing the budget, according to the conservative French ministers of finance, seemed to be more economies in governmental expenditures or the clinging

¹²Einzig, Crisis, pp. 14-15.

to the belief that German reparation payments would be collected.¹³
No Government economist presented the Keynes' solutions to solve such problems.

Ever since Poincaré had devaluated the franc in 1926, the French budget had been in a healthy state. In the early 1930's, as André Tardieu and Pierre Laval led their respective cabinets in running French affairs, depletion of Treasury funds and an increase budget disbursement brought on the "budgetary crisis." By 1932, the Herriot Government was faced with a serious decline in tax receipts and even more lavish Treasury outpourings. With every new Radical-Socialist Ministry, the budget deficit grew larger and larger, and any economies or salary cuts met Socialist opposition. As early as May, 1932, in retrospect also, it appears that measures proposed were not audacious and rapid enough to check this crisis. The Frenchman was kept unaware of the seriousness of his country's budget and, even in political circles, the subject was underemphasized. France generally was still bathing in its prosperity.¹⁴

As the "budgetary crisis" was one of the main issues that contributed to the bringing of the "Democratic Crisis of 1934 in France," deeper analysis on the development of this problem is called for at this point. Beginning at the time when the Herriot Government assumed

¹³Einzig, Crisis, pp. 14-15.

¹⁴M. Marc Rucart, Rapport Général: Procès Verbaux de la Commission, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3383 (Volume II), Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 1348.

office, the historian discovers that the Treasury was almost dry. The Treasury surpluses left by M. Poincaré had been replaced by unpaid bills, an unbalanced budget, overestimated receipts, and a complacent attitude on the part of too many government financial experts. Furthermore, Premier Herriot found a budget which had not even been voted upon for the past nine months.¹⁵

Further signs of the incoming "budgetary crisis" appeared in June, 1932, when the public receipts were 8 billion francs below those of 1929, while the government expenses kept increasing--expenditures had been augmented from 1929 to 1933 by more than 10 billion francs. To cover up these budgetary deficits, the governments dipped their hands into the accumulated "special emergency resources" of Poincaré. Then came the sudden announcement by the Herriot Government that the budgetary deficit for 1932 was 15 billion francs and, worst of all, that the Treasury itself was empty. A final blow was given public opinion when, on January 30, 1933, M. Chéron, the Finance Minister under Paul-Boncour, wrote to the Premier that the budget issue had reached the form of a major "budgetary crisis."¹⁶

Everything had been done by government officials to prevent this development. For one thing, a stronger attitude was taken towards reparations, and "Poincaré's gold mine" was scraped. When this was not enough, the Herriot Government "forced the happy days to stay" and kept the "French prosperity balloon from exploding!" by formulating

¹⁵Rucart, Rapport Général, p. 1348.

¹⁶Ibid.

exaggerated tax returns. As a last hope, the Herriot Government from June 3 to December 14, 1932 had floated 2,513,000 francs worth of bonds overseas, while the Boncour Ministry demanded 5 billions more in bonds.¹⁷ M. Georges Bonnet, the very able conservative Minister of Finances in the First Daladier Government, admitted the "budgetary crisis" left him in a quandary, and he was unable to prevent more floating of loans outside the country.¹⁸

Georges Bonnet did the best he could under the circumstances and, in fact, for a while it appeared that he had established some recovery. He courageously offered what he considered the needed remedy: further economies and pay cuts. The antipathy of the Socialists towards this so-called Article 37, as we have seen, snuffed out those who placed their hopes in this solution. The "budgetary crisis" was handed to the succeeding Sarraut Ministry which fell before it was given a chance to understand the matter. As the year 1934 came, the "budgetary crisis" remained to help turn a dejected French population against their "democratic parliamentary institutions."¹⁹

Depression hits France late.-- Before proceeding any further on the "budgetary crisis," we must reflect on the oncoming French depression and the part it played in bringing on the "Democratic Crisis in France in 1934." Probably the best introduction to this tragedy came

¹⁷Rucart, Rapport Général, p. 1348.

¹⁸Germain Martin, Les problèmes actuels des finances publiques en France (Paris, 1933), pp. 20-22.

¹⁹Cameron, Prologue, p. 47.

from the pen of the able Pierre-Étienne Flandin, former Minister of Finance--and Premier in 1935. In his famous memoirs he pointed to the technical reasons behind the depression in France by noting that:

The bankruptcy of Germany in the year 1931, the Hoover moratorium which came in June, and the depreciation of the pound in September 1931, brought Europe to a serious economic crisis. After 1931, the index of wholesale prices computed in gold fell, in England, to 98 and, after the devaluation of the pound in 1932, to 73. Later the United States was forced to devalue the dollar and in 1933 American wholesale prices went to 75. After a year of fluctuations, British and American indices levelled off, at the end of 1934, at 63 and 65 respectively. The price-index in gold had thus fallen to less than 50 per cent of its 1928 value. Such a shock was truly catastrophic for the world economy and obviously brought about serious repercussions on the French economy.

No one can deny that our financial system makes the state an associate in all economic activity. By indirect taxes, more than by direct taxes, the Treasury obtains about one third of the profits and gains of all Frenchmen. The fall of wholesale prices, which approximately represent production costs, corresponds thus to a loss in budgetary receipts.

Our maximum governmental income was reached during the fiscal year 1929--with receipts of 53 billion francs. From 1929 to 1934, French wholesale prices fell about 40 per cent and, in the same period, revenues fell from 53 to 41 billions--a reduction of about 22 per cent.²⁰

Thus from this viewpoint, it can be seen that the "budgetary crisis," brought on by a heavy decline in taxes and increased expenditures, was a major cause in bringing the depression to France. Another major contributory cause was the French refusal to "devalue the franc," to accept a "New Deal psychology," and to adjust their money system to the world economic financial situation. Indirectly, moreover, the inability of the French banks to replenish the depleted Treasury or to play "their

²⁰ Pierre-Étienne Flandin, Discours (Paris, 1937), pp. 22-24.

reciprocity role" contributed to the seriousness of the general economic crisis. Furthermore, added to these reasons for the coming of the French depression, was the fact that the little gold remaining was leaving the country to pay for imports.²¹

The depression reached France comparatively late--during 1932 and 1933. During that period unemployment figures kept mounting from month to month, and soon poverty had invaded thousands of French homes. The government statisticians admitted that a record unemployment of 350,783 persons had been reached by February, 1934.²²

The implications were no better when the business and industrial tables were bared, for these showed a progressive downward trend. More specifically, revenue from the sales tax was 34 per cent less in February, 1934 than in 1929. The production index stood at 106 in 1934 as against 139 in 1929. To comprehend further the impact of this distressing picture of the French economy, it should be recalled that the farmer was already subsidized, and that the languishing luxury trade was almost at a standstill. Foreign trade figures were no more encouraging, for they revealed a drop from about 108 billion francs in 1929 to a little less than 47 billion francs in 1933.²³ These bare figures are of necessity extremely significant.

²¹Einzig, Crisis, pp. 3-4; also Rucart, Rapport Général, p. 1349.

²²Ibid.

²³Statistics taken from Imprimerie Nationale, Bulletin de la Statistique Générale de la France et du service d'observation des prix (Paris, 1934).

By 1933, therefore, the French people were thus gasping painfully within the claws of the world depression. This difficult struggle will strike home more vividly if a little more exploration is given to the following unemployment figures:

UNEMPLOYED GIVEN GOVERNMENT AID FROM 1931-1934

Year	January	February	May	September	December
1931	28,536	40,766	41,339	38,524	147,009
1932	241,487	293,198	262,184	259,956	277,109
1933	316,259	330,874	283,068	226,634	313,894
1934	332,266	350,783	323,427	323,365	412,129

Source: Imprimerie Nationale, Bulletin de la Statistique, 1934, p. 140.

The above chart suggested more distress. First, it indicated to the worried French conservative economists that as the unemployed were given government assistance, the government expenditures were increased by that much more. A second observation was that unemployment really became abnormal as early as January, 1932 and kept rising throughout 1934. Furthermore, there were many unemployed who did not receive government aid--an informed guess places these around 500,000-600,000. Even then these figures do not include the majority of the French farmers who were in a very sad plight. The small businessman added to this distressing picture the fact that the number of bankruptcies was accelerated at an alarming rate.²⁴

²⁴Imprimerie Nationale, Bulletin de la Statistique; also Rucart, Rapport Général, pp. 1347-1348.

Especially distressed were the small entrepreneurs of Paris. The Parisian market, depending heavily on the luxury trade, was hit with unusual brutality by the oncoming depression. It made the "city of lights" a painful sight, for there were but few visitors in the hotels; and the spacious restaurants, encircling the Grand Boulevards, were suffering from a lack of trade. Theater owners saw fewer and fewer foreigners confusing change at their cashiers. The chic shops situated on the Champs-Élysées or the Rue de la Paix were almost emptied. The art studios were sans clients, and the intellectuals augmented the already bulging crowds that had been handed their final employment checks. Thus Paris took on a somber atmosphere.²⁵

"Crise de confiance" and "Crise morale."-- Simultaneously, as the Great Depression reached France, came the Crise de confiance. This was based partly on latent French psychological concepts which, generally speaking, brought a low opinion of the morals and effectiveness of a French politician. The development of political events in 1932-1933 only enhanced this lack of confidence in politicians. The ministerial instability, the deadlock over the budgetary issue, and the general social and economic atmosphere were major factors which brought on this lack of respect. This Crise de confiance gradually became a full-fledged attack against all parliamentarians. By the end of 1933 the political demoralization of the period brought many Frenchmen to the point of questioning seriously their "faith in parliamentary democracy."²⁶

²⁵Rucart, Rapport Général, p. 1348.

²⁶Einzig, Crisis, p. 5.

Closely connected to the Crise de confiance was the Crise morale. The Crise morale involved a loss of hope in the present and much apprehension about the future. The roots of the Crise morale were imbedded in post-World War I France. As in America, during that period, France found herself adopting a "business and pleasure" psychology in what became the "Happy Twenties." The personal moral discipline of many was too often replaced by a more or less elastic moral code. The main point in this moral approach became: to make much money in the shortest period possible. In reaching for this "money bag dream," the methods used were not the most ethical ones. If this loose code of public morals seeped down into the political affairs of the time, it was in part largely due to the "business conditioning" then existing within the social and economic structure of the country. This period of prosperity built the French hopes very high and made them see the future through colored glasses.²⁷

This strange new world of the "Happy Twenties" brought a special distaste to the majority of the French veterans. The ex-soldiers were bitter over the role they had played in la grande guerre and the paucity of returns they had received from society after the war. Their attitude was that they had devoted months and years of their lives--for what? As the nouveaux riches of the Twenties included few veterans, this enraged them only more. The veteran in 1933 saw his country isolated; he was disturbed over the failings of collective security, and he worried over the new role Germany was casting for itself in Europe. While in

²⁷Rucart, Rapport Général, pp. 1347-1348.

Such a mood, he saw the standard of living tightening in 1932 and 1933, and he began to feel that his sacrifice in 1914-1919 had been in vain. Furthermore, one thought stood uppermost in his mind: unless something was done, he would go to another war--and what for he asked himself.²⁸

The Crise morale was thus well-distributed throughout the veteran organizations of France by 1933. These had lost hope in the present and found no comfort when contemplating the future. The Crise morale, however, was also rampant throughout most classes of French society as the documents on the period show. As to how deep and widespread this crise morale was, the historian is unable to say because of the many intangibles involved.²⁹

Capitalism on the Offensive

Grand Capitalists dissatisfied with the Cartel.-- In 1934, the population of France was about 42,000,000, which was nearly equally divided between the rural and urban districts. Demographic studies revealed that the urban population was concentrated in northeastern France, roughly within an arc extending from the English Channel to Alsace-Lorraine. It was in this area that industrialization was dominant. Within a thirty-mile radius of Paris, the industries were even more compact, and often attained what even the foreign industrialists would accept as large factories. "Grand Capitalism" also existed out-

²⁸Rucart, Rapport Général, pp. 1347-1348.

²⁹Ibid.

side this "proletarian arc," with two noteworthy industrial clusters centering around Marseilles and Lyons.³⁰

France in the early thirties was, from an industrial viewpoint, dealing with midget-size industries, and the great majority of them were under the personal wings of small entrepreneurs. There was a reluctance to invest in larger concerns, because families preferred not to handle more than they and their relatives could personally direct. There was a growth-choking, anti-expansion spirit, but this was part of the accepted folkways of French economic life. This "limited expansion psychology" was greatly responsible for the fact that after World War I over 94 per cent of all corporations employed about twenty persons each.³¹

The "Grand Capitalist" tried to rely on his own profits for further mechanization and expansion. He took as a personal attack the imposition of any extra taxes. He was especially a strong opponent of the devaluation of the franc in the early thirties. The creation of the corporation was too often a very difficult accomplishment by a "strong" Frenchman, and anyone who succeeded in his efforts here was proud to be recognized as a "Grand Capitalist." On the other hand, he clung steadfastly to his wealth and fought anyone who tried to take it away from him.³²

³⁰Walter Rice Sharp, Government of the French Republic (New York, 1951), p. 5.

³¹Donald C. McKay, The United States and France (Cambridge, 1951), p. 144.

³²DeWilde, Political Ferment, p. 123.

In the early thirties, the Grand Capitalists were in control of the French banking system, the important iron-works, and the larger coal mines. They further enhanced their economic prestige by being the most active members of the higher echelons within Big Business groups. The Grand Capitalists made up the economic plutocracy of France, and they were all-important in the French Chamber of Commerce. As a group they considered any political measure trying to control in any way their "economic power" as detrimental to them. The strong Socialist returns in the Election of 1932, therefore, horrified many of them. The Socialists were ideologically organized to attack the Grand Capitalists and their basic assumptions. Openly did many of the Grand Capitalists admit their fear when contemplating the possibility that the Radical-Socialists might bargain with the Socialists. Many felt such an alliance was inevitable.³³

The Communists helped to fan this flame of suspicion by indicating that the Grand Capitalists were really responsible for the "general economic crisis." A typical presentation of this point of view declared:

The social and political crisis, shaking the Republic to its foundations, arises from the small group of bankers and industrialists, who control this modern financial and industrial machine, to rob the mass of the people, in order to maintain their own privileged position now menaced by the economic crisis.³⁴

³³Maurice Paz, Le six février (Paris, 1936), p. 4.

³⁴Ralph Fox, France Faces the Future (New York, 1936), p. 15.

Édouard Herriot angered or frightened the Grand Capitalists in 1932 when he preached against the moneyed interests. For political reasons the Premier denounced these foes in public speeches, but in actuality he did little against them. Although Herriot's actual conservative approach and his refusal to accept the Socialists as allies should have calmed the Grand Capitalists' fears, his attacks were a factor that turned some of the most powerful businessmen in France against the Ministry.³⁵

Capitalists' antiparliamentary campaign.-- By early 1933, Grand Capitalism in France was taking the offensive, and it began a series of organized and merciless attacks against the democratic leaders of France and some of its political institutions. Through such media as mass meetings, public speeches, and mass demonstrations of all kinds, the procapitalist defenders made a case for their dominance of French economic life. This propaganda campaign left the impression that the technician should replace the politician in running public affairs. The newspapers tended to reiterate similar messages to their readers, for many of the presses in France were heavily subsidized by one or more client riche.³⁶

The name of M. Ernest Mercier stands out as the prominent one during this 1933 "Capitalist Offensive." Mercier was an example of

³⁵Jean Pierre Maxence, Histoire de dix ans (Paris, 1934), pp. 215-216.

³⁶Georges Michon, Les puissances d'argent et l'émeute du 6 février (Paris, 1934), p. 5.

the self-made "Grand Capitalist." He was the magnate in such important pressure groups as the Electricity and Gas lobby, and the President of the very strong Coal Miners' Association. For his role in the Capitalist Offensive, all these positions of high honor were dwarfed by his honorary presidency of the Redressement Français--the leading capitalist propaganda weapon. In 1933 the Redressement Français became the focal point for all antiparliamentary capitalists of France.³⁷

On January 28, 1933, the antiparliamentary Capitalist Offensive had a beginning when, at Magic City before a tremendous audience, M. Large, who was the delegate for the National Federation of the Tax-payers (Association des Contribuables), in a fiery utterance threatened to lead a march to the Palais-Bourbon. He blamed France's economic miseries on the parliamentarians, and he sounded the call for action "to clean the scums within the Chamber."³⁸

In June, 1933, a gigantic gathering directed by leaders of the Redressement Français met in Paris to hear the newest developments in the Capitalist Offensive from M. Ernest Mercier. Many veterans and nationalists, for the first time, attended this assembly which abounded in harangues by capitalists denouncing the régime. Some of the enthusiastic "Big Business" leaders now were coming out in support of a plan to reorganize France's economic life along the lines of the corporate organizations found in Mussolini's Italy. Such important men as M. Mathon, President of the Woolen Association, and M. Nicolle, on the Committee of Economic

³⁷ Michon, Les puissances, p. 7.

³⁸ Quoted by Michon from the inaccessible Réveil du Contribuable, February, 1933.

Safety, were proponents of such a program. As for M. Mercier, he kept his mind on the "parliamentary enemies," and he announced that in October would occur the "decisive hours" for the Redressement Français.³⁹

The Capitalist Offensive reached a climax on December 11, 1933 when Mercier gave a very important address before the Redressement Français. Mercier denounced the German menace, and he predicted that "violent events" would bring about changes in the French parliament. Mercier was followed by M. Marcel Champin, metallurgical and mining magnate, who indulged in using semitreasonous language for most of his talk. He finished his address by declaring that the "bad mood of the French people" would produce "a disorder during which the parliamentarians would be the first victims."⁴⁰

Exactly how much influence the above meetings, attacks, and suggestions had on the already downhearted and overexcited public, it is difficult to say. This antiparliamentary campaign, spearheaded by some of the leading French capitalists, could only have a destructive effect on democratic institutions. The capitalist force, which took part in the antiparliamentary offensive, did not represent all of France's Big Business, but the latter's agitation only ended in further depressing the French public. If the Grand Capitalists had placed faith in their democratic institutions, they would have hesitated before undertaking such a pointed and serious movement to bring down the

³⁹ Michon, Les puissances, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 9; also Bulletin du Redressement Français, December, 1933.

system which kept them relatively free of controls.⁴¹

Venality and the Antiparliamentary Press

The French press and public opinion.-- In most democracies, it can be assumed--and usually is--that newspapers are very important agencies expressing public opinion. This does not hold true for France in this period unless we accept the assertion with serious limitations.

For our period of interest, the foreign correspondent's habit of reading a sampling from the leading French newspapers, and translating their contents usually eclectically for his country's readers, was a thankless and often an unreliable approach at best. French newspapers as a whole did not express public opinion, but rather the opinions of a particular clique with definite predetermined ends in mind. To consider the French press uninfluential, however, would be foolhardy. In the past, its power had too often lighted the public's passion to a dangerous point and even brought on panic conditions. So was it to be during 1933 and 1934, as we shall see below.⁴²

Traditionally, the French newspapers were divided into the journaux d'information or the Grande Presse and the journaux d'opinion or the political press. Although this still held true in 1933, it is better not to insist too stubbornly on these categories. Such a rigid

⁴¹M. Marc Rucart, Rapport Général fait au nom de la Commission d'Enquête chargée de rechercher les causes et les origines du 6 février 1934 et jours suivants, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3383, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934).

⁴²Georges Boris, "The French Press," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 13 (January, 1935), 321.

definition would not exactly be true of the existing conditions. The journal d'information, it was undeniable, made its profits largely by satisfying as large a public as possible; but it often very shrewdly presented a definite political tone. The journal d'opinion, on the other hand, did away with even this veneer of objectivity in treating the news. Most Frenchmen were aware that the distinguishing characteristics of a journal d'opinion were: (1) a very limited circulation, (2) a troubled financial situation, and (3) a one-sided political schema carefully constructed to indoctrinate its readers.⁴³

The French press' finances and their influence on expression of objective opinion.-- The typical Frenchman bought his newspaper at a newspaper stall. He often purchased several, because French newsprint sold cheaply. In fact, although he was usually unaware of the fact, his newspapers were the cheapest in Europe outside the Balkans and Belgium. The condition created many press problems, especially in the financial areas. This system of newsstand purchasing, furthermore, made sales unreliable, led newspapermen to try to be sensational to keep their readers buying their sheet, and kept press incomes in a very erratic state. The more dependable or house-subscriptions were practically nonexistent.⁴⁴

Most publishers were only too often made aware of the rickety condition of their finances. They were glad about one fact then: that

⁴³Charles Micaud, The French Right and Nazi Germany: 1933-1939 (Durham, 1943), pp. 5-6.

⁴⁴Boris, "French Press," p. 321.

the usual newspaper was four to six pages in size. The reader also enjoyed this, for he could more easily fold his reading matter and deposit it inconspicuously in an appropriate pocket when not in use. Yet this was a disadvantage because it brought certain limitations to the press such as: (1) overemphasis on French national news, (2) extreme condensation or omission of foreign news (handled mostly by the news-gathering agency Havas), and (3) limitation on advertising space.⁴⁵

In France, the price of a newspaper was far below the total cost required to produce it. If the copy boys, the typesetters, the reporters, the relay men, the special columnists, and the editors were to keep their employment, their newspaper needed to look for supplementary income sources. Reliance on the sales was shaky, as we have seen, and the advertising market was just as undependable. In fact, the advertising in France was extremely poor; for the French public demanded a cheap newspaper, but refused to accept too much advertising with its news.⁴⁶

The advertising problem was succinctly presented by Georges Boris, a reliable authority on the French press in 1934, as follows:

Suppose we take a newspaper with a circulation of between 80,000 and 100,000, a figure which would class it among the more important papers in France. Its expenses will run at the very least to 6 million francs, and the strictest economy will be required to keep it as low as that. In the most favorable circumstances it can not expect more than 4 million francs from the sales and subscriptions. That leaves 2 millions to be taken care of by advertising. Now a newspaper of that size is far from being able to count on any such advertising revenue as that.

⁴⁵When the author described the size of our New York Times to some French provincials, they accused him of having his tongue in his cheek.

⁴⁶Boris, "French Press," pp. 320-321.

Le Populaire, the organ of the Socialist Party, happens to be a paper of the kind described. In its accounting for the year 1931 it could not enter as high as half a million francs as having been received for advertising.⁴⁷

French newspapers had three alternatives they could take to keep out of the red. A few newspapers availed themselves of all three. The first method was opened to the journal d'opinion only, and simply involved the turning of its "deficit headaches to its raison d'être"--the political party whose views it represented. The professional politicians, the partisans, and the officeholders within the core party organization expected this request annually, and usually made provisions to take care of "the party's main propaganda organ," A second way to remove a newspaper deficit was to "send the tab to the rich proprietor--often a Grand Capitalist--who owned the paper." In return, both the party and the capitalist demanded that their views be considered by the publication.⁴⁸

The third method in vogue in the thirties in France by the press "to get out of financial embarrassment was some form of subsidization." These grants were made by: (1) individual capitalists who did not have any financial control of your press, but sympathized with your views; (2) some interested business group; and (3) the government itself. When the recourse to government subsidization was revealed by the Stavisky Inquiry Commission in 1934, most of the newspapers--who were ashamed--did not print it or did not comment on the sessions taken up

⁴⁷Boris, "French Press," pp. 320-321.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 322.

with the subject.⁴⁹

The political subsidization program received rather unsavory publicity in 1934 when it was revealed how "special or secret funds" were earmarked by government officials to tune down the wrath of certain newspaper editors. Former Premier Daladier testifying before the Stavisky Inquiry Commission, in 1934, presented the "subsidization program as involving four-fifths" of the French newspapers.⁵⁰

M. Camille Aymard, editor of La Volonté, a Rightist organ, was later involved in the ensuing press scandals during the exposure of the venal French press in 1934. Before his accusers, Aymard admitted that few newspapers could balance their books without being "supported by friends in politics or by large business concerns, which consider that the policies of those papers are helpful to their interests and to the public welfare as they conceive it to be." This same investigation brought out also that many former Cabinet ministers had access to the "secret government funds" to hush up personal attacks against them.⁵¹

With these facts before us, it now becomes obvious that the typical French newspaper could not be considered as representing the objective viewpoint, or public opinion, when taking up a domestic issue--especially a political one. The press' opinions were conditioned by such factors as political loyalties, purposeful advertisers, government officials,

⁴⁹Boris, "French Press," p. 322.

⁵⁰René Modiano, La presse pourrie (Paris, 1935), p. 9; also Sharp, French Republic, p. 32.

⁵¹Boris, "French Press," p. 320.

and the Agence Havas. Havas, in our period, handled much of the provincial news as well as the foreign field; it held the biggest advertisers under its thumb; and it wielded a powerful influence throughout the French press world. With all these forces impinging their demands on the editor, it was difficult for the latter to feel any special duty to the people.⁵²

Briefing on specific French newspapers and introducing the vicious governmental attacks.-- In spite of what has been said above, the historian must admit that the French newspapers which existed in the system just described were not all bad. Under normal conditions, much of the Grande Presse was rather reliable in its news and, within the period of the "Democratic Crisis of 1934 in France," Le Temps was unusually trustworthy.⁵³

Le Temps was almost in a category by itself in 1933 and 1934. Before making a brief survey of the French press in this period (needed if we are to interpret French source material along this line), Le Temps deserves special attention because of its uniqueness. Le Temps in 1933-1934 averaged approximately 120,000 subscribers and was owned by the Comité des Forges--the French Steel Trust--controlled virtually by the Baron de Wendel family. The de Wendels could indirectly place pressure on Le Temps, but in actuality this did not occur. Le Temps was moderate during the Grand Capitalist Offensive, it was decent

⁵²Robert W. Desmond, The Press and World Affairs (New York, 1937), pp. 199-205.

⁵³Ibid.

towards government policies, and it kept a conservative attitude.⁵⁴

The same comments cannot be made for the journaux d'opinion during 1934, for these newspapers spearheaded a series of vicious attacks against the Third Republic which came close to destroying the democratic régime. Traditionally unmerciful to the government was L'Humanité (260,000 circulation), the Communist organ, which had been founded in 1904 by the Socialist leader Jean Jaurès. Next to L'Humanité the royalist newspaper, the Action Française (80,000 circulation) was usually well-known for its antigovernment diatribes. Daudet and Maurras in 1933 and 1934 soon drove their newspaper circulation to new heights because of the leadership it took in a series of vicious and truculent attacks against the Third Republic. Third on the list of leading newspapers carrying an intense antigovernment crusade was the Socialist organ, Le Populaire (80,000 circulation), directed by Léon Blum.⁵⁵

Politically the other major journaux d'opinion have been classified as follows:

⁵⁴ Editor and Publisher, International Year Book, Vol. 66 (New York, January 27, 1934), p. 219.

⁵⁵ Desmond, Press and World, pp. 214-215.

NEWSPAPER	PARTY POSITION	CIRCULATION (normally in 1933)
<u>Journal des Débats</u>	Center	35,000
<u>Le Figaro</u>	Center	100,000
<u>Le Temps</u>	Center	120,000
<u>L'Ère Nouvelle</u>	Radical-Socialist	Not recorded
<u>L'Oeuvre</u>	Radical-Socialist	200,000
<u>Ami du Peuple</u>	Fascist (?)	Not recorded
<u>L'Avenir</u>	Nationalist	Not recorded
<u>Le Jour</u>	Right	250,000
<u>La Victoire</u>	Right	80,000

Source: Editor and Publisher, International Year Book, 1934, p. 219.

Some of these are deserving of a few more comments. Le Journal des Débats went back to 1789; it called itself the "oldest newspaper in France"; it was backed by the de Wendels; and it was very conservative in approach to domestic reforms. Le Figaro was considered respectable, although it was called "the most aristocratic of the dailies." It tended to be ultraconservative on matters involving the Grand Capitalists and the aristocracy. Le Temps was written in a dull, conservative style and it was fair during the "Democratic Crisis"--a period when it was difficult to be so. Le Temps was not widely read in France, but, because its leading editorial was often contributed by a member of the Cabinet, it did influence political leaders. L'Ami du Peuple was edited by Pierre Taittinger, leader of a revolutionary group called the Jeunesses Patriotes. It was subsidized by the perfumer, François Coty, who gave the paper an authoritarian, Bonapartist, and antiparlia-

mentary tone.⁵⁶

The journaux d'information had by far the largest circulation, and they emphasized domestic news. Outstanding under this classification were the so-called Big Five: Le Petit Parisien (1,800,000 circulation), Le Matin (750,000 circulation), Le Journal (1,200,000 circulation), Le Quotidien (600,000 circulation), and L'Écho de Paris (450,000 circulation).⁵⁷ From this list cannot be omitted the very important L'Intransigeant, Paris-Soir, and Paris-Midi. The Big Five were all morning newspapers, and this fact made it easier to circulate all over France during the day. This also broadened their influence, for most of France read one of these newspapers--bought them or borrowed from their neighbors. Le Petit Parisien, with the largest circulation in France, was usually kept moderate by its political editor, Lucien Romier. It supported whatever government was in power because it defended democracy. Le Matin was extremely venal and antiparlamentarian, but well-known because of its editor, Stéphane Lauzanne. Le Journal was sensational. L'Écho de Paris was a nationalist sheet and boasted one famous writer--"Pertinax" (André Géraud). Le Quotidien was one of the strongest upholders of a democratic republic in the period. Thus briefly were the positions taken by the French press as the year 1934 was opening.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Desmond, Press and World, pp. 214-215; the author so labelled these newspapers according to the stand they took on domestic issues.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Desmond, Press and World; also writer's analysis.

As 1934 approached, the French press began an irresponsible attack against the Chamber of Deputies and its methods of operations, the Cabinet members, the ministerial instability, and democratic institutions in general. This antiparliamentary campaign was unusually vicious, unsympathetic, uncooperative, and destructive in nature. The dejected atmosphere existing in France was channeled by members of the "fourth estate" against the government personalities in particular. By December, 1934, newspaper editors thought nothing of using vile names against the government leaders, of threatening them, and of dragging French democracy forever downward.⁵⁹

A sociological study later made of the French press in its conclusions appropriately declared:

The injustices under the preventive régimes and the excesses of repression, brought on--as a reaction--the birth of the freedom of the press. And, in turn, the uncontrolled freedom of the press led to the growth of abuses of the privilege. In a few words, the new press problem is: What can be done with a free press (in France), that has come to be synonymous with an irresponsible press?⁶⁰

The French press in 1933-1934 was to overplay trivial news. It made much ado about nothing. It printed much that was not "fit to print." It perfected the scandal sheet methods of sensational stories, lurid pictures, blatant headlines, lies, insults, and rabid attacks on leading personalities. Taking advantage of the Press' Loi de 29 juillet 1881, which prohibited censorship of what was to be printed,

⁵⁹Boris, "French Press."

⁶⁰Halim Tefvik, Le nouveau régime de la presse (Paris, 1937), p. 53.

it excited the French public against its own government in a libelous manner. This disgraceful campaign reached its climax during our period of study.⁶¹

These vicious newspaper attacks only helped to provoke an already depressed and jangled French public. This "uncontrolled press charivari" was to be one of the strongest elements which almost brought French democracy tumbling down. In retrospect, it is difficult to comprehend what role many newspaper editors had assigned to themselves. The press gave the appearance of being bitter against the democratic form of government, which gave it this freedom it was misusing.⁶²

⁶¹ Sharp, French Republic, p. 31.

⁶² Sisley Huddleston, France and the French (New York, 1925), p. 88; also Modiano, La presse pourrie.

CHAPTER III

THE STAVISKY AFFAIR AS THE POWDER KEG CAUSE: PART I (Filling the Powder Keg)

Stavisky Before 1926

The Stavisky Scandal was to release such a charge over France that rumblings to this very day can still be heard. In the suffocating economic, political, and social atmosphere, so far outlined, it would not be incorrect to say that France had a powder keg full of troubles. Within this cylindrical chamber of miseries, one of the sensitive points was the city of Paris and its occupants. Here the great industrial and commercial houses perpetrating the luxury trades were in full economic panic by the end of 1933. The usual rich tourists were staying away. Paris waited impatiently daily for the rich buyers and the easy-spending visitors who never showed up. Paris pavements were missing the delightful sound of foreign footsteps. No, instead, the streets of the "City of Lights" felt the pangs of unemployment, of high prices, of an unbalanced budget, of a depleted Treasury, and of a chilly antiparliamentary campaign. The disgusted foreign policy and the hackneyed ministerial instability only struck a deeper note of sadness into the citizenry. It was a sad mission that history had during those long, dark days.

Family background and personality.-- Then, like a bombshell, in the midst of all this turbulence burst the Stavisky Scandal. It struck

the center of this sea of troubles and shook the Third French Republic to its very foundation. The date was December 23, 1933. The character was one Alexandre Stavisky. The place was France. The result was a catalytic agent which threatened to destroy France. The revelations even outdid what the most optimistic smearers expected.¹

The man behind all this, the one who lighted the fuse, was Alexandre Stavisky--one of the most intriguing figures in modern French history. This many-sided and energetic personality had an evil destiny to carry out on earth. That being so, he found it advisable to use many aliases in his checkered career: the names "Sacha," "Sacha-Jean," "Serge Alexandre," "Doisy de Monty," "Boitel Victor," "Monsieur Maurice," and simply "Alex" were all to have their usefulness.²

¹Laurent Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes de février, 1934 (Paris, 1935), pp. 15-16.

²M. Ernest Lafont, Rapport Général fait au nom de la Commission d'Enquête chargée de rechercher toutes les responsabilités politiques et administratives encourue depuis l'origine des Affaires Stavisky, Chambre des députés, Annexe 4886, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, March 7, 1935). This is a report of 5600 pages in three volumes paged continuously. It will be cited hereafter as Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," followed by a reference to one of its four main sections:

- (a) Déposition: contains verbatim testimony of witnesses.
- (b) Documents: contains other materials on photographs, checks, and data collected by the Stavisky Inquiry Commission.
- (c) Rapport Général: contains the Stavisky Inquiry Commission's collective report, and opinions of some of its individual members.
- (d) Rapport Spéciaux: contains special police reports.

Alexandre Stavisky was born on November 20, 1886 in Sobodka, Russia. His parents were named Dornia Adamov and Emmanuel Stavisky. His father was a man of some standing in society, as he graduated from the Faculté de Médecine de Paris and had taken up the problems faced by a dental surgeon as his lifetime pursuit. "Alexandre" was still a small boy when both he and his father were naturalized French by a decree of August 29, 1900. "Alexandre" then attended one of the best secondary schools in Paris, the Lycée Condorcet. On December 28, 1900 Stavisky married one Armande Sévère of Paris, but this ended in divorce.³

During his secondary school days, "Alexandre" began contacting ladies whose charms were fading. He became the favorite of an elderly lady who brought him in contact with the fun and race course of Deauville. For the money he had, he became extravagant in his expenses there. When short of cash he would sponge on his father and even older women. He was especially fascinated by the Petit Pot (a name he was to use later in one of his financial enterprises) at the Porte St. Denis. Here he first became acquainted with the narcotic pushers, the white slave racket, and "love at a price." He was fascinated by gambling dens, bookmaking, brothels, and, above all, questionable financial transactions.⁴

For a short while he served in the French army during World War I, although he had failed to register at first. He was unable to break

³Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Spécial: Pachot et Cousin (1931), p. 705.

⁴Paul Lenglois, Vie et mort de Stavisky (Paris, 1934), p. 14.

away from his delinquent conduct pattern even then, and by 1915 he had found a way to be discharged by claiming Russian citizenship during the war. Later on, when times were more peaceful, he would renew his French "patriotism." After his discharge at twenty-eight, he picked up a romantic affair with one Vivianne Lamarre. Miss Lamarre soon found her lover had stolen her jewels. All she could say to the authorities was that she forgave him because she was still madly in love with him. Thus, we can see how shiftless Stavisky really had become. In many circles his youth would even be considered adventurous, but surely not defensible.⁵

If we probe even deeper, we find that Stavisky early developed a taste for the theater and the wild night life that can go with it. As he lacked definite employment and had no thespian ability, his background would appear to have been against him, but, as early as by the end of 1909, "Sacha" was overcoming any barriers in his way. In fact, he decided to start at the top of the theater world by appointing himself artistic director of the Folies-Marigny Theater. This had been rented for him by his grandfather Abraham. This, as we shall see below, was to bring the first encounter "Alexandre" had with the law.⁶

The first major police investigation made of the immoral life of Stavisky was the Rapport Hennett of 1924. This revealed in no uncertain terms how, after leaving his first wife, "Sacha" took his meals

⁵ Alfred D trez, L'Affaire Stavisky (Paris, 1935), pp. 13-17.

⁶ Ibid.; also Alexander Werth, France in Ferment (London, 1935), pp. 79-81.

with his widowed father, but preferred to spend the nights with his many mistresses. After his discharge from the army, he kept himself fed through the money provided by his father or the mistresses he handled. But these were lean pickings as far as "Sacha" was concerned, and he began looking for greener pastures.⁷

Although by 1915 Alexandre Stavisky had already been involved in petty theft and sharp deals, he believed his luck had changed when he formed a partnership with Charles Henri Amouroux that year. Amouroux claimed to have invented a fantastic machine called Le Matryscope which he asserted would become a boon to mankind. This instrument would reveal, once and for all, whether a woman was pregnant so early as several days after cohabitation. To the partners' great sorrow, their customers soon were disappointed and dissatisfied with the result. An irate female who had been swindled out of 24,700 francs finally exposed this lucrative racket to the police. "Sacha" spent the next six months in prison. Amouroux, the inventor, received eighteen months.⁸

Once out of prison, Stavisky became the friend of Madame Jeanne Bloch. Jeanne was then a well-known café-concert singer. She became very fond of her lover, and she was willing to finance his whims if she could. In 1917, while the Montmartre cafés were listening to La Madelon, Madame Bloch installed Stavisky in a cabaret named the Cadet-Rouselle. From the beginning, "Alexandre" carried on an illegal business. A superficial visit to the Cadet-Rouselle brought to the atten-

⁷Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Spécial: Hennett (1924), pp. 664-665.

⁸Ibid.

tion of the customer that Jeanne Bloch was the featured attraction. Furthermore, the excellent chansonniers on the entertainment fare were termed outstanding. In fact, the place offered variety for, too often, the guests were treated to a fight between Stavisky and his mistress because he had been caught with another woman. One of his biographers tells us how Stavisky sold cocaine and heroin in this boite de nuit as a sideline. The cabaret closed in two months.⁹

By 1918 Stavisky's protectoress, Madame Bloch, felt that she had "Alexandre" under her wings. She was sadly mistaken. From her viewpoint the love affair was serious enough, but she soon discovered that Stavisky looked upon her as one more woman to bleed. When she would become enraged by his attitude and conduct towards her, she would refuse him money. Then he would take over and beat her--at times severely. She kept shouting and threatening police action; but she could not make herself go through with it. Moreover, Jeanne knew that at times "Alexandre" pleased her for, in the opinion of many, Stavisky could be regarded as possessing an attractive physique. In the world he moved in that was very important. Jeanne was aware also that "Alexandre" could be very charming and that he possessed the rare "gift of gab." On the other hand, he was lazy, of a doubtful moral stature, and was too interested in older women if they could bring him a profit. Jeanne was one of those misguided creatures who kept trusting, forgiving, and

⁹Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavišky," Rapport Spécial: Hennett (1924), pp. 664-665; also Lenglois, Vie et mort, pp. 34-35.

supporting as unscrupulous a Don Juan as we find in modern history.¹⁰

As we can conclude from the above sketch, Alexandre Stavisky's youth was shaky to say the least; but this was also made possible by the freedom a person could really enjoy under French law. An enemy of society, such as Stavisky, could make use of his questionable talents to take advantage of what he considered "the weaknesses of the French legal system." One thing was clear to the Stavisky Inquiry Commission: society included the large majority of men who were bound by laws, but Stavisky was one person who made his own rules.¹¹

Judicial past of "Serge Alexandre."-- It will be of some importance later if we take up several of these early encounters "Alexandre" had with the law. First on the list we find the Folies-Marigny Theater Case. This sprouted in 1909 when Stavisky's grandfather, desiring to start his "boy Alexandre" on the right road, rented for him for the summer season the Folies-Marigny Theater. As the summer season was considered a quiet one, this theater had always been used only in winter time. But our new director had a theater and big plans, but no money to produce a play, no backers, and no cast. In spite of what even a seasoned director would consider major handicaps, "Sacha" Stavisky, the new genius director, was not worried. Offers of employment for all types of theatrical workers were published. Those who answered the advertisements were asked to put up security, in one form or another,

¹⁰ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Spécial: Hennett (1924), pp. 614-615.

¹¹ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Déposition: all testimonies on Stavisky's person.

which would be returned to them with profits during the first three months. The theater never opened; the money was spent; the case went to court; and delayed justice in 1918 led the case into the filing folder.¹²

Our attention is next drawn to the Mazier versus Amouroux and Stavisky Case (1914-1916). This case had many interesting features. First, it led Stavisky and his partner, Amouroux, to establishing a banking front on the Rue Caumartin. Second, it was to place Stavisky behind bars for six months, as we have seen. Third, it showed that he already knew the value of lawyers who had contacts when he employed M. René Renoult as his attorney. The case itself had a bit of the comic in it and involved Le Matryscope already mentioned. It appeared that a widow, Madame Mazier, had been swindled by the use of Amouroux' pregnancy machine. This widow had important financial resources and soon found she was parting too quickly with them. Puzzling indeed was how she was taken in so easily, for she was seventy-four years old! This case also presented Stavisky as taking a high and mighty attitude with French justice. He complained of delayed justice, of the moral prejudice of his clients, and the bad publicity the partners were receiving. But all this was to no avail, for to prison he went.¹³

The audacity of the man was also well-illustrated by the Stavisky versus Fisc Case (1915-1932). In this court session, Stavisky was a

¹²Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 42-43.

¹³Ibid., pp. 44-45.

claimant against the French Treasury for unpaid war damages. During World War I, "Alexandre" had made a deal with the Italian Government to deliver them 20,000 sheet iron bombs. The Italian Government paid Amouroux and Stavisky 416,250 francs to buy this shipment from Darracq de Suresnes of Paris. Although investigation revealed that the latter had never been paid by Stavisky, "Sacha" argued that he was 219,750 francs short. As the police uncovered more and more dirt. Stavisky said Amouroux must have been the "dirty crook." Amouroux had conveniently left for Austria in 1932. This matter surpassed all credence!¹⁴

The Pereaux versus Stavisky Case (1917-1918) involved his mistress Jeanne Bloch. Jeanne had bought an automobile by paying 10,000 francs down and promising to cover the balance of 20,000 francs in future payments. A few days later, Madame Bloch went to the same car dealer, selected another car, and was allowed to drive it away without depositing anything. Her lover "Alexandre" sold the first car at a lowered price to a rent-a-car businessman and loaned the second car to the same dealer for 20,000 francs. Stavisky in thus assisting his mistress throughout all these transactions seemed to have been master of the situation. He did everything in such a way that the case, once in court, resulted in the conclusion of the court that an offense did not exist. It probably did not exist, but it still did not console the car dealer who had received only 10,000 francs for two vehicles worth 62,000 francs. Stavisky's testimonies showed his vicious intelligence at work,

¹⁴Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 45-48.

and also proved that his shyster friends had coached him well.¹⁵

In this period of initiation during which time Alexandre Stavisky was learning the ways to outwit justice, Jeanne Bloch, his mistress and accomplice, suddenly decided she had enough. This developed into the Jeanne Bloch Case (1921). She made all kinds of charges in the complaint. The main charge was that Jeanne had given her lover 15,000 francs to redeem a ring from the pawnbroker, but Stavisky swore he had lost it on the way. As the case hit bottom, it was brought out that Jeanne was jealous because one Madame Franck had been in on the deal with "Alexandre." Stavisky received thirteen months in prison, but he got out of this by playing on his mistress' heartstrings. Madame Bloch, unable to bear the thought of separation, reopened the case and in tears openly declared her love for "Alexandre." Proof of her love followed when she denied everything she had said before. It turned out that she had misplaced the money under question. Stavisky was acquitted.¹⁶

In the Zelli versus Popovici and Stavisky Case (1923-1924) the observer was treated to one more of the complicated tricks which Stavisky's mind was constantly devising to get his hands on money. This one began when Popovici, at Stavisky's instigation, went to a dance hall operated by Mr. and Mrs. Zelli and paid his bill with a \$50.00 bill in American money. He said that if Mr. Zelli would be so kind, he would prefer his change by a check. He explained that this was a

¹⁵ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 48-49.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

precaution on his part for, when he had too much to drink, he usually was rolled by some evil female. As Stavisky had been the tenant for two years of a room above Zelli's restaurant, he was given as reference. The Zellis in this case regarded Stavisky as an intimate friend and did as they were asked. The check was tampered with and Stavisky collected the money. In court Stavisky got away with it, but Popovici received eighteen months. Thus it can be seen that Stavisky not only cheated his girl friends, but also did not hesitate "to give the works" to his friends, landlords, and foreigners.¹⁷

The Juvet Case (1925) presented Stavisky as the leader of a "mob." This gang now included the nervous and vulgar Henri Hayotte who was to become one of the closest men to Stavisky. In the matter under discussion, Hayotte sold two hundred casks of cognac to a M. Juvet and received 100,000 francs as payment. The buyer, several days later, discovered that the original owner in Anvers had not received a centime for the consignment. The sum involved was 290,000 francs. It was revealed later that M. Juvet, operating on the shady side of the law himself, had made a deal with Stavisky who then had enough police trouble. Hayotte cut this private settlement out of court and reimbursed Juvet 60,000 francs--thus the Stavisky gang made a cool 40,000 franc profit.¹⁸

The above cases are typical of the high-handed methods used by

¹⁷Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 51-52; also Détrez, L'Affaire, p. 19.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 61.

Stavisky before 1926. They should suffice in pointing out that Stavisky fleeced those who had any monetary traffic with him in those days. An exhaustive list would include many others but, space lacking, we can only refer to some of the others. In the Paignault-Valdivia Case (1923-1926), Stavisky was involved in a theft from a mailing bag on the South American ship, the Valdivia. The Wimille versus Stavisky Case (1925-1928) accused Stavisky of cheating Mademoiselle Wimille of 120,000 francs in war damages awarded to her; while the Zweifel or "Forgeries of Brunoy" Case (1926) centered around the forging of false treasury bonds. In the latter case the lithograph plate used to do the engraving was at Brunoy and usually held by Henri Hayotte.¹⁹

The foregoing cases illustrate the development of Stavisky's methods in this period. The constant delayed justice throughout 1909 to 1926, when the Stavisky cases came before the courts, reflects unfavorably on the judges involved. Furthermore, especially in the Zweifel Case, the police did its job well and kept the court well-informed on Stavisky's forging of treasury bonds and other financial documents, but the courts refused to act on the evidence. The Stavisky Inquiry Commission later concluded: "There is probably no other example, in all judicial annals, of a negligence as systematic."²⁰

¹⁹Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 56-73.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 73-74; also Détrez, L'Affaire, pp. 21-22.

From Prison to Bayonne

"Les grandes affaires de 1926."-- The historian is simply amazed that, before 1926, Stavisky had been so often in court and yet escaped imprisonment for his swindling activities. It is indeed a sad commentary on the state of French justice in those days! Yet, in the search for the truth behind the "Democratic Crisis of 1934 in France," he must avoid emotional reactions and present his account in an objective manner.

The year 1926 saw "Serge Alexandre" involved in two cases of such magnitude that they should be temporarily isolated for proper analysis. These were the Labbé Case and the Laforcade Case--termed appropriately the "great affairs of 1926." These, as we shall see, will cast Stavisky more into the mold that he was to be usually associated with thereafter.

The Labbé Case rotated around the purchase of valuables (gold, silver, and the like) from M. Labbé, representative for the Banque Nationale de Crédit and the Banque Spéciale de Crédit. These had been paid for with two checks drawn February 12, 1926, by a M. Perotti on his account in the great houses of Marseille: the Comptoir d'escompte (650,000 francs) and the Crédit Lyonnais (450,000 francs). As can be seen, the sums involved were unusually large. But a little further check on M. Perotti would have revealed him as carrying the alias Martinelli and, in actuality, being none other than our acquaintance, Zweifel. Of course, no one suspected this yet, for the job of covering up had been meticulously planned. With Stavisky's lieutenant, Smilovici,

Zweifel as Perotti had journeyed to Marseilles to open up accounts and to add and withdraw amounts honestly from them, from time to time. Care had been taken to see that sizeable checks had been withdrawn, and more money later deposited to create a reputation of confidence. From now on, these considerable financial, but normal operations, became part of the technique adopted by Stavisky. When M. Labbé presented the respective checks of 650,000 and 450,000 francs, he was sadly informed that Perotti's accounts were almost dry. Stavisky, who had become involved as a reference, now proceeded to calm down M. Labbé, expressed his sympathies, and even took a trip to Marseille with Labbé to check on this Perotti, who had so viciously tricked them. Zweifel, however, not "wanting to be left holding the bag, squealed everything."²¹ It was a sad day for "Alexandre," the swindler!

The details of the Laforcade Case were yet of a more ambitious enterprise. Stavisky bought bullion to the value of 2,800,000 francs in Laforcade's name. Here was an operation without recourse to the usual banking façade. It was a theft, pure and simple. Stavisky's henchmen, Loiseau and Pourcelle, had stolen some bonds and other valuables from Laforcade's files. The police were called in to investigate. The trail led to Alexandre Stavisky's doorstep.²²

The efficient Commissioner of Police, M. Pachot, was assigned to get Stavisky on April 2, 1926. Pachot meticulously went about his

²¹Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 113-140.

²²Ibid., pp. 113-141.

task. His search brought him to Alexandre Stavisky's spacious villa at Marly-le-Roi. The "King of the Crooks" was giving a farewell party before crossing the border into Switzerland. Pachot and the police arrested Hayotte, Loiseau, Pourcelle, Zweifel, Stavisky, and Stavisky's new mistress, Arlette Simon.²³ "Alexandre" had to postpone his sumptuous dinner party. His mistress being pregnant was released soon afterwards, but the others received free board and room in prison for a while. It looked as if everything was over. Apparently Stavisky's father thought so; for, unable to face the disgrace, the elderly Stavisky committed suicide.²⁴

Stavisky in prison.-- Alexandre Stavisky heard the doors of La Santé prison clang behind him on December 8, 1926--the day he began serving his term. His feverish mind already was considering plans for his release. As if the prison's name gave him his clue, he began presenting the state of his health as his principal debating point. He seemed to be hitting a blank wall when the essential ray of hope came in August, 1927. At that time, Doctor Paul of the prison staff concluded his diagnosis of Stavisky's condition. He felt that Stavisky was possibly not faking and suggested treatment at the Fresnes infirmary. The neurasthenic Stavisky was disappointed. What he desired was his complete freedom. Therefore he kept plaguing the medical men. Finally Doctor Paul suggested that "Alexandre" probably should be re-

²³Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 114-116.

²⁴Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 82-83; also Albéric Cahuet, "L'Affaire de Bayonne," L'Illustration, Vol. 4741 (January 13, 1934), p. 37.

moved to a health center for the necessary care. This required placing the patient under "provisional liberty."²⁵

The director of La Santé's prison, at this point, became suspicious of Stavisky's motives when the latter invoked pericaecal abscesses instead of the previous gastrointestinal disorders. Then, without warning, Stavisky switched to dental troubles, head pressures, and the like. This farce ended by one Doctor Desfarges on November 21, 1927, in a certificate, proposing the prisoner's release. Judge Decante, basing his judgment on the medical reports, gave the order to release Alexandre Stavisky. On December 27, 1927, Stavisky's tactics paid off; for, on that day, he walked out of prison under "provisional liberty" with 50,000 francs for bail. He swore he would never return again. Yet he was about to launch himself into the explosive Bayonne Affair.²⁶

While in La Santé, "Alexandre" had been allowed to see his mistress and illegitimate son. In 1929, Arlette finally became his wife. A rather untrustworthy authority on Stavisky later claimed that she was used, because of her physical attractiveness, as a go-between with politicians. This author also accused Arlette of passing money to certain Radical-Socialists and of being the mother of an illegitimate son in 1922. Part of this was later shown to be true--especially the son. His marriage was to become a mania with Stavisky. Although he was to

²⁵Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 41-42; also Détrez, L'Affaire, pp. 25-28.

²⁶Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 41-42.

be often away from home, he constantly insisted on referring to his family, usually in tears.²⁷

Judicial Corruption

French judicature or justice versus promotion.-- In order to understand how people like Stavisky could get away for so long with what they did, we need to refer to the French judicial system. Fortunately, an invaluable study of it has already been made.²⁸

A French boy who aspired to enter the French magistrature, at this period, had a rather strict period of study ahead. First, he had to complete his secondary school education and then move on to an accepted law school. In the latter institution, he spent a large part of his time studying the courts' past decisions, the French legal system, and the French traditions. Next came a period of apprenticeship with a lawyer or a judge. Finally, the degree of Licencié en Droit was given if the candidate passed a stiff qualifying bar examination. As the Ministry of Justice made all legal profession assignments in France, the young man, having attained the minimum age of twenty-five, had to wait for an appointment from this bureau. If this hope was realized, he became a magistrat within the French magistrature.²⁹

The magistrats were all considered as judges, and they were divided into three main groups: (1) the bench itself, (2) staff member

²⁷Jean Bardanne, Stavisky, Espion Allemand (Paris, 1934), pp. 96-98.

²⁸R. C. K. Ensor, Courts and Judges (Oxford, 1933).

²⁹Ibid., p. 26.

in the Ministry of Justice, and (3) the "parquets." The ambitious young man or French magistrat early was made aware of the importance of fast promotion within the conic legal system of his country: he had, above all, to try to prevent being pegged too long in one place. It did not matter at first what type of assignment he received, as long as he kept advancing upward. His journey to the top would acquaint him with three major types of work: (1) Civil Service labor in the Ministry of Justice, (2) State Attorney's briefs and defense in the "parquets" tied to the different courts, and (3) judging as we know it in the United States. Ensor here poignantly commented:

Indeed, if he is to climb fast and go far in his profession, the less time he spends on the Bench itself during his climbing years, the better. There is more scope for distinguishing oneself in the "parquet;" while best of all for accelerating one's rise are the posts in the Ministry of Justice--at all events, those that bring one into any sort of personal contact with the Minister. An analysis of the careers of leading French judges leaves no doubt on these points.³⁰

As the so-called Principle of Collegiality dominated in every French court, several magistrats usually sat to hear and judge a case. The efficiency of such a system might bring was stifled by the 3,600-odd judges the system demanded, and the poor pay that could be afforded. The temptation to venality was therefore always a possibility. This, in fairness, was not necessarily a black and white conclusion, for many of the members of the French magistrature came from relatively well-to-do families and could look to a financially favorable marriage union.³¹

³⁰Ensor, Courts, p. 27.

³¹Ibid., pp. 28-32.

If the magistrature system had its idiosyncracies, so did the actual court system. Jurors were not used in civil cases while their activities were limited to sitting only in the highest courts for criminal cases. French juries were considered too sentimental and unreliable. The burden of deciding a case on facts tended more and more to fall upon the magistrats.

To make things more complicated for the uninitiated, each court had a "parquet" section attached to it. The head of the "parquet" was termed a procureur or State Attorney, and under him were the assistants called either substituts or avocats-généraux. These were collectively referred to as the Standing Magistrature, when compared to the magistrats, who judged within the assize and were known as the Sitting Magistrature. The "parquets" had a serious duty: the defense of France's interests.³²

In this system, before a defendant went to court, he appeared before an investigating judge called a juge d'instruction in a criminal case. The latter's position was a strategic one, for he issued the arresting order. The amount of power inherent in this status fell into its proper perspective when it was realized that the one arrested had no right to resort to Habeas Corpus, because it did not exist in France. Of course, it can be seen how a delaying order would help a culprit from languishing in prison where he belonged. The juge d'instruction was also the one responsible for ordering searches and seizures of documents and other property. Of paramount importance was his duty to

³²Ensor, Courts, pp. 33-34.

interrogate all suspects. As he was the initial cog that started the wheels of French justice moving, if he were bribed the machine never needed to start. This possibility was even more probable for this honor gave a very poor financial remuneration. The person in such a status usually was still young and ambitious, and would be willing to overlook something if someone who could help his career was the one making the demand.³³

In this work we shall need to refer to the French Court system as it was then. The author had therefore included a brief summary of both the Civil and Criminal divisions. The Civil Court branch could be outlined as follows:

COURT	NUMBER	JURISDICTION
Tribunal of First Instance (3 judges)	360 placed over 90 <u>départements</u>	Where civil litigation over 300 francs, for divorces, for damages
Court of Appeal (3 <u>robe rouge</u> judges)	1 per <u>ressort</u> or jurisdictional area (26 in France)	Hears appeals. Only one appeal allowed
Court of Cassation (separate chambers)	1 only -- in Paris	Nationwide jurisdiction. Does not listen to appeals but only <u>révision</u> (law questions).

Sources: Ensor, Courts, pp. 35-38; also Lévêque, Histoire, p. 503.

³³ Ensor, Courts, pp. 35-38; also André Levêque, Histoire de la civilisation française (New York, 1950), p. 503.

The French Criminal Court System appeared as:

COURT	NUMBER	JURISDICTION
Correctional Tribunal	1 per <u>arrondissement</u>	No juries. Tries smaller offenses called <u>délits</u> .
Assize Courts (3 judges)	1 per <u>département</u>	Hears appeals. Twelve jurors used only in gravest crimes. No appeal above here.
Court of Cassation (Separate chambers)	1 only -- in Paris	Hears no appeals; only <u>révision</u> on points of law.

Source: Ensor, Courts, pp. 38-46.

Now certain threads in this court system are more tangible for those like Stavisky who would misuse their services. One conclusion was that the magistrats nearer Paris could be more influential in advancing their promotions than their colleagues out in outlying provinces. A second connecting point of interest was that it would pay eventually to have friends who "could pull wires for you" at the Ministry of Justice. Last, but not least, was the truth that within this enmeshed system was a politician. He was the head of the Ministry. As we shall see, all these three points were made to be an advantage for Alexandre Stavisky. Again the indispensable Ensor clinched this view firmly when he wrote:

For the most potent deputies in the Parliament, the men who are impregnable in their own seats and who can stampede the Chamber at critical moments, or who wield such blocks of

votes that their support or neutrality commands a high price from day to day--in short, the men with whom Ministers have traffic most and who may themselves at any moment become ministers--are by profession, as a rule, advocates. That is to say, they practice before the judges. But the judges depend on the favor of a Minister, and the Minister depends on that of these politician-advocates. The conclusion from such data is not difficult to draw, and in the practice of the French courts it is drawn quite freely.

In private it is easy to hear the most staggering instances, not as a matter of idle gossip, but from the lips of men in every way reliable. And the best confirmation of them lies in the fact that big clients with big money at stake flock to the advocates credited with this occult power.³⁴

And what a power it was in our period of interest! A comprehension of it and all its inherent possibilities for corruption made up the subdivision called the "judicial scandal" within the larger frame of the Stavisky Affair. "Serge Alexandre" was to take advantage of most of the weaknesses.

Delayed justice and Stavisky's "nineteen postponements."-- From 1929 to 1933, Alexandre Stavisky obtained the delaying of justice in his case, by one mean or other, nineteen times. Every move cost dearly but it was worth it. The following table showed the results:

³⁴Ensor, Courts, pp. 41-42.

Date of Court Hearing	Date of Remittance of Case	Reason for Case Postponement
October 11, 1929	November 15, 1929	For information
November 15, 1929	November 22, 1929	For placing on agenda
November 22, 1929	February 21, 1930	For placing on agenda
February 21, 1930	First day possible	For medical-legal reason
May 23, 1930	June 20, 1930	For medical-legal reason
June 20, 1930	In four weeks	For placing on agenda
July 18, 1930	October 17, 1930	For placing on agenda
October 17, 1930	January 16, 1931	Stavisky's address needed
January 16, 1931	February 20, 1931	Stavisky's address needed
February 20, 1931	May 8, 1931	Stavisky's address
May 8, 1931	July 3, 1931	Stavisky's address
July 3, 1931	November 13, 1931	Stavisky's address
November 13, 1931	January 22, 1932	Demand of André Hesse
January 22, 1932	May 21, 1932	Demand of André Hesse
May 21, 1932	October 28, 1932	Demand of André Hesse
October 28, 1932	January 20, 1933	Demand of André Hesse
January 20, 1933	May 12, 1933	Lawyers demand time
May 12, 1933	October 20, 1933	Lawyers demand time
October 20, 1933	January 26, 1934	Stavisky was dead.

Source: Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), p. 125.

These frequent postponements and the reasons given were "a laugh at French justice's expense." It has been explained that Stavisky was placed on "provisional liberty" with 50,000 francs bail. Before these postponements started operating, "Alexandre" went through a lot of trouble to gain time to make "the proper connections." A great help in this was when on January 8, 1929, Stavisky produced a certificate from his doctor, Pierre Vachet, declaring to the tribunal that his client had a general paralysis, symptoms of muscular deficiency, some form of speech trouble, mental characteristics emphasized by a persecution complex, delusions of grandeur, lapses of memory, and a weakening

intelligence. From then on Stavisky let his lawyers take over, and he made it clear that he did not want to return to prison--no matter what price it would cost. The results were the "nineteen postponements."³⁵

In January, 1934, the men involved in helping Alexandre Stavisky to secure these postponements were to make the headline news. The latter revealed that M. Hurlaux, a Paris magistrat, had dealings with Stavisky. Many members of the "parquet" would have gladly hidden their heads in shame for they were especially responsible for renewing Stavisky's everlasting "provisional freedom." For instance, it will be noticed that the court was often lax in pushing the case. The postponements depended technically on the Paris Parquet whose procureur was M. Pressard, the Premier's brother-in-law. Pressard later testified before the Stavisky Inquiry Commission that all nineteen postponements could be legally justified. His testimony further proved that a man to do what Stavisky had done needed many friends in the right places within the French judicial system.³⁶

Legal Corruption

Lawyer-deputies and shyster techniques.-- In 1927, after the French "King of Crooks" was "provisionally released," he made sure that he employed the services of lawyer-deputies. "Political lawyers with big connections" were part of the evil doers associated with Stavisky. The Stavisky Inquiry Commission later condemned these selfish

³⁵ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 70-71.

³⁶ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Déposition: Pressard; also Werth, France in Ferment, p. 234.

individuals who sold their honor in such a disgraceful fashion. These attorneys usually knew Stavisky's record but, being shysters, they kept it away from the Paris Parquet's daily gossip materials. Negligence and complacency already had invaded the Parquet's offices, so there was no danger of too many questions being posed.³⁷

The greasing of the shysters' palms worked miracles for "Serge Alexandre." M. René Renoult, for instance, was a former Minister of Justice, whom Stavisky employed as his attorney before 1926. M. Renoult before the Stavisky Inquiry Commission admitted receiving 50,000 francs to help suspend Stavisky's arrest through M. Prouharam, the procureur.³⁸ This "legal scandal" was also to bring out that Pierre Chautemps, the Premier's brother, had defended Henri Hayotte. Arlette Simon, Stavisky's mistress, used Paul-Boncour as her lawyer. It was obvious that influential political friends could impress the parquet and the magistrats. Stavisky was surely aware of this fact, if we judge from the names of the legal advisors he secured. Some were innocently involved, but they served the purpose.³⁹

Stavisky and the Police

Organization of the French police.-- Besides involving a "judicial scandal" and a "legal scandal," the Stavisky Affair, when it broke out over France, exposed that a serious "police scandal" was also within

³⁷ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Déposition: Pressard; also Werth, France in Ferment, p. 233.

³⁸ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 234.

³⁹ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), p. 115.

France's powder keg of troubles. It will be valuable for the understanding of the latter scandal if we gather some knowledge of how the French police then went about its business. For this mission and for proper guidance we will rely heavily on Paul Allard, an important authority of the French police in this period.⁴⁰

The French police in round numbers totalled 32,000 agents--half of these public protectors were in Paris itself. Further microscopic analysis told us that of the 16,000 Parisian law-enforcement officers, 14,000 were gardiens de la paix, the well-known uniformed peace officers walking the streets of the great city. These 14,000 men were further broken down into four brigades whose members worked eight-hour shifts. In times of troubles or riots, they were doubled or worked overtime. This police force, however, was concentrated in the interior of Paris, and left the suburbs relatively unprotected. For example, St. Denis, a Communist center with a large, spreading population, had only forty policemen available. The weakness of such an organization was evident.⁴¹

Less conspicuous than these 14,000 policemen, the remaining 2,000 law-enforcement officers were plain-clothes men belonging either to the police judiciaire (Judiciary Police) or the renseignements généraux. The Judiciary Police, as the name implied, took its assignment from the Ministry of Justice and it was responsible for the serving of warrants and other stints given out by the Paris Parquet. The other branch, the

⁴⁰Paul Allard, L'anarchie de la police (Paris, 1934).

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 5-6.

renseignements généraux, was in more ways than one the "eyes and ears" of the Paris Municipal Police. It had the more adventurous and dangerous undertakings such as the investigations, the following of suspects, the giving of police protection to important people, and the looking into any matter which involved the public's interest. This last duty had to do with the French counterspy activities--an extremely efficient but poorly advertised service, for obvious reasons.⁴²

Now if we move away from the Paris Municipal Police itself to look at the larger and broader French police, we soon discover that it had two main arms: the Préfecture de police (Prefecture of Police) and the Sûreté-générale (shortened to Sûreté). It does not take long to uncover the significant fact that the two groups are torn from within by an extreme jealousy of one another. This jealousy was based partly on the opposition they gave each other in the areas they considered under their responsibility. Technically speaking, the Préfecture was in charge of Paris and the Department of the Seine; while the Sûreté was given the rest of France as its territory. In reality, the lines of demarcation were not that rigid. In fact, they were so fluid that at times the problem of who should arrest whom-where became an inextricable maze. This anomalous system had deep roots and had evolved through the centuries. It would take a major national police reform before it could be straightened out properly.⁴³

⁴²Allard, L'anarchie, pp. 5-6.

⁴³Ibid., p. 7.

This double supervision of Paris sometimes could in a specific case present a buffoonish situation. Such an absurd development usually occurred in railroad stations or on railroad routes. The yards of the great Paris terminals were under the eyes of the Préfecture; the corridors of the station were covered by Commissioners from the Ministry of Public Works; and the other parts were usually left for the Sûreté. An escaping prisoner could bring a lot of debating and quarrelling among the law officials in such a mess! At times it became very difficult to know who had the power to act.⁴⁴

For our later reference, it would be appropriate at this time to give a few moments to the police in the provinces. As we have seen, the uniformed policemen of Paris and all other towns were not gendarmes, a mistake often made, but gardiens de la paix or agents de ville. The Gendarmeries formed part of the Ministry of War, but certain of its sections, such as the garde républicaine (Republican Guard) and the gardes mobiles (Mobile Guards), were employed by the other ministries in time of emergency.⁴⁵ These two last named subdivisions were to participate actively in the quelling of the disturbances occurring in Paris in January and February, 1934, and totalled 38,000 men. The gendarmes were especially needed in some French towns and villages where the police were almost nonexistent. Furthermore, those that did exist

⁴⁴Allard, L'anarchie, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁵Jean Galtier-Boissière, Mysteries of the French Secret Police (London, 1938), p. 9.

still operated as they did in the nineteenth century and lacked phones, proper financial support, and technical equipment.⁴⁶

Overlapping and jealousy in police administration.-- Much overlapping and jealousy in law enforcement resulted in France in 1934 under the police organization just described. If the Préfecture had information on someone, it made sure that its rival did not get its hands on it. Furthermore, the deep-seated jealousy was only inflamed daily more and more by the fact that the Préfecture's policeman was paid double the salary of his counterpart in the Sûreté. Here the important French authority on the French police aptly noted:

The brave gardien de la paix of the Porte Saint-Denis makes 32,000 francs which represents the maximum salary of a First Class Inspector of the Sûreté. That is to say, because it is true, this places our functionaries in the police at the mercy of temptations. If there are some "itchy sheep" among them, it is because they are tempted to do some "weaving;" that is, private police work.

These "itchy sheep," said a high personality to me in the Sûreté, "are imposed on us, anyway, by politics and the politicians. For do not forget that, by our laws, five-sixths of our civil servants are veterans placed in reserved posts by the Ministry of Pensions."⁴⁷

This political intervention in police work was a demoralizing factor; it could paralyze an investigation or an arrest. The Préfecture here was more careful and kept a sort of defense by keeping secret documents under lock and key in a special department called the "service of the roses." The "roses" referred to prominent political figures on whom dossiers were gathered and filled with such delightful

⁴⁶Allard, L'anarchie, pp. 69-70.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 14-15.

material as the names of their mistresses, their irregularities, their public appearances, and other revealing items.⁴⁸ But this political piston moving up and down the police hierarchy usually had its way, for when meeting obstructions, it could always be greased. How this could work was clearly shown in the Stavisky Affair. Once Alexandre Stavisky sent word to the former Prefect of Police, Hudelo, informing him that the Sûreté was about to search Hudelo's home. The ex-prefect was alarmed, but Stavisky soon reassured him that there would be no further investigation and no search if Hudelo used his influence in the Préfecture to have him freed and his case adjourned. This Hudelo did. Stavisky, who originally had suggested the search, used his knowledge of the jealousy rampant in the police to hush the matter.⁴⁹

Jealousy in law enforcement prevented valuable information assembled by the Préfecture or the Sûreté from circulating. The Prefect of the Seine with his imposing headquarters next door to the law courts, on the Île de la Cité, looked disfavorably upon the Sûreté with its horrible offices on the Rue des Saussaies. Jean Belin, former Commissioner at the Sûreté wrote in his memoirs:

With all these resources at its disposal, the Préfecture constitutes a state within a state. Though the Prefect is appointed by the Minister of the Interior, if he is a strong personality, he may be difficult to remove because of his popularity with the public and with his own staff. Besides this, he has so much political power that, until 1939, it

⁴⁸Allard, L'anarchie, pp. 52-60.

⁴⁹Pierre Lazareff, Dernière édition (New York, 1940), pp. 194-196; also Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Déposition: Hudelo.

was considered to be a promotion for the head of the Sûreté to be transferred to the Préfecture. The rivalry that existed between our two principal police organizations was such that time and again their men handled the same case in direct competition and quite frequently they would try to discredit each other.⁵⁰

The battle that was waged at high level was also fought lower down the ladder. This could be noticed in crime detection in France for, as in many countries, this was then largely based on using informers.⁵¹

The latter were recruited from a group the police felt had committed misdemeanors. They would be "let off easy" with the understanding that they would inform the police when they knew something important. In our period, the Sûreté and the Préfecture enjoyed damaging each other's work by arresting their rival informers. Apparently, these informers were not screened too carefully, for Stavisky was one!⁵²

Inspector Bayard had been the Pachot in 1926 when Stavisky was arrested at Marly-le-Roi. Soon after Bayard made "Alexandre" his contact. Inspector Bayard of the Sûreté explained that he had given Stavisky a card introducing him in case of need to fellow detectives. Bayard added that Stavisky informed the police chiefly about dope fiends, thieves, and forgers. The meeting place for the "passing of the tips" was the Stock Exchange.⁵³ The disclosure of this fact in 1934 was to lead to many antidemocratic comments.

⁵⁰ Jean Belin, My Work at the Sûreté (Toronto, 1950), p. 120.

⁵¹ André Ulmann, Le quatrième pouvoir: police (Paris, 1935), Ch. VII.32.

⁵² Belin, My Work, p. 120.

⁵³ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 313-

The famous police reports.-- The "police scandal" subdivision of the larger Stavisky Affair became even more shameful when the Stavisky Inquiry Commission uncovered the long record Stavisky had with the police. The police reports dated as far back as 1924. In that year the Rapport Hennett not only reflected credit on its compiler, but it was quite accurate on Stavisky's movements, legal and illegal, before that date. Yet this commendable effort was to remain unsung for a decade, for the Sûreté kept it hidden for the time being.⁵⁴

The Sûreté was no better than the Préfecture in tracking down Stavisky. The whole police had known ever since 1928 that "Alexandre" and Stavisky were the same man but, as Inspector Simon testified before the Stavisky Inquiry Commission, Stavisky "had been untouchable at the Sûreté." Inspector Colombani seconded his colleague and added that Stavisky could always count on leniency at the Sûreté. Colombani blamed the strong "political interventions" brought to bear in favor of Stavisky. Further testimonies only accentuated these disgusting assertions.⁵⁵

The Rapport Hennett, dated June 20, 1924, was made for Commissioner Pachot of the Judiciary Police of the Sûreté. It told of Stavisky's early crooked escapades, his blackmails, his thefts, and his other schemes as far back as the Folies-Marigny Case of 1909. It concluded that Stavisky was a cheat and should be watched. The Rapport Imberdis,

⁵⁴Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Spécial: Hennett, pp. 664-665.

⁵⁵Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Déposition: Police, Volumes I and II.

completed on December 10, 1926, was again at Pachot's request. With intelligent precision Commissioner Imberdis described Stavisky, his past record, and warned that his business was swindling people.⁵⁶

On March 18, 1930 the monumental Rapport Gripois was ready for distribution to the proper people. That was never done! This document not only included a very specific analysis of Stavisky's past but also gave "run downs on his gang." The Rapport Cousin et Pachot (May 21, 1931) went even further, for it was the most comprehensive report ever done on Stavisky. It showed that knowledge of Stavisky was widespread among the police administrators. Yet all this fine material based on minute investigation was allowed to be suffocated by the police.⁵⁷

André Tardieu when testifying before the Stavisky Inquiry Commission referred with force to the importance of one Inspector Lecerre's testimony. Lecerre explained that at the Sûreté the "dossier Stavisky" was locked in the bureau of Commissioner Hennett, and that special permission was needed to consult it. He further added pertinently that this was standard procedure in cases considered "especially important." Lecerre could recall only two or three times in eight years service when so much precaution was taken to protect a dossier.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapports Spéciaux: Hennett and Imberdis, pp. 664-667.

⁵⁷ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapports Spéciaux: Gripois et Cousin-Pachot, Vol. I; also Détrez, L'Affaire, Ch. IV.

⁵⁸ André Tardieu, Sur la pente (Paris, 1935), pp. 161-162.

In summary, it is impossible to get around one fact found by a study of the Stavisky Affair and its connection to the leading French democratic institutions of the period: Stavisky's contact with the French Court System, the legal profession, the police, and the parliamentarians added to unsavory comments on French democracy. Stavisky was known by those in charge of justice to have a long and checkered past. Stavisky was helped by the lawyer-deputies who placed "money" above "country." Stavisky was familiar to police circles through the Gripois and Cousin-Pachot reports. Especially damaging on the Third Republic's records was the willingness of a number of politicians and parliamentarians to use their positions and influence in behalf of questionable individuals. Very pointedly the Stavisky Inquiry Commission expressed its repulsion after studying the "judicial scandal," the "legal scandal," and the "police scandal" by the conclusion that:

A very heavy accusation must be given to the responsible services because they permitted Stavisky to act without punishment for many years. These responsible services are the parquet de la Seine, the Sûreté-générale, and the Préfecture de police....

The rivalry between the services of the Judiciary Police and the Préfecture prevented all initiative coming from one or the other.

It is regrettable that the Judiciary Police did not believe itself obligated to transmit the "rapports" relative to the activities of Stavisky, and that seeing the records did not move in the Paris Parquet, they (members of the Judiciary Police) did not insist on more vigorous action by the superiors.

The Parquet and the Judiciary Section, warned of Stavisky's previous activities and his many frauds since 1930, did nothing during this period....

These institutions stand condemned!⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 504-512.

CHAPTER IV

THE STAVISKY AFFAIR AS THE POWDER KEG CAUSE: PART II (Hunting the Vanished Crook)

The Almost Great Financial Schemes

The almost great financial dreams.-- In our last episode we saw how Stavisky's career was gradually moving towards the specialization in crooked high finance that was to make him notorious in modern French history. The historian's task is considerably lightened by the hours which the members of the Stavisky Inquiry Commission spent in gathering, sifting, and classifying an immense amount of disconnected data. To go through all of Stavisky's many financial schemes would be time-consuming and of doubtful value. Therefore, the presentation below will not only be a selective one, but it will be condensed to the essential points needed to comprehend how these financial affairs were a strong factor in bringing on the "Democratic Crisis of 1934 in France."¹

The initial financial schemes undertaken by "Serge Alexandre" were not so significant as the ones Stavisky organized after being released from prison in 1927. In order to understand the later but "more stupendous financial schemes," the historian must give attention to the early financial swindles engineered by Stavisky. These early efforts can be collectively termed the "almost great financial dreams."

¹See Footnote 2 in Chapter III for reference we will use in our footnotes for this chapter.

The first of the "almost great financial dreams" was established in 1923 as Chez Elle. This company almost died in infancy and never amounted to much. Learning from the mistakes he made in founding Chez Elle, Stavisky threw himself into two more financial ventures almost simultaneously. The Compagnie Industrielle Transcontinentale dealt superficially with the sale of commercial goods and the transfer of rehabilitation bonds, while the company La Jurançonne issued various types of watered stocks. Both these schemes were used as a front for speculators, and Stavisky found them a great benefit when he wished to deal with crooked money-changers. The actual operations as stated in their charters never seemed to be realized as far as these two enterprises were concerned.²

But Alexandre Stavisky was also interested in building up a background for respectability in finance. This was his main motive when he invested in the Nouveau-Marseille or Société Foncière Phocéène. The founder of this company, M. Regnaudin, an important figure in financial circles then, felt it was an honor for him to be trusted as the administrator of the funds invested by M. Alexandre Stavisky and M. Henri Hayotte. The purpose of this company was the development of small property.³

With these initial endeavors behind him, "Alexandre" felt he knew enough to stop playing "the silent partner," and so, in 1926, he began

²Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 147-163.

³Ibid., pp. 160-172.

his first notable financial deal: the P'ti Pot. The objective of this company was supposed to be the exploitation of a business producing condensed soup. So now "Alexandre" was talking, dreaming, and selling soup. This soup business for Stavisky was a milestone in his career because, for the first time, the Stavisky gang made its appearance as stockholders in the P'ti Pot. These shareholders made up an impressive list of some of the top French underworld characters of the period: Cachard, Hayotte, Loiseau, Mikowsky, Pourcelle, Schmitt, Stavisky, and Doctor Vachet. Gilbert Ramognino, Stavisky's secretary, later joined this group; and Henri Hayotte, Stavisky's right-hand lieutenant, held the most shares (307). The gang soon had to sell their soup business for "a stretch in the cooler." The law placed them behind bars for the Laforcade Affair!⁴

Once out of prison in 1927, Alexandre Stavisky set up one of the main props in his financial dreams: the Société des Établissements Alex (1928). This company's interests involved varied dealings in jewelry, ornaments, gold and silver objects, and art works. Stavisky graciously allowed the use of his nickname, and the Stavisky gang once more was in business--the luxury trade. The Établissements Alex showed that "Serge Alexandre" was now using the technique of putting up most of the money but keeping himself in the background. Henri Hayotte, his favorite "among the boys," was assigned the managership. Hayotte saw to it that the Établissements Alex opened up three important jewelry

⁴Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 160-172.

shops and placed the proper tentacles in Touquet-Paris-Plage, Biarritz, and Cannes. Within this triangular setup, the Stavisky gang became "big-time operators," and they used the Établissements Alex "as a front" for irregular financial activities. The Établissements Alex carried on a loan trade which netted sizeable revenues. It was not long before false gems, especially emeralds, became a "specialty of the house." For the connoisseur a certain amount of true precious stones were kept on hand. Eventually the latter totalled ten million francs in valuation.⁵

The Établissements Alex became almost entirely devoted to sponsoring Stavisky's major interests. The false emeralds and fraudulent bonds involved in the later Crédit Municipal d'Orléans, as we shall see, were possessions of the Établissements Alex. The same use was made of this company to organize Stavisky's most ambitious scheme-- the Bayonne Bond Fraud. When in 1931 it became impossible to keep the jewelry stock tied down, because they were needed for the yet larger schemes under advisement, the Établissements Alex were liquidated.⁶

Then "Alexandre" began to take trips to all points of Western Europe and founded numerous financial schemes. The complete list makes one gasp at the distance covered and the efforts expended in setting up these crooked financial companies. A roll call of these shaky enterprises would reveal the following to be of considerable size: the Crédit

⁵Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 179-181.

⁶Ibid., pp. 178-181.

National du Luxembourg, La Holding Bourgeoise, and Trust Foncier Belge.

He seemed about to put much energy into Belgium and Luxembourg, but just as these international financial houses were demanding more attention, "Alexandre" was forced to reduce the size of their activities because of the time he had to devote in Paris to his major schemes.⁷

One of the main reasons why Alexandre Stavisky allowed "his foreign deals to cool" was the attention he needed to give to his newest enterprise created in 1929: the Compagnie Foncière. This company placed Stavisky in control of the principal financial transactions although, technically, his friend, Édouard Cazenave, held most of the stock. This was a sizeable company investmentwise, and it advertised its main interest as being the development of public works. Stavisky became convinced that this Compagnie Foncière was as big a thing as he had ever attempted, and he decided that it demanded a lot of dressing. As he scouted around, Stavisky was informed that M. Hudelo was in charge of low-cost housing in the Ministry of Public Works; while M. Monod was the man to see if you had any "propositions to help salvage the liberated regions."⁸ "Serge Alexandre" also picked up the tip that these men were willing "to be reasonable if approached properly." Stavisky's political-lawyers, Gaulier and Guiboud-Ribaud, proved to be the friends he needed and "the right connections were made." Alfred Détérez, a rather amazing worker on the Stavisky Affair, in spite of his

⁷ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 183-192.

⁸ Ibid.

prejudices against masons, struck an important chord when he wrote:

When all was ready, one day in April, all that was left to do was to allow the administrators in on the deal. These were: President Hudelo, the Vice-President Monod, M. Verrier, the former Mayor of Paris; M. Dargent, honorary justice of the peace; M. Wurtz, member of the Cabinet; M. Linarès, property holder; and the banker Cachard--who had never been in such good company--and the former President of the Military Inter-allied Commission in Bulgaria, General Bardi de Fourtou. The latter was a member of the reserve, who was pleased with his new friends, but hoped that he could escape this time without recourse to his lawyer--M. Camille Chautemps.⁹

It was not too long afterwards that General Bardi de Fourtou became one of the most trusted individuals within the Stavisky gang.¹⁰

The hurdles all surmounted, Stavisky was on his way to forming the Compagnie Foncière with a capital of 2,500,000 francs. The company's charter made it essential that the government support this scheme. This was done when the Compagnie Foncière became the recipient of important government contracts for works in the Paris suburbs, the construction of highways through the Pyrénées, the pulling down of fortifications circling Perpignan, and the reconstruction of many demolished homes in Paris. The whole affair looked legitimate enough until the bills began pouring into the government offices--the prices seemed double or triple what they should be! Soon the whole package involved totalled 10,000,000 francs, and there seemed more where that came from. As the financial dealings became higher the Ministry of Finance threatened an investigation. Hudelo, at this point, "calmed down the angry

⁹Alfred Détérez, L'Affaire Stavisky (Paris, 1935), pp. 51-52.

¹⁰Bardi de Fourtou was condemned to prison for two years in 1936; see Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), p. 311.

spirits," made a few appropriate phone calls, and upheld Stavisky as an "honest man." In our previous chapter, we mentioned how "Alexandre" had thrown the scare into Hudelo.¹¹

Next "Alexandre" moved into a well-established firm, the S.I.M.A. (Société d'Installations Mécaniques et Agricoles). The S.I.M.A. had been founded in Paris in 1923 and was a legitimate corporation interested in mechanical, industrial, commercial, mining, and agricultural machinery. Then, in 1929, Stavisky bought S.I.M.A.'s shares. That year no more dividends were distributed to the stockholders. The annual report was a little late for it needed doctoring to be done to it. Someone was absorbing the money somewhere, but the excuse offered the stockholders was that the profits were needed for expansion into the production of "Phébor" refrigerators. Gaston Bonnaure, later deputy, was Stavisky's attorney, and he was in charge of providing the proper terminology for this lack of dividends from then on.¹²

In 1932 came the creation of one more company by Stavisky, the so-called S.A.P.I.E.N.S. (Société Anonyme de Publicité d'Impressions et d'Éditions Nouvelles de la Seine). The leadership here was held by Albert Dubarry, the editor of the Paris newspaper, La Volonté. The S.A.P.I.E.N.S. was organized for the exploitation of the press, libraries,

¹¹Edouard Cazenave, high stockholder in the Compagnie Foncière, received two years' imprisonment in 1935; see Docs. Parl., "Rapp Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 53-55, 331.

¹²Gaston Bonnaure was condemned to one year in prison in 1936; see Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 317-320, 198.

publishing firms, publicity, advertisement, and the like. Dubarry had introduced "Alex" into the newspaper world, and both men decided that La Volonté would be the vanguard of a campaign to muzzle unfavorable public opinion towards the "almost great financial schemes."¹³

From the first, S.A.P.I.E.N.S. met much opposition. This new mania "Alexandre" had to control the petite presse led him into many costly but fruitless negotiations. As the failure of S.A.P.I.E.N.S. became obvious, Stavisky and Henri Hayotte tried to prevent the whole matter from collapsing by trying to interest Joseph Kessel and his brother George in spearheading a Stavisky-sponsored newspaper of major proportion. The Kessel brothers were lavishly entertained but, in spite of all this, they stuck to their original demand for a periodical. Stavisky tried to tempt them by balancing the sum of 18,000,000 francs before them, but to no avail. It probably reminded "Alexandre" of 1926 when he attempted to control the Eiffel Tower's radio transmission system but similarly failed to impress the right people.¹⁴

But "Alexandre" would not give up S.A.P.I.E.N.S. so easily. He became involved, again unsuccessfully, with Paul Lévy of Le Rempart and Aux Écoutes. He pushed 50,000 francs Camille Aymard's way; Aymard took the money but offered little compensation in his newspaper, La Liberté. Finally, Stavisky accepted defeat for S.A.P.I.E.N.S. in 1933--

¹³ Jean Pennes (Sennep), Livre de Comptes de Stavisky: le rire (Paris, 1934); also Alexander Werth, France in Ferment (London, 1938), p. 84.

¹⁴ Joseph Kessel, Stavisky, l'homme que j'ai connu (Paris, 1934), pp. 20-31.

the venture had cost him 3,553,810 francs. This financial scheme became a touchy subject for "Alex."¹⁵

If S.A.P.I.E.N.S. could, at times, bring "Alexandre" to cry, the Société Nouvelle du Théâtre de l'Empire, founded in 1932, could make him furious by 1933. This company was organized to help finance show places, ticket sales, and the like. Henri Hayotte considered this scheme "his baby" and, at first, "Alexandre" was unable to refuse "mon cher Henri." A big music hall near L'Étoile, the Empire, was bought and transformed into a theater for the production of operettas. The first production presented publicly was entitled Katinka and it had Rita Georg, the famous Austrian star, to play the lead. This turned out to be one of the best shows of the 1932 season, especially because of the notoriety it received. But Hayotte grew tired of it and, in spite of Stavisky's disapproval, he produced a monstrosity carrying the title Deux sous les fleurs. This enterprise soon became unpopular with producer Hayotte, and Stavisky was forced to disburse huge sums every month to keep "the flop running."¹⁶

Orléans to Bayonne: The Great Financial Schemes

"Optants Hongrois."-- Alexandre Stavisky's crooked Doctor Vachet had diagnosed that his patient had "delusions of grandeur." One can almost believe it when faced by Stavisky's "great financial schemes."

¹⁵ Paula Lévy, L'Affaire Stavisky: justice pourrie (Paris, 1935), pp. 7-45; also Camille Aymard, La véritable affaire Stavisky (Paris, 1935), pp. 13-63.

¹⁶ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 84.

These are so called because of the tremendous amount of money invested in them, the many important government officials who were unable, or were refusing, to detect the immense frauds, and the impudence of the undertakings. When these enterprises were exposed through the French press in January, 1934, they brought on the "Democratic Crisis."

Before seeing how the Stavisky powder keg exploded over France, let us follow the train to Budapest taken by Alexandre Stavisky in October, 1931. "Serge Alexandre" travelled as a tourist at that time, accompanied by his attorney, Gaston Bonnaure. These two men were actually not visiting Hungary as tourists, but they were on a mission which involved the erection of a vast borrowing operation based on the Hungarian Agricultural Funds. These funds stemmed from a convention signed on January 20, 1930 at La Hague by France, Great Britain, Italy, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Japan, Poland, Portugal, Greece, and Hungary. Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia had acquired former Hungarian territories by the Treaty of the Trianon, but this transaction posed a problem: What was to be done for the landowners in the annexed territories? This question was finally answered when the powers involved gave a choice to the former Hungarian landowners between accepting the Hungarian nationality or joining their new owners. Those who chose to stay loyal to Hungary called themselves the Optants Hongrois.¹⁷

The Optants Hongrois found the three new ruling nations decreeing

¹⁷ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 224; also Détrez, L'Affaire, pp. 187-190.

agrarian laws expropriating the large landowners, attempting to settle the question of indemnities for those staying faithful to Hungary, and trying to reach agreement on a standard and fair price at a time when the money was depreciating rapidly. This last problem ended in a compromise being reached by the interested nations. The latter accepted the creation of a common fund to be earmarked to indemnify the land of the Optants Hongrois. The money was to be raised by floating bonds at a low price. The regulation and determination of a fair price for indemnities for the Optants Hongrois were to go on until 1936, and the Hungarian Agricultural Funds were to emit redeemable shares beginning in 1944. Alexandre Stavisky began to see his "pot of gold" being made from this and, in 1931, he was one of the first speculators to buy 780,014,151 francs worth of Optants Hongrois bonds for as little as 5 to 10 per cent of the face value. In 1944, he could collect the full face value.¹⁸

For several years the Hoover moratorium and the Lausanne Treaty prevented "Alexandre" from throwing his Optants Hongrois shares on the market. He held on "until he felt the lucky day was at hand." In 1933 Stavisky concluded that the propitious time had arrived and, in October, he formed the Caisse Autonome des Réglements et Grands Travaux Internationaux (usually shortened to Caisse Autonome) for the purpose of emitting financial shares based on the Hungarian bonds he held. Gilbert Ramognino was installed in the Director's seat, but Stavisky kept

¹⁸ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 223-228.

hold of the operation himself. Ramognino later testified that "Alexandre considered this project his most precious treasure."¹⁹

In 1933, therefore, "Alexandre" began laying the foundation for his Optants Hongrois scheme. Gaston Bonnaure--whose election in 1932 as a deputy had "milked Stavisky of quite a few sous"--travelled several times to Budapest with introductions to the French legation. A trip with Stavisky to Stresa where "Alexandre" and "Gaston" dined at the same table as M. Georges Bonnet was to cause the latter many headaches. All these trips were made to prepare the ground for the "big scheme."²⁰

In the summer of 1933 Stavisky visited M. François Albert, Minister of Labor--the introduction being provided by the questionable M. Hulin, former Undersecretary of War. Stavisky glibly spoke of a new way to abolish unemployment by forming a company which would loan money easily and cheaply to municipalities. This money was, of course, to be raised with the Optants Hongrois bonds. "Alexandre" suggested that it would be gracious on M. Albert's part if the Social Insurance Fund of France "would begin the movement to invest." M. Albert said that he would consult the Minister of Finance for an opinion.²¹

The Minister of Finance was none other than the respectable Georges Bonnet, who gave a "thumbs down" on the Hungarian bond scheme. Bonnet,

¹⁹ Docs. Parl., "Rapp Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 223-228.

²⁰ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 224; for opposite opinion on Bonnet see Henri Rochefer, Stavisky, n'est pas mort (Paris, 1934), pp. 9-13.

²¹ Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 224-225.

thus, probably prevented a five hundred million franc swindle from taking place. The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs then published a circular warning everyone against the Hungarian bonds. This blow was to eventually end Stavisky's financial career.²²

Stavisky, the financier.-- Let us pause at this point to draw out more fully the techniques employed by "Alexandre" in the establishment of his financial schemes--especially those activated during his "provisional liberty." First, it should be noted that "Serge Alexandre" was never hampered by the juridical limitations placed upon his different enterprises. He personally saw his schemes' activities as not limited within certain legal boundaries as written in the various charters. Stavisky operated on a more fluid financial basis, for he considered it proper to take funds out of one enterprise to cover up the deficit in another one. The financial expert Guerbigny, employed by the Stavisky Inquiry Commission, suggested in his personal report to the Commission that "Alexandre" saw all his companies' treasuries as one big cashier's desk with many drawers." As time went on, the numerous checks from the S.I.M.A., the Compagnie Foncière, the Établissements Alex, and others became so confused that even months of meticulous research by the Stavisky Inquiry Commission's staff never completely straightened them out. How Stavisky knew what his assets were, it is impossible to say.²³

²² Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 224-225.

²³ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 237-238.

Besides these interchanges of funds, it should be observed that Stavisky's financial maneuvers, after 1927, included the fact that "Alexandre" was not technically associated with any of the schemes. After 1927 he simply became "M. Alexandre" for most of his contacts. In order to circumvent the law, he believed it more comfortable to leave the actual shares with someone else, although he gave in to the extent of allowing his nickname used once (Établissements Alex). In all his financial activities, however, Stavisky never relinquished the management reins.²⁴

A third point to notice about Stavisky's financial schemes was that an extremely large amount of the companies' debentures were false. Furthermore, these bogus bonds were guaranteed by the false jewels handled by the Établissements Alex. In times of stress, Stavisky's supply of genuine jewels was produced. Such an occasion was called for when a "government snooper came around."²⁵

The "Crédit Municipal d'Orléans."¹ - Stavisky's move to the municipal pawnshops was based on a June 24, 1851 law which made it legal for a community to loan, temporarily, money to a member of a community if he were financially embarrassed. This money was borrowed by the borrower from the community at 7 to 8 per cent interest. A community involved in lending activities would accept jewels or other valuables from the borrower as security. If the borrower became delinquent in

²⁴Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 239-245.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 247-248.

meeting his payments, the jewels held could be sold to cover up the losses. To secure initial funds for such an enterprise, a community would issue bonds paying 5 per cent in dividends. The purchase date and terms of these bonds were recorded in triplicate: (1) on the bonds themselves, (2) on the stub of the receipt book kept by the community, and (3) on the receipt kept by the so-called "recorder of the bonds."²⁶

The city of Orléans had established just such a pawnshop as described above in 1928. Here a M. Desbrosses became Cashier-Director of all transactions, a M. Lacroix verified the bonds emitted, and a M. Farault was the valuer of the jewels. The whole matter was honestly carried out until Henri Hayotte and Alexandre Stavisky entered the picture. After Hayotte and Stavisky bought a share into the Crédit Municipal d'Orléans, the total of the series of bonds placed on the market went up to 22,900,000 francs. Whenever suspicious eyes questioned the high valuation of the bonds emitted, "Alexandre" would order the jewels from the Établissements Alex brought forward. "Alexandre" always made sure that only samples from the genuine jewelry collection were ever scrutinized closely. The majority of the bonds issued at Orléans by 1931 were backed by "false emeralds." These false emeralds were overestimated and were valued at the price of genuine jewels.²⁷

Careless insurance companies all over France outdid each other to buy these bogus debentures issued by the Crédit Municipal d'Orléans. "Alexandre" netted near 25,000,000 francs from this scheme before he

²⁶ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Documents, pp. 536-537.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 536-539.

was suspected of any irregularities. A skeptical prefect and a questioning Municipal Council set the Stavisky gang in Orléans to trembling. Stavisky decided it was time to get out of Orléans, and he gave the emergency order: it had become urgent to free the false emeralds and to reimburse the bonds before the full extent of the fraud was exposed. This was carried out successfully by the Stavisky gang. "Alexandre" began looking for another municipal pawnshop.²⁸

The Bayonne Swindle.-- The mayor of Bayonne was Joseph Garat, a respected man who had served his fellow citizens for nearly twenty-five years. He was one of the most influential persons in his district, and the people sent him to the Chamber of Deputies with a high majority vote. As "Alexandre" checked the background of Garat, he picked up a few hints that the "honorable deputy from Bayonne was not completely satisfied" with his role in life. Garat longed for a dynamic and interesting life as a youth, but middle age rewarded him with more responsibilities and little fun. "Alexandre" knew that Garat had to become a member of the Stavisky gang if a Bayonne financial scheme was to be set up. Garat was further indispensable to any such venture, for he was a welcome figure through the private doors of many ministries in Paris. Stavisky visited Garat, gave the Mayor a taste of the brilliant life of pleasure that was his if he cooperated with the Bayonne scheme, and soon was successful in enlisting the services of the limping Mayor. After all, the handsome "Alexandre" offered Garat what he had

²⁸ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 248-249.

been desiring for years: wine, women, and money.²⁹

As early as January, 1930, this movement to Bayonne by the Stavisky gang had begun. During that month, the Ministry of Finance warned that there were grave irregularities in the Crédit Municipal d'Orléans. The management by Desbrosses (a loyal Stavisky follower now) of the Orléans Pawnshop came under the supervision of higher local authorities in the Municipal Council. The latter demanded Desbrosses' resignation. Moreover, by summer, the branch of the Établissements Alex in Orléans was ordered out of the community. So the cry for the Stavisky gang came to be: "On to Bayonne!"³⁰

By the fall of 1930 Bayonne was seriously considering creating a municipal pawnshop. Deputy Garat asked M. Turbat, Mayor of Orléans, how to organize such an affair. The Ministry of Finance, informed of what Bayonne had in mind, forewarned Mayor Garat about the crooked Desbrosses. This warning disappointed Mayor Garat for the latter had already asked Desbrosses to come to Bayonne and assume the role of Cashier-Director. Garat, in a quandary as to what should be done, consulted Stavisky. "Alexandre" solved this problem by phoning M. Tissier, employee of the S.I.M.A., in Paris. Tissier was ordered to take the Cashier-Director position in Bayonne. Tissier did as he was asked.³¹

²⁹ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Spécial: Pachot-Cousin, pp. 369-377; also Albéric Cahuet, "L'Affaire de Bayonne," L'Illustration, Vol. 4741 (January 17, 1934), p. 38. Garat was condemned in 1936 to two years in prison.

³⁰ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Spécial: Pachot-Cousin, pp. 369-377.

³¹ D'Atrez, L'Affaire, pp. 104-125.

In January, 1931, the Bayonne Pawnshop opened for business. Sam Cohen, Stavisky's friend, became the valuer--he estimated the value of the jewels presented as security by the borrowers--and after his death his son, Henri Cohen of the Établissements Alex, carried on this assignment. Digoïn, a former inspector of police who had entered Stavisky's service in 1929, was made Commissioner of the Bayonne Pawnshop. The Commissioner's job was to act as intermediary for those who wanted to buy Bayonne bonds but were unable to come to the Municipal Credit's windows. Desbrosses stayed around for a while to teach Tissier "the tricks of the game." Stavisky advised the Cashier-Director Tissier that the Bayonne Pawnshop's first duty was to "reimburse the Stavisky's financial schemes that found themselves in the red for the time being." Tissier was told that the Optants Hongrois scheme would later cover up these Bayonne disbursements. Furthermore, to prevent any unnecessary inspections, Stavisky would not allow the Bayonne Municipal Credit to join the Association of French Pawnbroking Establishments.³²

M. Albert Dubarry, a newspaperman who knew many important government officials, helped Stavisky in meeting the proper government figures who could give the word that the Bayonne bonds were above reproach. Through such an intermediary, in June 1932, was M. Dalimier, the Minister of Public Works under the Herriot Government, reached. Dalimier soon declared the Bayonne bonds excellent, although he made no investigation of the Bayonne Pawnshop. Dalimier was further helpful when

³²Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Document, pp. 541-542; also Werth, France in Ferment, p. 85.

he wrote to M. Hermant, President of the Committee on Insurances for all France, and asked the latter to give backing to the Bayonne debentures. This Hermant immediately did. This so-called Dalimier Affair greatly contributed to the early success of the Bayonne scheme.³³

Now the Bayonne Municipal Credit, like any other Municipal Pawnshop, was subject to periodic inspections. The different government inspectors of control later testified that the Bayonne bonds looked in a healthy state when they checked the books. The reason for this was that Mayor Garat made such an inspection almost foolproof by having M. Constantin appointed as his inspector from the Ministry of Commerce. Constantin was not one to forget Garat--the man who was most influential in placing Constantin where he now was. Constantin, moreover, when he came from Paris to Bayonne on an inspection tour, was given a "gay old time by the Deputy-Mayor." M. Sadron, the other inspector from the Ministry of Finance, was kind enough to give an eight-day warning before making his appearance in Bayonne.³⁴

If these inspectors had really been doing what they should have done, they could have uncovered the following disgraceful financial situation prevailing in Bayonne:

³³Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Document, pp. 541-542; also Werth, France in Ferment, p. 85.

³⁴Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Document, pp. 541-542.

YEAR	REGULAR BONDS	FALSE BONDS
1931	11,500,000 francs	63,500,000 francs
1932	4,450,000 francs	80,640,000 francs
1933	6,550,000 francs	91,454,120 francs

Source: Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 266-270.

Quite a disproportion for a community with 30,000 inhabitants!

As he had done in the Crédit Municipal d'Orléans, "Alexandre" made his profits by allowing the issuance of bogus debentures at Bayonne based on borrowed jewels or the Optants Hongrois shares. The jewels used at Bayonne were estimated by the Cohens to be worth 22,717,000 francs, but later government appraisers found them worth 608,000 francs at most.³⁵

The mechanics employed at Bayonne in issuing the bonds were the same as those developed at Orléans. The face of the bond carried a superior amount to the sum written on the public record and the stub of the receipt. The total on the stub or the counterfoil being the smallest, it was written on the books used by the accounting department when the inspectors came. The control slips duplicated these entries. Tissier handled most of the important steps during a "bogus bond transaction," for M. Piet, his superior, very conveniently signed the blank bonds beforehand. Tissier filled in the amounts and, when

³⁵Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Document, pp. 541-542; also Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 85-86.

necessary, he forged the signatures. The false bonds issued in this manner up to the time of Tissier's arrest added up to 238,594,000 francs.³⁶

By the end of 1933, however, the Bayonne scheme was endangered because: (1) certain financial newspapers were calling attention to the high emission of bonds from Bayonne; (2) the year 1933 brought more and more bonds to be cashed in; and (3) the impossibility of covering up the deficits at Bayonne by the Optants Hongrois scheme which had been nipped by the Ministry of Finance. It was a matter of time before the Bayonne swindle would be exposed. This happened in December, 1933, and the chain of events which it set off nearly destroyed the Third French Republic.³⁷

Stavisky's Gang

Stavisky's gang and its expense account.-- As early as 1926, the police were already denouncing Alexandre Stavisky as the "King of the Crooks" and as a major gang leader. By the early thirties, the Stavisky gang had become extremely well-organized. The gang's table of organization classified the members into two categories: (1) the specialist, who naturally was a close friend of "Alexandre," and (2) the intermediary, who was used by the gang but never shared all the secrets of the "inner circle." The specialists were assigned the most diversified

³⁶ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Document, p. 542.

³⁷ Lenglois, Vie et mort, pp. 55-82; also Werth, France in Ferment, p. 83.

tasks, and they included the company directors (Bardi de Fourtjou and Henri Hayotte, for instance), bodyguards, the underwriters, the receivers of stolen goods, the informers, the doctors, and the lawyers.³⁸

The intermediary never was trusted by the specialist of the Stavisky gang. In fact this group was also called the "intermediary leeches." It was so named because the members collaborated with Stavisky only because they loved the sight of "Alexandre's" money. Yet Stavisky was aware of the importance of this group, for the success of a particular enterprise often depended on how well an intermediary did his work. The members of this questionable status came from the French police, the French judiciary, and the press. The great majority of the intermediaries hobnobbed with high government officials.³⁹

Stavisky's gang was constantly keeping "Alexandre" worried about how to get enough money to pay them all. In fact, when he was not busy trying to keep them occupied by inventing new enterprises, they were after him to get money from his private accounts. In private "Sacha Alexandre" often mentioned the burden his gang made him carry and, when enraged, he shouted viperous language at individual gang members. "Alexandre" was seen in such a rage by Joseph Kessel, the newspaperman, one evening. After criticizing some of his experts, Stavisky attacked the intermediaries who took his money but gave no service afterwards.

³⁸ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), p. 293.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 293-295.

This will not go on. I've had them in my service before, and I will get those that are against me. On the Sûreté's side, everything is fine. But at the Préfecture, I have enemies.⁴⁰

Stavisky's personal expenses.-- Stavisky loved extraordinary entertainment. This desire thus increased that much more his need for money. Stavisky's tastes were expensive ones. He amused himself by giving valuable gifts to women, by organizing fabulous parties, by "splashing in front of his friends," and buying always the best of everything. Those who came in contact with this side of his personality were charmed by his contagious exuberance, his irresistible amiability, his frequent gifts, and his sumptuous dinners. His clothes were impeccable--and expensive. This display of "conspicuous wealth" was for Stavisky a raison d'être.⁴¹

The finesse and polite appearance, usually displayed by the magnetic Stavisky before large gatherings, was sometimes replaced by one dominated by ill-manners and vulgarity in a smaller group. Kessel relates how, early in 1933, Stavisky took him to dine in a Russian restaurant near L'Étoile. Stavisky being a connoisseur of rich and well-served Russian dishes became a gourmet on this occasion. He ate and drank too much. This was unusual for "Alexandre," for he normally was temperate in his habits. Kessel was shocked to hear the vulgarity used by Stavisky once he was drunk. It somehow did not go with the

⁴⁰ Joseph Kessel, Stavisky, l'homme que j'ai connu (Paris, 1934), p. 67.

⁴¹ Eugène Bortchy, 300,000 kilomètres avec Stavisky (Paris, 1934), pp. 68-83.

swindler's luxurious clothes and expensive perfumes.⁴²

A costly item on Stavisky's expense account was the spacious apartment he occupied in the Claridge Hotel on the Champs-Élysées. The valets, chambermaids, managers, and sommeliers catered to his every wish, for he was the heaviest tipper in the hotel.⁴³

The aristocratic living standards kept by "Alexandre" kept him constantly in need of money. Especially costly were the gambling debts he would incur. Yet Stavisky was no easy "sucker" at a gambling table. In fact, he was an expert in the use of marked cards. The French Riviera long remembered him for what he did in 1932 to Zographos. The latter then had the reputation of being "the greatest card sharp of all times." Then he met Stavisky at the card table in 1932, and he found his master. Stavisky was proud of this dubious honor.⁴⁴ What was even more impressive to the French underworld was that "Alexandre" had been outlawed "from casino life for cheating in the early thirties and that this had been his first night out" since his readmittance to the card tables. Georges Thomé, Director of the Sûreté in 1932, must take some of the credit here, for it was he who gave Stavisky a special card readmitting him to the gambling rooms.⁴⁵

⁴²Kessel, Stavisky, pp. 7-31; also Bortchy, 300,000, pp. 9-121.

⁴³Kessel, Stavisky, pp. 81-84.

⁴⁴Anonymous, Le drame de la "banque ouverte" ou "tout va"-Zographos: Stavisky (Nice, 1939), pp. 1-5.

⁴⁵Georges Thomé, Mémoire (Paris, 1935), pp. 1-8.

Stavisky's love for taking trips, for beautiful and expensive works of art, for the race track, and for tailored clothes also demanded further disbursements. The private entertainment of beautiful and voluptuous women who were often showered with gifts by Stavisky and Hayotte also kept the swindler's budget "constantly in the red." Eugène Bortchy, Stavisky's driver for over three years, takes us into this fabulous milieu in his memoirs. Bortchy relates how Stavisky had a mania for speed, how he enjoyed rushing from one beach to the next, how heavily he lost at the Deauville race tracks, and how careful he was in purchasing the best clothes and perfumes--regardless of the price. The houseful of toys Stavisky bought for his two children, as well as the huge closet filled with the newest styles that Arlette possessed, were constantly making demands on the head of the family. A constant merry-go-round of expenditures thus kept Stavisky perpetually in need of more money.⁴⁶

Last Days of Stavisky

Stavisky's flight from Paris.-- On December 23, 1933 the Stavisky powder keg with its long chain of scandals--judicial, legal, and financial in nature--broke over France. This explosion had its fuse lighted by the end of November, 1933, when one of the insurance companies, which had invested heavily in the Bayonne bogus debentures, filed a complaint through the Ministry of Finance and the proper courts. The resulting investigations led to the arrest of Tissier, the Cashier-Director of

⁴⁶Bortchy, 300,000, pp. 1-87.

Bayonne, on December 23.⁴⁷ Stavisky's name, however, was not mentioned or revealed publicly until December 30 by L'Écho de Paris. But, by that time, "Alexandre" had escaped from Paris, and no one in the French police knew his whereabouts.

Stavisky's flight from Paris was planned from the moment the Stavisky Gang heard of Tissier's apprehension by the police. "Alexandre" decided not to leave Paris for a few days and to watch what would take place next. It should be pointed out that at that time the police would have encountered very little trouble if they had arrested Stavisky, for the latter was available in his Claridge Hotel suite. When it finally dawned on the police that such an arrest should take place, "Alexandre" had made good his escape.⁴⁸

Several days before Christmas, 1933, the Stavisky experts met in a hurried meeting and selected the companions to go with "Alexandre" while he "stayed low." The ones chosen for this assignment were the gang's newest members: Henri Voix and René Pigaglio. In his memoirs, Pigaglio relates how on Saturday, December 23, he went to work as usual for the Méphisto, a newspaper edited by M. Pierre Guiboud-Ribaud. Shortly after Pigaglio's arrival, Guiboud-Ribaud rushed into the office with an air of irritation and disgust. Guiboud-Ribaud came right to the point with "Piga." It appeared that their mutual friend M. Alexandre was in difficulty. Guiboud-Ribaud as Stavisky's lawyer said he was worried about his client. Then came the question: "You have much

⁴⁷ Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 86-87.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

friendship for Alex, don't you, Piga?" Pigaglio, who had become devoted to "M. Alexandre" since the latter had given him money for his daughter's recent emergency operation, affirmed his friendship for Stavisky. Guiboud-Ribaud then asked Pigaglio to accompany "Alexandre" on a vacation if the occasion should present itself. "Piga" gave his immediate approval to this. That same evening René Pigaglio was invited to Guiboud-Ribaud's house for supper. When "Piga" got there, he was introduced to many of the members of Stavisky's gang, and he was informed that "Alexandre" had accepted him as his travelling partner. Pigaglio was dumbfounded.⁴⁹

On Christmas Eve, Guiboud-Ribaud telephoned Pigaglio and invited the latter to a supper-conference at the former's home. At that supper-conference Stavisky's lawyer entertained the Stavisky gang. Near the close of the festivities, Pigaglio was informed of the decision made for Stavisky's escape earlier that week: Pigaglio's villa called Les Vallons in Servoz (in the French Alps) was to be the perfect "resting place needed by M. Alexandre during his recovery." Pigaglio unsuccessfully opposed this choice. "Piga" neglected to mention to the group that the main reason for his opposition was that in Servoz M. Pigaglio had many bill collectors just waiting for him to reappear. As a final instruction, Pigaglio was ordered by the gang to drive "Alexandre" to Servoz in an outdated Peugeot automobile owned by the former. The reason advanced for such a move was that such a car would be less

⁴⁹ René Pigaglio, La vérité sur les derniers jours de Stavisky (Paris, 1934), pp. 18-20.

likely to bring "undue attention to the occupants riding within."⁵⁰

At 1:00 A.M. Christmas morning, after a farewell party held at the Café des Coupoles for "M. Alexandre," Pigaglio and Stavisky said au revoir to the gang members and made their way to a nearby street where the Peugeot was parked. After some difficulty in starting the car, the rattling automobile was on its way out of Paris. Pigaglio had mapped out the course and had decided to take the road to Lyons out of Paris. For a short period of time Pigaglio and "Alexandre" were unable to find much to say to each other and concentrated their vision on the road ahead. The Peugeot slowly made its way towards the Porte d'Italie to the south of Paris. By this time, the two men inside the automobile were beginning to feel the sharp blasts of winds slapping their cheeks. Pigaglio noticed that "Alexandre" was shivering. When the Porte d'Italie was reached, Pigaglio stopped for gas and then continued on his way.⁵¹

"Monsieur Maurice," Stavisky's new alias, broke the silence as the Peugeot was leaving Paris. Stavisky spoke of "Christmas without your loved ones" and he thanked Pigaglio for the service he was rendering. While the two lonely men were exhausting this topic, the cold rain now coming down in torrents began pouring within the poorly protected car. Several miles south of Paris, near Corbeil, the two occupants of the Peugeot ran into a thick, sticky snowstorm. By the time

⁵⁰ Pigaglio, Derniers jours, pp. 28-30; also Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Déposition: Pigaglio, pp. 2857-2860.

⁵¹ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Déposition: Pigaglio, pp. 2861-2867.

they reached the Forest of Fontainebleau, Stavisky and Pigaglio were half frozen. Around 3:00 A.M., Christmas day, the two men decided to sleep for a while in a Fontainebleau hotel and to resume their journey early that morning.⁵²

Pigaglio and "Monsieur Maurice" were up early as planned that morning. Soon after leaving Fontainebleau, the two travelers were stopped by engine trouble. Unable to repair the automobile, Pigaglio left the Peugeot in Sens. Both men then proceeded to Dijon by train and arrived in Culoz, a French resort in the Alps, too late to make connections to Servoz. Reluctantly, "Monsieur Maurice" and Pigaglio sought refuge in a hotel.⁵³

As both men were about ready to retire for the night, Stavisky pulled a Browning revolver out of his suit pocket and deposited it on the night table. Pigaglio gasped at the sight of the weapon, while Stavisky calmly explained:

Do not worry for nothing, my good Piga, for I have no fatal thoughts in mind. But I want you to understand one thing: I would prefer to kill myself before I am arrested by the police.⁵⁴

Tracking down Stavisky.-- The little electric train running to Chamonix at 10:45 A.M. on Tuesday, December 26, carried Pigaglio and Stavisky to the safety of the villa, Les Vallons. The two "tourists" soon were disheartened by the run-down appearance of their new home.

⁵²Pigaglio, Derniers jours, pp. 31-33.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 37-38.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 38.

The rooms were dark and badly in need of repairs, and the howling winds outside penetrated within too easily for their comfort. When Pigaglio discovered that the villa's pipes had burst during his absence, he decided to visit a Madame Dussaix nearby to see what she could suggest. The Madame was accommodating and gladly offered her empty villa of Les Argentières to Pigaglio and "Monsieur Alexandre" if her price were acceptable. It was. Once the two tourists were established in Les Argentières, Stavisky made a phone call to Paris. There he reached Henri Voix, recent employee of the Compagnie Foncière and new gang member, and informed him that he was expected as soon as possible at Les Argentières.⁵⁵

The so-called Second Browning Revolver Incident took place while Stavisky was unpacking his valise in his pleasant room in Les Argentières. The sight of the dark and heavy Browning inside the valise made quite a contrast with the snow at the foot of Mont Blanc outside. Pigaglio tried to take the gun away from Stavisky, who finally refused to give it up. The two men then began a dull routine of meals, card games, and scanning of newspapers. The next morning, after Pigaglio had prepared breakfast, Stavisky decided to take a bath. While he was so occupied, "Piga" entered "Alexandre's" room and removed the Browning. Soon afterwards, Stavisky threatened to go to town unless his gun was returned. Pigaglio did exactly that.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Pigaglio, Derniers jours, pp. 44-48; also Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général, p. 279.

⁵⁶ Pigaglio, Derniers jours, pp. 48-58.

When Henri Voix arrived at Les Argentières, Pigaglio was already packed and ready to return to Paris. This changeover was not done too smoothly, for just as Pigaglio was about to leave, his local bill collectors caught up with him. These unexpected visits made "Alexandre" very nervous and moody. "Piga" finally was able to dispose of these unwelcome visitors and left Chamonix for Paris on December 28.⁵⁷

Once in the capital, Pigaglio went to Guiboud-Ribaud's home and found the latter in a frenzy. It seems that Stavisky had left nothing in his will to his attorney. This made Guiboud-Ribaud irritated and he told Pigaglio that he could not help "Alexandre" any longer. Guiboud-Ribaud added that he did not "care what happens to the dirty bum." Pigaglio further discovered that Voix' mistress, Lucette Alméras, was also angered because mon cher Henri had deserted her. The Stavisky gang decided that Voix would have to return to Paris to "shut her up." Pigaglio was to return to Les Argentières to make sure that "Alexandre" did nothing foolish." When this switch was carried out, "Alexandre" took further precautions. He decided to leave Les Argentières as soon as possible, "just in case some of his friends in Paris spoke to the wrong people." While Pigaglio was making plans to carry out this change of residence, Voix and his mistress arrived from Paris. Pigaglio and Stavisky decided that it would be best if "Piga" went alone to Chamonix to find a new villa, for "Mademoiselle Alméras with her flashy fur coat and excessive make-up might be noticed."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Pigaglio, Derniers jours, pp. 59-69.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 70-73.

"Piga" selected an expensive villa called the Vieux-Logis and rented it from M. and Mme. Chatou "for the newlyweds M. and Mde. Fargeas (Voix and his mistress)." On New Year's Day, 1934, the four "tourists" made the move to the Vieux-Logis as quietly as possible. After this was done, Pigaglio decided to return to Paris and bring his family for a vacation in the Alps. While "Piga" was so occupied, Voix, Lucette, and "Monsieur Maurice" spent their days eating, sleeping, and playing card games. This monotony was broken only by Lucette and Voix doing the daily shopping, by Stavisky taking his evening constitutional, and by the two men spending hours locked up in "Monsieur Maurice's" room reading the daily newspapers. Lucette Alméras discovered that "Monsieur Maurice" and Stavisky were one and the same on January 6, 1934.⁵⁹

On January 7, 1934 Lucette recorded the following conversation as having taken place with her lover when they discussed the moral let-down of Stavisky during the past few days:

If you had seen him a little while ago....he was in a very depressed state. He frightens me when he gets in that mood. I fear that at any time he will kill himself, for he is tortured by the desire to end it all. He talks about committing suicide constantly, and he keeps his Browning always by his side.⁶⁰

While the three lonely figures were thus living under tension and depression in the Vieux-Logis, the outside world was on a manhunt for Stavisky. Alexandre Stavisky and his companions had left many tracks behind since they had left Paris. The many stops and changes

⁵⁹ Lucette Alméras, Ce que je sais (Paris, 1934), pp. 44-93; also Pigaglio, Derniers jours, pp. 79-85.

⁶⁰ Alméras, Je sais, pp. 154-155.

made by Pigaglio and Stavisky during their escape from Paris were traced by the police. In case the police lost the tracks, Stavisky's phone calls to Paris could always be traced. Furthermore, it had been poor logic for Stavisky's gang to send their boss to Pigaglio's villa where the latter was so well-known. All these trails, the movements of Pigaglio back and forth between the Alps and Paris, and the exclamations of Lucette Alm eras all over Paris, led the police to Stavisky.

While Voix was casually doing the daily errands in Chamonix, either alone or accompanied by the conspicuously dressed Lucette, Pigaglio was not content to remain hidden in Servoz. The latter took constant visits to Chamonix. One of these visits on January 6, made under the pretext of replenishing his food supply, was not completed without Pigaglio dropping by to see how Stavisky was doing. The latter gave "Piga" an invitation to come the next day for dinner.

On that day (January 7)--which was the last one for Pigaglio in the vicinity--"Piga" missed the 2:00 P.M. train leaving Chamonix for Paris. He decided to go part of the way by sled with his family but, before beginning this journey, he again stopped by to see "Alexandre" and to tell the latter why he was going to Paris. Pigaglio had received a telegram from his secretary of the S.A.P.E.G. which declared, in convenient language, why he had to return. "Piga," himself, then telegraphed the news of his departure from the Haute-Savoie to his sister in Paris. This last telegram was neglectfully left on a table in the Servoz telegraph office. Soon thereafter Commissioner Charpentier entered the office in order to make a call to his superiors in the S uret . Charpentier's attention was brought to the telegram on the table signed "Ren ." The Commissioner immediately associated the name with Madame Dus-saix's lodger.⁶¹

The day before the discovery of this telegram, on January 6, 1934, Inspectors LeGall and Girard led by Commissioner Charpentier had left

⁶¹Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport G n ral (1935), pp. 281-284; also Pigaglio, Derniers jours, pp. 85-86.

Paris in haste. They took the train to the Haute-Savoie to see a M. Drueault, father of Madame Dussaix, who had tipped off the police that he knew where Stavisky was hiding. The police followed the many tracks left by Stavisky up to the time of his change of residence to the Vieux-Logis. Then the police were unable to make much headway. They did know, however, that Pigaglio if found would lead them to "Alexandre." It was at this point, through the telegram coincidence mentioned above, that they knew Stavisky was in the area. The police then began to check hotel registries. Voix's signature was discovered on one of the registers in Servéz-- he had signed his true name through force of habit. Voix's unusual handwriting was found to be in the same style as that of the Farjeas of Servoz. The police later claimed that this deciphering of Voix's handwriting was decisive in breaking the case.⁶²

Death of "Sacha" alias "Alexandre" alias "Stavisky."-- January 8, 1934 was destined to be the last day alive for Alexandre Stavisky. Early that morning in Paris, Pigaglio visited Gaston Bonnaure, Stavisky's deputy friend. Bonnaure at 10:25 A.M. was informed by Pigaglio of Stavisky's whereabouts. Bonnaure then advised "Piga" to give himself up to the police. Pigaglio later claimed that Bonnaure revealed Stavisky's hiding place to the police by 11:00 A.M. The police always insisted that "Alexandre" had been tracked down as described above.⁶³

Unaware of what was going on in Paris or in downtown Chamonix,

⁶²Paris-Soir, January 8, 1934; also Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Rapport Général (1935), pp. 287-288.

⁶³Pigaglio, Derniers jours, pp. 114-121.

Stavisky, after breakfast, decided to take a nap. While "Alexandre" rested, Lucette and Voix departed for their usual shopping tour in downtown Chamonix. Not long afterwards, Commissioner Charpentier and his assistants headed for the Vieux-Logis. M. Chatou, proprietor of the villa, accompanied the police. Once at the Vieux-Logis, M. Chatou knocked on the villa's door. As no one answered, the visitors went inside. Stavisky was awake and locked in his room. Charpentier decided to go through a "mock session of prospective tenants looking for a new villa." Whether Stavisky was fooled by this "tenant visit" no one will ever know. In fact, from here on the events are very controversial. One thing is undebatable: by 4:00 P.M. "Alexandre's" body was stretched out in a pool of blood created by a bullet fired from his Browning.⁶⁴

Throughout 1934 a heated debate developed over the question of whether Stavisky did or did not commit suicide. Commissioner Charpentier's version of what did happen after the "tenant visit" was:

I beckoned to LeGall and Chatou to retire to the dining room--which is extremely large--while I remained near "Alexandre's" door. I was hoping that the occupant within would conclude that the two inspectors and M. Chatou had left.

I stood outside the door approximately twenty to twenty-five minutes....⁶⁵

Then around 3:30 P.M. Charpentier received an urgent call from Paris. The Commissioner was told of the call; he left the villa; and

⁶⁴Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 92-93.

⁶⁵Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Déposition: Charpentier, pp. 3362-3363.

he soon was talking to M. Ducloux of the Sûreté. Ducloux informed Charpentier that Stavisky was known to be within a radius of thirty to fifty kilometers of Chamonix. The Commissioner bellowed: "What are you saying! I'm right on his doorsill--what should I do?" Ducloux replied: "All you can do is to break the door down."⁶⁶

The testimony made by Voix before the Stavisky Inquiry Commission on Stavisky's suicide was:

M. Voix.-- "What can we say to a man who wanted to commit suicide constantly. We did our best to change his mind, to console him, to build up his morale...."

M. President.-- "He therefore said clearly that he would resist arrest?--in consequence you do not doubt that Stavisky committed suicide?"

M. Voix.-- "There is no doubt in my mind!"⁶⁷

Pigaglio's comments on the "Suicide" were:

It is, however, incontestable--as I have previously indicated when answering M. Xavier Vallat of the Commission, who demanded that I be specific on this point--that "Alex" decided to commit suicide because of his precarious situation. He was determined beforehand that, if there existed no other way to prevent being apprehended, he would shoot himself.-- I must state, however, that the police did not give the tracked man any other alternative.⁶⁸

Lucette Alméras in her memoirs also declared that she was convinced that Stavisky had taken his life.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Déposition: Charpentier, pp. 3362-3363.

⁶⁷ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Déposition: Voix, p. 2804.

⁶⁸ Pigaglio, Derniers jours, p. 101.

⁶⁹ Alméras, Je sais, pp. 166, 223.

Thus Stavisky's nearest friends before his death unanimously pronounced his suicide as definite. The later postmortem made on the body gave the same result. Even Stavisky's farewell letter, opened after his death, explained his distress, and underscored his decision to do away with himself. Commissioner Charpentier's detailed account to his superiors declared that Stavisky had shot himself. This version would seem to be the true one historically speaking, for the records all point to it as true. It must be pointed out, however, that: (1) it would have been possible to arrest Stavisky alive earlier; (2) nothing was done by the police to make a regular arrest; and (3) by silencing Stavisky the majority of the men connected with him would not be brought to justice.⁷⁰

Stavisky Affair Unleashes the Press Campaign

Stavisky Affair and the press.-- When the Stavisky powder keg detonated in France in December, 1933, it became the immediate cause of the "Democratic Crisis of 1934 in France." It brought with it a period of antidemocratic criticisms by the press as had not been seen for a long time in Western Europe. The royalist newspaper, L'Action Française, led the more dangerous attacks against the Third Republic in early January, 1934 and brought on the so-called January Riots. The venal press campaign now released kept using the Stavisky Affair as the main symptom of a failing democratic régime. The press gave the numerous "calls to action" which declared that the various political

⁷⁰ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Déposition: Charpentier, pp. 3362-3364.

leagues of France should war against the representatives of French democracy. By mid-January, 1934, this press campaign had succeeded in making Frenchmen fight Frenchmen on the streets of Paris. Thus began what can be termed the "active or violent phase of the Democratic Crisis."

As a financial swindle, the Stavisky Affair was mediocre, but as a political and social ferment, it was one of the deadliest to ever appear in French history.

The Stavisky Affair was a most grievous symptom of a country undermined, wasted and blighted, tottering on the brink of moral decay, a situation resembling in many ways the epoch immediately preceding the Great Revolution.⁷¹

⁷¹Jean Dorgot, France Is Divided (London, 1945), p. 23.

CHAPTER V

THE POLITICAL LEAGUES (Playing with Matches)

The Royalists

Action Française.-- Because of the bold leadership which the Action Française offered in France during the January and February Riots of 1934, the royalists occupy a prominent position in the history of the period. While the movement for "monarchism" tended to be mostly an intellectual matter, Charles Maurras and Léon Daudet did not overlook the practical need for allies in their antiparliamentary campaign. The explosion of the Stavisky Affair in the already charged atmosphere of France enabled them to assume the leadership of the anti-democratic forces to which they had so often appealed through their newspaper articles. The fact that the two intellectuals also commanded the followers of the important political league, the Action Française, further assisted them in the events that were forthcoming.¹

The Action Française, a rightist organization, was chartered in 1905 and declared its purpose to be the restoration of the monarchy. Before World War I the movement attracted few members, but by early 1934 the membership was 8,300 in Paris and 60,000 in France as a whole.

¹M. Catalan, Préparation de la manifestation du 6 février 1934, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3385, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 582. The reader will notice that the context will differentiate between the Action Française, the league or the newspaper.

The political purpose was made clear to the new member, in case he had any doubt, on the day of his initiation into the league when he signed a declaration which stated:

I associate myself to the work of restoring the monarchy. I join in the fight against any Republican régime. The Republic in France is the foreigners' régime. Our unique future is in a monarchy such as would be personified through Monseigneur le Duc de Guise.... I dedicate myself to serve him by all means possible.²

This militant rightist group had, in addition to Daudet and Maurras as polemicists and chief guides, a Board of Directors including such outstanding royalists as the well-known journalist, Jacques Bainville, and a retired vice-admiral, M. Schwerer. The latter, in fact, was the President of the troops organized by the league.³

The work of the Action Française was carried out by two main agencies: the Ligue d'Action Française, under President Schwerer; and the Fédération des Camelots du Roi (King's Hawkers), under President Réal del Sarte, a sculptor by profession. During any major demonstrations, such as the invasion of the streets of Paris in January, 1934, both the Action Française league and the Camelots du Roi showed their skill at carrying out orders.⁴ The Camelots were, for the most part, young men who did the footwork demanded by the organization. These young rowdies could be seen all over Paris selling the league's newspaper, giving protection to the Action Française's leaders, keeping

²Catalan, Manifestation, p. 588.

³Ibid., pp. 582-583.

⁴Pierre Frédéric, "L'action des troupes directes en France," Revue de Paris, Vol. of 41st Year (May 1, 1934), 13.

a constant watch on the offices used by the members and distributing pamphlets. When special reunions were held, the Camelots were responsible for rounding up the participants, and subsequently offered police supervision of the meeting hall.⁵

The Ligue d'Action Française, whose membership fluctuated from time to time, could attract many intellectuals and wealthy bourgeois. These middle-class groups applauded the Action Française and its anti-democratic doctrines. They listened attentively to the royalist leaders who preached the re-establishment of the monarchy, the return of political inequalities of classes, and the reaffirming of loyalty to the old succession laws. Yet these intellectuals and wealthy bourgeois, who made up the majority of the royalists, were not willing to make an all-out effort for the Duc de Guise. One observer, noting the absence of any serious attempt to restore the king, wrote:

The wealthy bourgeoisie is perfectly willing to slow up the march of democracy, but it wants to do so for its own profit and not for the benefit of the old feudal nobles.

This stubbornness of the bourgeoisie explains a situation which must seem paradoxical to foreigners; namely, that while France is apparently so eager for a strong régime, the Royalist Party should have so little chance of success.

The people of France remain totally indifferent to the Royalist Party because its platform contains no reference to economic reforms.⁶

In time of great convulsions such as France was facing early in 1934, the Action Française showed how effective it could become if other

⁵ Catalan, Manifestation, p. 582.

⁶ Julien Benda, "The Enemies of Democracy in France," Foreign Affairs, XIII (January, 1935), 285.

dissatisfied elements would combine with its league in opposing the Republic. This possibility became a reality when the Action Française assumed the role of chief instigator in the antiparliamentary riots of January, 1934.⁷ At that time, the newly found allies gladly accepted the first part of Admiral Schwerer's assertion made before the February Six Inquiry Commission:

Our goal, it is to overthrow the Republic, for we believe that a republican régime will lead to ruin and death. We realize how natural it is to have a different opinion, but this is ours.⁸

Rightists and Fascists

Jeunesses Patriotes.-- The Jeunesses Patriotes were to be one of the earliest groups to join the Action Française. M. Pierre Taittinger, Deputy from Paris, in 1924 formed the Jeunesses Patriotes because he felt that France, especially Paris, needed an organization that could prevent action from what he called the "parties of anarchy." In consequence, a new recruit took an oath placing himself in opposition to any communist project and swore that he would support any national government which needed his services in maintaining order and preventing revolutionary troubles. This organization was highly nationalistic in character, and the members, totalling 6,400 in Paris and 90,000 over the rest of France, worked for the perfecting of the republican institutions within France by extolling the political doctrine based upon

⁷Alexander Werth, France in Ferment (London, 1935), p. 265.

⁸Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 583-584.

the application of the principles of authority, liberty, and responsibility.⁹

Membership into the Jeunesses Patriotes was open to anyone over seventeen years of age, and an adherent to the movement had to:

Belong to no parties or political organizations who received from foreign countries directives or money, whose activity is anti-nationalist and inspires international doctrines or which look to disturb the established order.

These parties or organizations include among others: the free-masonry movement, anarchist parties, communists, socialists, S.F.I.O., and the like.¹⁰

The Jeunesses Patriotes were organized along military lines and had one of the most detailed structures then found in existing leagues. It had twenty-one "regions" which, in turn, subdivided into numerous "sections." For instance, in Paris the league boasted of one élite division or "region" composed of sixteen "sections." M. Édouard Soulier, Deputy from Paris, commanded the twenty-one "regions" and was responsible for issuing orders during periods of activity. If Soulier were absent or could not easily be reached at the league's headquarters, Colonel Ibar des Isnards, Municipal Councilor for Paris, gave the commands; and in case he also was not available, this power fell upon M. Jean Ybarnégaray, Deputy from the Basses-Pyrénées.¹¹

For a political league, the Jeunesses Patriotes was highly militarized along combat lines. The members were classified in one of

⁹Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 583-584.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

three categories; namely, the Mobile troops, the Centuries, and the Friends of the Jeunesses Patriotes. The "móviles" were young leaguers who received actual military training such as obstacle course work, quick movement in and out of heavy motor vehicles, mobilization drills, and minute attacks on a designated point of concentration. These young men were the shock troops of the organization. The only weapon allowed the "mobiles" was either a small, heavy cane or the handle from a hatchet or its facsimile.¹²

The other two main categories within the Jeunesses Patriotes were not so active as their colleagues, the "mobiles." A reserve was made up from the "centuries" who were composed of adherents from all age groups. Each century had fifty men divided into three sections according to the organizational chart. As for the "Friends of the Jeunesses Patriotes," the members being over fifty years old, they only acted in dire need and as a last line of defense even then. Like their cohorts, the "mobiles," all Jeunesses Patriotes were to give strict obedience to the leaders. The leaders themselves received their orders from the Central Committee of Action in Paris led by Soulier.¹³

More concreteness was given the Jeunesses Patriotes as a political league when the members adopted their new constitution in March, 1934. As could be expected, it was along nationalistic lines and provided for a strong executive. This document outlines a new rule for the French Empire. At the apex would be the President of the Republic

¹²Frédérrix, Revue de Paris, p. 116.

¹³Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 583-584.

elected for ten years by a suffrage which included both sexes. Every person over twenty-one could vote except civil servants and military men. The President of the Republic, who was eligible for re-election, was to be assisted by ministers and was to possess strong powers. He was responsible for the initiation of laws, provided he consulted with the Council of State and the National Council of Labor. If these councils refused his demands, he could appeal to the people through a referendum. The Empire was represented by a Council of the Empire elected by universal suffrage for a period of nine years. Three hundred members was the limit for this Council of the Empire, and one-third of the seats were renewable every three years in rotating fashion. This body had the financial control of the Empire but, being unable to initiate laws, it could only vote on bills proposed by the President of the Republic.¹⁴

It would be easy to observe the many characteristics of fascism found in the Jeunesses Patriotes--the militant organization, the discipline of the troops, the dictatorial tone of its new constitution, and its remnants of Bonapartism. Yet to apply a completely fascist label to the Jeunesses Patriotes raises difficulties. Further materials of the activities of the organization show that the leaders of the Jeunesses Patriotes were deputies and sincere upholders of a democratic form of government and its institutions. To conclude that all the Jeunesses Patriotes were fascists would be an injustice to the many members, such as M. le Maréchal Lyautey, who believed the league

¹⁴Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 589-590.

desired to improve the government.

Solidarité Française.-- If we are to accept the claim of the Solidarité Française that their league included 80,000 members in Paris and 180,000 in France, we must conclude that, next to the Tax-payers Association, they were the second largest organized militant group in the country. The Solidarité Française was started in 1933 by the perfumer, M. François Coty. Coty, however, actually left much power to the Secretary General, M. Jean Renaud and to M. de Gueydon, known also as Vinceguide, who was the true Director. The objective proposed by the association was the study of modern French problems in the fields of finance, general economics, political science, and sociology. In consequence, its emphasis was on the intellectual exchange of new ideas in these areas.¹⁵

The Solidarité Française was organized into "regions," these "regions" were broken down into "secteurs," and each "secteur" had "sections" as its main component parts. The 80,000 men in Paris ultimately were subdivided into ten "sections." Like the Action Française and the Jeunesses Patriotes, the majority of the members were young men. The Solidarité Française went further than those two sister organizations in such matters as symbolic representations, for the Solidarité's leaguers were required to wear a beret, a blue shirt, and grey trousers.¹⁶ The insignia was a small badge which had the relief of a red Gallic rooster upon a red background. It could be worn either

¹⁵Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 582-583; also Frédéric, Revue de Paris, p. 115.

¹⁶Ibid.

as a brassard attachment or on the beret. The young members of the association enjoyed this display and received yet more pleasure if they were selected as messengers; for then they could show them off all the time. These so-called emergency messengers were the communication line of the troops during times of action. These messengers formed bands of bicycle and motorcycle enthusiasts who trained themselves by racing through the streets of Paris. Contrary to what has been printed, the majority of these men did not come from North Africa, although an observer could spot an Algerian here and there on maneuvers with these hoodlums.¹⁷

Again a superficial analysis of the Solidarité Française might lead to placing a hasty label of fascism on the organization. It is undeniable that the Solidarité Française had a military aspect, that its symbols reminded one of similar ones in Italy and Germany, and that the reliance on the leader principle was basic to the movement. But it was also accurate to record that this political league's goals were mainly intellectual ones, that the organization have no outstanding military training to its members, and that the group had no definite economic program in mind. The documentary evidence on the Solidarité Française makes it much easier to agree with M. de Gueydon when he testified before the February Six Inquiry Commission that:

I will, as you desire, give you information on our organization. We are a national organization, without any kind of loyalty to party; that is to say, we find among us

¹⁷ Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 583-584.

monarchists, some socialists. We do not care, as long as they are French, where they come from. We are an anti-Marxist organization and mainly a nationalist movement.¹⁸

Francistes.-- Our attention now must be given to a relatively small group called the Francistes. These took their name from the two-headed ax of the ancient Franks and were split into two branches, respectively under the leadership of M. Bucard and M. Coston. Both organizations, although differing on many points, had one objective in common: anti-Semitism.¹⁹

Marcel Bucard's Francistes were the only leaguers who openly declared themselves to be the true French fascists. The association had been established in 1928. The members were either workers, industrial employees, or peasants. They wore light blue shirts, basque berets, and an insignia representing a Frankish ax decorated by a dented wheel and a sword.²⁰

Bucard's Francistes asserted that their political purpose was to see that the greatness of France was brought back and that a true peace be established. Furthermore, the members pledged themselves to destroy Parliament and to replace it by a leader, a legislative corps, and a corporate system. The followers of these beliefs were organized into "sections" and totalled only 1,500 men of whom three hundred were in Paris itself.²¹

¹⁸ Catalan, Manifestation, p. 589.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 584.

²⁰ Frédéric, Revue de Paris, p. 114.

²¹ Catalan, Manifestation, p. 584.

Coston's Francistes, on the other hand, were mainly interested in carrying the fight against the communists, the free-masons, and the Jews. They believed in reconstituting the state on a totalitarian basis without bringing any changes in the original Constitution of 1875. Their membership was insignificant. This small number of dissidents from Bucard's group wore a blue shirt different from their namesake, and their insignia had a Frankish ax but no wheel. Both Francistes camps failed to move into action on February Six and soon were disbanded.²²

Front Universitaire.-- The Front Universitaire was a rather disjointed association made up when needed from college students. Its organization was of a haphazard nature. Before February Six this association was an inconsequential one, but on that day it suddenly mushroomed over the Paris streets.²³ Why so many young men, especially college students, joined the activities of the political leagues is a pertinent question at this point. A partial answer was provided by the philosopher, Julien Benda, when he wrote:

The essential prudence of democracy, its lack of reckless daring, the prominence which it accords to maturer minds to the "greybeards," have never had much appeal to the youthful imagination, and less than ever since the war. The young people admire only action and feel little respect for a settled life of thought. They thus constitute a ready-made audience for fascist doctrine. It would be sheer folly to ignore that fact.²⁴

²²Catalan, Manifestation, p. 584; also Fr  d  rix, Revue de Paris, p. 115.

²³Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 585-586.

²⁴Benda, Foreign Affairs, XIII, p. 289.

Croix de Feu.-- The Croix de Feu has been the most discussed of all the political leagues which made their appearance in France after World War I. Although it had been incorporated as early as 1927, the Croix de Feu still boasted of only 18,000 members in Paris and 50,000 adherents in the French provinces by February, 1934. At first, the Croix de Feu was a sincere veteran organization working for veteran benefits. M. Maurice d'Hartoy, the founder of the Croix de Feu, had attracted the disabled veteran to his organization because the Croix's charter concentrated mainly on the following objectives: (1) better veterans' hospitals, (2) free legal advice for the veteran wounded in action, and (3) increased government compensation. By 1930, however, Colonel de La Rocque seized the Croix's power and turned the organization into a political league. Officially the Croix could now be called the Croix de Feu et Briscards, but for our purpose, we will also use the shorter version to refer to the overall association.²⁵

The Croix de Feu et Briscards' military composition was developed to a very large extent around the disponibles. The latter made up the members of the large units called dispos. The "disponibles" were the shock troops and totalled 1,500 units. They were to be on the constant alert in case they were needed for "combat." One dispos unit contained numerous "divisions"--the "disponibles" in Paris, for instance, were broken down into three "divisions." The disponibles or young men within

²⁵ MM. Dormann et Salette, La participation des associations combattants à la manifestation du 6 février 1934, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3387, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 660.

a "division" were further subdivided into "groups." Each "group" was further broken into three "hands." Each "hand" was composed in such a way as to see that the five members could easily and quickly be moved into action in case of mobilization. One person within each "hand" was charged with transporting the others in his automobile when the call to action came. The disponibles were the spearheading troops used by the Croix de Feu in time of need.²⁶

The second most important groups within the Croix de Feu, after the dispos, were the Fils de la Croix de Feu. The Fils did not actually become a reality until Colonel François de La Rocque gave the matter his personal attention in October, 1933. This large subdivision of the Croix de Feu was formed to unite all the sons and daughters of the veterans within the Croix, so as not only to inculcate in them the memories of their fathers, but also to teach them honor, respect for the state, and discipline. These Fils de la Croix Feu were assigned to one of three categories once they joined the group: (1) Pupilles-- eight to twelve years old; (2) Cadets--twelve to fifteen years old; and (3) all those over fifteen. The young men from fifteen to eighteen were assigned the various positions found in a communication corps in the army and were responsible for keeping all the mobile elements in contact during a demonstration, a riot, or a public protest supported by the Croix de Feu.²⁷

²⁶ Dormann et Salette, Participation des associations, pp. 584-585.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 660-661.

Next in importance within the military cadre of the Croix de Feu et Briscards was the Regroupement National, which included all people sympathetic to the objectives of the Croix. This group was also a late-comer into the organization and made its first public appearance on June 21, 1933 in Wagram Hall. A fourth and last echelon tied to the Croix de Feu was the Volontaires Nationaux. This military wing had recruits from all the other three main Croix de Feu units and was assigned the task of coordinated action within any of the Croix de Feu's groups when a demonstration was in process.²⁸

The leader of the Croix de Feu was Colonel de La Rocque. His writings have been used by such men as Alexander Werth, the British newspaperman who is an authority on the period, to show that France was being undermined by "fascists" in early 1934. The author must admit that he believed this himself several years ago but, after the primary materials available were studied, he was forced to change this hasty conclusion.

It is interesting to note that Colonel de La Rocque was born the same year as Stavisky, namely, 1886. His family, long resident of Auvergne, had an aristocratic ancestry. This fact was usually listed as a reason why de La Rocque could be considered a fascist. As was usual around the turn of the century in France, one of the sons from an aristocratic family went into the army--de La Rocque was the representative from his family. After attending St. Cyr, Colonel de La Rocque gave honorable service to his country, and he was stationed in

²⁸Catalan, Manifestation, p. 585.

the Saharan and Moroccan zones from 1907 to 1917. In 1916 de La Rocque was seriously wounded in desert warfare, and as a result he was hospitalized. Recovering from his wounds before the end of World War I, he served in France as an infantry captain. The early twenties found him serving on Ferdinand Foch's general staff, and in 1928 he retired from military service. In 1930 he became the President of the Croix de Feu.²⁹

After 1930 Colonel de La Rocque collected his thoughts in a work entitled Service Public, which was to serve as a philosophical guide for the Croix de Feu. The latter organization, as we have seen, he transformed from a purely veteran association to a political league. De La Rocque's program as revealed in Service Public had a general characteristic found in fascist countries--it had an opportunistic tone. He clearly admitted this when he wrote: "I have therefore put programs resolutely away among my bookshelves, in company with my dictionaries and logarithm tables. I have given priority to the plan of action."³⁰

Another fascist trait, the appeal to a "mystic," was also strongly emphasized by de La Rocque when he stated:

And still we guarded pure our links with all the martyrs of the agony of France; and thus we caused the national mystic consciousness to gush once more, rich in vitality, heroism, self-sacrifice, and vital as in the days of Joan of Arc, of Fontenoy, of Valmy, of Montmirail, and of Verdun.³¹

²⁹Gaston Bergery, "La Rocque," L'Europe Nouvelle, Vol. 877 (December 1, 1934), p. 1183.

³⁰Colonel de La Rocque, Service Public (Paris, 1934), p. 18.

³¹Ibid., p. 28.

The fascist characteristics of "blind obedience to the leader" and "self-discipline to serve the state first" were also part of de La Rocque's philosophy. On this last subject he declared:

Without a freely given discipline, no organization can amount to anything, no preparations can become worthwhile, or no judicious application of efforts will be possible if need for resolution, rapid action, and order arise.³²

Colonel de La Rocque was completely vague about what economic and social program he would initiate once he became the "leader." His "moral discipline" was to add many men to his command, but many people were agreeing with Maurice Pujo, whom we already met as the editor of L'Action Française, when he argued:

What would take place on J day, how these sterile vows would become practical, and by what means these words uttered by honest men: "Fatherland, Work, Family, and National Reconciliation," would cease to be words and become realities, that was the secret the leader would not explain.

He says, "Monsieur, I am not a royalist, I am not a Bonapartist--but I am not a socialist--but neither am I for the capitalist--I am neither on the Right or on the Left.

On the contrary, as M. de La Rocque multiplies his "I am nots," when he renounces one after another all the forms, all the solutions known; when he opposes all attempts at national union; when he even refuses all opportunistic action--this method of acting only digs a bottomless pit of successive negations.³³

In retrospect it can be seen that Lieutenant-Colonel de La Rocque had many contradictions in his "plan of action." If his ideas suggested certain fascist techniques, these were never applied to France on any large scale. La Rocque's friends felt that the accusations of "fascism"

³²De La Rocque, Service, pp. 18-45.

³³Maurice Pujo, Comment La Rocque a trahi (Paris, 1937), pp. 12-14.

levelled against him and the Croix de Feu were unjust. One such friend presented the case forcefully by remarking:

For nothing is more improperly used than this word of "fascism" as it is presently employed within France. Nothing is further from the truth than the dictatorial mask we assign to Colonel de La Rocque.

La Rocque's actions have never restrained the individual's liberty, nor imposed on the country a régime by force. He wants exactly the opposite; that is, to bring each one of us to be aware of the need to be concerned of the public's welfare. He tries not to destroy, but to invigorate the democratic government.³⁴

In our period, the evidence available is rather thin that would objectively classify the Croix de Feu as a strictly fascist movement. Intellectually the documents could be used to show that fascism existed, but men such as Jacques de Lacretelle of the Académie Française have taken the same materials to build up a convincing case exactly the opposite. The conservative view would appear to be the acceptance of the Croix de Feu as one more organization that was antiparliamentary in the early days of 1934. A travesty on historical justice would appear to take place if we assigned to the Croix de Feu the role of a fascist organization of the same caliber as found in that period in Germany and Italy. If it carries any weight at all, it is only fair to record that de La Rocque himself always refuted this fascist charge and said the Croix de Feu and its President were "deeply republicans."³⁵

³⁴Jacques de Lacretelle, Qui est La Rocque? (Paris, 1936), pp. 3-4.

³⁵Marianne, March 1, 1934.

Veterans and Taxpayers

Other veteran organizations acting as political leagues.-- Besides the Croix de Feu, which still was partially a veteran association in 1934, there were other usually nonpolitical veterans who took an active role in the events of January and February, 1934. It was obvious that they acted as political leagues during the time period within the scope of this study. Therefore, they deserve to be developed in extenso at this point. Certain veteran organizations such as the Union des Combattants Corses, the Association des Membres de la Légion d'Honneur, Décorés au Péril de Leur Vie, and the Officiers de Reserve de L'Air limited their activities to publishing manifestoes and are easily dismissed.³⁶

Another group called the Association Nationale des Officiers (A.N.O.) founded in 1930 by Lieutenant-Colonel Ferrandi, a Paris Municipal Councilor, was normally nonpolitical. The long list of its objectives included the reunion between combat officers, the establishment of unity and friendship among the latter, and the desire to present a strong group which could get the government to listen to its demands. As the organization included only a thousand members, the A.N.O. leaders allowed their followers to join the political league of their choice on February Six.³⁷

An extremely important veteran group was the U.N.C., founded in 1917 under the name of L'Union Nationale des Combattants. October 15,

³⁶Dormann et Salette, Participations des associations, pp. 640-646.

³⁷Catalan, Manifestation, p. 585.

1933, was a decisive date for the U.N.C., for on that day it met in Wagram Hall and declared itself to be a political league. Before a considerable gathering of delegates from all over France, the convention placed its weight behind an action program for national reforms in the areas of economics, finance, fiscal affairs, and politics. This manifesto was later circulated throughout France and adopted by the individual sections. Some 72,000 members in Paris approved this step made by the U.N.C., while the 900,000 others over France also gave their assent. As we shall see, this unity of action was to give the U.N.C. a very weighty role in the February Six events.³⁸

M. Georges Lebecq, the U.N.C. President in 1934 and also a Paris Municipal Councilor, testified before the February Six Inquiry Commission that the U.N.C. was motivated by a deep desire to bring the stagnant and almost decadent government structure to a better condition by removing its main faults. He further added that the association had become disgusted with existing political conditions and desired not only a "political housecleaning" and removal of political corruption, but also was working actively for a "national renovation." By the end of 1933, Lebecq declared, the U.N.C. was ready to support anyone or any group that could offer constructive changes within the framework of the democratic institutions of the Third Republic. In this fight the U.N.C. took its motto, "United AS At The Front," to be a challenge to its followers to support such efforts as the leaders

³⁸Dormann et Salette, Participation des associations, pp. 643-660.

of the group would decide as accomplishing the goals developed above.³⁹

Another veteran association, the Association Républicaine des Anciens Combattants (A.R.A.C.) was not so democratic in approach as the U.N.C. The A.R.A.C. from its very beginning in November, 1917 denounced capitalism, supported antimilitaristic propaganda, and demanded that all veterans adopt the aspirations of the working and peasant classes as their main objective. As a political league this group was dominated by a communist leadership. The President was Henri Barbusse, the Director of the weekly revue, Le Monde. Barbusse claimed 20,000 adherents all over France--some 5,000 of these in Paris. Jacques Duclos, the Vice-President of the A.R.A.C., was also the Secretary of the French Communist Party. As we will see later, the A.R.A.C. was later activated to bring support to the Communists.⁴⁰

Taxpayers Association.-- It would be folly indeed if in this chapter on political leagues we neglected to mention the Fédération des Contribuables (Taxpayers Association). Although organized late in 1928, by 1934 it had some 700,000 members. The Paris number was large but never completely known. Its President was M. le Baron d'Anthouard de Wasservas, but the power actually was delegated to M. Large, the General Delegate. This organization in becoming a political league pledged itself to: (1) introduce programs of economics and tax abatements, (2) suppress abuses within the existing tax structure, and (3) investigate civil servants to see that they carried out their

³⁹Dormann et Salette, Participation des associations, p. 639.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 639-669.

tasks effectively.⁴¹

The role M. Large and the Taxpayers Association took in 1933 during the "capitalist offensive" has been discussed already. On January 29, 1933, M. Large had begun his attack on the government with such aggressive words as:

We will undertake a converging march towards the cave called the Palais-Bourbon if need be; we will take whips and clubs to sweep clean that Chamber of handicapped.⁴²

The discontent which was ravaging France in early 1934 found expression through the many political leagues that now were directing their activities against the existing government. Especially conspicuous in these political movements were the war veterans, the taxpayers, and the representatives from the younger generation. Our analysis above taught us that the majority of the men in the leagues were predominantly interested in reforming French democracy. The minority of these were communists, fascists, and royalists. This minority, of course, found the existence of French democracy to be repugnant. Whether this minority could assume and keep the leadership of a disgruntled French people, few were willing to say in early January, 1934.

The following appraisal, although made soon after the Great February Riot, still sums up most appropriately and adequately the political leagues as they existed prior to the explosion of the Stavisky bomb:

⁴¹Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 582-586.

⁴²Marc Rucart, Rapport Général fait au nom de la Commission d'Enquête de rechercher les Causes et les Origines des Événements du 6 février 1934, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3383, Débats Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 1356.

The various movements, manifested in conservative as well as radical circles, differed both in organization and program. Some were militant and disciplined, others were unorganized and largely intellectual in character. Those conservative in sympathy emphasized their nationalism, while those of radical tendency placed economic and social reform in the forefront. Some showed definite fascist leanings; others professed abhorrence of fascism as something alien to the French spirit. Yet, although divergent in aims, they were united in opposition both to parliamentary government as it functioned in France and to economic liberalism.⁴³

⁴³ John C. De Wilde, "Political Ferment in France," Foreign Policy Reports, X (July 18, 1934), p. 127.

CHAPTER VI

THE JANUARY RIOTS AND THE FALL OF CHAUTEMPS (Sitting on the Lid)

Riots Spearheaded by the Action Française

The royalist press begins the attack on French democracy.--

Realizing the potential forces which would be released if the political leagues should move into action, we are now prepared to understand how a general mobilization of these forces was carried out. The leagues were ready to respond to the commands of the archenemies of the Third Republic--the royalists. The time chosen was ripe, for in the social atmosphere which oppressed France at the opening of 1934, reaction to the Stavisky scandals could be turned to deadly account by plotters of evil. The public mood was well understood by the spokesmen "for the throne," who began to put into words what some Frenchmen momentarily believed to be true: namely, that French democracy was synonymous with and inseparable from corruption and impotence in their government. By keeping the country both mentally and physically agitated, the Action Française brought the crisis of French democracy sensibly nearer to its climax.

Under the headline "Democratic Filth" the royalist press began its devastating attacks on the Third Republic. As these picked up momentum, they attracted the attention not only of the monarchists but of all France as well. The newspaper's circulation skyrocketed to an

unprecedented height. The immediate cause of such a development was the relentless attack made on the ministry, which had been headed by Premier Camille Chautemps since November 26, 1933. The exposure of the highly charged Stavisky Affair was built up into a series of character defamations that not only embarrassed Chautemps politically, but subjected his family to moral judgment by all of France.¹

The Dalimier Letters.-- On the very first day of the campaign, Léon Daudet declared Camille Chautemps and his brother-in-law, M. Pressard the Procurator of the Republic, guilty of being Stavisky's leading partners in crime. Chautemps became more clearly involved on January 3 when the royalist press published one of its most important scoops, the Dalimier Letters. The Dalimier Letters dated from June, 1932, when M. Albert Dalimier, Minister of Public Works, corresponded with Joseph Garat, Mayor of Bayonne, about the recommending of the Bayonne Bonds to the French financial world. At that time, moreover, Garat made a similar request to M. Julien Durand, the Minister of Commerce. Garat reminded both men that the private insurance companies had not placed their investments in Municipal Pawnshop debentures lately, and that the two ministries involved here had a legal duty to the communities of France to advise such a move to them. Garat further added that purchases of the Bayonne Bonds by the Social Insurance Fund would also be welcomed. Durand declared himself in complete agreement with Garat and decided to give his immediate attention to the matter.

¹Action Française, January 2, 1934; also Alexander Werth, France in Ferment (London, 1935), p. 90.

The Minister of Commerce dispatched a forceful letter to Dalimier asking the latter to start the wheels moving. Furthermore, Dalimier was graciously warned that this purchasing of Bayonne Bonds could wait no longer and had been brought to the "attention of numerous parliamentarians." Within a week the whole Public Works hierarchy was shaking and doing its best to satisfy Mayor Garat.²

Dalimier, in recommending the Bayonne Bonds to the insurance companies, assumed a tone which gave the impression to his correspondents that the purchases were required and would be considered a personal favor to him. The private insurance companies could not afford to pass up such a request, for after all it was elementary to all those involved that they needed the Minister of Public Works on their side if they were to continue in business. The companies' representatives, therefore, went out of their way to accommodate Minister Dalimier, who asked them this favor in the name of the "general welfare of France." The usual caution used by the insurance companies was neglected to their detriment for, as we have seen, most of the Bayonne Bonds were false. The bogus debentures through Dalimier's letters had thus found avid buyers.³

The exposure of these Dalimier Letters was the forerunner of a series of revelations which kept Frenchmen gasping from day to day. The reader can begin to understand the emotional effects of these even

²Alfred D trez, Dossier d'histoire: l'affaire Stavisky (Paris, 1935), p. 214.

³Ibid., pp. 215-221.

when a brief synopsis of them is offered. On January 6 the Bayonne Scandal was linked to the international Optants Hongrois scheme. On January 7 Joseph Garat, then deputy from Bayonne, as well as Mayor, was arrested for being Stavisky's accomplice. On January 8 M. Dalimier, then Minister of Colonies in Chautemps' government, resigned in disgrace; and on the same day, the news of Stavisky's "suicide" began to divide France into two camps.⁴

On January 9 the Chamber of Deputies met, elected M. Fernand Bouisson its President, and undertook the discussion of the interpellations on the Stavisky Affair. The press daily kept connecting more and more parliamentarians and Chautemps' friends to Stavisky. On January 10 the public was informed of Stavisky's nineteen judicial postponements and how "delayed justice" was possible if you could afford deputy-lawyers. Among the latter Deputy-lawyer Gaston Bonnaure, who "might have revealed Stavisky's hiding place to the police," came up for uncomplimentary remarks. The climax of these disclosures was reached on January 11 when riots swept Paris. Such a presentation of so many unsavory events in less than a two-week period led to the demoralization of many heretofore "solid citizens." To them every institution in democratic France seemed to be involved with Stavisky and had become rotten.⁵

The rapid rise of the public's anger over the Stavisky Affair was

⁴Anon., "Politiques et littéraires," Journal des Débats, Vol. 2081 (January 12, 1934), p. 49.

⁵Le Temps, January, 1934 series.

by then finding vigorous release not only through the press, but also through the political leagues. Reserving the last point for a later literary treatment, let us linger a little longer on the reactions registered by the French press after the announcement of the Dalimier Letters. The outcry of the press against the democratic forms of France became almost general. Only a few newspapers, more or less controlled by the Government, such as the Petit Parisien, continued to call for moderation. But with much of the press gone wild, the Action Française naturally had to go one better. On January 7 the Action Française gave the first call to start the riots against the Third Republic. The newspaper flashed a gigantic headline to its readers on that day across its front page which read: "A bas les voleurs!"⁶ "Down with the thieves!" could be interpreted to mean "Down with Democracy!" and so it was by many Frenchmen if one is to judge from their resulting action.

It must be clear by now why the campaign against democracy in early January, 1934, was of such vital importance to anyone interested in upholding democracy anywhere in the world. Here was a serious threat to a key European country in an age when many of her neighbors had "lost faith in their democracy."⁷

Maurras and Daudet kept using "name-calling," "glittering generalities," and the "band-wagon" techniques with amazing dexterity and results. The two champions of "monarchism" abandoned all caution in their attacks on the Third Republic. Every new day in early January,

⁶ Action Française, January 7, 1934.

⁷ Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 90-91.

1934, found them devoting more and more space to the Stavisky Scandals, revealing myriads of names and connecting them unmercifully in one way or another to Stavisky. Many innocent men found themselves crucified before they had a chance to give one word in their defense. The epithets began on January 4 when Camille Chautemps was addressed as the "courteous devil" and "a gang leader of robbers and assassins." In case M. Chautemps wanted to know, Daudet informed him who "the boys" were: Henri Hayotte, Albert Dubarry, Dalimier, Pressard, and a hundred or so of France's "democratic" senators and deputies.⁸

With the Action Française now showing the way, the other French newspapers began following the antidemocratic drumbeats of the royalist press. On January 9 the Action Française printed a headline which bordered on revolutionary action. It read: "Down with the thieves! Down with the assassins! Everyone tonight in front of the Chamber!" That of January 10 was not meant to bring any calmness to the already aggravated atmosphere, as it declared that "Camille Chautemps, Kingpin of a Gang of Thieves and Assassins" would soon be booted out. The rest of the "democratic band" came up for censure on January 11 when Pujo, the royalist editor, gave the orders of "Down with the Ministers and Deputies Who Sold Themselves!" The "call to arms" was sounded on January 12 with: "The Paris Revolution against the Thieves! For France's Honor Let's Advance! Fight to the End!"⁹

⁸ Action Française, January 4, 1934.

⁹ Ibid., January 9-12, 1934.

Stavisky's "suicide."-- The most juicy bit of news after the disclosure of the Dalimier Letters came when Alexandre Stavisky was reported dead. The official version of "suicide" published by Havas was shown later by the Stavisky Inquiry Commission to be highly incorrect in details, but acceptable in substance. Few Frenchmen were convinced that Stavisky had shot himself. At the bottom of such skepticism was the fact that the populace, in the past few days, had been conditioned to doubt anything and everything when it was made public from police sources.

The Action Française thought the "suicide version" was an illusion prepared for public consumption by a person trying to prevent his own exposure. It further quoted an anonymous friend of Alexandre Stavisky as saying that on last December 30 Stavisky had told him: "I am too hot--if I do not get away, they will kill me." The royalists were convinced that "they" meant the police.¹⁰ M. Hennessy's nationalist paper, Le Quotidien, also insinuated that the suicide story was a sham by declaring: "Stavisky has received a bullet in the head?--From whom?-- He had barely stopped breathing, when others began breathing better."¹¹ The same incredulous attitude was reflected in Stéphane Lauzanne's venal Le Matin and Jean Piot's usually progovernment sheet L'Oeuvre. These two last newspapers received the official version without faith but would not admit anything else. If one went along with such disbelief--

¹⁰Action Française, January 9, 1934.

¹¹Le Quotidien, January 9, 1934.

and most of France did--the obvious conclusion that logically presented itself was that "Stavisky had been murdered by the police."¹²

M. Léon Bailby's nationalist newspaper, Le Jour, spoke clearly on the subject by noting:

The affair becomes each day a little more repugnant and more dirty.

Stavisky is dying. "Suicide," says the Sûreté. "Assassination," answers public opinion--whose instinct rarely fails. And furthermore, the political crime disguised as suicide does not have to be edited for us.¹³

One could expect to find the communists in L'Humanité presenting Stavisky's removal from this world as "murder," but the cautious socialists in Le Populaire surprised many by joining the bandwagon with:

Did we need to arrest this swindler and place him under police custody? If the police had so wished, they could have apprehended him at a moment's notice. But they were afraid of what he could say--they suspected that he would make a "clean slate" of it, and in doing so would reveal too many political and law-enforcement personalities.¹⁴

In direct results from such newspaper reports, it can be seen how easily most Parisians in 1934 were convinced that Stavisky had not killed himself. The Parisians furthermore were unusually well-organized into political leagues, as we have seen. The communists, nationalists, royalists, and veterans could all be called upon if their leaders thought the times demanded such a move. On the very day of Stavisky's

¹²Le Matin, January 9, 1934.

¹³Le Jour, January 9, 1934.

¹⁴Le Populaire, January 9, 1934.

reported "suicide," the leaguers did begin to march in cadence on the Paris streets, as the initial mobilization of these troops entered the "active phase" in what was to become the "Democratic Crisis of 1934 in France." The Third French Republic was in a most serious plight. At stake was the very existence of French democracy itself.

The Enigmatic Chautemps

Chautemps' personality and cabinet.-- It is essential before we proceed any further that we give some attention to Chautemps, the political leader at the helm of France's democratic machinery in January, 1934. Camille Chautemps, a Radical-Socialist, had replaced the outgoing Albert Sarraut on November 26, 1933, and his Ministry was the fifth since the Election of 1932.¹⁵

Although Chautemps had hoped to form a wider cabinet than his predecessors, he ended with almost the same personnel as his colleagues. All he did was reshuffle the former cabinet members into new posts. Most of the press expressed disappointment with the narrow representation of the Cabinet, but French politicians placed their hopes in Chautemps--they considered him one of the great statesmen in the Chamber.¹⁶ Although his physical appearance presented a man of medium height with a little moustache, sparse black hair, and an unimpressive air, his intellectual ability was usually assumed to be very high. His constant smile and zealous speeches impressed even his enemies. He was always

¹⁵ John C. DeWilde, "Political Ferment in France," Foreign Policy Reports, X (July 18, 1934), p. 123.

¹⁶ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 74.

polite, considerate of others, and endowed with a charming manner.¹⁷

Camille Chautemps began his administration by making a favorable impression on his countrymen. His December 9 ministerial declaration had dealt with the need for a more stable Cabinet "before a strong policy could be tried." The new Premier declared that he must restore sound public finance before he could tackle anything else. To the surprise of many observers, by the end of December, 1933, Chautemps had succeeded where his predecessors had failed. The Chamber of Deputies, with all the parties of the Left joining in, did meet what the Premier considered his "urgent financial problem." The finance bill he had suggested was passed with a comfortable majority. It provided nearly five billion francs of revenue, as well as the pay cut that had been so difficult an issue for two years. Chautemps then went on a much-deserved Christmas vacation.¹⁸

While Chautemps and the deputies went home for the holidays, the Stavisky Scandals broke. Chautemps, from the first day that the Stavisky Affair became top news, informed the press that it was his firm resolution to bring all the light possible on the subject. He added that nothing, absolutely nothing, would shake his determination to see that justice was rendered. Chautemps, however, did not believe the matter needed immediate attention, for he took his family on a vacation

¹⁷ Pierre de Pressac, "Chronique Politique," Revue Politique et Parlementaire, 40th Year (January 10, 1934), p. 119; also L'Action Francaise, January, 1934 series.

¹⁸ Roger Nathan, "De Chautemps à Daladier," L'Europe Nouvelle, Vol. 834 (February 3, 1934), p. 110.

to the Alps.¹⁹

When Chautemps returned from a stay in the Alps, the Stavisky Affair had become the problème majeur. While he was away, the poisonous antidemocratic campaign by the Action Française had gone into full swing. Chautemps' renewed promise in January to do something quickly about the Stavisky Scandals resounded flatly in a Paris swept by hate for "those who ruled." In fact, this hate had reached such a high pitch that it was now time for the January Riots to move across the pages of French history.²⁰

The January Riots

January Riots in Paris.-- January 9, 1934 was the day chosen for the first demonstration staged by the political leagues. On that day the Chamber of Deputies was holding its first meeting since the beginning of the New Year. In order to vent their discontent publicly and vociferously to their deputies, about two thousand rioters converged on the Palais-Bourbon from two assembly areas: the Boulevard Saint-Germain and the Place de la Concorde. From 5:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M., a clamorous crowd demonstrated in front of the Chamber of Deputies and periodically tried to encourage itself by hollering: "Down with the Thieves! On to the Chamber!"²¹

¹⁹ Le Temps, December, 1933 series.

²⁰ Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 75-76.

²¹ M. Amat, Les manifestations sur la voie publique en janvier 1934 et jusqu'au 6 février, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3384, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 582.

The Action Française had ordered this first "call to action" and naturally the Action Française league, with its Camelots du Roi, made up almost 98 per cent of this unruly mass of Frenchmen on the Concorde that evening. The police, in an attempt to give the democratic Chamber of Deputies all possible protection from some of its constituents, had thrown a solid police cordon around the Palais-Bourbon. It was strange to see a Government "by the people" thus protecting itself from the "wrath of the people."²²

Little destruction by the rioters had been planned for this first day. Several iron grills were torn from nearby trees and deposited on embankments surrounding the area. A few trees were actually uprooted. Near the Concorde Bridge some 250 rioters from the Action Française seized M. Albert Sarraut, former premier and now Minister of Marine, as he attempted to cross the Seine. He was pummeled seriously and was saved from further punishment only by the timely arrival of a police rescue squad. The now irritated police began pushing the crowd around, arresting 132 who insisted on being obstinate, and ending up with ten of their own officers beaten. The crowd was soon dispersed and headed for their homes.²³

The rioters had doubled their strength for the January 11 riot. By then the effect of Stavisky's "suicide" had convinced another political league that its members should join the Action Française "on the

²² Amat, Voie publique en janvier, p. 582.

²³ Laurent Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes de février, 1934 (Paris, 1935), p. 35.

battle field." Thus the royalists found a powerful ally when the troops of the Jeunesses Patriotes were ordered onto the streets for that day. M. des Isnards gave the matter his personal attention and united his forces with those of the Camelots du Roi. Around supper time a howling mob of Action Française and Jeunesses Patriotes leaguers, therefore, began taking positions near the Chamber. Inside the Chamber the activities were just as dynamic as the events outside, for the interpellations on the Stavisky Scandals were beginning.²⁴

Around 5:30 P.M., MM. Pujo and Calzant, leaders of the Action Française, directed a column of two thousand followers towards the Palais-Bourbon, but were quickly dispersed by the ever-vigilant police. By then the two departure points, the Boulevard Saint-Germain and the Boulevard Raspail, were emptying their thoroughfares and the marching men were taking new positions on the Concorde and its surroundings. Until midnight this human mass was to have one dominating cry: "To the Chamber!"²⁵

Charge after charge was made by the police during the evening. Innumerable pedestrians were clubbed and kicked after being knocked down. A howling mob constructed small barricades from wheel barrows, pieces of lumber, torn metal pipes, and other débris near at hand. The mob shouting, "Shame on the Thieves! Murderers!" now pushed on to more clashes with the police. M. Marchand, Director of the Paris Municipal Police, arrived on the scene to give his personal leadership

²⁴ Amat, Voie publique en janvier, p. 576.

²⁵ Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, p. 37.

to his men. He was just in time, for around 7:30 P.M. occurred a vicious encounter between the two enraged opponents which resulted in the energetic use of white sticks and fists.²⁶

Around midnight the rioters had been checked and most of them had left the scene. The cost on the side of law enforcement to keep the rioters out of the Chamber added up to twenty-two policemen seriously wounded. This mob not only had given the police many bruises, but it had also been very destructive. Its rage, once released, was taken out by the smashing of park benches, the uprooting of trees, the overturning of newspaper stalls or kiosks, the mutilating of public buildings, and the piling up of small hills of débris collected while on vandalism raids. A major attempt to invade the inside of the Ministry of Public Works had been prevented by a quick moving police; otherwise, the property inside would no doubt have been deposited on the street.²⁷

The rioters carried their share of black-and-blue marks and a few were severely beaten. The police, as it felt the tension increasing during the evening, tended to react with more and more brutal action. At one moment the rioters pulled out iron rails from surrounding trees and threw them into tramway cable transformers. The police working to prevent the deadly short-circuits had no sympathy for the ones who tried to hamper this labor. In the evening the crowd grew to four thousand rioters. As this crowd grew bigger and bigger, the police were under

²⁶ L'Écho de Paris, January 12, 1934.

²⁷ Amat, Voie publique en janvier, p. 576.

great tension. This strain resulted in M. Vertex, a reporter from Le Jour, receiving one of the worst beatings on record during this tragic phase of France's history.²⁸ In all fairness, it should be pointed out that this was the worst case that evening. It was highly publicized as an example of police brutality. The greatest French authority on the subject under discussion later described the beating of M. Vertex as follows:

His quality as a journalist was well known....He received first, in back of the head, a heavy blow from a night stick-- then two more on the cranium. Seizing one of the night sticks striking at him he collapsed into a sitting position. Then he was struck hard on the right orbit with a blow coming from a policeman's heel that knocked the eye out of the socket, drove itself into the sinuses, and knocked out all his teeth. A final attack took place, and this time he received such a violent kick in the groins that the urethral canal splitted and gushed blood. Once more on the ground a new blow slashed through his ribs and tore into his right kidney.²⁹

January 12 brought no relief from the constant pressure the forces in the streets were now applying against the existing democratic Government. Again on that day the Chamber of Deputies was discussing the interpellations on Stavisky, and once more those within the hemicycle-- where sat the deputies of France and the Government supporters--were the targets of the mob that began gathering outside. M. Pujo had assembled his Camelots ready to march when rain began to come down in torrents. The two thousand men were ordered to leave the Boulevard Saint-Germain and to take shelter at home.³⁰

²⁸ Amat, Voie publique en janvier, p. 576.

²⁹ Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 39-40.

³⁰ Amat, Voie publique en janvier, p. 576.

For a week the streets of Paris became relatively calm, but on January 19 the Action Française was again back on the boulevards. January 20 was a repetition of the previous day's rather limited demonstration. Both riots appeared to have been half-heartedly undertaken, for the police easily broke them up. These riots had shown foresight to be on the police side, for most of the law officers on duty fell fast and hard on the assembly points on the Grand Boulevards and the thoroughfares of the Richelieu-Drouot area. A total of thirty-two arrests were made, and the processions soon were broken up before they were too well-organized.³¹

The January 22 riot was the next most serious movement undertaken by the leaguers. This riot had certain different elements in it. One was that the rioters did not all organize in one mass before going on the Concorde, but rather they moved onto their initial objective from several points. Basically speaking, two large groups dominated the evening demonstration. The first group was formed on the Right Bank of the Seine and included some four thousand civil servants who objected to salary cuts. A second group organized on the Left Bank of the Seine, was directed by the Action Française, and moved towards the Concorde by taking the Boulevard Saint-Germain and the Boulevard Raspail.³²

From 6:00 P.M. to midnight a howling crowd faced a belt of policemen protecting the Chamber. The police hit the civil servants first, arrested 310, and dispersed most of the rest. But it was not so easy

³¹Amat, Voie publique en janvier, p. 576.

³²Ibid.

with the royalists, who kept using hit-and-run tactics against the police. Serious property damage occupied isolated units of rioters, while others passed their time away by beating the police. Some twenty policemen were seriously beaten, in spite of an additional 261 rioters being arrested later in the evening.³³

As January 23 came, it was obvious that the peace lovers of Paris were not to be satisfied that day either, for yet another riot was ordered by the leaguers. The rendezvous was still on the Left Bank and the objective remained the Chamber. The Action Française was assisted by followers from the Solidarité Française and several hundred adherents to the Fédération des Contribuables (Taxpayers Association). The taxpayers and the royalists called out their members for 5:00 P.M., and once more the march from the Boulevard Saint-Germain to the Concorde was successfully undertaken. Throughout the evening the leaguers kept sending reinforcements to the Concorde and converging their troops towards the Palais-Bourbon. The police, on hand to protect those in charge of France's democratic machinery, soon found the crowd turning their rage on them. The police bulletin for that evening read: 346 rioters arrested; 13 police wounded.³⁴

By now most newspapers were free with their views as to what was wrong with French democracy. Some preferred to use this intellectual way to do their protesting, but the young people wanted more action. In consequence, on January 26 a minor demonstration of Jeunesses Patri-

³³Bonnevay, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 40-45.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 46-47.

otes and Solidarité Française on the Grand Boulevards alerted the police. Near the Madeleine and the Concorde the young leaguers clashed with the law officers, and since they became extremely unruly and insulting, twenty-eight of them were incarcerated.³⁵

On January 27 Paris witnessed the most serious street riot that month. It was the ninth of the series that made its appearance since the New Year in the capital. As it was Saturday, a tremendous crowd invaded the streets to satisfy their curiosity and watch the rioters at work. The mob this time was dominated by the adherents of the Action Française, the Jeunesses Patriotes, and the Solidarité Française. The leaguers formed a compact group of over two thousand members who paraded up and down the Grand Boulevards, around the Madeleine, and along the Rue Royale. Then around 6:00 P.M. the rioters began moving towards their objectives: the Chamber and the Ministry of the Interior.³⁶

Around 8:00 P.M. the leaguers arm in arm marched towards the Madeleine shouting: "Down with Chautemps!" and "Hang the Deputies!" In all of January the police had never seen the leaguers as furious as they were that evening. The barricades set up by the police to stop these two thousand enraged men were smashed to bits. The procession soon was moving onto the Rue Royale and heading for the Chamber. The usual police cordon around the Palais-Bourbon assumed an air of tenseness. The grim police met the leaguers' frontal attack as they reached

³⁵ Amat, Voie publique en janvier, pp. 576-577.

³⁶ Ibid.

the highest point of the Rue Saint-Honoré. For the time being the police took the challenge successfully and pushed the rioters back.³⁷

The gardiens de la paix, in compact groups, and the Mobile Guards were given a helping hand every now and then by small units of Republican Guards on horseback. They seemed to be occupying a conquered city. Although attempts had been made during the day to remove any potentially dangerous weapons from the area, the rioters fashioned makeshift clubs and tested them on the police. Other rioters became regular vandals and went on a rampage destroying café furnishings, burning kiosks, breaking open gas pipes, forcing entrance into nearby homes and buildings, and lighting many fires. The firemen were quickly on the job; they were kept busy all night; and they fought off not only the incendiaries but the rioters as well.³⁸

The rioters formed a second column and attempted one more march towards the Chamber. Once more the police proved incapable of closing the Rue Royale to them. As they had previously done, the police moved to the Saint-Honoré heights, took their positions, and waited for the clash that came several moments later. Just as the assailants were gaining ground, to the surprise of the gardiens de la paix, the leaguers broke up the column. The excuse later given by the latter was that the Camelots du Roi had to leave to take their supper.³⁹

³⁷Bonnevay, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 49-50.

³⁸Anon., "Malaise parlementaire et crise ministérielle," L'Illustration, Vol. 4744 (February 3, 1934), p. 124.

³⁹Bonnevay, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 50-51.

Around 11:00 P.M. the human mass reunited, but after forming yet another column, instead of heading for the Chamber, the leaguers went about destroying and burning more public and private property. Many outstanding café terraces, of which Paris was so proud, were left in shambles. Most puzzling was the conduct of the police, who just stared at the vandals and did little to stop them. By midnight the littered streets radiating around the Concorde were empty. A general survey later showed some 317 rioters had been arrested, eighty-three law officers had been severely beaten, numerous leaguers had been treated for cuts and bruises, and the total valuation of the destruction committed added up to the worst riot of January.⁴⁰

We should linger a bit longer to draw out certain noticeable and common characteristics inherent in these January Riots. One asks first whether any one group was responsible for starting this chaotic chain reaction. All evidence indicated that the Action Française was mainly responsible for leading this "chantage dans la rue." The royalists not only participated with great vigor in all the January Riots but, profiting from the Stavisky Affair, they seem to have worked for the downfall of French democratic life.⁴¹

The convocations were usually in the morning and gave direction for the evening's demonstration. Even the journaux d'information published these calls to assemble. The key members within each league that had received orders to march were given more specific assignments

⁴⁰Amat, Voie publique en janvier, pp. 576-577.

⁴¹Maurice Paz, Le six février (Paris, 1936), p. 5.

over the telephone. Few placards or tracts were used in January as guideposts. Furthermore, the question of league cooperation beforehand was a serious one, for it would indicate a plot was being hatched against the Third Republic. All documents available at present point to only several minor contacts ever being made between the leagues during January. No plots against the state can be uncovered.⁴²

Another outstanding characteristic of these January Riots was their appeal to pent-up emotion. They always started with howls and shouts against the Government, the Stavisky Affair, and the democratic leaders and institutions. Unusual shouts, songs, whistles, and other rituals pierced the air next. As the emotional tempo increased, so did the destruction against private and public property. A new tactic seemed apparent in this January crowd also; that was, the rioters would test the police by breaking up when first coming face-to-face with them. Almost immediately they would reunite and begin movements that kept the police tense and up-on-their-toes. This would end by clashes with the police, as well as vandalism excursions to nearby points by some of the wilder leaguers.⁴³

The continuous police cordon used around the Palais-Bourbon throughout January was reinforced by the placing of trucks, equipment, and other types of vehicles at strategic points. The gardiens de la paix were armed with their usual white night sticks, while the Republican guards carried pistols and sabers. The Mobile Guards were used

⁴² Amat, Voie publique en janvier, pp. 577-579.

⁴³ Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 52-53.

sparingly. As the rioters had pin-pointed the ministry buildings and the Chamber of Deputies as objectives, the police in their orders were told: "At no moment should anyone go near the Chamber or the Ministry of the Interior." And it is to the credit of the police that these two points were never seriously threatened throughout January.⁴⁴

But the police do not deserve too many laurels for the way they behaved. Often when the rioters were pillaging the areas the police just stood there and stared at them--and did nothing. They kept always on the defensive and thus gave the impression to the political leaguers that a greater force in the street could be led successfully. M. Chiappe, Prefect of Police, desired as few arrested as possible and, even with those apprehended, he was much "softer with these Rightists" than he ever had been with communists who had done much less. The courts themselves never gave more than fifteen-day sentences--and then suspended them. A lack of efficiency and firmness by those in charge of law enforcement at this time makes their complete paralysis on the momentous Sixth of February more understandable in retrospect.⁴⁵

Although the police should be praised for not firing on the crowd, M. Bonnevey concluded his treatment of the January Riots by condemning the police as follows:

This "goodwill towards the rioters of the Boulevard Saint-Germain," this "nonchalance during the repressions," those "orders given to the gardiens de la paix not to employ force" ended by bringing protests from the gardiens de la paix.

⁴⁴ Amat, Voie publique en janvier, pp. 580-581.

⁴⁵ Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 56-57.

It is equitable to recognize the softness of law-enforcement, which was surpassed only by the excessive indulgence of the Paris magistrature, showed itself to be of an impossible weakness. The punishment given for the wrecking and public destruction cases, of those involving assaults, was assured continuance by the insignificant condemnations made.

Thus during this period, the successive mistakes made by all the authorities, their lack of firmness with those administratively responsible or those who committed misdemeanors, increased the audacity of the disturbers of the peace, who concluded that by coordination and cooperation their efforts would make them master not only of the streets but of the Government as well.⁴⁶

Fall of Chautemps

The interpellations on Stavisky.-- On January 11 President Fernand Bouisson of the Chamber opened the new sitting of the Chamber with the announcement that he was swamped by demands for interpellations on the Stavisky Affair. As Camille Chautemps confronted the Chamber that day, he knew that with the riots existing outside the Palais-Bourbon, with the police protecting France's lawmakers, with the deputies demanding reasons, explanations, and action, he had a difficult task ahead. Parliamentary government was completely impossible until something was done to overcome the Stavisky hurdle. It was comforting to some to see the smiling Chautemps mount the tribune. The Premier said he wanted to get through the long list of interpellations on the Stavisky Affair as soon as possible; and he added that he hoped that the debate would be sensible, calm, and constructive. M. Bouisson then called on

⁴⁶Bonnevay, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 56-57.

M. Lagrange for the development of his interpellation.⁴⁷

M. Lagrange, a member of the Socialist Party which had been cooperating with Chautemps since November last, gave one of the best summaries on the known facts on Stavisky up to that date. He was as objective as a deputy could be in January, 1934. Without giving a detailed analysis--it might be useful for the reader to compare it with what has been said in Chapters III and IV of this work--it will be enlightening and will act as a review of the main points in Stavisky's career if we give a synopsis of his speech. Such a condensation would reveal that the following points were known then: (1) Stavisky had been watched by the police for a long period of time; (2) in 1915 Stavisky had been condemned to six months in prison; (3) in 1926 the Labbé Case had broken out and soon thereafter "Serge Alexandre" was arrested at Marly-le-Roi; (4) in 1927 the cagey Stavisky was placed under "provisional liberty;" (5) in 1928 the crook had formed the Établissements Alex; (6) in 1933 Stavisky had attempted unsuccessfully to organize the Caisse Autonome; and (7) Lagrange explained how Stavisky reimbursed the Orléans Bonds with money from Bayonne. These were actually amazing revelations for the time, and again M. Lagrange's objectivity deserves high praise.⁴⁸

Deputy Lagrange further saw two personalities in Stavisky: the playboy who was a casino habitué; and the financial swindler who was

⁴⁷ Chambre des députés, Journal Officiel du 12 janvier 1934, 15^e ième Legislature, Débats Parlementaires (Paris, 1934), p. 20. The Journal Officiel to be abbreviated to J.O.C. from here on when reference is in a short form.

⁴⁸ J.O.C. du 12 janvier, Débats, pp. 21-25.

a serious figure at the Bourse. The Socialist continued that the "schizophrenic" Stavisky had brought certain questions to mind. Lagrange said that above all he desired to know the answers to the following queries: (1) What had happened to the Pachot reports? (2) Why was "Alexandre" freed after 1927? (3) Did Stavisky commit "suicide"? (4) Why had the Municipal Pawnshops' inspectors been unable to discover fraud was going on in Bayonne? Lagrange's words made a thundering impression not only on the Chamber but throughout France. Frenchmen were demanding answers. Did Chautemps have them?⁴⁹

M. Chautemps did not desire the floor yet and allowed the other Socialist, M. Monnet, to disclose the details of his interpellation. Monnet said much less than Lagrange had brought out. The venal press and the police came up for some tongue-lashing, and an emotional tinge from then on could be detected throughout his harangue. He ended by giving an ultimatum to the Government: Either you do something about the Stavisky Scandals or do not depend on Socialist cooperation anymore!⁵⁰

The Rightist, M. René Dommange, wanted "Les Noms"--"The Names." He said a large number of high-placed people had given Stavisky a smooth path through government offices. Who were they? Premier Chautemps decided that was enough for one day and interrupted Dommange at this point. Chautemps stated he would tell all he knew of Stavisky. The Premier reported how Stavisky after 1926 had foiled the authorities by the

⁴⁹ J.O.C. du 12 janvier, Débats, pp. 25-30.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 31-34.

medical-legal excuses he kept producing. Chautemps apologetically said the police and the judiciary were greatly hampered in carrying out their duties when the shysters were doing everything possible to assure the nineteen postponements. The eighteen-page Cousin Report was brought as an illustration that administrative laxity had existed. The Premier then completed his summary by promising reforms in three areas: the judiciary, the police, and the press. The first day's debate on Stavisky was over.⁵¹

On January 12, at 9:30 A.M., the debate on the Stavisky Affair reopened. The President of the Chamber informed his colleagues that there were still twelve interpellations on Stavisky to be heard. M. Alfred Lacourt had the floor next, and he felt that Chautemps had offered adequate reforms. The first completely subjective speech then was given by M. Arthur Ramette, a communist. Ramette blamed the bourgeoisie for Stavisky and, after listing wild and unfounded accusations, this deputy ended with a "call for the Communist Revolution." M. Michel Walter and M. Marcel Déat, who followed, said they were both satisfied with Chautemps' proposals. At this point it must be seen that the tide seemed to be turning in the Premier's favor.⁵²

M. Ybarnégaray was the next deputy in line on the interpellation list. The Basque deputy was conciliatory and took some time to review the Stavisky Affair. Then he threw a bomb when he demanded an investi-

⁵¹J.O.C. du 12 janvier, Débats, pp. 34-42.

⁵²Chambre des députés, Journal Officiel du 13 janvier 1934, 15 ième Législature, Débats Parlementaires (Paris, 1934), pp. 43-78.

gating commission of forty-four members to look into the whole matter. A heated debate followed this request and soon the Chamber looked like an arena filled with enraged men. Chautemps then announced that he opposed such a motion, and furthermore he affixed the question of confidence to it. The resulting vote gave the following: 376 votes against, and 229 for, having an investigating commission; 376 votes out of 589 deputies supported the Government. Chautemps had won for the time being, but he had made important enemies while so doing.⁵³

During these two moving days of debate within the Chamber, the press and the public galleries were bulging with guests. Many, who were curious to see if any political butchering were going on inside, took the standing room only outside and waited impatiently for a space inside the Chamber. The lobbies were filled with more people who also wanted to be "near the show." Many of these elements were disappointed that Chautemps was not defeated.⁵⁴

Chautemps' mistakes and his fall.-- While most of France became saturated with the Chamber's emotional attitude when the subject of Stavisky was being discussed, Premier Chautemps committed two major sins in the public's eye. The first one concerned the manner of M. Dalimier's resignation from the Cabinet. The Minister of Colonies who was responsible for the unforgiveable letters to the private insurance companies was patted on the back by Chautemps as he left. Chautemps, furthermore, gave Dalimier a "good character reference" in accepting

⁵³ J.O.C. du 13 janvier, Débats, pp. 82-112.

⁵⁴ Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 101-102.

his former colleague's resignation. The public reacted vigorously against Chautemps for this and believed he was definitely "coddling the crooks."⁵⁵

The press' response to Chautemps' refusal to go along with M. Ybarnégaray's proposal was also unfavorable to the Premier. This only goaded the editors to more attacks on the blundering Chautemps. The Premier would not give ground on this subject of forming a parliamentary commission, for the Stavisky Scandals, and ended up by doing himself much damage. Surely, his sympathetic critics commented, he must have seen that his refusal to give in on this point cast serious doubts in many people's minds as to whether the Premier was impeding the course of justice.⁵⁶

It was also maddening for many to see such a seasoned politician as Chautemps treating the matter so lightly. He set up a counterproposal to the parliamentary inquiry by alerting some of the key investigators in the administration to study and report, as soon as possible, on the Stavisky Affair. What the Premier failed to realize was that the administrative machinery was itself under suspicion by the public. The press was convinced that this method of probing into the Affair was exactly what the Cartel desired. Secretly, the argument went, the choking process will be carried out. A few civil servants, a few magistrates, and a few fools would be brought forward to be disciplined. But at the bottom of the Affair the light would be kept as dim as the

⁵⁵ Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 101-102.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 104-107.

politicians dared to keep it. With this general theory accepted as the truth by many, it can be seen how Chautemps' behavior on this question was misinterpreted.⁵⁷

As the month and the Chamber sitting wore on, the deputies began reading the writing on the wall, and many decided to play the safest course and bring the Government down. As January 20 approached, this change in attitude by the deputies became more and more noticeable. With the riots outside and the Stavisky Affair inside the Chamber, the Palais-Bourbon soon became a madhouse. The Right accused the Left, the Left howled back at the Right, and the Communists called both a "bunch of dirty bourgeois capitalists." When this mudslinging had run its course, the Chamber assumed a dangerous mood as far as the Chautemps' Cabinet was concerned. An insidious campaign against the members of the Government now began. This campaign brought out one dominating belief: Chautemps was hushing up the Affair.⁵⁸

On January 23 M. Philippe Henriot of the Right began a devastating campaign against the Chautemps Cabinet. M. de Monzie, Minister of Education, and M. Paul-Boncour, Foreign Minister, defended themselves successfully after being attacked by the deputy. Then Philippe Henriot, young demagogue from the Gironde, selected M. Raynaldy, Minister of Justice, as his quarry. Henriot's attack and language on Raynaldy

⁵⁷ Anon., "L'Affaire Stavisky devant le parlement," Journal des Débats, Vol. 2082 (January 19, 1934), p. 93.

⁵⁸ Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 105-109.

became so strong that the Chamber had to be cleared to stop the fist fights.⁵⁹

When the deputies returned to order, the wald Henriot continued. In a harsh tone that whistled past his black moustache, Henriot accused Chautemps of having been General Bardi de Fourtou's attorney and reminded the Chamber that de Fourtou had been one of Stavisky's most trusted accomplices. With this digression against Chautemps, Henriot returned to attacking Raynaldy. The emotional deputy said he knew why the Minister of Justice could not uncover any more names--Raynaldy was a crook himself who was afraid of being exposed. With this introduction, Henriot then revealed that Raynaldy was a key backer in the Sacazan Affair.⁶⁰ This Sacazan Affair was a reference to a contemporary Commercial Holding Company which had issued--and had been caught doing it--watered stocks. This had nothing to do with Stavisky, but when Raynaldy admitted that he had been one of the backers behind this disgraced banker Sacazan, the old politicians knew this was the beginning of the end for the Chautemps Government. Yet the experts were themselves amazed that day to see that this Raynaldy Question ended with the Cabinet gathering 367 adherents on a "vote of confidence."⁶¹

However, public opinion, and not a parliamentary vote, was to overthrow Chautemps. On January 27 M. Raynaldy handed in his resigna-

⁵⁹ Anon., "Malaise parlementaire," L'Illustration, Vol. 4744 (February 3, 1934), p. 125.

⁶⁰ Chambre des députés, Journal Officiel du 24 janvier 1934, 15 ième Législature, Débats Parlementaires (Paris, 1934).

⁶¹ Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, p. 40.

tion in order to "better defend himself from his accusers." That same day, as we have seen, the worst and the ninth of the January Riots occurred. These two events were too much for Chautemps, who immediately resigned. This downfall is unusually interesting because, for the first time in the Third Republic's history, a cabinet fell after receiving two votes of confidence.⁶²

Was Chautemps innocent?-- It is a fact that during the last week of his stay in office Premier Chautemps had antagonized most of the press by proposing an ill-timed newspaper reform. The press naturally saw this as an attempt to crush the freedom of the press. The Premier's press reform, which would have removed the slanderous press cases from the jurisdiction of the emotional French jurors, was rejected by the Chamber in January. But the press became irreconcilable with the Premier. Even the newspapers who had formerly defended Chautemps, such as L'Oeuvre, could not forgive the Premier this attempted press reform and condemned him.⁶³

While the press' attacks on Chautemps are to be met with a highly critical skepticism, the charges made by the serious André Tardieu against the Premier are not so easily dismissed. Tardieu was convinced that Chautemps was the key politician behind Stavisky. Bluntly Chautemps said Tardieu was wrong in his accusation, for the Premier denied ever hearing the name Stavisky before the fall of 1933. Tardieu replied

⁶² Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 113-117.

⁶³ Anon., "Memorandum," Journal des Débats, Vol. 2084 (February 2, 1934), p. 169.

that this was a lie and that Chautemps was forced by the law of self-preservation to check any exposures on Stavisky that connected the crook to the Premier.⁶⁴

First, argued Tardieu, through his friends could we prove that Chautemps was a liar. These "friends" included such ministers as M. Gaston Hulin, Secretary of War in Daladier's First Ministry; M. Guiboud-Ribaud, Stavisky's lawyer, who was charged with periodic visits to the Ministry of Finance; and M. Dalimier, who was in the Ministry of Public Works. All these men knew Stavisky in 1932 and were in close contact with Chautemps. Tardieu mentioned that, secondly, Chautemps was guilty of being Stavisky's "servant" by reason of the position that he held. From June, 1932 to the end of January, 1934, Chautemps was Minister of the Interior almost continuously. As Minister of the Interior during this critical period, Tardieu felt that it would have been almost impossible for Chautemps not to have come in contact with Stavisky. The head of the Ministry had constant relationships with the Préfecture, the Sûreté, and the Paris Parquet--and these last three offices were very much aware of Stavisky. With such an entourage, concluded Tardieu, Chautemps would have had to be quite inefficient and ignorant as an administrator not to have heard of "le bel Alexandre." The reader is reminded here that Chautemps' contemporaries had selected M. Chautemps as one of the outstanding statesmen among themselves.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ André Tardieu, Sur la pente (Paris, 1935), pp. 118-122.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 123-145.

Furthermore, added Tardieu, some of Chautemps' closest advisers had been associated with Stavisky. It was logical to believe that through conversation the subject of Stavisky would have been broached. The list of these "associates" is quite an impressive one and reads as follows: (1) M. Tissot, General Director of the Social Insurance Fund-- a parliamentarian who had admitted the Radical-Socialist, Joseph Garat, to his office on many occasions; (2) M. Constantin, the Inspector for the Bayonne Municipal Credit--he admitted that M. Louis Proust, Radical-Socialist, and he had many dealings with Garat and Stavisky; (3) M. Gaston Bonnaure, the Paris deputy--he had introduced Stavisky to many Radical-Socialists; (4) M. Julien Durand, a Radical-Socialist and Minister of Commerce under Herriot in 1932--he admitted assisting Stavisky on numerous occasions; (5) M. Puis, a Radical-Socialist occupying a Senate seat-- he assisted Stavisky in setting up the Orléans Pawnshop; (6) M. Odin, a Radical-Socialist senator--he had been involved in Stavisky's attempt to set up the Caisse Autonome; and (7) MM. Hesse and Renault, two Radical-Socialist attorney-deputies--they had constantly defended Stavisky in court. All these men had been very intimate with Stavisky and were also cherished friends and associates of Camille Chautemps. Chautemps said they never mentioned Stavisky to him, while Tardieu replied that he could not admit this to be true.⁶⁶

In case the evidence against Chautemps coming from the study of "his friends," his "associates," and his "position as Minister of the

⁶⁶Tardieu, Sur la pente, pp. 120-122; the Radical-Socialist Party in 1934 expelled Garat, Bonnaure, Proust, Dalimier, Hesse, and Renault from the party.

Interior" was not convincing enough, then Tardieu wrote, we could linger on the evidence offered by the study of Chautemps as "an attorney and family head." It was difficult to get around the following undeniable facts. Pierre Chautemps, his brother, had defended Henri Hayotte, Stavisky's right-hand man, on June 5, 1924. In October, 1930, Camille Chautemps himself had defended General de Fourtou. On May 21, 1931, all those who had defended Stavisky and his gang received access to the Cousin Report. Finally, when Camille Chautemps began his investigation in January, 1934 into the Stavisky Affair, he had placed his already questionable brother-in-law, Pressard, in charge.⁶⁷

That so many who knew Stavisky and aided him were close friends with Camille Chautemps is serious enough. That, as Minister of the Interior, Chautemps should head the police and the "parquets" investigating Stavisky and he never heard of the man, is more difficult to accept. That his own brother and his own cousin, Robert Chautemps--not to mention his brother-in-law, Pressard--knew Stavisky and never mentioned him is very doubtful indeed if we are to accept the objective evidence on the matter. M. Guernut, Chairman of the Stavisky Inquiry Commission, found Chautemps' testimony confused and contradictory, and he further found it difficult to believe that Chautemps never knew Stavisky before 1933.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Ligue Franc Catholique, Le Sublime Prince du Royal Secret et sa famille (Paris, 1934), pp. 8-11. Camille Chautemps was later tried for his associations with Pétain in 1940.

⁶⁸ Docs. Parl., "Rapp. Stavisky," Déposition: Chautemps, pp. 516-532; also Tardieu, Sur la pente, pp. 148-151.

As the Chautemps Ministry fell in late January, 1934, many wondered why Camille Chautemps still hesitated to order more arrests. Madame Stavisky, Gilbert Romagnino, Guiboud-Ribaud, Bardi de Fourtou, Gaston Bonnaure, and others known to be involved in the Stavisky Scandals in early January were still free.⁶⁹ When all was taken into consideration on the strange behavior of the confused Chautemps, many agreed with the following appraisal:

And furthermore, the Chautemps Ministry had desired to give the appearance of integrity, of impartiality, and of honor. It could not afford to do this--the wretch--because it had to arrest men on the Left--for it was the Radical-Socialist who had benefited most from Stavisky's millions.⁷⁰

Forming the Daladier Government

Attempts at a broad ministry.-- The sudden resignation of the Chautemps Cabinet placed the President of the Republic, M. Albert Lebrun, in a delicate position. The Ministry had not actually been overthrown, and the Radical-Socialists under Chautemps had a working coalition in the Chamber of Deputies. As no major modification of the political orientation was needed by the one chosen to replace Chautemps, M. Lebrun consulted M. Gaston Doumergue, former President of the Radical-Socialist Party as well as President of the Republic, to see if he would take up the challenge. Doumergue refused and added that his age was against assuming such a difficult task. After several

⁶⁹ André Germain, Guerre Civile (Paris, 1934), Ch. I.

⁷⁰ Georges Imann, La journée du 6 février (Paris, 1934), p. 34.

more tries and refusals, M. Édouard Daladier, on January 29, gave his definitive answer that he would attempt to form a broad ministry.⁷¹

Daladier had the reputation of being energetic and of having the ability to make quick and correct decisions. His earlier Ministry had favorably impressed France.⁷² One periodical expressed this feeling thus:

M. Daladier, when he was President of the Ministry a few months ago was received favorably by some, impartially by others. He has benefited from his action and experience. Finally he has stayed mysterious enough, and he has shown at different periods sentiments that are generally approved.⁷³

Daladier devoted Monday, January 29, to the rituals necessitated by one forming a French Cabinet. He spent most of the night and early morning of the next day in numerous pourparlers. His wish was to form a cabinet of resolute personalities that would be above parties. Daladier was convinced that he needed to break with parliamentary habits if the democratic régime was to be saved. To accomplish this, he needed the S.F.I.O.'s cooperation and so informed the Socialist M. Frossard. Frossard, impressed, but a good party man, consulted his chiefs, MM. Léon Blum and Vincent Auriol. These Socialist leaders refused to allow Frossard to join Daladier. From then on, Daladier found his efforts to form a "cabinet above party" impossible, and he went back to the old

⁷¹Anon., "Malaise," L'Illustration, p. 125.

⁷²Roger Nathan, "De Chautemps à Daladier," L'Europe Nouvelle, Vol. 834 (February 3, 1934), p. 111.

⁷³Anon., "La crise," Journal des Débats, Vol. 2084 (February 2, 1934), pp. 172-173.

formula of getting a coalition cabinet.⁷⁴

By the dawn of Tuesday, January 30, the Cabinet was complete. A glance at its composition was a bit disappointing to the older politicians who could identify few of the members--for they were mostly political unknowns. Most of the press was hostile to the new "dull Radical-Socialist Cabinet." Colonel Jean Fabry, the new War Minister, was of little value politically, for he had been expelled from his party as soon as he accepted a post in the name of the Center. Moderate young men such as Pierre Cot, Jean Mistler, and Guy la Chambre were considered wild and completely inexperienced. The press, as well as much of France, wanted to know what Daladier expected to do with such a Cabinet.⁷⁵

But a member of the Cabinet, Colonel Fabry, did not agree with this pessimistic impression of disappointment.

To really look at it aligned by rank, in front of the President of the Republic, our troop didn't seem to me to be worse in composition than any other--nor better either. No major star of first class rank which ever glittered in the firmament of previous ministries was there. Besides the basic quadrilateral: Foreign Affairs, Finance, War, Interior: Daladier, Piétri, Fabry, Frot--there was a multitude of young radicals: Cot, Mistler, Paganon, Guy la Chambre--who were burning with a desire to make a name and also to replace the venerated pontiffs of the Radicals who were at last evicted. We had, it is true, given them certain chaperones of quality and age: Lisbonne, Valadier, Berthod, Ducos, Bernier, over whom as over all the group, Henry de Jouvenel spread the brilliance which the others lacked.⁷⁶

⁷⁴Georges Suarez, La grande peur du 6 février au Palais-Bourbon (Paris, 1934), pp. 9-35.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 39-45; also Werth, France in Ferment, p. 123.

⁷⁶Jean Fabry, De la Place de la Concorde au Cours de l'Intendance (Paris, 1942), p. 38.

But French public opinion, though disappointed with the Cabinet, was willing to give Daladier a chance. His January 30 remarks stirred the hopes of many and brought him many sympathizers, for on that day Daladier had forcefully declared:

I did not preoccupy myself to remedy the groups or personal quarrels. I wanted to form a Government of Réform and Republican authority. We must end, quickly, this recourse to brutal force by bringing all the light that public opinion demands, by correcting the errors that have troubled our country. "VITE ET FORT" (Quick and Vigorous)--such is our intention.⁷⁷

⁷⁷M. Catalan, Préparation de la manifestation du 6 février 1934, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3385, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 593.

CHAPTER VII

AFFAIRE CHIAPPE AS A MAJOR CAUSE (Lighting the Fuse)

The Administrative Changes and the Unscrupulous Press

With the disintegrating political situation being what it was in France as the Second Daladier Ministry took office, any Government would have to be unusually careful to see that public opinion, especially in Paris, would not be further antagonized. Furthermore, no mistakes would be overlooked by leaguers who already had a taste of what pressure by the street could accomplish against a blundering Government. Above all, the Third French Republic was badly in need of a man who could re-establish the strong faith in democracy that had once existed in the country. Would Daladier be the one to bolster up its spirit? Could he avoid adding any more political blunders to the many already associated with the Third Republic?

Daladier fires Chiappe.-- M. Daladier had promised action "Fort et Vite," and this he began to carry out even before presenting his Cabinet to the Chamber of Deputies. On February 3 France was shocked by a series of administrative changes and dismissals. This was Daladier's way of fulfilling his promise of "Fort et Vite." These removals by Daladier involved six persons: (1) M. Fabre, the Administrator of the Comédie-Française, who was forced into an early retirement; (2) M. Renard, the Prefect of the Seine, who chose to resign rather than to serve

under Daladier; (3) M. Pressard, the Procureur de la République, who was nominated counselor to the Cour de Cassation; (4) M. Thomé, the Director of the Sûreté, who was named the new Director of the Comédie-Française; and (5) M. Geay, who replaced M. Thomé as Director of the Sûreté. But all these administrative changes were dwarfed in importance when they were compared to (6) the discharge of Jean Chiappe as Prefect of Police.¹

Premier Daladier had contemplated needed administrative alterations almost as soon as he had completed the formation of a cabinet. His research into what was to become the Affaire Chiappe had led him to the study of the Rapport Mossé. This important report had been concluded by January 21, 1934 for Premier Chautemps, and divulged the secret activities of the Préfecture while handling the Stavisky Case since its inception. As Premier Daladier always insisted that the decision to fire Chiappe was the result of perusing through this document, it is essential for us to look at the matter a bit closer.

M. Armand Mossé pointed out in his report that among the most striking documents compiled by the Préfecture on Stavisky was the Rapport Cousin of May, 1931. In this revealing treatise, Commissioner Cousin had warned the Préfecture that Stavisky was leaving the Orléans Municipal Pawnshop and was moving to exploit the newly established Bayonne Pawnshop. Moreover, he called attention to the valuer Cohen who was a key

¹M. Amat, Les manifestations sur la voie publique en janvier 1934 et jusqu'au 6 février, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3384, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 577.

man in both swindles. Surely this demanded serious investigation. Yet no one took the initiative to do anything about this amazing revelation. Daladier was dumbfounded as he read this and was impressed by the thought that, as early as 1931, the Stavisky Scandals could have been ended.²

Daladier was also surprised by the gross neglect revealed by the police as he continued the Mossé Report. Mossé explained how the Rapport Cousin had first been given by the Division Commissioner Cousin to the head of the Judiciary Delegation of the Préfecture, M. Pachot. Pachot, in turn, sent copies to the financial section of the Procureur de la République, and to the Judiciary Police of the Préfecture administered by M. Xavier-Guichard. Yet no one along this chain of communication took any action on the Rapport Cousin. In fact, M. Guichard did not transmit this revealing report to the rival police service--the Sûreté. However, Guichard did remit it to M. Chiappe, the Prefect of Police.³

As Daladier read on into the Mossé Report, he was informed that Chiappe, when asked, had not been sure if he had ever received the Rapport Cousin. Mossé said that the evidence proved that Chiappe had. Now, concluded Mossé, if the Prefect had the Rapport Cousin in his possession, and if he had transmitted it to the Sûreté, the Sûreté would have communicated it to the Prefect of the Basses-Pyrénées, and

²M. Catalan, Préparation de la manifestation du 6 février 1934, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3385, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 595.

³Ibid., pp. 595-596.

the questionable Bayonne Pawnshop would never have materialized. As Daladier interpreted what Mossé had written, Chiappe had been derelict in his duties.⁴

Mossé then asked if the Sûreté was absolved of all guilt in this matter--and quickly added that it was not. The Rapport Cousin had found its way indirectly to the Sûreté's offices. Such a charge, if true, would place the blame of inefficiency on M. Thomé. Daladier was quick to make this observation.⁵

A revised Rapport Cousin was brought out on Stavisky by M. Pachot from October to December, 1931. As the chain of communications began once again, the Procureur de la République's office seized upon the document and demanded a follow-up be made by the Judiciary Police of the Préfecture. Before the probing went too deep, M. Guichard of the Judiciary Police found a major impediment in his way; namely, M. Dorn y Alzua. M. de Monzie, attorney for Dorn y Alzua--a minor member of Stavisky's gang--said that his client was an officer of the Légion d'Honneur and could not be involved in any such scandal. Guichard called off the investigation. The trenchant Mossé here points out that Guichard tended to take the easy way out too often, and Daladier made up his mind that the Préfecture needed new life--a revitalization.⁶

In January, 1932, when M. Pachot was sent into retirement and M. Ameline took over his duties, the latter received an anonymous letter

⁴Catalan, Manifestation, pp.596.

⁵Ibid., pp. 595-596.

⁶Ibid.

exposing Stavisky as a swindler. This developed into an investigation by Inspectors Sevestre and Cousin on February 3, 1933. While the Préfecture seemed, at last, to be moving into action, M. Albert Dubarry arranged a meeting between Stavisky and Chiappe. Just when the "heat was on" from the Préfecture, Stavisky complained to Chiappe of these inquiries against his person being made by the Judiciary Police. Chiappe promised to look into the matter and did. The Préfecture unloaded the Rapport Sevestre-Cousin on Chiappe--yet Chiappe did nothing about it. Daladier agreed with Mossé that here was a flagrant example of Chiappe's unforgivable complacency when it involved a truly important but nondramatic matter.⁷

After the fall of 1933 no further new discoveries were communicated on Stavisky through police sources, but during October Stavisky was brought in by Ameline and interrogated. Again on December 22, 1933 M. Lacambre, Ameline's secretary, arrested Stavisky for more questioning. On both occasions Stavisky insisted that the police had no tangible evidence to hold him on, and they let him go. Daladier and Mossé were amazed by three outstanding facts: (1) On December 23, 1933, one day after "Alexandre" had been questioned, the Stavisky Scandals erupted; (2) though the police were aware of the Rapport Cousin, they could not find any ground for holding Stavisky; and (3) knowing as early as October that they could not hold him without more evidence, the police had not even thought of "tailing le bel Alexandre."⁸

⁷Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 595-596.

⁸Ibid., pp. 596-597.

The February Six Inquiry Commission went on record as believing Daladier when he answered the question: "Was the measure taken against Chiappe a consequence of the Rapport Mossé?"

M. Daladier, former President of the Ministry, has affirmed before the Commission that it was the examination of the results of the inquiry by the services of the Préfecture of Police, written in the report of M. l'Inspecteur-Général Mossé, that brought him to name the Prefect of Police (Chiappe) to another function....⁹

It will be useful and revealing to return to January 30 to seek more information on this subject of the administrative changes, for on that day not only was the Daladier Cabinet constituted, but M. Bergery, a leading Socialist deputy, deposited a request for an interpellation on Stavisky. This interpellation might have influenced Daladier's decision to remove Chiappe, for when it was announced by the newspapers, it was reported as dealing with the responsibilities and actions of M. Chiappe when handling the Stavisky Affair. M. Bergery, Deputy from Mantes, was a man of no mean importance and it was obvious that he was only voicing the Socialist viewpoint towards Chiappe. Chiappe was accused not only of general inefficiency as a Prefect, but Bergery made no bones about what was required as a remedy here; that was, the suspension of M. Chiappe.¹⁰

As has been suggested above, Daladier desired the Socialist support of his Government and could not neglect any serious demands coming from them. Aware that he must be ready to give strong and convincing

⁹Catalan, Manifestation, p. 602.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 599.

answers when Bergery had him cornered, Premier Daladier, on January 31, held a special conference with M. Eugène Frot, Minister of the Interior, and M. Jean Penancier, Minister of the Seals. The chief problem necessitating this group meeting was the Stavisky Affair and the possible troubles it could create for the Daladier Ministry. The outcome of the discussions was that Daladier demanded to see the Stavisky dossiers. M. Frot, soon afterwards, secured three dossiers--those of MM. Plytas, Lescouvé, and Mossé--and read them himself first. In this way, Frot later explained, he would be better prepared to advise the Premier on the possible course of action to take.¹¹

On Thursday morning, February 1, M. Frot turned over the secret documents on Stavisky to the Premier. At the same time, the red-bearded Frot gave the conclusive findings he had made from his reading through them. The Minister of the Interior then presented certain possibilities and suggestions to be considered in this case. The suggestions by Frot were highlighted by the general statement that "a complete administrative reshuffling" was needed. The Minister of the Interior quickly added that this was merely a "suggestion on his part," for he knew that the Premier had to make the "final decision."¹²

On Friday, February 2, 1934, M. Martinaud-Déplat, Daladier's Undersecretary of State, telephoned M. Fourès, a Republican of the Center, and M. Laniel, another Republican, to meet with him at the Quai d'Orsay at 10:00 A.M. At that time Déplat mentioned that the 139

¹¹Catalan, Manifestation, p. 599.

¹²Ibid.

Daladier concluded that M. Thomé of the Sûreté had shown a lack of cooperation in the whole affair. Therefore, as we have seen, Thomé was transferred to the Comédie-Française.¹⁵

These administrative changes were not new in French history, for the Waldeck-Rousseau Government had established such a precedent. Premier Rousseau had removed the Procureur de la République, the Prefect of Police, and several military chiefs when they had embarrassed him.¹⁶

Now the historical question again poses itself: Did Daladier fire Chiappe because of the "fear of M. Bergery's interpellation," because Frot advised him to do so, or because the dossiers convinced him it had to be done? A critical examination of the records leaves little doubt that Daladier correctly furnished the answer to this query when he presented the following elaboration before the February Six Inquiry Commission:

I read the Rapport Mossé....

Even today, I tell you, having read it, I found in it nothing that seemed to indicate a stain on the personal probity of M. Chiappe, Prefect of Police. But I believed that I had found a certain number of facts which demonstrated that at the Préfecture, as elsewhere, that spirit, that dynamism that could have arrested Stavisky in 1931, at least apprehended him in September 1933, was not manifested with the force and energy needed. It was necessary to make much needed changes within the three great administrative posts mentioned. These changes had to be made in order not to hamper the investigations that had to be made into the Stavisky Affair--for the Government I headed subscribed itself, in its ministerial declaration, to the establishing of an immediate parliamentary investigation. Above all, these removals had to be made because there was a

¹⁵Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 599-603.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 599-600; also p. 616.

demand to infuse in these organisms a new blood, a need to get rid of the parasites; briefly, to arrive at a point when no notorious swindler could dupe France for six or eight years and get away with it.

Have I taken my decision alone, ask the newspapers?
YES I HAVE, ALL ALONE.¹⁷

The angry policeman.-- Jean Chiappe, Prefect of Police, had not been conditioned, since Daladier's rise to power, to believe that he would be removed from his present position. On the contrary, all the Prefect's contacts with the new Premier had been very gracious and satisfactory. On January 31, for example, the day after the Daladier Ministry was formed, the Premier discussed with Chiappe what measures could be taken to check or prevent the Union Nationale des Combattants from demonstrating on Sunday, February 4, as President Lebecq of the U.N.C. had announced. M. Chiappe promised to get in touch with Lebecq and do all he could to stop the march by the U.N.C. from becoming another "riot on the Concorde as in January." Daladier, overcome emotionally by the promise Chiappe had just made, held the Prefect's hands tightly and warmly assured him in his deep voice: "You are not 'a friend;' you are 'the friend.'"¹⁸ On Thursday, February 1, Jean Chiappe visited Eugène Frot, Minister of the Interior, and was asked to intervene in the proposed U.N.C. march. As he had done with Daladier, Chiappe said he would do his best.¹⁹

¹⁷Catalan, Manifestation, p. 600.

¹⁸Alexander Werth, France in Ferment (London, 1935), p. 130.

¹⁹Georges Suarez, La grande peur du 6 février au Palais-Bourbon (Paris, 1934), pp. 48-60.

Jean Chiappe now felt that he could not postpone visiting Lebecq any longer and undertook to go right away to see him. The U.N.C.'s President refused to listen to the Prefect's proposal at first. Chiappe, disappointed, telephoned Frot and suggested that Lebecq be invited by the Minister to a conference at the Interior that evening. Frot was in complete agreement and did as the Prefect proposed. At that rendezvous, the U.N.C. President refused to give ground and said that the Sunday meeting would go on as planned. Prefect Chiappe then saved the day by giving an ultimatum to Lebecq: "I will resign if you do not call off the demonstration Sunday." Lebecq, who considered himself Chiappe's intimate friend, then yielded and promised that the U.N.C. would not invade the streets on Sunday. The strain was so great on Chiappe that, after leaving the meeting, he went home with a fever and became bedridden.²⁰

It was at this point that M. Frot was made out to be a "two-headed monster and a hypocrite" by the French press. Stéphane Lauzanne, editor of Le Matin, produced in his newspaper what he considered "impeachable evidence" to show Frot was planning to "stab Chiappe" and get the Prefect fired. According to Lauzanne, M. Marquet, the Socialist Deputy from Bordeaux, had visited Frot on Friday, February 2, and assured the Minister that Daladier would get the Neo-Socialist and the S.F.I.O.'s support if he would do one favor for them--remove Chiappe. Lauzanne said that Frot then rubbed his red goatee and admitted to Marquet that

²⁰Suarez, La grande peur, pp. 59-62.

the idea had crossed his mind. Frot then supposedly visited Daladier and told him that Chiappe had to go if the Ministry was to carry the Chamber on Tuesday. This story has no existing evidence to show it ever occurred, but this account was taken as the truth by most of Paris when Chiappe was fired on February 3. History was to be influenced by the theory that a Socialist-Frot deal had been a reality.²¹

While Chiappe was going under the misapprehension that the Premier now favored him because of his success in getting Lebecq to call off the U.N.C. march, Daladier had completed the Rapport Mossé and had made up his mind to remove Chiappe. Daladier called an emergency Cabinet meeting for the next day. Few Cabinet members were aware, up to the last hour, what the meeting was to be all about.

Daladier had called the Cabinet meeting for Saturday, February 3, at the Elysée Palace. Before the official gathering got underway, Daladier summoned Jean Fabry, friend of Chiappe in the Ministry, to prepare him for the blow the Premier was about to deal. Fabry, unaware of what was up, made his way to the Quai d'Orsay as quickly as he could. He found Daladier impatiently awaiting him. After the usual polite greetings, the Premier informed Fabry that he should know that the Ministry was about to sanction numerous administrative reforms. Daladier then added that Jean Chiappe was above suspicion and would be transferred to the Resident-Generalship of Morocco, the highest post within the French Civil Service. Fabry opposed the change and warned Daladier that the matter should be reconsidered before action

²¹Le Matin, February 21, 1934.

took place. The Premier gave little encouragement to this suggestion, and Fabry decided to see what would transpire later, on the Chiappe Question.²²

Actually, by the time Daladier had this Fabry Interview, the Premier was still boiling from what had occurred earlier that morning. This brings us around to 9:00 A.M. when Daladier had telephoned M. Chiappe to ask him to please come to see him immediately. Chiappe, still bedridden with an attack of sciatica, answered that he was sorry, but he could not comply with this request. Daladier then concluded that there was no other way but to inform the Prefect of his removal over the phone. It displeased Daladier to have to do it this way--but he did.²³

Chiappe had been thoroughly unprepared for what was coming. As we have seen above, the Prefect of Police had not seen the Premier since Wednesday, January 31. Now at nine o'clock on Saturday morning the Premier appealed to Chiappe, "the good citizen and the good Frenchman." Then came the pitch--Chiappe was to go to Morocco. The Prefect muttered something about the honor--to succeed Marshal Lyautey in Morocco was no insult--but he could not leave Paris. The Prefect explained that this would be a surrender to his enemies--the Socialists and the Communists. M. Daladier, however, refused this answer and kept on insisting. Then Chiappe followed this statement by his famous reply:

²² Jean Fabry, De la Place de la Concorde au Cours de l'Intendance (Paris, 1942), p. 41.

²³ Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 604-605.

It is no good going on like this. Whatever reason you may give for offering it to me, I can not leave Paris. Oh, I know--I can feel it--you will probably chase me out of the Préfecture de Police; the Paris Préfecture to which my wife and I have devoted seven years of our lives. Well, never mind! I entered the Préfecture a rich man; but I am leaving it a poor man. I shall be IN THE STREET, perhaps an unhappy man, but an honest person. Monsieur le Président, I pay you my respects.²⁴

As Jean Chiappe had been in bed for several days for sciatica, it is difficult to see how the phrase "be in the street" could mean anything but the blowing of so much emotional steam on the Prefect's part. Premier Daladier later claimed that the Prefect had threatened to "come down into the street" and organize a riot against the Government. Whether Chiappe said dans la rue (riot implication) or à la rue (unemployment implication) now was the semantic problem existing here. The evidence available gives no sound basis to those who would conclude that Jean Chiappe planned to invade the street.²⁵

Before the Cabinet meeting began at 11:00 A.M., Fabry did bring out one interesting point in conversation with the Premier: Why should Chiappe be sent to the more difficult Moroccan post if he were guilty of inefficiency as Prefect? Moreover, to allow Chiappe to leave the Préfecture at that moment was leaving the route free to disorder. Fabry sincerely expressed the belief that such a move would provoke a riot. Fabry continued that the January Riots were still fresh in mind and that Paris needed an experienced Prefect in times of disequilibrium

²⁴Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 604-605; also Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 131-132.

²⁵Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 132-133.

like the present. The validity of these arguments did not sway Daladier to change his mind.²⁶

A few moments after Premier Daladier formally opened the Cabinet sitting, he announced the removal of Chiappe. President Albert Lebrun, both hands holding his head, seemed far away from the debate as the Premier's voice filled the room. Immediately after Daladier had finished listing the administrative changes, Fabry protested. A vigorous debate on Chiappe ensued. Fabry objected that it was cowardly to say to a man "you are an irreproachable servant of the country--but you're fired." He added that it was tactless to remove a man just as an interpellation against him was pending in the Chamber. But Fabry's audience appeared to be indifferent or impervious to what he was saying.²⁷

In his memoir on this Cabinet meeting--invaluable because Cabinet sittings are held without formal recording of the minutes--Jean Fabry wrote:

And suddenly Frot brought in the argument of the telephone call; "Chiappe said: 'Tonight I will be dans la rue.'" In vain Piétri and I protested; in vain Piétri demanded that we should take some time to reflect on the matter, to get more information.

Cot, Mistler, Guy la Chambre, Valadier, Queille wanted to get to the bottom of it. Daladier said nothing. Henry de Jouvenel asked that before voting, we should know what we were doing: he personally disapproved formally of the measure,

²⁶Fabry, De la Place de la Concorde, pp. 43-44.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 44-45.

but he would stay with whatever decision was made. I declared that in case the Cabinet should approve the changes, which seemed apparent would be the case, I would resign.²⁸

M. Piétri got up and expressed what he thought of the official opinion. Calmly, but severely, François Piétri announced that the Cabinet members would not receive his collaboration any more, for the Cabinet had just voted to fire Chiappe. Piétri based his decision to resign on the seemingly obvious fact that Daladier had offered no specific reason why the Prefect should be fired. Piétri could not see what was so chronically wrong with Chiappe, for after all he had been Prefect for seven years.²⁹

Fabry followed Piétri and also defended Chiappe. Like his colleague, he resigned. Fabry's resignation brought President Lebrun out of his trance. President Lebrun showed a shocked appearance and, throwing his arms upward, he stated: "Messieurs, do you know what you are doing! Two ministers quitting at such a time.... Now, it is the end!" The revered Henry de Jouvenel agreed with President Lebrun that these administrative changes were becoming tragic in their results. Without any further comments or exclamations, the silent Daladier adjourned the meeting. The clock struck 1:00 P.M.--but not all was well.³⁰

The Fabre-Thomé Affair.-- The Cabinet meeting of Saturday, February 3, was indeed an historic one! Its most important move, of

²⁸ Fabry, De la Place de la Concorde, pp. 45-46.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 45-47.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 44-46.

course, was the elimination of Chiappe from the Préfecture de Police and his appointment as Resident-General of Morocco. M. Ponsot, the Resident-General still at his post, was to be recalled, and M. Bonnefoy-Sibour was given the Préfecture. All these changes were necessary to get the Prefect out of Paris.³¹

But the other decisions made that noontime by the Cabinet should not be overlooked. Of great importance was M. Thomé's removal from the Sûreté-Générale. What was strange, however, was that Thomé was to be Émile Fabre's new replacement as Administrator of the Comédie-Française. Fabre was forced into retirement. These changes soon carried the label of the Fabre-Thomé Affair.³²

The Fabre-Thomé Affair resulted not only out of a need to find Thomé a new post, but was also conceived as a form of punishment for Fabre, who had allowed Shakespeare's Coriolanus to be presented to the Comédie-Française audiences. Fabre, as well-versed person in his field, had produced Shakespeare's play so successfully that the critics almost unanimously applauded it wildly--a rare event in Paris circles. Throughout January, 1934, Coriolanus drew a "standing room only" audience. For being so enterprising, M. Bardon, Undersecretary of the Department of National Education, informed Fabre on February 3 that he was through. Besides being given no reason for his removal, Fabre was told that he could count on no more Government employment.³³

³¹Gaston Chéreau, Concorde! 6 février 1934 (Paris, 1934), p. 48.

³²Ibid., p. 56.

³³Ibid., pp. 56-57.

But the historian and reader cannot be satisfied with such an arbitrary measure--there must be some underlying causes. As we probe further into the subject, we see it as tragic that a man should be removed for efficiency. It was bizarre that no better reason was given than the post at the Comédie-Française was needed for Thomé. It was at the same time comical, because those who led France for the moment were afraid that Shakespeare might help to overthrow the Third Republic. Our research shows that this last point was taken to be a serious matter by those in power.³⁴

Many months before, the Reading Committee of the Comédie-Française had approved Coriolanus as excellent material for the theater. Strangely enough, the records show, Émile Fabre was the only one to refer to the dangerous antidemocratic connotations of the play. Fabre was put at ease when the Reading Committee asserted that Coriolanus was a classic above the petty quarrels of party politics. So naturally Fabre formulated plans that would include the presentation of the play in the near future. Even M. Mistler, then Undersecretary of Fine Arts, had given his blessings and approved the final launching of Coriolanus.³⁵

The unexpected success of the play surprised even Fabre. Whistles, riotous conduct, extended applause followed every antidemocratic line spoken by the actors in January, 1934.

³⁴Chéreau, Concorde, pp. 57-58.

³⁵Ibid., p. 59.

There were demonstrations in the French manner?--God! We applauded the eternal truths of Shakespeare, the decadent causes for the fall of Rome--which were the truths of Byzantium, the truths of all fallen empires--which are the striking truths of today....³⁶

In retrospect, it would have seemed better to stop Coriolanus instead of firing Fabre. Thomé, who knew nothing about producing plays, was bound to come up for severe criticism from a culture-conscious France. This anger in Paris was soon increased, because of the Fabre and Chiappe removals, when the resignations of the two ministers, Fabry and Piétri, were made public. By February 4, the opposition brought against the Government by the removal of Chiappe, the Fabre-Thomé Affair, and the resignation of the two ministers, led M. Édouard Renard, Prefect of the Seine District and friend of Chiappe, to resign in protest. The press reacted to all these administrative changes by returning to its campaign against French democratic institutions and "those who ruled."³⁷

Press sides with Chiappe.-- The first major newspaper protest against the Chiappe transfer to Morocco came from the caustic André Tardieu. Tardieu denounced the injustices committed against M. Chiappe the very same evening that the official announcement had been made. The former premier and author claimed that the Daladier Government had "slaughtered Chiappe in order to sacrifice him for Socialist votes." This belief found many sympathizers. L'Ami du Peuple, La Liberté, and other Rightist newspapers echoed the same tune--behind the move was a

³⁶ Chéreau, Concorde, p. 59.

³⁷ Catalan, Manifestation, p. 605.

strong Socialist pressure.³⁸

The "Socialist pressure" argument appeared to many observers of the period to be undeniable. Confirmation of this belief appeared obvious to this group of thinkers when M. Léon Blum, in a speech before the Congress of the Socialist Confederation at Clermont-Ferrand, revealed that a Socialist "change of heart" towards the Daladier Ministry was in a formative stage because:

...when the party met on Thursday morning, it was unanimously resolved to vote against the Government. It is possible that the events of yesterday will modify the position of the group, because of the fact that the dismissal of M. Chiappe has brought attacks from the Center and the Right who are using this leader as an excuse to attack the Government....³⁹

Such insinuations infuriated the Right and Center only more. The Rightist presses now made tremendous appeals to the "emotional sides of all true Frenchmen." Their publication of Chiappe's formal letter of refusal lined up thousands of Frenchmen behind the Prefect. The Daladier Government was called every vile name for what it had done, and the "poor mistreated Prefect" was allowed the front pages to give his message to all of France. So the reader will be able to judge why this message made such an impact on the French nation then, a translation follows:

I have just been informed that you have decided to retire me from my duties as Prefect of Police and that you are calling me to the post of Resident-General in Morocco.

³⁸Catalan, Manifestation, p. 605.

³⁹Chéreau, Concorde, pp. 71-72.

This morning, when you gave me the honor of telephoning me to inform me of your intentions, you made an appeal "to the good citizen and the good Frenchman." You told me that my departure was necessary and that it had nothing to do with current events. On that matter, moreover, you had renewed the confidence of your predecessor.

It was impossible for me to tell you my surprise. I then recalled for you, in effect, that, neither during our long meeting of nearly two hours that you have me three days ago and during which you gave so many compliments, nor during my meeting with the Minister of the Interior, who met with me only last evening, and who also gave me congratulations and thanks--nothing could have prepared me for such intentions.

I added that my removal from Paris and the Préfecture de Police, in spite of the promotion offered by the post in which you called me to serve, would be under the present circumstances wrongly interpreted by public opinion.

I could not, to facilitate a political operation--for there was no other reason for your decision--sacrifice to you my personal reputation and the prestige that I had been bringing to my post and my title.

I have entered rich into the office that you forced me to leave; I leave a poor man.

During ten years, either at the Sûreté-Générale or at the Préfecture de Police, I have always served my country passionately and obeyed my chiefs loyally, devotedly, and faithfully. I have always defended, and yesterday again--by family tradition and personal conviction--the Republican institutions; always also I have dedicated myself fearlessly and unequivocally and--this will be the pride of my life--without shedding blood to maintain order.

The unexplainable promotion that you offer me so generously is, from my viewpoint, at this hour, only a sign of distrust for me. This is why I give you my refusal. But this refusal does not affect the sentiments that have always guided my conduct. Giving to my colleagues, for the last time, a proof of civic pride and republican discipline, I ask them, if they really feel the injustice inflicted on their chief, to stay at their posts, united by a compatible love for order, for the Republic, and for Paris.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Catalan, Manifestation, p. 605.

As had been anticipated, this letter of refusal aroused very strong emotional responses from the reading public. The Rightist publications, especially, defended Chiappe's cause as if it were a matter of "life or death." Even the Presse d'Information was furious and joined the choir of protests. A very serious accusation penned by Henri de Kerillis appeared in the Écho de Paris: that was, this administrative change was the beginning of the Daladier coup d'état.⁴¹ Le Figaro decided that the "removal of Chiappe was a sign of a drunkard's behavior," and called upon the solid citizenry to riot against such a Government.⁴² La Liberté had already issued such a call, as we shall see later. L'Ami du Peuple went a step ahead of L'Écho de Paris and stated that the coup d'état was not beginning but that a revolutionary committee had already seized power.⁴³ With such accusations being made, it was difficult to see how permanent peace on the Paris streets could continue.

Many people blamed Daladier's strange administrative changes on the "mad and mysterious" Minister of the Interior, Eugène Frot. Those who disliked Frot in the press asserted that he was the strong man behind Stavisky. Moreover, his enemies kept accusing him of having brought the downfall of Chiappe in return for a promise of the Socialist votes. Frot was plagued by this last accusation for years and

⁴¹L'Écho de Paris, February 4, 1934.

⁴²Le Figaro, February 4, 1934.

⁴³L'Ami du Peuple, February 4, 1934.

always denied that he had ever been so underhanded. Furthermore, it should be added here that Frot was innocent of such intrigue according to the later testimonies given by Vincent Auriol and Léon Blum.⁴⁴

Chiappe Leaving the Préfecture as Explosive

Jean Chiappe's record.-- To comprehend why Jean Chiappe's departure from the Préfecture became the match that lighted the Explosive February Six fuse, it is essential to look at the impressions he had made on Parisian public opinion. In Paris the Prefect's strongest supporters were the royalists. Chiappe was aware that he was "their favorite" and tended to treat their members with more leniency than he did his enemies--the Communists, for example,--when they were arrested. Jean Belin, a close worker with Chiappe during this period, in his memoirs has recorded:

Both Daudet and Maurras were on the closest terms with the Prefect of Police--Jean Chiappe. Chiappe gave them his secret support for, although he may not have been a royalist, he saw in the Royalist Movement a means of defeating the Government.⁴⁵

Chiappe's own officers also were strong defenders of their chief. Although he demanded strict obedience from those under his power, he was an "enlightened administrator." He knew how to praise and how to win friends by being gracious. He rewarded his "friends" by giving splashy parties for them, by sending them small but welcome gifts, and by helping them out with their family problems. His policemen

⁴⁴Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 601-603.

⁴⁵Jean Belin, My Work at the Sûreté (London, 1950), p. 141.

were loyal to him and considered "their prefect" an excellent administrator. That he was able to secure raises and better working conditions for those under him added to the friends he made in the ranks.⁴⁶

Those who knew of Chiappe's career also became great admirers of the Prefect. He had been born in Corsica in 1878 in a peasant environment under conditions where it is usually impossible to get very far in life. With ambition driving him to do better than those around him, the young Chiappe worked his way to a clerkship in the Ministry of the Interior. This was often the first step in what could become an impressive career. Young Chiappe learned to develop the irresistible manners that became associated with him and, soon after his arrival in Paris, he met a charming and wealthy woman. After the dapper little Corsican married the lady, his financial troubles were over. From now on he had no scruples in spending freely to advance his career.⁴⁷

In 1924 Camille Chautemps appointed Jean Chiappe head of the Sûreté-Générale. With his wife's fortune, Chiappe kept entertaining, regardless of expense. He developed a taste for fine clothes, and he became a connoisseur of art. No one in a high place was refused admittance to his home if he could help him to climb the public servant's ladder. Soon he desired the luxurious offices of the Préfecture, instead of the dingy ones in the Sûreté. His luck was with him in 1927

⁴⁶Belin, Work, p. 142.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 123.

when M. Albert Sarraut, the Minister of the Interior, was undertaking a fight against French Communism and believed that Chiappe was of the same mind that he was on the subject. Consequently, in 1928, Chiappe became Prefect of Police.⁴⁸

Besides having the loyalty of the royalists and his policemen, Chiappe had also become the idol of thousands of Parisians who wielded their influence for Chiappe in 1934. Chiappe had handled the traffic problems in Paris by introducing the light system, by rerouting, by strictly controlling traffic at dangerous intersections, and by punishing the dangerous motorists. His battle for morality in Paris had also won the praises of the respectable people of the city. Prostitution was placed under strict supervision. Foreign white slave operators were chased out of Paris. Pimps and "street girls" were given rough treatment if caught on the main boulevards. These social improvements made it possible for a man to enjoy a stroll without being accosted every five minutes.⁴⁹

Although Chiappe was later accused of everything from being a dictator to backing a monarchy, the evidence for this period of his life does not support such a harsh judgment. It is true that Chiappe's ideas on police administration had certain sympathies with the Royalists' beliefs. He was convinced that aristocratic control by an administrator was the ideal, and he looked upon the Préfecture as his

⁴⁸ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 127.

⁴⁹ Paul Allard, "L'Anarchie de la police," Revue de Paris, 41st Year (March 15, 1934), p. 417; also Chéreau, Concorde, p. 26.

fortress.⁵⁰ Even as understanding an observer as Werth used Chiappe's letter of refusal to show that the man was a royalist. The author through discussions with the French police has discovered that the rather strong paternal and administrative obedience demanded by Chiappe is not uncommon within the French bureaucracy even today. To call a man antidemocratic and a royalist because he followed the accepted mores of his time in administration seems to be unfair. On the other hand, Chiappe appeared to be a sincere democratic supporter in this period. His letter of refusal ended with a strong pledge to democratic institutions. His guide to police work reflected this democratic spirit when he wrote:

For this essential task for the safety of the country, I call upon the professional devotion of everyone. I ask you--and the Government asks the same through me--to stay always clearly and resolutely republicans! It is essential that all of you, by your attitude and actions, should give the example of unfaltering attachment to the ideas and principles that formed and constituted the Republican tradition--which are the essence and spirit of our democracy.⁵¹

Daladier, to his credit, never claimed that he removed Chiappe because he had undemocratic ideas, but rather because Chiappe had shown that "negligence and decadence were apparent within the top brass of the Préfecture." Yet, unless Daladier offered a complete reform program when he removed Chiappe, it would appear that the inefficiency and carelessness evident by the reading of the Rapport Mossé would still continue to exist. History here must record that the precipita-

⁵⁰ P. L. Darnar, Chiappe, un chef de bandits (Paris, 1936), pp. 8-32.

⁵¹ Jean Chiappe, Paroles d'ordre (Paris, 1930), pp. 34-35.

tion of the Chiappe Affair did not show the way to solve the existing political administrative problem. On the other hand, the elimination of Chiappe from Paris at this time was interpreted as an arbitrary measure taken against a man who was extremely popular. Chiappe would have been more valuable to the Daladier Government if he had been kept at his post.⁵²

Press calls for early February street riots.-- As we have seen above, Chiappe's departure from the Préfecture was received very badly by the Paris press. On Sunday, February 4, the majority of the newspapers denounced the Government's administrative changes as "meeting Socialists' pressure." In La Liberté, M. Pierre Taittinger, head of the Jeunesses Patriotes, expressed what soon became a general cry throughout the French press:

Paris deserves to demonstrate to M. Chiappe its gratitude. It owes it to itself not to allow him to leave without giving proof of its indignation.

We are facing a Jacobin coup d'état. The Government strikes M. Chiappe today. Tomorrow, the Socialists will ask for General Weygand's head. Will M. Daladier give it to them?

In any case, we must expect large demonstrations, that could lead to extremely grave consequences. The veterans, the Latin Quarter, the patriotic associations, and various other leagues announce their intentions to riot with force in order to shout their indignation.⁵³

Even Lucien Romier, in the conservative Le Temps, pointed to the intense pressure the Chiappe Affair had brought. Romier issued the

⁵²Catalan, Manifestation, p. 603.

⁵³La Liberté, February 5, 1934; also Catalan, Manifestation, p. 601.

warning that:

....the structure of our electoral and parliamentary system is in danger, day after day, of being overthrown by an assault from the nation.

Once the French people have lost their patience, they can become one of the most violent known.⁵⁴

The presentiment of the press, that the French people would not allow Chiappe's removal to go unanswered, was verified on February 4 when at 2:00 P.M. the Grands Boulevards were filling up with a pro-Chiappe crowd. Men paraded the Paris streets all afternoon and demonstrated at different intervals in favor of the Prefect. On the whole, the marchers were not unruly--they knew that Chiappe desired order in Paris. Around 3:30 P.M. the U.N.C. demonstrated in front of the Clemenceau statue on the Champs-Élysées and then marched its small column of three hundred men to pay their traditional respects before the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Arch of Triumph before disbanding.⁵⁵

During the evening of February 4, small crowds gathered at diverse points all over Paris to demonstrate for Chiappe. The police, not out of sympathy with the crowds, made as few arrests as possible. A main center of unrest that evening was the Comédie-Française where Coriolanus played before a capacity audience. Every antidemocratic speech was used as the spark to drive the audience into the disorder and shouts of: "Long live Fabre!--Long live Chiappe!--Hang Daladier!" The performers were dismayed to see how impossible the outraged audience

⁵⁴ Le Temps, February 4, 1934.

⁵⁵ André Benoist, Les mystères de la police (Paris, 1934), p. 227.

became and were glad when the evening performance of the tragedy ended.⁵⁶ While the welcome calm to the Paris streets returned, the Croix de Feu et Briscards, which up to this point had not participated in any demonstration, decided that a major protest would be made by their members on February 5.⁵⁷

The February Six Inquiry Commission later concluded:

The riot of February 6, whose leading cause, the Stavisky Affair, had been motivating street protests for a month, was to be precipitated faster because of the measure taken towards M. Chiappe.⁵⁸

The Croix de Feu's demonstration of February 5.-- The January Riots directed by the Action Française had attracted numerous political leagues to order their troops to invade the Paris streets, but the Fédération des Contribuables, the Jeunesses Patriotes, and the Solidarité Française had given only limited assistance to the Royalists. Other leagues had not even bothered to participate in any demonstration against the Chautemps Ministry but, when the Chiappe Affair occurred, the period of "watchful waiting" was over for these.⁵⁹ Of these, the first one to react was the Croix de Feu.

Thus the Croix de Feu, deciding that it had waited long enough, proclaimed that the first major demonstration by its followers would

⁵⁶ Amat, Voie publique en janvier, pp. 576-577; also Chéreau, Concorde, p. 70.

⁵⁷ Ligue des droits de l'homme et du citoyen, Le coup de main fasciste et la riposte républicaine (Paris, 1934), p. 9.

⁵⁸ Catalan, Manifestation, p. 595.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 594-595.

take place on Monday. This Croix de Feu demonstration of February 5 was to equal in importance those in January if we are to consider the number of leaguers called out, for the total of "disponibles" parading reached four thousand men. These four thousand marchers were applauded by the public on the Grand Boulevards and the Champs-Élysées as they moved from the Madeleine to the Arc de Triomphe. These Croix de Feu columns were well-organized; they carried out their leaders' commands in cadence; and they made a deep impression on those watching--if we are to judge by the newspapers' accounts.⁶⁰

Colonel de La Rocque had ordered the Croix's H-HOUR to be 7:00 P.M. on February 5. The main points of concentration were the Champs-Élysées and the Madeleine. The objective to secure was the Ministry of the Interior building. On February 5 everything went according to plans. By 7:00 P.M. a group of about a thousand members of the Croix de Feu et Briscards had assembled at the Rond-Point on the Champs-Élysées, while another group estimated at two thousand "disponibles" formed at the Madeleine. No arms were being carried by the demonstrators. As the disciplined leaguers began leaving their two assembly points, the police and the Mobile Guards--who had set up barricades at certain salient points along the announced route of march--tightened their cordon near the Ministry of the Interior.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Amat, Voie publique en janvier, pp. 576-577; also L'Écho de Paris, February 6, 1934.

⁶¹ MM. Dormann et Salette, La participation des associations d'anciens combattants à la manifestation du 6 février 1934, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3387, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 663.

The Croix de Feu from the Champs-Élysées arrived in front of the Ministry Building first and began shouting for the Daladier Government to resign. While this Rond-Point crowd kept hurling its shouts in front of the Ministry, the larger Croix de Feu's columns from the Madeleine arrived. The Republican Guard on duty near the Ministry charged the incoming leaguers. A guardsman directed his horse towards the flagbearer, drew out his saber, and slashed the staff holding the Croix de Feu's insignia. This flag incident aroused the demonstrators, who unhorsed the guilty rider and forced him to kneel before the broken flag and apologize. Then the strangest thing happened: Instead of concentrating on the Ministry Building, as planned, the Croix de Feu reformed into an immense column and headed for the Arc de Triomphe while singing La Marseillaise. After appropriate ceremonies before the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the leaguers returned to the Concorde and were dismissed.⁶²

Returning from this mass protest, Colonel de La Rocque addressed the following message to President Lebrun:

Conscious of my heavy responsibilities, I have decided today to make a march on the street, for a visible protest with the irreproachable front-line veterans of the Croix de Feu.

All the decent elements in the country--even if they do not have the precise awareness of the danger or the force necessary to shout it aloud--are gravely alarmed by the state of public affairs. Coups de force of semidictatorial nature are being executed through Socialist influence by a Government, at times, weak and incensed, and in a nation strongly united to its familial, patriotic, and dedicated traditions. I report

⁶²Dormann et Salette, Participation des associations; also Chéreau, Concorde, pp. 76-78.

that the several thousand Croix de Feu, detached from my local "sections" for their demonstration, carried on perfectly and successfully through the Champs-Élysées, the Place Beauvau, the Place de la Madeleine, and the Concorde. A horseman from the Municipal Police, too faithful no doubt to the orders received, tried vainly to slash the tricolored flag carried by my admirable colleagues.⁶³

This letter warned President Lebrun that this was just the beginning of the "treatment to be given the Daladier Government." This February 5 demonstration had caused little physical damage in Paris; it had led to few arrests being made; and it had brought out a league which had never before tried to use the street in order to influence political decisions. The quiet and relatively well-behaved march of the Croix de Feu was to be the "calm before the storm." It was the dramatic event that disturbed what could have been a quiet and pleasant Paris Monday. It was the introduction of things to come on the eve of one of the most serious days in modern French history: FEBRUARY 6, 1934.

⁶³ Chéreau, Concorde, pp. 78-79.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GREAT FEBRUARY RIOT: PART I (The Flash)

The Attack against Parliamentarians and Republican Institutions

Attacks by the press, periodicals, and leagues.-- There is probably no better way to understand the viciousness of the attacks made against the Government and the Chamber on February 5-6, 1934 than by quoting extensively from the contemporary materials; for the analysis of such materials led to the obvious conclusion that the Action Française was again in the vanguard of those who were determined to overthrow French democracy as it was then. The Royalist newspaper charged that the Daladier Government did not "give a darn" about rendering justice. The Government had discharged the only man worth anything, added the Royalists. It had given in to Socialist pressure, and it was part of the international group of freemason thieves. The Action Française declared that MM. Daladier and Frot did not care in the least for the French indignation that existed at the time. All that mattered to these corrupted politicians, the Royalists continued, was the preservation of the "crummy kind of power" they had gained over the country. The Action Française then predicted that the French public, having had enough of this "stinking mess," would "tonight, at the time when the shops and offices are being cleared, assemble in front of the Chamber

and shout: 'Down with the Thieves!'" The "thieves" referred to the ministers and the parliamentarians.¹

The "call to arms" issued by the Solidarité Française, an aggressive political league, was especially vicious and illustrated that the time for reasoning had gone by. In this "active phase of the Democratic Crisis," the dominating pleas against the Third Republic and against those in charge of its political equipment were emotional in nature. It did not matter that the statements made were half-truths. What mattered was: enough people believed these statements to be true. The Ami du Peuple and other newspapers featured the following accusations and appeal from the Solidarité Française:

Be on the alert all adherents and youths, for our Fatherland is in danger!

After the Scandals came a period of trying to cover up mistakes. This ended by the expulsion of the Prefect of Police, M. Chiappe, whom we do not especially care for except that he has been removed in spite of justice demanding the contrary.

Such insolent behavior will not be allowed by those of us who are the sons of those who fought in '89, or will it?

Your public officials, dear patriots, are allowing themselves to be led, as sheep to the fair, by one Daladier whose utterances have become despicable and similar to those held by the Blums, the Kaisersteins, and the Schweinkopf.

The result, if this is allowed to continue, people of France, will be a dictatorship. It is obvious that your Parliament is rotten and your politicians are not to be trusted. Your country is given up to scandalous filth, while your very

¹Action Française, February 6, 1934. The FIGURE 1 MAP will serve as a guide to indicate the broader movements taken by the February Six rioters.

security is being menaced. In fact, the signs of a Civil War, or at least a short war, can be detected.

The police is mobilized and--you must understand that it is against their better sense and sentiments but it is ordered by those who rule--this is done to get the help of the Revolutionary Socialists. This will result in placing the "thieves" in charge of an exasperated people.

The peasants are facing ruin because of the wheat scandal. The workers and intellectuals find their jobs endangered by foreigners. Small taxpayers and functionaries, as well as small businessmen, your lives are threatened. Are you going to stand for what is going on?

FRANCE MUST BE RETURNED TO THE FRENCH PEOPLE!

It is time that the French become master in their house once again! This can be brought about if we all take time out to clean up the mess.

In all cities, in all villages where they are found, the members of the Solidarité Française are ordered to rise on Tuesday and, by 7:00 P.M., to be on the Grand Boulevards to participate in a demonstration against the parliamentary régime which is interested only in its profits.²

This highly disconnected and emotional message issued by Jean Renaud, leader of the Solidarité Française, was purposely rather vague and suggestive in sections. By such emotional suggestions Renaud felt that most adherents in his league could become aroused to move into action against the state. But the Secretary of the Solidarité Française did not have a monopoly on the emotional tracts put out on the eve of February Six or early next morning. The manifesto released by the Jeunesses Patriotes was just as wild in tone as that of their colleagues.³

²L'Ami du Peuple, February 6, 1934.

³M. Catalan, Préparation de la manifestation du 6 février 1934, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3385, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), pp. 607-608.

After accusing the Communists of being responsible for Chiappe's removal, the Jeunesses Patriotes' proclamation warned that pressure was actually coming from Germany to see that the courageous General Weygand was retired. Then the following revelations and distortions of truths were made:

A formidable hecatomb is being prepared. In the army, in the magistrature, in all ranks and files of the administration, will be struck those who have given proofs of their independence and their patriotism.

The régime by decrees will return!
 The crime against having an opinion is back!
 Will you allow the dictatorship of the clan?
 Are you going to allow the strangling of your liberties?

Small functionaries, independents and patriots, are you going to allow your work to be suppressed?

Public opinion must protest in force. The people must clamor its will.

To the parliamentary decomposition now going on,, it will impose silence on the parties and bring dignified leaders to the nation. There is a plot being organized within and outside our country. We will know how to unmask it.

People of Paris you will come to affirm with us, in the Place de Grève, in front of the Hôtel de Ville, cradle of your communal liberties, that the COUNTRY IS IN DANGER.⁴

The Jeunesses Patriotes called Chiappe's departure from the Préfecture the beginning of a "coup de force." To check this coup from going any further, Parisians were told that it was their duty as good Frenchmen to join the Municipal Councillors at 7:00 P.M. on February 6 before the Hôtel de Ville. Then a march to the Palais-Bourbon was to be on the schedule. It was obvious that if this call by the Jeunesses

⁴Gaston Chéreau, Concorde! 6 février 1934 (Paris, 1934), pp. 83-85.

Patriotes was answered, the Third Republic was in for trouble. The parliamentarians and the democratic institutions of France were in fact to face this very real challenge when this force came to "dictate its wishes from the streets."⁵

The Croix de Feu et Briscards, fresh from tasting the applause from the Paris march of the night before, joined the Solidarité Française, the Jeunesses Patriotes, and the Action Française by delivering a manifesto of its own on February Six. Through the medium of the press, the Croix de Feu addressed the nation, the French people, and their "disponibles." The appeal began with the assertion that the Communists had enslaved the Daladier Government and that the dictatorial régime was well on its way. Quick action could prevent this totalitarian bid for power if all serious citizens would line up behind the Croix de Feu on February Six. This "call to action" ended with a diatribe against the politicians and democratic institutions of the time.⁶

A new member now joined the familiar list of protesters, namely, the Front Universitaire. For the first time in French history, this student-group became a major political element which demanded to be heard. Its appeal called upon all students to be:

Outside and above parties, independents from all organizations either of the Right or the Left, we come to appeal to those among you that have always refused, as we have, to be involved in politics.

France is in peril. Tomorrow, the revolutionary organizations will attempt to seize power and will surrender our

⁵Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 607-608.

⁶Ibid., p. 608.

country without a fight to the conqueror.

It is not necessary to be inscribed within a group to revolt before the horrible scandals which today condemn the republican system, and those that are parasites in it.

For the honor of our generation, the students must rise up and lead the great national movement which is about to be depicted.

We are not asking you to follow one committee or one group. We are asking you to descend, on Tuesday night, and to shout so that the country will be torn from the political pirates, from the cravens, from the traitors, and from the swindlers.

All of you meet on the Boulevard Saint-Michel on Tuesday, February 6, at 6:30 P.M.⁷

Taking the cue from the Front Universitaire, the Fédération Nationale des Contribuables de la Seine through their chief, M. Bardou, declared itself above parties in its presentation. Claiming that the Taxpayers Association always had the national interest at heart, the Fédération Nationale communicated publicly that it could not neglect to move into the streets of Paris. This league called upon its adherents to protest vigorously on February Six, so that its combined voices would be loud enough to let the Government know that it opposed "an immoral political clique."⁸

The veterans of the Légion d'Honneur Décorés au Péril de Leur Vie, led by President Jossé, a former senator, was like the other leagues already mentioned, indignant over the recent series of scandalous revelations. These veteran heroes placed the bulk of the blame on the

⁷L'Ami du Peuple, January 6, 1934. This appeal was independent of all those made by the other political leagues.

⁸Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 608-609.

Radical-Socialist Governments by saying that France's disgraceful internal and external policies, under the Cartel des Gauches, must immediately be reversed if the country were to be saved. For the quickest possible action on this matter, the Légion d'Honneur summoned all the patriotic associations--as well as all individual Frenchmen deserving of the name--to group themselves, to unite, and to act with the maximum of cooperation. With such élan, the drive to awake sleeping energies and to combat the "dictatorial rule of the free-masons" would become an overwhelmingly successful operation.⁹

Continuing with the chronicling of the appeals made by the various leagues before the February Six Riot, we encounter the very powerful Union Nationale des Combattants protesting that the Daladier Government was two-faced.¹⁰ The U.N.C. ordered its followers to assemble at 8:00 P.M. Tuesday night in front of the Grand-Palais, the Cours-la-Reine, and the Victor-Emmanuel III Avenue.

Forty-eight hours ago, in the presence of our leaders, M. Frot shook M. Chiappe's hands with great affection and thanked him fervently. Twenty-four hours later, he handed him to the vengeance of the Socialist Party.

If the Prefect of Police was guilty, what was this Judas' kiss?--and why offer him a post in Morocco?¹¹

Here the contradictory action of Premier Daladier and his colleagues was cited as a major issue in the U.N.C.'s manifesto. Similar questions were being asked all over the country. But as no answers

⁹Catalan, Manifestation, p. 609.

¹⁰Chéreau, Concorde, pp. 85-86.

¹¹Catalan, Manifestation, p. 609.

or explanations were forthcoming from the Premier, the periodicals of France that appeared that week reiterated their objections to Chiappe's removal.

The Journal des Débats, the oldest periodical in France, catalogued the work done by the new Daladier Government and stated that this new "ministerial crisis" revealed the degradation of the French political system. Secondly, asserted the weekly, it was obvious that the nation and the parliamentary cartel were enemies. Especially distressing to the French people, continued the Journal des Débats, was the reshuffling of practically the same Radical-Socialists in successive ministries.¹² The next week's issue carried the following appraisal of this Government by the Cartel des Gauches:

A Government was needed. It was anarchy that installed itself in power. The nation demanded justice, cold facts, and reasoning. What it got was incoherence and brutality.¹³

The rather biting periodical Revue Politique et Parlementaire repeated the now familiar tune that Daladier had dismissed Chiappe to obtain Socialist votes, and then gave its opinion of the Government as being one of:

Illusions, prevarications, concussion!
Stupefaction, indignation, abomination!
Interpellations, manifestations, confusion!
Explanation, verification, putrefaction!
Continuation?¹⁴

¹²Anon., "Le ministère Daladier," Journal des Débats, Vol. 2084 (February 2, 1934), pp. 173-174.

¹³Anon., "La crise politique," Journal des Débats, Vol. 2085 (February 9, 1934), p. 211.

¹⁴J. Compeyrot, "Les divagations du crédit de l'état," Revue Politique et Parlementaire, Vol. 41 (February 10, 1934), p. 209.

As far as the nervous public of Paris in this period was concerned, it was decided that "continuation" would not be the final word. This was definitely the attitude adopted by the more aggressive elements of the Municipal Council of Paris when that body turned against the National Government itself. These did not exactly help to calm down the already frenzied protests that had been issuing in ever-increasing numbers from the press, the periodicals, and the leagues.

Those men elected by the Paris citizenry held a meeting on February 5 and, in the name of the city of Paris, declared themselves in opposition to the administrative changes--especially the elimination of Chiappe from the city. The following day placards were posted on many walls all over Paris making this position known. These angered public servants blamed politics for their losing two fine men: Chiappe and Renard (former Prefect of the Seine who had resigned in protest). The Municipal Councillors were convinced that the Daladier Government was idle, immoral, and on the road to eliminating cherished French freedoms. This manifesto made a strong appeal to the Parisians because it came from their own elevated representatives.¹⁵

When even their representatives told them to move into the streets to protest, many Parisians wondered, understandably, whether the councillors had been motivated by some secret political information. The appeal made by the Municipal Councillors could not be taken lightly by the Government for the signatories included: (1) Colonel Jean Ferrandi, President of the Association Nationale des Officiers Combattants;

¹⁵Catalan, Manifestation, p. 607.

(2) Charles des Isnards, Vice-President of the Jeunesses Patriotes;
and (3) Georges Lebecq, leader of the U.N.C.¹⁶

To this call for action by the Municipal Councillors was appended a second manifesto when the first one was placarded all over Paris walls and kiosks. The second manifesto was signed by some thirty deputies of the Seine district who vigorously protested the departure of Chiappe and Renard from their respective posts. The original copy of this document had been sent to the Ministry of the Interior. The deputies' signatures included such well-known men as MM. Denais, Dommange, Douissain, Jean Fabry, Louis Fourès, Marcel Héraud, Paul Reynaud, Georges Scapini, Soulier, Pierre Taittinger, and Lionel des Tastes. All these men could depend on sizeable followers in time of need. The emergency and the need were declared to be now.¹⁷

With the press, the periodicals, the leagues, the Municipal Councillors of Paris, and even the Deputies of the Seine issuing "calls to action" on February 5-6, 1934, the public became uncontrollable. When, on the Great February Six, the masses of human beings invaded the streets, it was obvious that these appeals had been answered. Through the use of placards, through circulated brochures, and through other communicative media, a profound antiparliamentary and anti-Daladier spirit was expressed. The human forces which had been brought to understand that their Government had cheated them were not to be easily

¹⁶Catalan, Manifestation, p. 607.

¹⁷Chéreau, Concorde, pp. 74-75.

guided once they invaded the streets.¹⁸ The "Democratic Crisis of 1934 in France" was entering its most critical period. The issue to be resolved was an extremely important and serious one for France: Would France be able to withstand this organized onslaught against the Third French Republic and its imperfect but democratic institutions?

The Early Phase of February Six

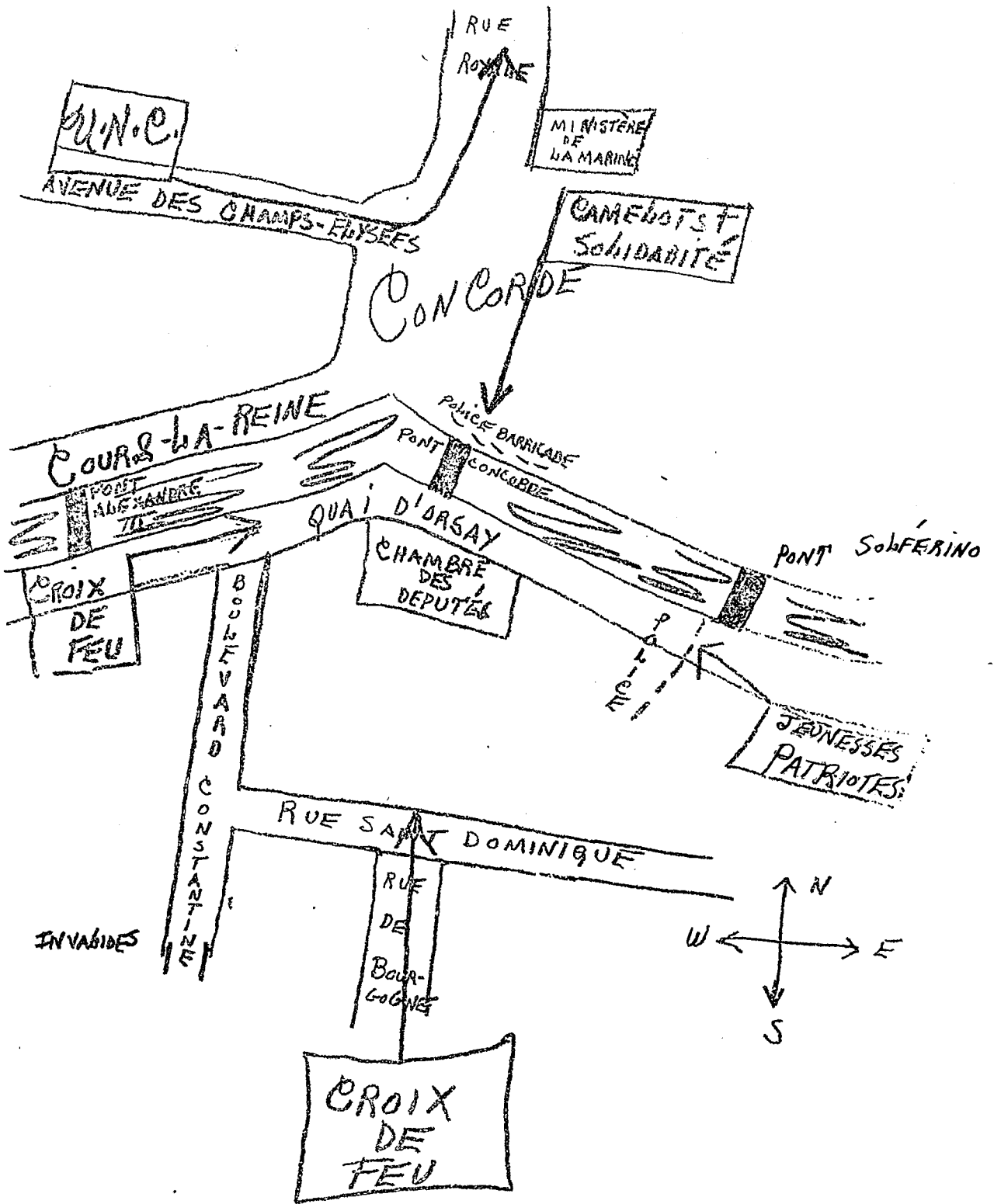
Meeting places set by appeals.-- It was on the eve of February Six that the numerous appeals just presented were formulated. In them were given the objectives on which to concentrate, the assembly points for the different organizations, and, of course, the times to congregate. It will be invaluable, if we desire a comprehensive view of the Great February Six Riot, to restate the political leagues' orders on these three points. Such a presentation will help bring clarity to a subject which, otherwise, might appear as extremely confusing.

The Action Française had commanded the royalists to assemble immediately after working hours in front of the Palais-Bourbon. The Chamber of Deputies was to be their objective. From the appeal it could be deduced that the time would be between 5:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M.¹⁹

The Solidarité Française had already established its objective as far back as January 15. On that day, while the association had been assembled in Wagram Hall, M. Jacques Fromentin pronounced the following words which were to receive the approval of his league: "Faced

¹⁸ Maurice Paz, Le Six Février (Paris, 1936), p. 11.

¹⁹ Action Française, February 6, 1934. See FIGURE 2 MAP for movements of various leagues during early hours--before 9:00 P.M.



SOURCE: PAUL LEPEYRE, (LE 6 FÉVRIER) (PARIS, 1935), p. 1.

with the enemy within our country, faced with the Palais-Bourbon gutter; it is our duty to clean them up!"²⁰ With the Chamber of Deputies as the center for their adherents' assault, the Solidarité Française was to be ready to move at 7:00 P.M., after using the assigned assembly points near the Grand Boulevards. A special precaution for February Six was made by the Solidarité: in case the approaches to the Palais-Bourbon should be blocked by the police on the side of the Place de la Concorde, a turning maneuver was planned so as to attack the Chamber from the Place du Palais-Bourbon.²¹

The Jeunesses Patriotes' meeting place was publicly announced to be the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville by 7:00 P.M. From there the leaguers were to move towards their objective--the Chamber.²²

Thus the list went on and on. For brevity's sake, it is useful to summarize the rest of the political leagues by stating that:

(1) the Front Universitaire was to assemble on the Boulevard Saint-Michel by 6:30 P.M. and head for the Palais-Bourbon; (2) the Fédération des Contribuables invited its followers to join all other leagues demonstrating according to their political affiliation, their personal preference, and the access from their home to the group selected; (3) the Croix de Feu et Briscards ordered its "dispos" to be ready for 6:00 P.M. to receive further orders; (4) the A.R.A.C. called its meeting for 8:00 P.M. at the Rond-Point and near the borders of the

²⁰L'Ami du Peuple, January 16, 1934.

²¹Catalan, Manifestation, p. 611.

²²Ibid.

Champs-Elysées so as to facilitate movements towards the Chamber;
(5) the Association Nationale des Officiers Combattants' members were to start mixing with other leaguers of their preference around 8:00 P.M.; and (6) the U.N.C. was called for 8:00 P.M. on the Champs-Elysées. From the above commands, it is obvious that all political leagues were alerted to begin their activities for February Six between 5:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M., and that they were to demonstrate near or in the vicinity of the Palais-Bourbon.²³

It would also appear from the foregoing that the political leagues had agreed beforehand to concentrate their efforts on the Chamber of Deputies. Yet the evidence showing that such agreement existed is very thin. On this matter, the records reveal that during the January Riots, a few phone calls and personal conversations had been exchanged for January 9, 11, and 12. The groups involved then were the Jeunesses Patriotes, the Action Française, and the Fédération des Contribuables. These contacts, however, had been of minor importance and involved unimportant matters. The historian who relies on the available objective evidence is forced to conclude that no overall action by these political leagues had been anticipated.²⁴

Another noteworthy observation derived from a study of the "leagues' calls to action" is that the special assembly areas assigned by the various associations formed a vast circle around the Palais-Bourbon. Beginning on the Champs-Elysées, we find the U.N.C. activating

²³Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 612-613.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 611-612.

its members, while the A.R.A.C. was to be at the Rond-Point. Further to the right, on the Grand Boulevards, would be the Solidarité Française; while far to the right, several miles from the Champs-Élysées, on the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, the Jeunesses Patriotes had been alerted. Moving in back of the Chamber to the extreme right we find, on the Boulevard Saint-Michel, the Front Universitaire was to assemble. The Action Française' followers had the immediate rear of the Chamber for they were to move from the Boulevard Saint-Germain. Finally, the Croix de Feu et Briscards, yet unassigned, was to cover the left of the Chamber and complete the circle. Thus it can be seen that if all went according to plans, a circular formation would isolate the Palais-Bourbon from the rest of France.²⁵

Before dismissing this question of the political leagues' objective--the Palais-Bourbon--it is pertinent to try to answer the question: what political goals did these associations have in mind? M. Jean Renaud, leader of the Solidarité Française, later testifying before the February Six Inquiry Commission, suggested that the leaguers desired the Daladier Government to fall. M. Taittinger of the Jeunesses Patriotes asserted that this had also been his main goal. The various Municipal Councillors when questioned reiterated the same.²⁶

In a letter dispatched by Colonel de La Rocque to his provincial sections on January 5, the commander wrote:

²⁵Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 613-614.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 614-615.

The goal that we have is to end the dictatorship under the influence of the Socialist; and to call to power a clean administration; get rid of the corrupted politicians no matter who they might be, and to have as objective the re-establishment of national order within a secure ring of sécurité.²⁷

The existence of such political leagues, no matter what their political aims, was a dangerous element within the frame of French democracy because of their allegiance to an authoritarian and semimilitary discipline. Once these forces were unleashed over the Paris streets, it would be difficult to prevent disorder even with the strictest controls being used. Exactly what role these leagues hoped to play within the established French democratic system was also highly questionable. The answer to such a query would furthermore depend on what a person's view on the following matters was: (1) Did the leagues have the right to consider themselves speaking for the French people? (2) Was the "pressure from the street" proposed a quantity found in a sound democratic system? (3) Would such "pressure" benefit French democracy? Evidence shows that France was divided as to what were the correct replies to these questions at that moment in history.

Paris on Tuesday afternoon.-- During the early hours of the morning of February Six, the crowds circulated on the Grand Boulevards, on the Champs-Élysées, on the Concorde, and near the Palais-Bourbon, as they always did. There was no sign of anything different from any other days, except that no taxis were to be seen, for they were on strike. Soon after the usual morning rush, the Paris streets assumed a semi-

²⁷Catalan, Manifestation, p. 615.

deserted appearance for a while. As lunch time approached, certain precautionary measures were taken by the police. Unusually large groups were not allowed on the Concorde.²⁸

By noontime, however, these efforts proved in vain, for larger and larger groups began forming around the areas surrounding the Place de la Madeleine, the Rue Royale, and the Place de la Concorde. This amassing continued for several hours and then, around 3:00 P.M.--the time when the Chamber was about to open its sitting to listen to Dardier's ministerial declaration--this crowd broke by waves into the strategic and relatively unprotected Place de la Concorde.²⁹

Our study of the leagues' appeals above pointed to the Place de la Concorde as not chosen so early by any of the leaguers as an assembling area. Around 3:00 P.M., because of this fact, the Place de la Concorde was still relatively free from police protection as those waves of human beings kept pouring onto it from all directions. This crowd became, in a short while, a massive sea of people whose voices kept rising in volume with the passage of time. While this steady drone continued, the crowd kept swelling and swelling. This early Tuesday mob was not homogeneously grouped. It was composed of: (1) leaguers, who had arrived early; (2) women and children, who soon departed when the proceedings became vicious in nature; and (3) hundreds of curious, who just wanted to see what would take place. All these people were calm enough and kept lingering around, moving about, and

²⁸Candide, February 8, 1934.

²⁹Le Temps, February 8, 1934.

turning here and there to see what was developing. It reminded an observer of the crowds that pile into a Spanish arena to see a toreador do the "slaughtering or be slaughtered" by the bull.³⁰

As it was later agreed by many witnesses testifying before the February Six Inquiry Commission, this early crowd took on an atmosphere of expectancy because of certain reports found in the press of late. Many just desired to demonstrate their disgust with the existing Government and believed this the best way to express their feelings. Other witnesses said that this human mass gave the impression that a huge carnage was being prepared. Certain newspaper reports, alluded to above, had given some basis for such a belief to exist. These reports involved the secret movements of colored troops, machine guns, tanks, and cannons. The newspapers claimed these military tools had been slowly entering Paris for the past few days and were to be used in a forthcoming coup d'état. It was further suggested that the Daladier Government was planning to use this equipment against any demonstrators or rioters.³¹

Léon Daudet had caused much emotional comment all over Paris after he had disclosed that:

Now, they have imagined that such a régime cannot be defended except by machine-gun fire. I know, from unimpeachable sources, that twelve of these dismantled instruments have been--four days ago--transported with great secrecy to the Palais-Bourbon.³²

³⁰Pierre Appell, La soirée du 6 février 1934 à la Concorde, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3386, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934).

³¹Catalan, Manifestation, pp. 610-616.

³²Action Française, February 3, 1934.

Other newspapers reaffirmed the truth of such statements and added that no one could be calm when colored troops were secretly alerted to move on Paris at a moment's notice. Le Jour added that in combination with these troops, the Government had started moving tanks from the Compiègne depot. These stories were believed to be true by the crowd on the Concorde that Tuesday afternoon.³³

While this considerable but relatively passive crowd circulated slowly back and forth over the Place de la Concorde, the deputies were moving towards their seats within the Palais-Bourbon. Premier Daladier arrived hurriedly, quickly made his way into the building, and the Chamber of Deputies soon came to order so as to hear the leading item on the business for the day--Daladier's ministerial declaration.³⁴

The Tumultuous Chamber

Disgraceful sitting.-- The Chamber of Deputies opened precisely at 3:00 P.M. that afternoon with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting by one of the Chamber's secretaries, M. Guillaume Ballu. The presiding officer over the legislative body of France was its President, M. Fernand Bouisson. After the initial rituals, President Bouisson read Daladier's letter which demanded the convocation of the deputies so as to listen to the ministerial pronouncements. With this business out of the way, Daladier mounted the tribune. From the Left and most of the Extreme-Left came thunderous acclamations.³⁵

³³ Le Jour, February 5, 1934.

³⁴ Le Temps, February 7, 1934.

³⁵ Chambre des députés, Journal Officiel du 7 février, 1934, 15 ième Législature, Débats Parlementaires (Paris, 1934), pp. 405-406.

Messieurs--

For a month now a scandal born from several individuals' failures....³⁶

Daladier could go no further. Cackling and laughter broke over the Chamber, especially from the Right and Center benches. Philippe Henriot, the young and vigorous heckling representative from the Gironde, hollered that other "public officials are involved." While this racket was going on, a member of the Chamber arrived late and received applause. Daladier, seemingly unaffected by such disturbances, went on:

....has paralyzed the work of the Chamber, has set the parties one against the other, has demoralized the country, and has furnished the adversaries of the régime the chance to take up again the attacks that the republican vigilance got rid of in the past.³⁷

This last statement brought down the Chamber. The Right, believing the insinuation was made for them, began laughing loudly and made the hemicycle reverberate with various types of disturbing noises. The Left joined this clamor by trying to counteract it with vigorous hand-clapping. In the center of this Chamber gone berserk was Premier Daladier. He still kept on the appearance of imperturbability and when the chance appeared, he carried on:

We will get out of this insufferable atmosphere only by bringing full clarity to the subject, by being courageous, and by showing energy. The Government before you has already begun this task.³⁸

³⁶J.O.C. du 7 février, Débats, pp. 405-406.

³⁷Ibid., p. 405.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 405-406.

Now the last word brought a repetition of the disturbances described above, especially from the Right. The Right had correctly assumed the last words referred to the administrative changes. An incessant booing, shouting, laughing, and banging now resulted. The Left shouted reprimands to the Right and applauded in Daladier's direction. The Right in turn hollered that they "had enough of Daladier." Daladier then threw in the comment that he had been in power only eight days and wanted to be judged on only what he had done. This proved to be the wrong statement to make. With great difficulty President Bouisson brought back order, he scolded the deputies for their conduct, and he told them to behave from now on. Daladier managed to go on:

Besides the faults that your Inquiry Commission will denounce, and which will end in my punishing the guilty--without mercy--your Government has established that within certain public services exists a relaxation of vigilance, a weakening of the sense of responsibility, which demand a renovation of personnel and methods. You tell us if we did the right thing.³⁹

The Left and Extreme-Left gave a strong ovation to these statements, but the Right shouted that the country already had indicated what it thought of Daladier's "Vite et Fort." Daladier made several attempts to continue. He interjected the double question of whether he was correct when he desired to restore authority within the Republican state by refusing to allow backward conditions to exist; and whether he could be blamed for refusing to keep an irresponsible administration. The Chamber, however, was not listening and proceeded to

³⁹J.O.C. du 7 février, Débats, p. 406.

more disturbances.⁴⁰

Pandemonium reigned. The Left kept applauding as hard and as long as possible until exhaustion would set in. This was repeated time after time in various attempts to drown out the rather derogatory remarks emanating from the Right. President Bouisson begged the Deputies to control themselves, for no one could speak under such noisy conditions. Daladier tried unsuccessfully to shout his ideas on the composition of an Inquiry Commission. The attempt to speak made by Daladier was cut short by M. Renaud Jean. Jean, representative from the Communist section, got up and bellowed: "Long live the Soviets."⁴¹

This had a sobering effect on the assembly for a moment. Daladier, taking advantage of the opportunity, stated that the Inquiry Commission would allow the Chamber and the Senate to return to their normal legislative duties. Then everything broke loose. All the deputies rose from their seats, made threats to their opponents, booed loudly and incessantly, sang songs, and some shouted for Daladier's resignation. Others went all over the hall laughing like fools, dancing, and jumping here and there. Giving up the thought of bringing back some order, President Bouisson suspended this disgraceful sitting.⁴²

It had been a good time for President Bouisson to take such a course, for fist fights were about to start. The Communists were singing the Internationale, and the Third Republic's Chamber resounded

⁴⁰ J.O.C. du 7 février, Débats, p. 406.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

with demands for the fall of the Republic and the setting up of soviets everywhere. Daladier at the tribune was stunned, while Frot occupied a position in front of the Premier, and his clenched fists were ready to take on all comers. The press gallery was filled with heads who just could not turn fast enough to see all they desired to observe. Never in the Third French Republic's history had a sitting been suspended in the middle of a ministerial declaration. All the decorum demanded in a well-ordered democracy was lacking. The democratic principle of respect of an opponent's opinions was completely disregarded.⁴³

After President Bouisson reconvened the Chamber, he admonished his colleagues and threatened the closing of the session if any more disturbances occurred. The deputies, apparently afraid of what the public's reaction would be if the session should be closed, listened to Daladier give the rest of his address. Few interruptions were made as Daladier declared:

We need to vote laws protecting savings--effectively. We must have a budget before March 31. If we do not, the labors exerted for eighteen months by five successive governments will be incomplete--and will become sterile.

While the unemployed are waiting impatiently for news--true or false--of the scandals, while certain partisans believe they are in need of revenge because of their misfortunes, the peasant is asking how he can sell his harvest, the worker sees his remuneration reduced, and he is frightened by the menace of "loafing." The business man and the industrial leader are struggling against a foreign competition which every day is getting more severe and more pressing. The middle classes are overwhelmed by high prices, while our youngsters are in doubts about their future.

⁴³Alexander Werth, France in Ferment (London, 1935), p. 148.

You--elected by the people--in contact with them in all our provinces--know their sufferings, their worries, and their hopes. Is it possible, without hurting your feelings, that you prefer passionate conquests instead of carrying out the duty assigned to you by France?

The scandals will pass, but the problems will remain. The Republic, in order to carry on, must solve the latter. We have decided not to change our monetary status--but the budget must be voted. The budget, once voted, will be the beginning of the fight against unemployment. Next we will take up the task of bringing new life into the economic activities of the country. The improving of our trade balance depends on realistic policies founded upon reciprocity and compensations.

We will also need to reform, from the bottom up, our ancient fiscal system. We must replace this archaic and complicated machinery by a simple mechanism run along more modern lines....with more regular, and less precarious, returns.

In the face of a worried and divided Europe, we reaffirm our faith for the peace and security of France, whose politics internationally can be summarized by two phrases: international cooperation--national defense.⁴⁴

Daladier went on speaking about world peace and France's reliance on the League to accomplish this goal. As his last remarks to the deputies, he again reminded them that: (1) heavy responsibilities had been entrusted to them by the people of France; (2) the Daladier Government was backing an investigation into the Stavisky scandals through the use of a parliamentary commission; and (3) he hoped to be given the chance to try to solve France's chronic problems as he had outlined them above. The Left and Extreme-Left received these final words with thunderous approval. The Right, on the other hand, waited for the next move.⁴⁵

⁴⁴J.O.C. du 7 février, Débats, p. 406.

⁴⁵Ibid.

Interpellations and confidence votes.-- A comparatively quiet Chamber had listened to M. Daladier give the last sections of his ministerial declaration. The Radical-Socialists and the Socialist S.F.I.O., except in several places, had kept cheering his words rather weakly. It seemed apparent that the opposition cared little about the content of his declaration, for their uncomplimentary ejaculations tended to dominate the assemblage. The latter were looking for a scapegoat on which could be deposited the blame for France's troubles. Daladier was to be the one who presented himself as the goat to them.⁴⁶

After the Premier had presented his views on the present situation, President Bouisson took a minute to remind the deputies that all interpellations addressed to the Chautemps Ministry were now obsolete as a new ministry now held the reins of power. The President continued that he had some seventeen demands for interpellations on the agenda against the Daladier Ministry. These interpellations were of such a variety that to answer them satisfactorily would keep the Chamber in session for weeks. The interpellations covered such topics as the Government's views on the agricultural problems, the sale of cheap and dishonest housing in Northern France, the situation in Indochina, the movement of certain infantry troops, and the recent scandals and changes. To answer these correctly, not only would the time element be considerable, but a person would need information then not even available.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 148.

⁴⁷ J.O.C. du 7 février, Débats, pp. 406-407.

Daladier was obviously shaken by the impact of so many interpellation demands presented so quickly, and he mounted the tribune once more to announce that time was now of the essence. Because of this serious time factor, Premier Daladier insisted that the immediate discussion of all these interpellations could not be undertaken. If it were, continued the Premier, the debate would go on for days. But as a compromise measure, Daladier suggested listening to only three opposition speakers: MM. Dommange, Ybarnégaray, and Franklin-Bouillon. Further reflection prompted the Premier to add the Communist interpellation to the list. Before stepping down from the rostrum, he further declared that his ministry wanted to know--tonight--if it had or had not the confidence of the Chamber. Besides, on the acceptance of this political expedient he had just proposed, he posed the question of confidence.⁴⁸

President Bouisson then recognized M. Franklin-Bouillon, the speaker from the Right. Franklin-Bouillon stated that apparently a new technique for handling interpellations had been devised, for the Premier had no such right as he had just exercised. Bouillon sarcastically thanked Daladier for keeping him on the suggested list to be heard, but he preferred to leave the compliments of oratory to those who deserved them; namely, MM. Léon Blum and Frossard. Strange as it might seem, the Left did not applaud this complimentary statement. Franklin-Bouillon next stated that M. Gaston Henry-Haye would speak first for the Right. The President of the Chamber said this was out

⁴⁸Werth, France in Ferment, p. 148.

of order. Henry-Haye insisted and insisted and finally succeeded in forcing himself onto the floor.⁴⁹

Henry-Haye took on the attitude of bewilderment. He could not comprehend why the Left was refused the right to present its much discussed interpellation against Chiappe. Henry-Haye was further shocked by Daladier's position, for the Premier had just spoken of Republican liberties, and no sooner had he so spoken, than he tried to abridge them. This proved, continued the enraged deputy, that Daladier was a tyrant who was undertaking a coup to destroy the hard-fought-for French liberties. Throughout this heated presentation, the Right and the Center applauded vigorously every accusation, and the Chamber took on the mood of a political rally. Henry-Haye, encouraged by prolonged sympathies, declared that he would never "submit to Prince Daladier." Daladier was a fascist in disguise, said the speaker-- and a poor one at that. Haye concluded with an emotional call for action to save French liberties. The Chamber turned into an uproar.⁵⁰

At that moment came a shout from the Communist benches that Henry-Haye was a "dirty Jesuit." Anticlericalism now flared up as Henry-Haye hollered that the Communists were "not only turncoat Jesuits, but false revolutionists." Haye asserted proudly that he had been brought up with nice people and not a "bunch of scums" like the Communists were. President Bouisson could well be nearing a nervous breakdown by now, as he continued trying to restore order. Bouisson finally shouted to

⁴⁹J.O.C. du 7 février, Débats, pp. 407-408.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 408.

Haye to "shut up." Haye refused. M. Lionel des Tastes then jumped up and threw further obstructions into the proceedings by demanding a "scrutin public à la tribune" on whether Daladier's selection of interpellations was acceptable. The session was again suspended.⁵¹

When the session reopened, President Bouisson in a calm and controlled tone announced that the scrutin public à la tribune was in order and voting would take until 5:05 P.M. This delaying maneuver required that each deputy mount the tribune to drop his vote into an urn. The procedure took an hour.⁵²

The result of the scrutin public was that Daladier's proposal was carried by three hundred votes of the 517 cast--with 217 opposed. Henry-Haye had barely heard this when he got up once more. Haye accused the Premier of trying to smother the traditional democratic procedures of the Chamber. M. Blum asked for and received the right to have the floor at this juncture. Blum identified the present buffoonery in the Chamber as a deliberate campaign by the opposition to prevent the wheels of free institutions from turning. The Socialist leader pleaded for moderation in this moment of crisis and said the present debate was an aimless one. Blum proposed that an understanding could be reached if the seventeen deputies desiring to question Daladier should meet, select three among themselves, and those chosen would challenge the Premier. This plea to save time received approval

⁵¹J.O.C. du 7 février, Débats, p. 408.

⁵²Werth, Ferment in France, p. 149.

from all over the Chamber.⁵³

From the Right, M. Xavier Vallat arose. This ex-serviceman made quite a striking figure, for he had a wooden leg. Vallat declared that he would just as soon not speak, for he was soon to join his veteran friends in the streets. Daladier took the floor and noted that he had never imagined that his suggestion on the interpellations would create so much steam. Turning towards Vallat, Daladier pointed out that he had to preserve peace and would not condone any rioting. Besides, those veterans out there "in the streets" had been born after 1900. Returning to the interpellations, the Premier explained that he had arbitrarily selected those he believed offered the greatest threats to his Government, but that he did not care which were heard.⁵⁴

Henry-Haye once more on the floor demanded another scrutin public à la tribune. Daladier jumped up and bellowed that he had enough of this. The Right was definitely obstructing the session. He moved that the time be saved by all the interpellations being shelved indefinitely. A great tumult swept the gathering. M. André Tardieu demanded the floor. Just as the latter stood up to speak a Communist rushed towards him, called him vile names, and a debacle ensued. Once more the Chamber was suspended. A nearby clock struck 6:00 P.M.⁵⁵

At 6:10 P.M. the Chamber returned to order. A glance around the

⁵³ J.O.C. du 7 février, Débats, p. 409.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 409-410.

⁵⁵ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 150.

meeting hall revealed that half of the press seats were empty, while a similar condition existed in the public galleries. The former occupants of these chairs had gone outside where more tragic events were going on, as we shall see later. Yet the deputies kept droning on and on. Every ten minutes or so even a few of them got tired and left the debating hall.⁵⁶

When the Chamber reopened, Tardieu began accusing Daladier of being the "first fascist of France," and added that no premier could check the number of interpellations--this was checking liberty itself. Maurice Thorez, the Communist leader, pooh-poohed such an interpretation and began sending cat-calls in Tardieu's direction. Thorez then unrolled his name-calling vocabulary and hurled several choice words at the former premier now on the floor trying to be heard. Tardieu, taking as much of this as he could, answered that Thorez was a loud-mouth pig, and that he (Tardieu) had ordered the Communist behind bars once and would love to do it again.⁵⁷

While the Tardieu-Thorez insults were flying, the spectators who had stayed in the galleries felt this was the best part of the show yet and well worth staying for. Thorez spoke about the "class war" being near, developed the idea that Tardieu was a d--- liar, and that he would enjoy spitting in Tardieu's eyes. The Communist leader congratulated himself for being present at the moment when parliamentary institutions were showing how decadent they had become. Furthermore,

⁵⁶Werth, France in Ferment, p. 150.

⁵⁷J.O.C. du 7 février, Débats, pp. 411-412.

he added, the Communists were ready for the revolution against Daladier-- the "Jacobin." President Bouisson, shaking with disgust, told Thorez this was enough and "to shut his big mouth."⁵⁸

The discussion led to another scrutin public à la tribune being taken on whether to accept cloture. Daladier once more connected a confidence vote to the scrutin public. Voting went on--much by proxy-- and of some 506 ballots cast, Daladier received a majority of 303 votes.⁵⁹

This was barely over when yet another balloting was taken on whether to throw out all the interpellations. Léon Blum jumped up and startled the deputies present by saying that his party not only considered this the voting of confidence but also a "vote of combat." Someone interrupted Blum to say that trouble had reached a serious stage in the Concorde. The Communists, shouting in unison, cheered the day of revolution. The Right shouted accusations towards Daladier.⁶⁰ Werth described this dramatic moment as follows:

I returned to the Chamber at 7:45 P.M. and found the place in a state bordering on panic. Some of the deputies were hurriedly leaving by the back door.

The debate still dragged on, stupidly, pointlessly....

And then a most dramatic thing happened. M. Scapini, the blind deputy of the Right, suddenly rose to his feet and cried: "They are firing!" And pointing a threatening finger towards the Government bench: "Monsieur le Président du Conseil, did you give orders to fire?" There was an uproar on the Left.

⁵⁸J.O.C. du 7 février, Débats, pp. 412-413.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 413-414.

"Down with the Fascists!" they cried. But the blind man persisted: "Did you give orders to fire, M. Daladier, answer me!" And then M. Lionel des Tastes, another deputy of the Right, rushed into the hall, and cried: "The Prefect of Police has just told me that shots have been fired. Go to the Concorde Bridge and look for yourselves!"⁶¹

This disorder led to one more suspended assembly.

At 8:10 P.M. the Chamber reconvened. President Bouisson pleaded not to have any more disturbances and then proceeded to a vote of confidence. The Journal Officiel here records:

M. Camille Blaisot.-- The Government should leave therefore! (Loud exclamations from the Left and Extreme-Left.)

M. Jean Lerolle.-- We are firing on the crowd, monsieur President! All the Paris deputies are protesting! (Movement on the Left and the Extreme-Left.)

M. Georges Scapini.-- It is a Government of assassins!

From the Center and the Right.-- Resign! Resign! (Lively interruptions on the Left and Extreme-Left--prolonged disturbance.)⁶²

President Bouisson in exasperation threatened adjournment to Thursday. The Chamber shouted its unanimous disapproval of this. The show went on with Franklin-Bouillon attacking the Daladier Government and advising Daladier to get out. The President said such language was inadmissible. The resulting vote of confidence gave 360 votes of approval to the Daladier Ministry.⁶³

The political charivari was now completely out of control after this announcement. Daladier, dumbfounded, held both of his hands over

⁶¹Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 151-152.

⁶²J.O.C. du 7 février, Débats, pp. 413-414.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 414-415.

his face so as not to see the mass of hollering, bickering, and jumping deputies. The Basque deputy, Ybarnégaray, said that the "Civil War" had begun. Franklin-Bouillon leaped towards the speechless Premier and began swinging his fists while telling Daladier to resign and leave. Daladier did not even take notice of this as his young ministers, Jean Mistler, Pierre Cot, and Guy la Chambre formed a protective ring around their leader.⁶⁴

"Turn off the lights," shouted a deputy, "they will think the Chamber is empty!" The deputies began flying for the exits, and panic swept the Chamber clean. Daladier, hesitating on what should be done, was conducted by his colleagues to a waiting automobile outside and spirited, still almost speechless, to a nearby point of safety.⁶⁵

As the Chamber lights were extinguished, a comical scene occurred in the midst of these tragic events. This is a reference to the incident M. Édouard Herriot encountered while speeding on foot along the Boulevard des Invalides to his home. Herriot was spotted by several rioters, who soon seized him and began beating him up. One rioter struck the victim and suggested: "Drown him in the Seine!" Herriot, who represented Lyons and was mayor of that city, answered that at least he preferred being "thrown into the Rhône." Without having to undergo any more beating, several gardiens de la paix rescued him.⁶⁶

⁶⁴Pierre Lazareff, Dernière Edition (New York, 1940), p. 221.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 222.

⁶⁶Édouard Herriot, Jadis, Vol. II (Paris, 1934), pp. 376-377.

Firing in the Street and the "Spilling of Blood"

The rioters arrive.-- We must now backtrack to 3:00 P.M. to observe how the rather calm group we had left on the Concorde came to drive the deputies into such a panic. As we have seen, the morning of February Six had been uneventful in the Concorde area. The day had started as a warm one for the season and had developed an air of usualness until noon. It was at that time that crowds had gathered around the Concorde and finally, around 3:00 P.M., had invaded the Place de la Concorde by waves.⁶⁷

It was through the Place de la Concorde that the main assaults were to come that day. This main foyer of the February Six rioters became more and more the principal center of attraction as the afternoon wore on. The police, realizing that this gathering crowd would not be convinced easily to go home, began preparing--too late--for the worst.⁶⁸

The police after 3:00 P.M. took on the duty of protecting the passage through the Concorde Bridge. Commissioner Rottée, who was to take charge of the defense in this area, arrived around 4:45 P.M. He had orders to allow no one to pass over this key passageway to the Chamber--no matter the cost. To see that this command was carried out effectively, he had been assigned the small force of 195 men. The defense for the time being was to depend on: (1) seventy gardiens de la

⁶⁷Laurent Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes de février, 1934 (Paris, 1935), p. 87.

⁶⁸Paz, Six février, p. 13.

paix, (2) a hundred Mobile Guards, and (3) twenty-five Republican Guards on horseback.⁶⁹ The Mobile Guards were relatively new at this business, for it was only in 1927 that the mobile platoons of the infantry legions and the rookie gendarmes--recruited at 1,500 to 2,000 a year--formed a corps called the Republican Mobile Guard. Serving under the Ministry of the Interior, they owed their allegiance to the National Government. Rottée was trying them out as riot shock troops that day.⁷⁰

These 195 men were rather poorly equipped considering the task they had to carry. The gardiens de la paix carried their usual white night sticks and an automatic pistol each. The mounted Republican Guards had sabers, while the Mobile Guards had pistols. These policemen were distributed at strategic points near the Place de la Madeleine, in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, near the corner of the Rue Royale, and near the Ministry of Marine.⁷¹

Facing these new police recruits as well as the police which had been on the Concorde since noon, the demonstrators of the Place de la Concorde were increasing in number. The majority of this crowd was made up still of brave Frenchmen who had come to protest. They did little to prevent the police from taking their positions.⁷²

An ominous air hung around Paris as darkness came. Shutters were being tightly drawn, while steel curtains rattled down also earlier than usual. The restaurants in the rioting areas also took their pre-

⁶⁹Appell, La soirée, p. 617.

⁷⁰Colonel L. A. Grasset, "Qu'est-ce que la Garde Mobile?" L'Illustration, Vol. 4747 (February 24, 1934), p. 235.

⁷¹Appell, La soirée, p. 617.

⁷²André Tardieu, Sur la pente (Paris, 1935), p. n.

cautions and closed early. The aristocratic Hôtel Crillon, opposite the Chamber and facing the Place de la Concorde, agreed with these movements and bolted its iron gates and barricaded its doors. The American Embassy to the left, still relatively new, had protection behind a high grillwork. Construction materials nearby were to be used by the rioters that evening as dangerous weapons.⁷³

While these precautions were being taken, the leaguers began moving on the Concorde. The process was slow at first, but at its height that evening it included 100,000 human beings.⁷⁴ The new Prefect of Police, M. Bonnefoy-Sibour, arrived while these activities were being carried out. He took a position near the center of the Concorde Bridge which he kept most of the evening. It was just about that time also that the large crowd in the Place de la Concorde began surging forward towards the Concorde Bridge. Commissioner Rottée, feeling the crowd was moving too near, ordered the clearing of the embankments south of the Place de la Concorde, as well as the immediate vicinity of the bridge. The Republican Guards charged into the human mass and succeeded in pushing it back. Circulation near the Concorde Bridge was now prohibited.⁷⁵

This five o'clock charge, concluded Rottée, was to be the first of many similar attempts to seize control of the precious bridge. Therefore, the police were reassigned and the following pattern was

⁷³New York Herald (European Edition), February 7, 1934, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁴Tardieu, Sur la pente, p. n.

⁷⁵Appell, La soirée, p. 617.

constructed: (1) on both sides of the bridge were placed thirty gardiens de la paix and Mobile Guards; (2) cars and police vans were placed at the bridgehead so as to leave only a small passage between the central vehicles; and (3) in front of these vehicles was established a cordon of twenty gardiens de la paix.⁷⁶

Until 6:00 P.M. the police were unquestionably the masters of the situation. For many hours this leaderless crowd had been swelling to an immense size. But at that moment it still did not appear either as very vicious or as having a political purpose.⁷⁷ But around that time, however, the mood of this human mass began to change. The police could also feel what was transpiring and were obviously worried as the leaguers now began to unload their followers on the already overcrowded area. Alarming reports arrived that the Front Universitaire had begun to move on the Boulevard Saint-Germain.⁷⁸

As these leaguers arrived on the Concorde scene, the crowd became denser and denser, and the resulting pushing and packing brought violence. The shouts now became more distinct. The clearest ones were: "Down With The Thieves!" "Resign!" "Down With Daladier!" "Long Live Chiappe!" and "Policemen Join Us!" Not yet did the crowd show any antagonism towards the law-enforcement officials.⁷⁹

⁷⁶Appell, La soirée, p. 617.

⁷⁷Le Temps, February 8, 1934.

⁷⁸Paul-Émile Cadilhac, "L'Émeute dans les rues," L'Illustration, Vol. 4745 (February 10, 1934), p. 158.

⁷⁹Bonnevay, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 83-87.

From 6:00 P.M. to the firing on the crowd.-- Around 6:00 P.M. vans filled with police guards, while coming from the Cité towards the Grand-Palais, were insulted and heavily stoned by the crowds along the way. This new violent mood now introduced was soon communicated all along the line from Notre Dame to the heights of the Champs-Élysées. As this emotional wave of vengeance reached the Concorde, the Republican Guards near the Concorde Bridge made a charge. For a moment this appeared to have been successful in tuning down feelings.⁸⁰

Suddenly, the Republican Guards were pelted with all kinds of objects as attempts at bringing about cooperation between the crowd and the police were discarded. Numerous flying projectiles began filling the air and were aimed in the direction of the Republican Guards. Asphalt pieces, torn grill bars, diverse metal pieces broken off from the arched fences covering the Cours-la-Reine and the Tuileries Gardens, found their way into human flesh. Thus began the so-called "spilling of blood." Three Republican Guards were unhorsed, severely beaten, and a rescue squad evacuated two to the hospital. This six o'clock charge was to set the pace and the pattern of the charges for the evening.⁸¹

M. Rottée, in charge of the police on the Bridge, realizing the serious turn events were taking, asked to have reinforcements. These were sent to him as soon as the contacts with the individuals could be made, but throughout the evening the police force was to be always

⁸⁰ Appell, La soirée, p. 617.

⁸¹ Ibid.

insufficient to handle the tasks ahead. The first reinforcement arrived at 6:30 P.M.--three platoons of twenty-five Mobile Guards. At 6:55 P.M. were added one hundred more gendarmes. At 7:00 P.M. came seventy gardiens de la paix, while at 7:10 P.M. some hundred more gendarmes joined their colleagues at the Concorde. Fifty Republican Guards arrived at 7:25 P.M. and by 8:00 P.M. some 225 more law officers came to help. Thus several hours after the six o'clock charge, the authorities had answered the emergency by sending the total of 625 new men to the Concorde.⁸²

The rioters, still arriving in droves, began appearing from subways. Too few policemen were available to block these subway entrances; and besides, the double duty of handling the charges and protecting the Concorde Bridge were keeping them constantly busy. The police so far had shown an unusual amount of patience and, as the records show, no weapons had been used by them up to this point. But the time was at hand when the gardiens de la paix would use their night sticks, and the horsemen would go about brandishing their sabers.⁸³

While the Concorde charges were getting more exasperating for the police, the rioters filling the Tuileries were busy building barricades with park benches, park chairs, garden débris, and uprooted kiosks. Commissioner Rottée at 6:30 P.M. ordered a major charge against these obstructions. The Tuileries rioters, who had just about solidified their positions, saw the horsemen coming at them. The alert was sounded

⁸²Appell, La soirée, p. 617.

⁸³Ibid.

on the rioters' side, and the onrushing police were welcomed with blows given by metal bars, shivers, metal pipes, and clubs. A frenzy developed and bones could be heard being smashed, and blood flowed freely. The police, now fighting for their lives, began returning the blows with an uncontrolled rapidity. When this most serious charge was over, several rioters were pulled back unconscious and covered with blood. The police in the meantime evacuated some twenty-two of its own to the nearest hospital.⁸⁴

While the Tuileries charge was going on, a similar cleaning-up operation was made to the left of the bridgehead--towards the Cours-la-Reine. Simultaneously, a bus from the A. C. line was brought to a stop by five hundred persons on the Concorde, the windows were smashed, and the driver was pulled out. The driver later testified that he had been crossing the Place de la Concorde--amazingly some traffic had been getting through the center--when his bus was invaded by a group of demonstrators who were shouting: "To The Bus! To The Bus! Long Live Chiappe! Throw Out The Thieves!"⁸⁵

The driver had been removed from his seat after some rioters had pushed his feet as hard as possible against his pedals. The passengers, the rear ticket collector, and the driver had then been roughly handled and pushed out of the vehicle. In the meantime, other rioters began dipping a newspaper into the opened gas tank. The latter were

⁸⁴ Appell, La soirée, p. 617.

⁸⁵ Droits de l'homme, Coup de main fasciste--riposte républicaine (Paris, 1934), p. 21.

well-dressed and were using a copy of Le National (Jeunesses Patriotes organ) to ignite the driver's seat. The Republican Guard charged and dispersed these hoodlums. The driver then quickly seized his fire extinguishers and put out the flames. Part of the crowd near at hand then jumped on the Republican Guards, while young men tried unsuccessfully to lift the bus and dump it near the Obelisk--in the center of the Concorde.⁸⁶

While the rioters kept the Republican Guards busy, a youth unscrewed the bus' carburetor and lighted the gas inside. The firemen who had just arrived then rushed to the scene and carried out their duties. But it was not long before the rioters also seized these firefighters, began a free-for-all with them, and succeeded in putting the bus to flame. Throughout the evening this fire was to cause a glow in the center of the Concorde. The residue further brought a strong smell of burnt rubber, which also was part of the atmosphere that night.⁸⁷

A little after this bus incident, there occurred what was later called the Marly Horse Incident. This began when a barricade behind the Concorde and near the mouth of the Champs-Elysées was erected. A group of unsuspecting police on bicycles fell right into the rioters' hands near the Marly equestrian statues. One of the policemen was not so lucky as his colleagues in finding a way out, and this guard--Delcroix--was rolled on the ground and his skull was opened by blows given by an iron pipe. Some spectators, shocked by seeing the uncon-

⁸⁶Bonnevay, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 87-91.

⁸⁷Appell, La soirée, p. 617.

scious Delcroix, rescued him and took him to the nearest hospital. These rioters who gave this beating were later identified as Camelots du Roi.⁸⁸

The situation became critical near the Concorde Bridge as some four thousand rioters began moving towards this objective. The mounted guards now received special attention from these newcomers, as stones, glasses, metal pieces, and iron railings began seeking their human targets. Razor blades attached to walking sticks were used to slit the horses' legs and the nearest part of their bodies which came in contact with these rioters.⁸⁹ Around 7:00 P.M. the newly arrived police reinforcement helped to clear the bridgehead once more. This assault had cost sixteen serious wounds on the police's side. The whole while, the burning bus and the flood-lighted Obelisk (all nearby lamps had been smashed) gave a gruesome appearance to this scene.⁹⁰

Then came the so-called seven o'clock charge. For the first time that day the police were pushed within their own cordon by the rioters. The flying missiles were thicker than ever. The police checked this latest threat to their security by forming two groups and charging both to the right and to the left. Although the police succeeded in re-establishing lost ground, the effort disabled half of the law-enforcement men used in the charge. This seven o'clock charge also brought forth the first gunfire that night. The bullets apparently

⁸⁸ Appell, La soirée, p. 617.

⁸⁹ Droits, Coup de main, p. 21.

⁹⁰ Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 154-155.

first came from the rioters' side, and at 7:10 P.M. one bullet found a deadly target when it entered Guard Richard's body. Richard was the first casualty from a bullet that evening.⁹¹

From this point on, it is not possible to bring into our account what actually took place; however, we must remember that the shots which were fired, between 7:00 P.M. and 7:20 P.M., came from the gardens of the Champs-Élysées situated between the Avenue des Champs-Élysées and the Avenue Dutuit, and the two embankments on the left of the Place de la Concorde (about thirty pistol shots)....⁹²

Unscrambling eye-witness reports.-- From this point on, the eye-witness reports are full of contradictions and are of doubtful reliability. The many witnesses who testified before the February Six Inquiry Commission disagree on the hours a certain event occurred, and contradict each other on numerous points. Some witnesses changed their minds on the aspects on which they were questioned when they were confronted by other evidence. Our report in the next chapter will rely on what the majority of the witnesses believed took place. Although disagreements on details abound, the historian is fortunate that along the broader aspects, the reliability of the evidence available is quite acceptable by most of the more conscientious observers.⁹³

⁹¹Appell, La soirée, pp. 617-618.

⁹²Chéreau, Concorde, p. 118.

⁹³Appell, La soirée, p. 616.

CHAPTER IX

THE GREAT FEBRUARY RIOT: PART II (The Explosion)

The March of the Municipal Councillors

Hôtel de Ville to the Chamber.-- While the Chamber of Deputies was going through its disgusting drama and while the rioters on the Concorde became more impudent and dangerous, the Municipal Councillors of Paris were preparing to demonstrate their dislike for the Daladier Government. The Paris Municipal Council was composed of eighty members at this time and was dominated by a pro-Chiappe minority. This minority, as we have already seen, had taken a strong stand against the resignation of Renard, Prefect of the Seine, and Chiappe, Prefect of Police.¹ This manifesto, later published and distributed all over Paris, had been voted a few hours before as an official city resolution. Although the message took the vigorous stand just outlined, the Municipal Councillors invited all good Parisians to keep calm. Besides the above motion being publicly declared on February 5, there also had been plastered on countless walls all over the city, numerous copies of the appeal we have mentioned under our summary of the appeals above. It will be recalled that in this document some fifteen Municipal Councillors blamed Daladier for Chiappe and Renard leaving their posts.

¹ Laurent Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes de février, 1934 (Paris, 1935), p. 145.

With this in mind, let us proceed to study what follow-up procedure the Paris Municipal Councillors took on February Six.²

Up to 5:00 P.M., the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville had its usual physical appearance. This was changed, however, as special police units arrived to supervise the large square. The nearby storeowners, seeing the gardiens de la paix and the Republican Guards jumping out of their vans, ordered their shops closed. The owners of cafés in the vicinity took similar precautions: cleared their terraces and within a few minutes bolted all their doors.³

In the meantime the Paris Municipal Councillors were gathering in their meeting room within the Hôtel de Ville. Not too long afterwards M. Louis Peuch called the meeting to order. Peuch, the Chairman, began the discussion with a summary of the possible dangers to the city the immense crowd on the Concorde could bring. Then he asked his colleagues what they thought about cooperating with the new Prefect of Police, M. Bonnefoy-Sibour. This question brought vehement replies from MM. Armand Massard and Georges Prade who could not understand why the Municipal Councillors should help such an inefficient and unqualified person. They argued that Sibour was an ignoramus as far as his duties were concerned, and that it would be best to take action which would lead to his removal. Massard then moved that the Councillors join the people of Paris on the Concorde. Once assembled on this

² MM. Paul Perrin, de Pouet, de Tinguay, La manifestation des Conseillers Municipaux de Paris le 6 février 1934, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3388, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, 1934), pp. 672-673.

³ Le Temps, February 8, 1934.

strategic vantage point, continued Massard, they could decide on the spot what measures should be taken against the Daladier Government. With very little discussion taking place the Paris Municipal Council decided to follow this course of action.⁴

With the passage of such a vague motion, it was easy for the anti-Daladier minority on the Paris Municipal Council to twist the following events to their belief. M. Charles des Isnards, an anti-Daladier Councillor, later testified before the February Six Inquiry Commission that a phone call coming after the sitting described had changed the motion just voted. This phone call came around 7:00 P.M. and informed the Councillors that firing was going on at the Concorde. This brought on a lively discussion among the Municipal Councillors who concluded that a march to the scene of action was called for here. M. des Isnards added that:

We started our march--we Municipal Councillors--with the intention of going to the Chamber. We did not know if the crowd along our way would follow us. Later events proved that the crowd did follow us, and we were very pleased that they did so.⁵

In his testimony, des Isnards further reiterated several times that the formal intention of the group was to march to the Palais-Bourbon--in spite of the numerous impediments which might be encountered to prevent such a move. Twenty Municipal Councillors led by des Isnards made their way towards their objective. It should be pointed out here that only one-fourth of the Municipal Council believed that the

⁴Perrin, Municipaux de Paris, pp. 679-681.

⁵Ibid., pp. 679-681.

situation called for such a march by them. Those who did participate in this march averred afterwards that, as elected representatives of Paris, they were convinced that it was their duty to go to the Chamber to speak for the Parisians.⁶

The march of the Municipal Councillors began in front of the Hôtel de Ville around 7:15 P.M. that evening. The Councillors wore their red and blue sashes across their chests. This insignia was the symbol which designated that a Councillor was acting in an official capacity.⁷

M. Taittinger, undisputed commander of the Jeunesses Patriotes and one of the marching Councillors, had his young men ready outside the Hôtel de Ville to accompany the City Fathers. In fact the whole Committee of Direction of the Jeunesses Patriotes had been alerted for this event. Thousands of adherents therefore were on hand to carry out what they considered "a sacred Mission." The Municipal Councillors and the Jeunesses Patriotes made their way towards the Concorde, while a wild crowd packing the streets along the ways gave their wholehearted approval to the marching men.⁸

As the march began, the Jeunesses Patriotes leaders and the Municipal Councillors agreed that:

Our mission was to protest against the turn that recent events had taken, and against the dilatoriness with which

⁶ Perrin, Municipaux de Paris, p. 681.

⁷ Le Temps, February 8, 1934.

⁸ L'Écho de Paris, February 7, 1934.

the Stavisky Affair had been handled. We came to the Chamber to express the indignation that this scandal brought to Paris. We further made the march in order to speak out against what we believed to be a denial of justice, in the cases of the Prefect of Police and the Prefect of the Seine--who had always served Paris faithfully and were removed in a few minutes. Thus had Paris been decapitated of her heads--of her leaders--this was done without even demanding the opinion of those elected to represent the city.⁹

The marching men soon attracted approximately three thousand followers who began to form a swelling and long column. This massive line of demonstrators sang La Marseillaise, followed the streets along the Right Bank of the Seine for a while, made an "oblique March" to cross the Royale Bridge, and soon had the front of the column parading on the Left Bank. The mounted police on duty at this point began charging and snipping off the tail, bit by bit, of this long and thick column. Still these tactics could not prevent the line from moving towards its objective--the Palais-Bourbon.¹⁰

It was about 7:30 P.M. when the Municipal Councillors reached the Place du Châtelet. From here on the marching men, arm in arm, were twenty men abreast as they moved, in cadence, along their way. The Municipal Councillors guided the procession towards the Chamber by giving short commands every now and then. Suddenly, as the group neared the approaches to the Solférino Bridge, the lighted Chamber of Deputies loomed in sight. Up to this point the march had been carried out without any incidents.¹¹

⁹Perrin, Municipaux de Paris, p. 682.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 683.

¹¹Bonnevay, Les journées sanglantes, p. 147.

In front of the column now appeared a police trumpeter who blew the legally required three summations (as noted in the riot act of 1791 and amended in 1848). The significance of this was: if the marching men took another step the police were not responsible for what followed. To proceed any further was at "the rioters' own risk." Disregarding this warning the Municipal Councillors led the massive column onward. The police charged.¹²

Night sticks, clubs, and makeshift weapons now went into action. MM. Taittinger, Lobligeois, D'Andigné, Frédéric Duport, Contenot, Massard, Ferrandi, and Levée were clubbed. The Jeunesses Patriotes came to the Councillors' rescue but were received by angry policemen who kept swinging at anyone that came near their cordon. The Jeunesses Patriotes ended up with three hundred casualties as a result of this encounter.¹³

Yet the police were incapable of stopping the ever-advancing line. After a few more incidents, the Municipal Councillors reached a corner of the Palais-Bourbon. M. Désiré Ferry, a deputy, allowed a door on the Rue de Bourgogne side to be opened and took four Councillors inside the Chamber. The police, however, quickly arrived in force at this spot and refused to allow any more demonstrators to enter the building. The Councillors now left outside proceeded to debate the

¹² Perrin, Municipaux de Paris, p. 683.

¹³ L'Écho de Paris, February 7, 1934.

matter with the police.¹⁴ MM. Contenot, Paul Piel, Armand Massard, and Charles des Isnards were the Councillors escorted within.¹⁵

Inside the Chamber and meeting with Daladier.-- The Municipal Councillors admitted within the Palais-Bourbon were spirited from one room to another, in what struck the four representatives as being in a "mysterious manner." Just after crossing one threshold the men were pushed on and the door was locked behind them. Finally M. Barthe, the Chamber's purser, conducted the men to his office. Once there, the "invaders of the fortress" demanded an immediate audience with the Premier.¹⁶

M. Barthe later testified that the reason for all these doors opening and closing was that, by regulation, a member of the Municipal Council could only enter the hallways of the Palais-Bourbon, and not the actual hemicycle, when parliament was in session--as it was. Therefore he took them all around to his office where he could more easily make contact with Daladier. Suspecting that unpleasant situations might develop if the four Councillors did not calm down, Barthe conducted them to the furthest office from the center of the Chamber. He hoped that in the time thus used the obviously pent-up emotions of the unwelcome visitors would subside.¹⁷

¹⁴ Perrin, Municipaux de Paris, p. 683.

¹⁵ Le Temps, February 8, 1934.

¹⁶ Perrin, Municipaux de Paris, p. 686.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 686.

The news that the Municipal Councillors were within the Palais-Bourbon soon circulated through the deputies' ranks. The Deputies from the Seine, once made cognizant of this fact, immediately left their seats and came to join their colleagues in M. Barthe's office. Barthe warned the group not to cause him any embarrassment while he went to find Daladier. The Premier told Barthe that he could not leave his post for the time being, and he requested M. Penancier, his Vice-President of the Council, to talk to the irate Councillors. The Councillors, however, refused to deal with Penancier. They insisted on seeing the Premier.¹⁸

Twenty minutes later, Premier Daladier appeared. The Premier briskly stated that he wanted the room cleared--he alone would hear the Councillors. What happened during his interview became a controversy later. On one side of the argument were the Municipal Councillors who asserted that they had told Daladier to resign. Penancier agreed that the Councillors had, in substance, given him this message.¹⁹

Daladier refuted this version of the interview. The Premier declared that the main topic under discussion had been whether it was wise to use the mounted guards on the Concorde against the crowd. He continued that:

I have read with the greatest of surprises, in M. Barthe's deposition, that one of the Councillors, in a defiant tone, had asked me to submit my resignation.

¹⁸ Perrin, Municipaux de Paris, p. 686.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 687-688.

I assure you that the tone was quite different from the one reported. I have never heard such a demand---if I had you can be confident that I would have ended such a proposal without delay.²⁰

The February Six Inquiry Commission was puzzled by such contradictory testimonies. By a majority vote, the investigating committee concluded that the Municipal Councillors did demand the resignation of the Government. No matter what the truth of this matter was, the historian greatly doubts whether such a move at this late hour could have satisfied the angry mob now in charge of the Concorde. As we will see later, by this time the Concorde crowd was beyond one man's ability to control.²¹

Political Groups Attempt to Storm the Chamber

Did the veterans have a common plot to hatch?-- In the previous chapter, we presented the evidence on the political leagues with the thought of showing or disproving that pre-riot agreements were made by the various groups involved. At that time we were forced to conclude that no overall plan was collectively formulated beforehand. Similarly a study of the records on the veterans' league reveals no traces to prove that the veteran groups protesting on February Six had agreed on a pre-conceived plan before moving onto the Paris streets. Later on, the Paris press kept insisting that a veterans' plot against the state" had existed. In view of the lack of documentary evidence to prove it, the historian is faced with the inevitable conclusion that

²⁰ Perrin, Municipaux de Paris, p. 688.

²¹ Ibid., p. 689.

such a plot was "the fabrication of a lively imagination" which has no basis of facts.²²

M. Noedts, Commissioner of the Renseignements Généraux at the Préfecture, testified that his staff made a systematic and minute investigation of the so-called "veterans' plot against the state." His office discovered that jealousy was rampant among these veterans and that, in fact, careful plans were made to avoid coordination. Noedts was surprised to find that no ties existed between the Croix de Feu and the Action Française where Colonel de La Rocque had two brothers.

M. Lebecq, named by the press as the one responsible for coordinating the U.N.C.'s movements with those of the A.R.A.C., explained afterwards that, although the A.R.A.C. did join his association on February Six, he had never asked them to do so. In view of the scarcity of documents to the contrary, it is safe to conclude that there had been no previous agreement among the veterans.²³

Role of the Croix de Feu.-- Another questionable theory, peddled for many years by writers engrossed in the history of this period, was that the Croix de Feu was on February Six the advance guard for a fascist revolt. The theory went on -- and later became treated in fact -- that the Croix de Feu had been the dominant group to come out on the Paris streets that historic day of February Six. This view is

²²MM. Dormann et Salette, La participation des associations d'anciens combattants à la manifestation du 6 février 1934, Chambre des députés, Annex 3387, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 641.

²³Ibid., pp. 641-642.

inconsistent with the actual facts as we shall see.²⁴

On February 5, the Croix de Feu had announced that it intended to lead a demonstration on the streets of Paris and was going to attempt to enter the Chamber area. On February Six, Colonel de La Rocque claimed eight thousand of his "disponibles" were ready for action. He had divided these men into three groups: Group A, which was to meet in the Rue de Varenne in back of the Chamber, estimated at two thousand men; Group B, which was to assemble at the Petit-Palais, estimated at four thousand; and Group C, which was assigned a reserve role near the Petit-Palais, the remaining two thousand. These three groups were to be kept in contact with each other by the "signal corps disponibles" who were stationed in different telephone booths along the proposed route of march.²⁵

At 8:45 P.M. on February Six, Group A of the Croix de Feu entered the Rue Bourgogne in back of the Chamber of Deputies. Group B had started moving from the Petit-Palais at 8:30 P.M. towards the Gare des Invalides by going through the Cours-la-Reine, and around to the Alma Bridge. Group C as planned stayed ready for action near the Petit-Palais embankments not far from the Champs-Elysées. As the two active groups of "disponibles" met close to the Place du Palais-Bourbon, the Adjutant-Chief of Police in this sector pleaded with Colonel de

²⁴ Dormann et Salette, Participation des associations, p. 642.

²⁵ Jean-Henry Morin, "Interview du Colonel de La Rocque sur les événements du 6 février," Les Annales Politiques et Littéraires, Vol. 103 (March 2, 1934), 237.

Puymaigre, the Croix de Feu's field commander, not to proceed any further. His efforts proved in vain, for a series of encounters between the police and the Croix de Feu took place. The Croix de Feu quickly checked the police opposition and, since the police made only mild efforts to prevent their forward march, the Croix de Feu found themselves in back of the Chamber of Deputies.²⁶

Colonel de La Rocque, at his headquarters, was notified that the deputies had left the Chamber. In an interview a month later, the Colonel explained that:

I learned that the Chamber sitting had been closed. Because of this fact I had my two groups go their separate way once more. One group marched, by way of the Alma Bridge, to the Etoile where it disbanded after ceremonies before the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The second group went in perfect order over the same bridge to the Champs-Élysées, proceeded to the Place de la Concorde onto the Rue Madeleine, and finally reached the Madeleine. Here the men were disbanded and told to go home.²⁷

La Rocque later falsely claimed that, without firing a shot, his "Disponibles" had forced the Chamber to run out. This egocentric boast was accepted as a fact in many foreign journalistic circles. Colonel de La Rocque, helped by such propaganda, thus took the role of the "hero of February Six." La Rocque claimed that he had only desired to bring pressure against the Chamber and that he had no wish to invade the building. A former lieutenant under La Rocque disagreed with his commander here when he divulged that: "The general watchword was to

²⁶ Morin, "Interview," Annales Politiques, p. 237; also Dormann et Salette, Participation des associations, p. 664.

²⁷ Morin, "Interview," Annales Politiques, p. 237.

try to break into the Chamber. We were to attempt to get in by the main door, while our comrades would rush to our aid over the Concorde Bridge."²⁸

Further probing into the records brings out the fact that La Rocque had meant to seize the Chamber, but his men were so disorganized that he was unable to do so. In spite of all the precautions made in advance, the telephone communication system was a miserable failure. Group A and Group B once united were at odds as to what formula to follow in working together effectively.²⁹ Yet Colonel La Rocque boasted that the Volontaires Nationaux, the Fils de la Croix de Feu, and the older Croix de Feu--all subdivisions of the main Croix de Feu et Briscards--had carried out their maneuvers on a perfect schedule. The loquacious assertions of the Colonel were accepted by newspapermen and writers as facts.³⁰

One fact stands uppermost in mind when the part of the Croix de Feu in the February Six Riot is discussed: the Croix came nearest the Chamber that evening, but they did not seize their objective. Some writers on the subject later felt that La Rocque could not take the Chamber although he so desired. Jean Belin, Commissioner of the Sûreté, clearly had this in mind when he recorded:

When I look back to the strange happenings of that black 6th of February I have often thought how near France came to disaster. There was a moment when Colonel de La Rocque could have made himself master of Paris and possibly of the whole country, at least for a while. Had he done so it is as certain as the rising sun

²⁸ Lt. Chopine, Six ans chez les Croix de Feu (Paris, 1934), p. 114.

²⁹ Maurice Paz, Le Six Février (Paris, 1936), p. 18.

³⁰ Dormann et Salette, Participation des associations, pp. 665-666.

that a bitter civil war would have ensued, with the possibility of a repetition of the various Coups d'état of the Nineteenth Century.

It is my own opinion that he was not big enough for the job in hand and that his nerve failed him at the last moment.³¹

Werth wrote:

And instead of going into the Place de la Concorde, they gathered in the Esplanade des Invalides and its sidestreets, at the back of the Chamber. Marching backward and forward, and singing the Marseillaise, they created the impression that they might have broken into the Chamber (which was poorly defended from that side) had they wished to do so, and had they been prepared to sacrifice a few lives.³²

Maurice Pujo, the Royalist editor and a former admirer of Colonel de La Rocque, is left the final word with

This is what the admirers of M. de La Rocque have termed his "success." We usually give this name to positions that have been conquered, to advantages taken--no matter how modest they have been--taken against an adversary. Here the "success" consists of the fact that he was able to reassemble honest Frenchmen--more numerous at that moment than any other group--but these honest men were no sooner organized that they were just as quickly immobilized and neutralized.³³

Initial police firing and the U.N.C. march.-- In Chapter eight, we had brought our account of the activities on the Concorde to approximately 7:30 P.M. It was pointed out then, that a few moments after seven o'clock, the first shots from the gardens near the Champs-Élysées had been fired at the onrushing guards, and that this had struck the first victim of the evening: Guard Richard. With these facts in mind

³¹ Jean Belin, My Work at the Sûreté (London, 1950), p. 147.

³² Alexander Werth, Which Way France? (London, 1937), pp. 56-57.

³³ Maurice Pujo, Comment La Rocque a trahi (Paris, 1934), p. 8.

we can go on with the account on the Concorde.

By 7:30 P.M., the dominating curious elements on the Place de la Concorde had left the scene to be replaced by the organized followers of different leagues. The Action Française had arrived and taken strategic positions facing the Concorde Bridge in front of the Tuileries. The nearby terraces were overcrowded with followers of either the royalist banners or those of the Jeunesses Patriotes. These Jeunesses Patriotes had joined the Municipal Councilors earlier that evening, as the latter had marched toward the Chamber, but instead of crossing to the Left Bank of the Seine, this group had gone along to the Concorde. The Front Universitaire had marched from the Boulevard Saint Michel to the Concorde after 7:00 P.M. to join the leagues already there.³⁴

Of the royalist followers, the Camelots du Roi were most numerous and brought a recklessness among the leaguers already amassed on the Concorde. Reliable witnesses claimed that the crowd on the Concorde at this time was dominated by young men, and that all social classes were represented. The Front Universitaire, filled with disappointed college students, was ready to move into action once the need appeared for doing so. All in all the mob covering the Place de la Concorde around 7:30 P.M. was the largest yet assembled that day.³⁵

Immediately in front of this mob stood the ever vigilant police strung out on both sides of the Seine. The lights from the windows of

³⁴ Paz, Six Février, p. 12.

³⁵ Bonnevey, Les Journées sanglantes, pp. 85-86.

the Chamber behind them gave a shadowy appearance to these tired law officers. On the Concorde Bridge, behind the barrier of the six police vans, stood bleeding mounted guards and gardiens de la paix. The police with the more serious wounds were rushed, as quickly as possible, into police vans on the bridge and taken to the improvised infirmary in the lower rooms of the Chamber.³⁶ In the meantime a solitary figure was ruffling his fur collar in the center of the bridge and smoking countless cigarettes. It was M. Bonnefoy-Sibour, who had been at this point since 5:00 P.M., but who refused to give any guidance to the events unrolling before his eyes. He, the Prefect of Police, had come to observe!³⁷

Suddenly, coming from the Grand Boulevards to the northeast, appeared the columns of the Solidarité Française led by M. de Gueydon who took his column--estimated at 1,500 adherents--straight to the Concorde Bridge. Everyone sensed that trouble was ahead as these newcomers pushed their way rapidly through the crowd. As this energetic column moved forward it kept shouting: "On To The Chamber! Throw The Police In The Seine!"³⁸

A certain tenseness swept the Concorde as the Solidarité Française arrived near the lined trucks in front of the Concorde Bridge and began

³⁶ Alexander Werth, France in Ferment (London, 1935), pp. 150-151.

³⁷ Bonnefoy, Les journées sanglantes, p. 87.

³⁸ M. Pierre Appell, La soirée du 6 février 1934 à la Concorde, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3386, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 618.

penetrating the passages in between. This was the furthest any rioters had reached that day. The police, responsible for keeping this entrance to the Chamber blocked, became panic-stricken for the moment. The young leaguers launched themselves at the police barricade and began demolishing it. All the while, the mounted guards, as if stunned by what was going on, started slowly to back up.³⁹

But the police soon regained their ability to act decisively. Believing that this advance by the Solidarité Française placed them in a "state of the legitimate defense of the country" (as required by the Nineteenth Century Laws on the subject), the gardiens de la paix and the Mobile Guards drew out their pistols and fired on the approaching leaguers. This was the first use of gunfire by the police that evening. At first the police aimed their bullets above the heads of the Solidarité Française, but as the adherents of this league inched ahead bullets began ripping through the nearest human targets.⁴⁰

Many of the onrushing rioters later testified that they believed blanks were being used. The smoking guns stopped the Solidarité Française's front units in their tracks. For a few moments, the pistols were silenced. Then the crowd gave the idea to the police that it was surging forward once more. This brought on a series of blasts from the police ranks. Captain Fabre, leading the Republican Guards, rapidly advanced with his men and seized the lost ground. The rioters were dispersing in every direction as the heavy breath from the galloping

³⁹ Appell, La soirée du 6 février 1934 à la Concorde, p. 618.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

horses began coming down their necks. And, in a short while, a great calm fell over the Concorde.⁴¹

The rioters counted six dead and forty seriously struck by the flying bullets. The Solidarite Francaise's assault had turned out to be the most aggressive so far, but had ended in failure. The leaguers gathered their dead and drove them to the hospitals close by. Because of the mounting casualty lists on both sides, emergency first aid centers were created. The famous Café Weber on the Rue Royale, for instance, was one of the busiest places that evening for the tables were made into beds for those struck. The Val de Grâce hospital was flooded all night with victims, while--as we have seen--the lower rooms of the Chamber of Deputies served as a combat medical center and evacuation point for the police.⁴² One casualty from that 7:30 P.M. charge was an innocent bystander--a woman who was on the terrace of the Hôtel Crillon way across the Concorde.⁴³

Commissioner Rottée, who was still on duty when the charge occurred, had been struck in the ankle--but he insisted on staying at his post. The leader of the Republican Guards, Captain Fabre, discovered, after he pushed the rioters back, that his intestines were wide open and bleeding profusely--they were housing a huge piece of metal. He was evacuated immediately to the hospital. This Captain Fabre incident

⁴¹ Appell, La soirée, p. 618.

⁴² Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, p. 96.

⁴³ Appell, La soirée, p. 618.

developed into a rumor which told of the horrible tortures the beloved Captain had gone through before he died on the way to the hospital. His friends on the Concorde took an oath to avenge their chief. The police therefore, goaded to extremes, reorganized itself, and with one charge sent the rioters flying a hundred meters from the Concorde Bridge.⁴⁴

At 8:00 P.M. the Place de la Concorde was still solidly packed with discontented Frenchmen. Near the obelisk a vehicle was in flame, while numerous fires gave their lights all around the square. The front of the Concorde Bridge was strewn with débris. As one glanced in the thickets near the Champs-Élysées and the Cours-la-Reine, the human mass seemed to have no end to it. The police was packing this crowd still tighter by pushing them back from the Concorde Bridge to the Marly Equestrian Statues not far from where the Avenue des Champs-Élysées started.⁴⁵

Suddenly stream after stream of flying projectiles began once more to fall on the police watching the Concorde Bridge. Thunderous voices kept shouting: "Assassins! Assassins!" The rioters however stayed where they were and made no attempt to advance towards the Chamber. Especially distressing to the rioters was the arrival of more police reinforcements at this time. The latter quickly lined up in battle formations and stood ready for what might come. For the time being a stalemate had been reached in this sector.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Appell, La soirée, p. 618.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

But this equilibrium did not last for long, as attention shifted to the Ministry of the Marine. The Concorde rioters started to move toward the corner of the Rue de Rivoli and the Rue Saint Florentin where the building of the Ministry was located. As the rioters advanced, they smashed all in their way that could be broken. Gas pipes and gas burners were torn from their moorings. A wounded rioter in front of this unruly mob caught his foot and slipped to the ground. His colleagues, without verifying what took place, and unable to distinguish any sound coming from the fallen man, concluded that someone was shooting at them from the Ministry of Marine. The howling mob now turned their attention against their supposed assassins.⁴⁷

So at 8:15 P.M. rocks, stones, chair pieces, park bench parts, and asphalt wedges were thrown into the Ministry of Marine. The lights from within had already been knocked out, as the rioters set fire to the first floor of the building. The concierge's home close by was broken into and a fire had begun there also. The mob was not aware that within slept a one-year old child. Admiral Darlan and a few unarmed sailors, who were inside the building, at the risk of their lives, rescued the infant just as the flames were reaching his little body.⁴⁸

The enraged and shouting rioters, in the meantime, tried to enter the Ministry. The young leaguers in the lead finally entered the front door, only to be greeted by a jet of water coming from a hose held by Captain Fenard. Courageously, while soaking the assailants, he convinced

⁴⁷ Appell, La soirée, p. 618.

⁴⁸ Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 97-98.

them that no one from within had fired at them.⁴⁹

Meanwhile a rescue squad of Mobile Guards, protected by their steel helmets as they pushed through the crowd, made an avenue through which the firemen could come. The firefighters had arrived earlier on the Concorde and, at different intervals, threw powerful streams of water on the Concorde crowd.⁵⁰ As the firemen reached the Ministry, the fire within was really starting to blaze. The hoses were connected and, just as the fire seemed under control, the rioters hacked into pieces the leading one-thousand-foot-hose.⁵¹

The blaze was extinguished after the arrival of Commissioner Boulanger and his men from the Grand Boulevards. The rioters were cleared from the vicinity, but not until several firemen were severely beaten and more equipment destroyed. The police made effective use of their night sticks, and the firemen were given enough time to put out the fire.⁵²

The Place de la Concorde (the irony of the name Place of Agreement or Harmony) was ablaze with more bonfires by this time. Near the Concorde Bridge the police were still in control of the situation. The repulse of the Solidarité Française's assault had acted as a quieting agent on the mob. The police, conscious of the advantage they had for

⁴⁹ Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, p. 98.

⁵⁰ London Times, February 7, 1934, p. 12.

⁵¹ New York Herald (Paris Edition), February 8, 1934.

⁵² Appell, La soirée, p. 618.

the time being, decided to empty the terraces and the Tuileries Gardens.⁵³

This involved an assault on the mob by the Republican and Mobile Guards and a turning movement to clear the terraces on the Concorde's right or east flank. The mounted police infiltrated rapidly through the human mass in the areas under attack, separated the groups by using night sticks liberally, and cleaned out the more stubborn rioters by once more opening gunfire on them. At the same time, pistols began taking a heavy toll further down the Concorde's left. By 8:45 P.M. the police were the masters of a large and deep arc on both sides of the Concorde Bridge.⁵⁴

At 8:45 P.M. a strong new element made its first appearance on the Place de la Concorde; namely, a thick and very long U.N.C. column. The U.N.C.'s leaguers had assembled in the vicinity of the Grand-Palais as scheduled in its appeal. Once the column was ready to move, M. Lebecq, President of this powerful veteran league, and his official assistants took the front of the immense procession and gave orders to move. Immediately behind the officers of the U.N.C. were the standard bearers of the organization who carried a long rectangular banner inscribed with: "We desire that France should exist under honor and cleanliness."⁵⁵

As the U.N.C. column, with its six to eight thousand adherents, reached the Marly Equestrian Statues at the end of the Champs-Élysées,

⁵³ Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 100-103.

⁵⁴ Appell, La soirée, pp. 618-619.

⁵⁵ Le Temps, February 8, 1934.

everyone gave way before it. A great calmness struck the Concorde as the U.N.C. marched on it in perfect order. Once the U.N.C. was in the center of the Concorde, it led the crowd in singing La Marseillaise, Le Chant du Départ, and La Madelon. Most of the Association des Décorés au Péril de Leur Vie led by Colonel Jossé--some three hundred strong--were here to join the U.N.C. A group unwelcome to these two organizations was the A.R.A.C. which tried to disrupt the singing by giving their version of L'International.⁵⁶

After this patriotic singing was over, the U.N.C. leaders surprised everyone on the Concorde when, instead of heading for the Concorde Bridge, they led their immense column to the Rue Royale away from the bridge. Colonel Jossé and his three hundred men detached themselves from the U.N.C. and made straight for the bridgehead. The Association des Décorés au Péril de Leur Vie reached this critical point around 9:00 P.M. and, once near the police barricade of police vans, demanded passage through. While these useless talks were going on, an impatient gardien de la paix came out of the police ranks and swung his night stick at the veterans in his way. This developed into a free-for-all, for even the firemen, still angry over the Ministry incident, turned their hoses on the insurgents.⁵⁷

The excitement reached a high pitch as the rioters threw the débris

⁵⁶ Dormann et Salette, Participation des associations, pp. 651-667; also Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 102-104.

⁵⁷ Gaston Chéreau, Concorde! 6 février 1934 (Paris, 1934), pp. 125-126; also Dormann et Salette, Participation des Associations, pp. 671-672.

materials piled up in front of the bridge at the police. Voices could be heard bellowing: "Long Live Chiappe! Assassins! Resign! On To The Chamber! Down With The Thieves!" The veterans could not budge the law officers from their position and finally retreated. Despair swept the Concorde crowd as the Association des Décorés au Péril de Leur Vie were ordered back to the Rue Royale. The police did not receive any more serious threats in this area until 10:00 P.M.⁵⁸

Late attempt to take the Concorde Bridge.--- After the six to eight thousand men of the U.N.C. took their oblique march on the Rue Royale--- around 9:00 P.M.---the procession paraded through the Rue Saint-Honoré, returned to the Rue Royale, went past the Madeleine, and made for the Grand Boulevards toward the Faubourg Montmartre. All along the way crowds cheered them on, some joined the column, and the men went as far as the highest points in Montmartre, turned around, and began their march back to the Concorde.⁵⁹

By 10:45 P.M., when the U.N.C. column reached the Concorde once again, it had gathered innumerable young elements who tended to keep shouting phrases which excited the older veterans. By the time the procession entered the Concorde, the original U.N.C. column had changed its attitude. It was not the peaceful group which had sung patriotic songs on the square earlier. As the excited U.N.C. appeared on the Place de la Concorde, there was no doubt what it had in mind: it went

⁵⁸ Appell, La soirée, pp. 618-619.

⁵⁹ Anon., "Éléments d'une enquête sur la soirée tragique," L'Illustration, Vol. 4747 (February 24, 1934), 235.

straight for the Concorde Bridge.⁶⁰

Once in front of the bridge, the U.N.C. leaders demanded that the police open ranks to allow the veterans to go to the Chamber. The police, of course, refused to comply with such a request. The troublesome elements, who had inflated the size of the procession, sent out a loud cry of "Forward!" The column began moving towards the approaches on the sides of the Seine. The police, incapable of realizing what had brought such a sudden challenge to their positions, were pinned against the trucks. The rioters mad with hate broke into the vehicles and proceeded to dismantle them. The police had the sensation that a hundred hands were reaching for their throats. Many testified later that they thought this was the end. Clearly this was the most serious crisis the police had faced on the Concorde since the Solidarité Française's assault of 7:30 P.M.⁶¹

This climactic attempt to take the Concorde Bridge almost succeeded. The police, now fighting for their very lives, gave an all-out effort which confounded their attackers. Using night sticks, clubs, firehoses, and other weapons they could get their hands on, the police began the most determined counter-attack of the evening. Never had the police appeared so enraged. The mounted guards struck and struck and struck again at any human forms in their way. Blood from their victims soon covered their weapons, their clothes--even their faces. The Concorde crowd fought back with a barrage of asphalt pieces, stones, sticks, and

⁶⁰ Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 121-122.

⁶¹ Appell, La soirée, p. 619.

other kinds of débris. The ferocity on both sides defies description.⁶²

The result of this protracted struggle was that the police regained the initiative after many charges on the mob. Until 11:30 P.M. both sides made periodic attempts to crush each other. The police on their part carried out twenty charges, only to find that the rioters were still as close as the first trees of the Cours-la-Reine: not far to the left of the bridge. Both sides made liberal use of gunfire and little mercy was shown. But by 11:30 P.M. the Concorde Bridge was still held by the police, but only at a tremendous cost in human casualties and destruction of property.⁶³

As for the brutality which had been displayed, the ablest French study on the February Six moralizes thus:

As one checks over the events of February Six, he can not but think of the terrible responsibility that must be placed on those who, by their mad lust for excitement, brought men to such an attack against one another. This brought out, even from the best of them, the worst instincts that exist in the human beast.⁶⁴

Letting Loose Man's Latent Aggressiveness

The "Human Beast" of February Six.-- In one of the most remarkable works of Émile Zola's Rougon-Macquart series entitled La Bête Humaine, the distinguished author uses the character Jacques Lentier as the symbol of a human being whose desire to kill and destroy what he loves is forever getting the best of him. In agreement with Zola's belief

⁶² Appell, La soirée, p. 619.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, p. 135.

is a modern school of psychology which teaches that in everyone of us, to varying degrees, exists a "need for destruction." When this need dominates in a person, and it is allowed to express itself negatively--that is, against the accepted mores and folkways of society--it demands more and more satisfaction once it is given satisfaction.⁶⁵

Zola believed that such a "human beast" was latent in every person. Laurent Bonnevey probably would not have agreed with so inclusive a belief--but of one thing he was sure: the "human beast" had appeared on the Concorde on the evening of February Six. The facts on the event would appear to corroborate such a view.⁶⁶

The atrocities to man and beast on February Six were abnormal in nature. Especially is it distressing to observe that these horrible and savage deeds took place within a peace-loving nation--such as France was in 1934. First, the police would seem to have committed outrageously cruel acts that in retrospect seem uncalled for. Many times during the evening of February Six rioters were struck unconscious and obviously they could do no more harm. The police, in such cases, too often, went on beating the unconscious person as he lay there senseless. Such was the punishment given to one M. de Noblens on February Six.

Two Mobile Guards came out of the ambush, behind the police vans, fell on de Noblens, struck him unmercifully with night sticks and walked on to their left. At this point, the rioters and the police were far apart. Another police officer rushed

⁶⁵ Walter Langer, Psychology and Human Living (New York, 1943), pp. 82-83.

⁶⁶ Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, p. 135.

towards the crumbled figure and, taking his turn in a line, he struck the pleading figure three or four hard blows. Then, believing the miserable being had not taken enough punishment, the police gave four or five vicious kicks to the motionless form crumbled on the ground.⁶⁷

Physicians later asserted that M. Chesnier de Noblens had died as a result of these blows.

M. Jean-August Ducrot, a twenty-nine year old journalist working for the sensational picture magazine VU, told the February Six Inquiry Commission that near the Concorde Bridge around 11:30 P.M., he noticed police officers amusing themselves by betting among themselves as to see who could hit the most rioters. The witness added that he was shocked to see the policemen going about this "sport" while they continued eating, laughing, and apparently enjoying themselves. And so the witnesses testified. Some were obvious lies, while others were at least questionable. A few were cranks who wanted publicity. But the fact remains that the police were unusually brutal on the night of February Six.⁶⁸

The tired state of the police might account for such behavior. Their overtaxed nervous systems were nearing a breaking point, because for over a month many of them had been working overtime under very tense conditions. The January Riots had engendered much conversation on their part and some policemen came to believe that the rioters were indeed dangerous. Before arbitrarily condemning the law-officers, it is only fair to realize that the tension they were working under could

⁶⁷ Appell, La soirée, p. 631.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

easily lead to nervous breakdowns.⁶⁹

But the records indicate that atrocities were more commonly seen on the rioters' side. The witnesses in their testimonies before the February Six Inquiry Commission brought out the most gruesome acts committed by the rioters. In a brutal fashion were the rioters said to have jumped on a policeman's back to bring him down. While in such a defenseless position, other rioters would kneel down and start tearing at the victim's face or body with such lethal weapons as broken glass or asphalt knives. Still other rioters preferred to use pointed rocks and jagged stones. Lead pipes drew blood from more than one unwary policeman that evening. Worst of all was the reliance on those long open straight razors or Gillette blades strapped to the end of canes. The gashes the latter weapons made to man and beast make for unpleasant description.⁷⁰

As early as 7:15 P.M., near the Marly Equestrian Statues, for example, the mounted guards attempted to clear the area. As usual they were received by a flood of flying débris. But it would seem that it was at this time that long metallic and pointed pieces first appeared, for many law-officers came out of this assault with torn flesh and muscle. The onrushing police, kept on in spite of their bleeding faces, only to be met this time by long pieces of wood with sharp screws or spikes on their ends. Furthermore, bamboo sticks crowned with sharp spearheads, striking pieces from broken chains,

⁶⁹ Appell, La soirée, p. 631.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

park bench bats, and other makeshift instruments brought their share of deep wounds.⁷¹

The effective force of 305 healthy horses was also severely cut on the evening of February Six. These animals, under the command of four squads of Republican Guards, were most horribly disfigured in the vicinity of the nose, the pastern, the rump, and the leg. In a few cases the animal's head was seized by several rioters, while others tried to tear out the eyes. The leg muscles were the preferred spots for those canes topped with razor blades we have mentioned. M. Chamvoux, who had twenty-five years as an inspector of slaughterhouses reported the following conclusion to the February Six Inquiry Commission:

Some of the wounds, nine in total, seemed thus to have been caused by razor blades fixed to the extreme end of canes; in fact, it was impossible, without taking the chance of being kicked, to use other means. The use of knife, stiletto, or poignard, for example, would have exposed one to serious dangers and given wounds of a different character than those studied.⁷²

Some writers on the Great February Six Riot have been so impressed by these atrocities that they have named their works after them; for example, Bonnevey refers to the "jours sanglants"—"the bloody days." One question recurs which will probably never be satisfactorily answered: Were all these extreme measures necessary on February Six? Perhaps Zola was correct when he asserted that man becomes a beast when

⁷¹ Appell, La soirée, pp. 633-634.

⁷² M. Chamvoux, La nature des blessures des chevaux de la garde républicaine de Paris, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3390, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), pp. 692-693.

he pushes his nervous system too far and places himself in a situation where he "must kill or be killed."⁷³

The casualty list.-- February Six exacted too heavy a human toll for a nation classified as civilized. Statistics concerning the wounded and killed on February Six are rather controversial depending on the sources from which they are taken. Below is presented the total official number of wounded and dead for all Paris. It is a pertinent fact that most of the policemen wounded (except a dozen officers) were struck either at the Concorde, the Cours-la-Reine, or the Champs-Elysées. The statistics include some fifty struck near the Solferino Bridge. With these limitations in mind the following summary is the correct casualty list of February Six:⁷⁴

	Police	Rioters and Spectators
Killed	1	14
Hospitalized	92	236
Treated for wounds	688	419
Totals	781	669

*Source: Appell, La soirée, p. 619.

Thus 1,450 people were killed or so seriously wounded as to require medical care. The people who received light wounds or were

⁷³Émile Zola, La bête humaine (Paris, 1953--Livre de poche edition), Ch. XIII.

⁷⁴Appell, La soirée, p. 619.

given first-aid treatment are not included. It is impossible to get figures as to what totals the latter group made. Of the fifteen human beings killed that evening, the evidence shows that all of them were struck by bullets. Mme. Caroline Gurlan was the only woman on the casualty list and was the one struck on the terrace of the ^AHôtel Crillon around 7:30 P.M. The first bullet had been received by Guard Richard at 7:10 P.M. according to medical reports. From that time to 10:30 P.M. bullets found some forty-seven victims; while, from 10:30 P.M. to 1:00 A.M. (February 7), twenty more persons were hit. These official figures, however, do not take into account all those who suffered physically from all types of wounds inflicted during the riot. Everything taken into consideration, the seriously wounded and those who were ambulatory cases probably amounted more nearly to four thousand.⁷⁵

Clearing of the Place de la Concorde

Rioters' last assault and Colonel Simon's counteroffensive.-- But our narration of February Six is not yet completed, for we left our account at 11:30 P.M. The numerous police charges made after 11:00 P.M. gave the impression for a while that all was over. The mounted police did not encounter too much opposition in clearing the rioters out of the Cours-la-Reine. Then the police turned around and discovered that the rioters were beginning what later became known as the "rioters'

⁷⁵ MM. Gardiol, Amat, et de Framond, Les victimes des journées du 6 au 12 février 1934, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3389, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), pp. 690-691.

last assault."⁷⁶

The 11:30 P.M. assault by the rioters was as aggressive a threat to the Concorde Bridge as had been attempted that day. As the human mass surged forward once again, the police unloaded more pistol shots on the insurgents. The shout of: "Throw The Guards Into The Seine!" filled the air.⁷⁷ The mounted guards, whose remaining horses were covered with blood, were pushed back to about the same arc the Solidarité Française had placed them in the earlier 7:30 P.M. charge. Exhausted and disillusioned the police seemed to have no spirits left as they drew their pistols. Gunfire succeeded in sending the rioters scurrying behind diverse points of safety. No one knew it then, but this was the last serious attempt to be made to take the Concorde Bridge.⁷⁸

Since 7:00 P.M. the numerous charges, scuffles, assaults, and bullet exchanges had by 11:30 P.M. exhausted both sides. The 11:30 P.M. advance had been half-heartedly carried out by the rioters. When this last try failed, rioters by the hundreds began departing for home. For the first time that evening it became possible to notice certain bald spots on the Place de la Concorde. A desperate core of various elements later identified as Camelots du Roi, Jeunesses Patriotes, Solidarité Française, and Communists, and just plain scums harangued those leaving to stay. The leaguers insisted that it was their duty

⁷⁶ Appell, La soirée, p. 619.

⁷⁷ Chéreau, Concorde, pp. 128-129.

⁷⁸ Appell, La soirée, p. 619.

to fight. These speakers soon were speaking to the winds.⁷⁹

The angry young men, with their allies who remained on the Concorde, then made united thrusts at the police. Gun play on both sides became dominant, and the rioters, scared, hid behind their barricades and started to hurl more missiles in the police's direction. While this was going on, Colonel Simon, Commander of the Légion des Gardiens de la Paix, dropped by to see how his men were doing. Simon had been off duty but, worried about his men, he decided to go to the Concorde. He arrived at a time when his gardiens de la paix looked more dead than alive, and when the rioters were again becoming audacious and violent.⁸⁰

Disgusted with what he observed, Colonel Simon took command. Their chief making such a move encouraged the gardiens to regain new hopes. Colonel Simon felt that the police were in no shape to resist another assault if it should come. When he discovered that such a move was being prepared by the rioters Simon took the initiative.⁸¹ He told his men:

My friends, you must keep yourselves going. You must go as far as the Rue Royale to the end of the Place de la Concorde. I will follow you with all the other police--and the mounted guards. It will be your last charge--be assured of that!⁸²

Therefore, around midnight, Colonel Simon asked the Republican Guards to cooperate with his men and really clear the area. With this

⁷⁹ Appell, La soirée, p. 619.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 127-128.

injection of renewed hope within the police ranks, the law enforcement agents charged the rioters' barricades, demolished them, pushed the mob behind them to the Rue Royale, and made a complete sweep from the Avenue Gabriel to the embassies. The rioters tried to stop what they saw as an avalanche, but the most serious trouble they caused was the sending of a bullet into the mounted Guard Riou.⁸³ Thus the Concorde was cleared.

Next Colonel Simon directed Captains Merzeraut and Gilles of the Mobile Guards to follow him in emptying the areas to the right of the Concorde. M. Marchand, who had replaced Commissioner Rottée earlier that evening, simultaneously led a police detachment into the Cours-la-Reine. Commissioners Challier and Jannette took the points not yet covered. Jannette was struck by a bullet before he got too far, but the police kept pushing on and, when Jannette fell, they opened fire on the rioters. The crowd panicstricken could not disperse off the Concorde's surroundings fast enough.⁸⁴

The Great February Six Riot was all over. The Place de la Concorde was deserted, but the police, taking no chances, stayed at their posts until 2:30 A.M. The final counteroffensive by Colonel Simon had resulted in six rioters being killed and seventeen seriously wounded. By 3:00 A.M. the exhausted police were able to be sent to rejoin their families.⁸⁵

⁸³ Appell, La soirée, p. 619.

⁸⁴ Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, p. 128; also Chéreau, Concorde, pp. 129-132.

⁸⁵ Appell, La soirée, p. 619.

Critical Comments

What could have been done.--- The critics, on the effectiveness of police methods on February Six, asserted later that little trouble would have occurred if the Place de la Concorde had been cordoned off and made off limits. These writers further claimed that the Champs-Élysées could have been blocked off, as could the Rue Royale, the Right and Left Banks of the Seine, the Tuilleries, and even the subway entrances. This last point was in reference to the fact that the subways had not been closed until eight o'clock.⁸⁶

Gaston Chéreau propagated the idea that not only could the above have been done, but even after the police had neglected to cordon off the Concorde, they could have still cleared it earlier during the evening of February Six. Chéreau added that:

If an encircling movement had been carried out by the police, in such a way as to amass the demonstrators in a corner of the Place de la Concorde--either on the side of the American Embassy, or on the Rue de Rivoli side--they would have obtained more effective results, than did all those dashes of small columns--in a blind manner--around the Concorde Bridge area.....⁸⁷

The records disclose that the Place de la Concorde could have been isolated from the rest of Paris by a plan formulated back in 1919. M. Guichard, in his testimony before the February Six Inquiry Commission, recalled that this scheme had been successfully used on May 1, 1919. But on February 5 this method had not even been considered. The Paris Municipal Police commanders later explained that such a plan took some

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⁸⁷ Chéreau, Concorde, p.120.

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⁸⁶ Appell, La soirée, p. 619.

⁸⁷ Chéreau, Concorde, p.120.

ten thousand men to carry out, and that in all of Paris there were but seven thousand law officers. To carry out this design with any success the troops had to be called out, as they were in 1919.⁸⁸

More important and serious is the criticism which declared that the police force assigned to the Concorde Bridge and nearby areas had been too picayune for the task at hand. Numerous policemen testified afterwards that the police leaders had underestimated the violent mood of the rioters. Colonel Simon was the main proponent of this criticism, but he was not alone in this, for almost every writer on this event since has emphasized this point.⁸⁹

Another criticism, which also cast a bad reflection on the efficiency of the police, was the observation that the Mobile Guards and the Republican Guards were not allowed to use their long range muskets. Close combat was thereby made more of a certainty for any encounters between the rioters and the police. The police themselves were the chief supporters of this view. The explanation went that a musket permits one to push an opponent without getting into hand-to-hand combat. Also this weapon would have prevented much trigger-happy behavior which a pistol lends itself to so easily. In defense of the police commanders here, it should be noticed that these guards had not shouldered muskets on Paris streets for years.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Appell, La soirée, p. 620; also Werth, France in Ferment, p.162.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 621

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Another criticism brought out by Colonel Simon was that the police command had been disorganized on February Six--no one gave the orders or took the responsibility to do so. As no one man had charge of the area, the measures taken were by nature uncoordinated and often chaotic. Added to this was the neglect by the various police commanders to make use of tear gas or barbed wire.⁹¹

As a final criticism came the suggestion that almost no arrests were made that evening. The worst violators and troublemakers were not even reprimanded. The encouragement thus given, along this line to break the law, and remain unpunished if you did, proved too great a temptation for many--so went the argument. Again in defense of the police, it must be recalled that the police were few in numbers. Arrests probably were out of the question, for three or four policemen--and they could not be spared--would have been needed to catch some of the younger and more vicious rioters.⁹²

Misconceptions.-- Certain erroneous conceptions were accepted as truths by most Parisians in 1934. Unfortunately too many writers on February Six, in spite of the evidence to the contrary, still keep presenting as facts such misconceptions as: (1) that the police were drugged; (2) that black troops were brought into Paris and used against the rioters; (3) that machine guns had made their appearance near the Concorde Bridge when the police became desperate; (4) that the army was called in; and (5) that armored tanks were ready to carry out a

⁹¹ Appell, La soiree, 621-622.

⁹² Ibid.

coup d'état.⁹³

The machine gun story revolved around the fact that several dismantled machine guns had been brought to the Chamber of Deputies the first few days in February. The press concluded that these were mounted on February Six and turned against the rioters. Some witnesses even testified seeing them in action.⁹⁴ M. Barthe, however, gave the adequate explanation when he declared that on:

The night of February Six were to take place the funeral rites or the obsequies of General Lefèvre who resided on the Rue de Bourgogne--in back of the Palais-Bourbon.

You, of course, know that at the obsequies of a general it is customary to send different detachments of the many arms found in a division. That is why we saw parading on the Place du Palais-Bourbon on February 5--around twelve--some machine-gun units, some 75 millimeters, and a detachment of corps troops (some black).⁹⁵

No records exist to support the tank rumors. Such stories had been circulated mainly by La Liberté and Le Jour. All that can be said is that no tanks were moved on Paris streets on February Six.⁹⁶

The story about the drugging of the guards was shown afterwards to be based only on suspicions and not facts. The press again jumped to quick conclusions. An objective investigation of this matter

⁹³ Chéreau, Concorde, pp. 136-140.

⁹⁴ Action Française, February 7, 1934.

⁹⁵ M. Catalan, Préparation de la manifestation du 6 février 1934, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3385, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 610.

⁹⁶ La Liberté, February 6, 1934; also Le Jour, February 5, 1934.

reveals that these rumors were based on what occurred in the improvised hospital within the Palais-Bourbon on February Six. This mistake was made because:

At a given moment four or five wounded were near fainting on a table. No "cordial" or stimulants were near at hand. Mme. Barthe, wife of the Chamber's purser, sent someone to get a few bottles of rum which helped to revive the wounded. From this was born the legend of the doped guards.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 164-165; also Gardiol, Les victimes, p. 690.

CHAPTER X

DALADIER RESIGNS - DOUMERGUE ASSIGNS (Picking Up The Pieces)

Rioting and the Fall of Daladier

Morning of February Seven.-- In a previous chapter we were left with a depressed Daladier. We saw the tumultuous Chamber sitting had made the Premier a very confused leader. His colleagues did their best at the time to bolster his spirit, but with very little success. Daladier by the end of the debate on the interpellations kept his hands in front of his bent head as if crying. The young Cabinet members, who stayed around to protect him, found the Premier incapable of making clear decisions on questions involving his own safety--not to mention theirs. They, therefore, took things into their own hands and rushed the stunned Premier out of the Chamber.¹

At midnight, Premier Daladier had regained his composure once again. He called an emergency Cabinet meeting shortly after 12:30 A.M. at the Ministry of the Interior. Present at that time were MM. Pierre Cot, Eugène Frot, Donat-Guigüe, Guy la Chambre, Mistler, Pailhé, Penancier, and the Premier.² Daladier came right to the point. They

¹ Jean Fabry, De la Place de la Concorde au cours de l'intendance (Paris, 1942), p. 49.

² Le Temps, February 8, 1934.

had assembled to decide: (1) what measures needed to be taken to maintain order in Paris, and (2) what could be done to merit the respect the parliamentary votes of confidence gave the Ministry.³

M. Frot insisted that a "state of siege" should be proclaimed. He explained that such a state would make it possible to undertake systematic searches, to apprehend the culprits responsible for February Six, to check the venal press, and to outlaw the irresponsible leagues. A "state of siege," furthermore, would place the police under military orders and, as a consequence, they would end this mollycoddling of the irascible veterans. Daladier, upholding the traditional French democratic liberties, took a strong stand against this proposal and it was dropped. An alternative proposal to investigate whether a plot against the safety of the state existed was abandoned after Frot spoke against it.⁴

M. Frot then brought up the matter of "preventive arrests." He felt that such action was justifiable if the arrests would place the "plotters of February Six" behind bars. Bonnefoy-Sibour, Prefect of Police who had walked in late, stated that legally he could not make such arrests. The newspapers later insisted that the Cabinet made an extended list to be arrested at this point. Daladier and his ministers just as strongly asserted that no such long list had ever been created. Rather, stated Daladier, Maurras, Daudet, Pujo and all militant league

³MM. Jean Piot et de Nadaillac, Les décisions du gouvernement au lendemain du 6 février 1934 sur la voie publique, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3391, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 693.

⁴Ibid., p. 693-694.

commanders were brought up as possible names.⁵

Without a warrant, early on the morning of February 7, the police went to Léon Daudet's house. Daudet opened the door, asked the law-officers what they wanted, and was told he was under arrest. Daudet demanded to see the warrant. The police answered that they did not have one, but it did not matter for the arrest was only a formality. They wanted to ask him a few questions. The royalist leader insisted on a warrant: no warrant, no Daudet. They had none, they said. He told them to leave. Maurras when visited was even humorous about the whole thing. He refused to leave his home and added that he never did so before 3:00 P.M. Reason: it was bad for his health!⁶

As for what was done about the league leaders' arrests a police report dated February 8 read:

Conforming to the instructions received, certain provisions were made yesterday morning to place under arrest the military-minded leaders within the leagues: Action Française, Solidarité Française, and Jeunesses Patriotes.

Thus followed the apprehension of MM. Jacques Ditté (Solidarité), Vinceguide, Pierre Besançon, de Franqueville (Jeunesses), as they were leaving their domiciles.⁷

Besides carrying out these "preventive arrests" until noon on February 7, the Daladier Government released a communiqué in which it thanked the veterans for having refused to join the professional rioters on the evening of February Six. The message divulged that

⁵ Piot, Les décisions, pp. 694-695.

⁶ Gaston Chérau, Concorde! 6 février 1934 (Paris, 1934), pp. 152-153.

⁷ Piot, Les décisions, p. 695.

"a plot against the state" had been nipped in the bud. The release ended with an appeal to all honest Frenchmen to rise in defense of the republican institutions of France. On the much-discussed plot, the communiqué read:

Nevertheless, certain political leagues fomented the desire to riot and attempted a coup de force against the Republican régime.

Gangs armed with revolvers and knives assailed the gardiens de la paix, the Republican Guards, and the Mobile Guards. They even opened fire on the defenders of the law and wounded numerous law-officers. The proofs were given of such a plot from the identifications made by the rioters arrested. There was definitely an organized armed attack against the safety of the state.⁸

This "plot against the state" theory was upheld, on February 7, by Radio-P.T.T. and Radio-Paris. The newscasters for these stations announced on that morning that Paris was now calm. They continued that such was not the case the evening before when a vicious minority unleashed a mad crowd on the city's streets.⁹ The commentators placed the blame for the destruction and unruly conduct on the Action Française, the Communists, and the unemployed. The facts show this to be incorrect for: (1) the Action Française never had control of the crowd on February Six; (2) the Communists and their sister organization, the A.R.A.C., were ineffective and negligible: and (3) not only the unemployed, but the bourgeoisie from all ranks dominated the crowd on the Concorde. The February Six Inquiry Commission further discovered that the Government had brought pressure on M. Pellenc,

⁸ Piot, Les décisions, p. 696; also Le Temps, February 8, 1934.

⁹ Chéreau, Concorde, pp. 148-152.

Director of the French Radio, to issue such a version of the events of February Six.¹⁰

After the Daladier Government took the necessary measures to carry out the "preventive arrests" and the communiqués, it made immediate provisions to replace the disabled policemen. Besides these replacements, provisions were made to bring in reinforcements. Colonel Barthe in the Ministry of War made arrangements for fifteen platoons of Mobile Guards to be alerted by 2:00 A.M., February 7. These troops were never used.¹¹

After the Government leaders did these things, they went home. Soon afterwards, the Parisians, who had gone to bed early the night before, woke up to find their Paris riddled with scars. Then began a steady stream of curious and of souvenir hunters. The police kept them moving throughout the morning and, by noon, every person on the Concorde was ordered out of the area.¹²

Daladier visits the hospitals.— Premier Daladier wanted to visit the hospitals on the morning of February 7 to see if the reports that he read about the Great February Six Riot were true. Accompanied by Frot and Bonnefoy-Sibour, Daladier arrived at the Maison de Santé to which the gardiens de la paix had been evacuated the night before. From 9:00 A.M. on, the three visitors silently moved from one ward to

¹⁰ Piot, Les décisions, pp. 696-697.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 697-698.

¹² Action Française, February 8, 1934; also Alexander Werth, France in Ferment (London, 1935), p. 169.

another and could not believe what they were seeing. A few questions posed to the suffering men acted at times to break the deadly silence kept during the tour.¹³

Even more distressing for the three men were the sights awaiting them at the Val-de-Grâce Hospital. There they were confronted by the mangled and suffering bodies of the Mobile Guards and the Republican Guards. Daladier later admitted the distressing effects these scenes had made on him. For over an hour the men continued their visit to the wounded and dying. Frot and Bonnefoy-Sibour kept staring as cries came from some of the tormented men. Both men, obviously shaken by what they saw, broke the silence only long enough to let Daladier know that it would be difficult to maintain order that evening.¹⁴

Daladier resigns.— After Daladier's return to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs following these hospital visits—around 10:15 A.M.—the Premier found MM. Cot, Guy la Chambre, Martinaud-Déplat, and Mistler waiting. These men strongly urged him to resign. This was the first time that this course of action was recommended by the official family.

They insisted that, according to their sources of information, the arsenals of Paris and of the suburbs had been raided. Furthermore, the widespread purchase of arms that was going on would end up by groups of exasperated rioters leading successful assaults against any barricades constructed by the police. The resulting number of victims would be considerable. They insisted forcibly, because of these reasons, that the Cabinet should leave.¹⁵

¹³ Piot, Les décisions, pp. 698-699.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Soon thereafter the Premier was visited by Léon Blum, the Socialist leader. Daladier asked Blum what he thought of his intention of proroguing the Chamber. This was necessary, added Daladier, for he could not afford to waste his time answering questions, interpellations, and other matters. Blum vigorously opposed any such adjournment of the Chamber at this time, as this would only act as another stimulus to excite public opinion.¹⁶

M. Jeanneney, President of the Senate, around 11:00 A.M. was consulted by the Premier for his opinion. Jeanneney said he could not advise resignation. Bouisson, President of the Chamber, when asked what he thought, declared that Daladier should get out for the good of the country. Thus, Bouisson felt, would the threat against the parliamentary democratic institutions be calmed down. He further added that plans should be made immediately for a "Government of National Union."¹⁷

Frot, who was tied up for the moment, sent M. Frossard to Daladier with the message that the Minister of the Interior advised "resisting the mob" no longer. Frot was of the opinion that his police could not cope with another February Six Riot. Consequently he proposed resigning. Frot wanted to be rid of the burden he carried.¹⁸

Blum now took a strong stand against the Government leaving.

¹⁶ Laurent Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes de février 1934 (Paris, 1935), pp. 183-207; also Piot, Les décisions, p. 699.

¹⁷ Piot, Les décisions, p. 699.

¹⁸ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 166.

Blum believed in the existence of the "fascist plot," that is, that the French fascists had deliberately brought on February Six. The Socialist leader was only repeating the version which was accepted as the truth by his party followers. Blum therefore insisted that Daladier was doing a disservice to his country if he yielded to "fascist mob rule," that this was exactly what the plotters wanted.¹⁹

But the decision was Daladier's to make. The Premier, before the February Six Inquiry Commission, gave two reasons for resigning. First he asserted that in the present confused situation in France, nothing could be done to solve the country's economic problems. But the decisive reason for his departure was:

On February Six, the riot was a failure--the riot was now broken. The rioters tried to invade the Chamber--they attempted to begin a national revolution--to proclaim the overthrow of the Government--to set up a Provisional Government. These objectives were never attained. There is no doubt, the riot was checked for good!

But, in spite of this fact, during that evening too much blood had been spilt. Now, on February 7, the Army was needed for intervention. We needed to throw twenty-year-olds against the mob--against an angered mass of misguided souls. To have guns--machine-guns. Hundreds of dead would have resulted--for sure....²⁰

Thus Daladier decided to resign. Before departing he made a final plea with the leagues who had been active the night before: desist from any further demonstration. Around 3:30 P.M. the French press

¹⁹ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 166-167.

²⁰ Piot, Les décisions, p. 699.

informed the public that another Cabinet had resigned.²¹

Many would agree with the following statement as the true reasons why the Daladier Cabinet had to leave:

M. Daladier had made one mistake after another for eight days. He was mistaken in the constituting of his cabinet. He made more errors by the administrative measures he took. He cannot be forgiven for refusing to explain why he did so before the Chambers.²²

For the second time within a two-week period a Government had been overthrown by the "forces of the streets." The Daladier Ministry, like its predecessor led by Chautemps, had the confidence of the Chamber, but it was led to admit--even though unconsciously--that the extra-parliamentary pressure continued to challenge the traditional French democratic procedural rules. To many observers the Daladier Ministry leaving in such a fashion meant that the very existence of "democratic principles" was in jeopardy. As Werth succinctly put it: "Was 'the street' to be allowed to make and unmake governments?"²³

Street rioting on February 7.-- As a result, probably of the announcement of Daladier's resignation, the rioting on February 7 had little support from the political leagues. This rioting, furthermore, became highly disorganized and sporadic. As on February Six, the main centers of activities were the Concorde and the Champs-Élysées, but the Place de la Concorde and the Tuileries areas never became the

²¹ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 170

²² Anon., "La démission du ministère," Journal des Débats, Vol. 2085 (February 9, 1934), 215.

²³ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 165.

trouble spots they had been the previous evening.²⁴

The curious, as we have said, were kept from assembling on the Concorde that morning. By 2:00 P.M., the first incident was underway when some 120 Mobile Guards were pelted with numerous asphalt pieces and small stones while taking up their posts. Nothing serious came out of this, for the police scared the assailants away.²⁵

From 4:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M., small groups of rioters mingled with the peaceful crowds, gathering near the Place de la Concorde, and attempted to overturn busses. The police quickly put an end to such rough play and kept the would-be demonstrators moving. Memories of the previous evening reappeared at 4:30 P.M. when several thousand rioters began marching out from the Rue Boissy-d'Anglas, pushed everyone in their way to one side, and headed straight for the Concorde Bridge. The police came forward to meet these onrushers, struck them hard, and just as quickly as possible dispersed them in all directions.²⁶

The police were plentiful in number that afternoon. In fact, by 7:00 P.M., M. Marchand, Director of the Municipal Police, had four thousand men on duty--a considerable number indeed! Marchand had alerted all police vans to patrol the streets throughout the night and to allow no unusual bunching of crowds. Besides these law officers, the Mobile Guard was on duty with 1,400 men (1,100 on foot patrol and

²⁴Piot, Les décisions, p. 700.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Piot, Les décisions, p. 700.

three hundred as mounted cavalry). This combined force was enough to check any demonstration that took place that evening.²⁷

But this heavy police supervision of Paris did not deter the rioters from trying to develop trouble spots all over the city. Concentrating our attention first on the Concorde, we find at 5:30 P.M., some three thousand passive Frenchmen idling in the vicinity--waiting! By 7:30 P.M. this crowd had doubled its size and the police, not waiting any longer for more addition, pushed this human mass beyond the Ministry of Marine and cleared the square. For the time being events calmed down in the Concorde area.²⁸

But the same cannot be said for the Champs-Élysées and the Grand Boulevards during the same period. The police on the Champs-Élysées were especially well placed at strategic points in this sector. At 4:00 P.M., for instance, the police had little difficulty when some five-hundred overstimulated Jeunesses Patriotes started to stone the Elysée Palace. The police quickly removed the hoodlums. Around 7:00 P.M., again near the Elysée Palace, a column of two thousand men singing La Marseillaise clashed with the police line on duty. Someone on the rioters' side opened fire while the charges and clashes were going on. The police answered this shot with a forceful charge which cleared the vicinity.²⁹

²⁷Piot, Les décisions, p. 700.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

On the Grand Boulevards the rioters were constantly parading from 11:00 A.M. onward. Throughout the afternoon these marches back and forth continued with steady chants of: "Thièves! Down With The Thièves! Death For Frot! Hang Daladier!" The police trying to keep order were menaced constantly by gangs coming from side streets. During the evening these tactics continued as small isolated police bands found themselves under attack. The roving police vans always were on time to prevent any serious development against their colleagues.³⁰

From 7:00 P.M. on, the Grand Boulevards experienced attacks carried on the "apache gangs." These "apaches" were bent on destruction and shamelessly went about looting stores along the Rue de Rivoli, the Rue de la Paix, the Boulevard des Capucines, and as far north as the Gare St. Lazare shops. These hoodlums did an unusually destructive job on the shopping centers, where glass windows were unprotected by steel curtains.³¹

From 9:00 P.M., vandals coming from the direction of the Opera began a systematic destruction. Kiosks were overturned, the large and expensive shops' windows were shattered into hundreds of pieces, fires were set, trees were uprooted, and the Grand Boulevards were blocked with pushcarts and assorted debris. At different intervals pistol shots would whistle through the streets. On Rue Tronchet, Chéreau witnessed the following incident:

³⁰L'Écho de Paris, February 8, 1934.

³¹Alexander Werth, Which Way France? (London, 1937), p. 58.

I saw this disgusting affair: a motorcycle with a sidecar raced along the street, clipped the stores on its way, while the driver broke the windows by using a club. Immediately behind him came the looters who entered the shops and the display windows and seized all they could carry.³²

While the Grand Boulevards were undergoing this mass vandalism, the street lamps on the Champs-Elysées were smashed by flying stones thrown by hundred of rioters. The police in the dark took no chances and made vicious charges to clear the whole avenue. Spotting rioters, for instance, who were tearing up park benches and burning them;...

The police did not want to be bothered for nothing. Nearing the culprits they jumped into the crowd and began swinging their night-sticks against all bystanders.

At the height of the Avenue, a lonely figure stood near the curbing with his official badge shining. It was our colleague Jean Goujon.

A blow from a night-stick hit him smack on the skull, and he hit the ground. Ten seconds later, our collaborator attempting to rise was assaulted by six policemen who tore away his insignia, and hammered him with heavy blows which soon placed him in an unconscious state.³³

With such determination, the police had the Champs-Elysées and the Grand Boulevards swept clean. By 11:00 P.M. the police were still on duty but the crowds had left. The streets were deserted. The price paid by human beings that evening was: 289 policemen seriously wounded; four rioters killed and seventy-three seriously wounded. Hundreds were given first aid on both sides. The records further show that of

³² Chéreau, Concorde, pp. 158-159.

³³ L'Intransigeant, February 8, 1934.

the four killed that night not one had been struck by a bullet.³⁴

The influence of Provincial Rioting

Provinces answer Paris riots.-- Historically speaking relatively little attention has centered on the role and importance of the provincial riots on February 6-7. Based on the several studies made on this subject and on the meager records available--mostly newspaper accounts--it can be concluded that the "provincial riots" had a national significance. For a balanced picture as to what the "Democratic Crisis in France in 1934" actually meant nationally the reader must also be presented with the remarkable provincial protests made on February 5-7, 1934.

With a few exceptions and generally speaking, it is accurate to state that the Socialistic version of what the Great February Six Riot was, or was to become, was accepted by the provincials of France. This interpretation saw February Six as a "Fascist-inspired plot" which had failed for the time being. In retaliation the provinces simultaneously were swept by a desire to let their feelings be known. The resulting provincial uprisings placed the provincials in direct opposition to what they believed had almost transpired in the capital on the evening of February Six. Here the historian encounters once more the age-old question: Does Paris dictate to the provinces and does it speak for France?³⁵

³⁴Piot, Les décisions, p. 700.

³⁵Marc Bernard, Les journées ouvrières des 9 et 12 février-1934 (Paris, 1934), p. 19.

Goaded by the reports coming out of Paris, the provincials in such major population centers as Cherbourg, Grenoble, Lille, Lorient, Lyons, Nancy, Nantes, Nevers, Nice, Nîmes, Marseille, Rouen, Saint-Nazaire, Toulouse, and Valence put on their own mass demonstrations. In these industrial cities the workers were united by a "feeling to make their voices heard by all France." The common cry issuing from all these points was: "Down With Fascism!"³⁶

In Lille, for example, some four thousand demonstrators hunted and chased off the streets the Action Française leaguers of that city. The port city of Saint-Nazaire was the site where six thousand proletarians, answering a call made by the local labor unions and the League of the Rights of Man, protested vigorously before the windows of the royal newspaper: the Courier de Saint-Nazaire. In Toulouse, an appeal published by local newspapers brought out a column of twenty thousand which paraded incessantly through the streets with streamers and banners reading: "The Fascist Reaction Shall Not Come To Pass!" and "The Workers Will Seize Power!" Lorient had a similar parade with three thousand taking part.³⁷

At Grenoble, the demonstrators addressed a message to President Albert Lebrun--which received wide circulation--and which read:

The Representatives from the Labor Organizations in Vizille and Grenoble remember their traditions and are conscious of the strength they have even if they have remained calm.

³⁶ Bernard, Les journées ouvrières, p. 19.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 20.

Workers, peasants, functionaries, townspeople, and mountaineers have decided to form a Vigilance Committee. This Vigilance Committee is ready, if need be, to become a revolutionary committee.

For instance, we know what our immediate task is: to maintain calmness, a questioning attitude, and furthermore, to prepare, silently--for there is one idea which transcends all--the provincials have remained calm before all appeals which demanded murder, which demanded excitement.

The Vigilance Committee of the Workers of Vizille and Grenoble believes it is necessary to remind you that Paris is not all of France.³⁸

This manifesto is illustrative of the élan typical in the provinces at this time. The Vigilance Committee in its message refused to follow Paris' example and ended by stating:

The Republic is probably weak in Paris, but in the provinces it is strong. The workers of Vizille and Grenoble decided--not by opening each others' heads, but by firm resolution--to defend their liberties, and to be ready to bring back, throughout the province, the rebirth and the restoration of the word "Revolution" to its original noble meanings and to its generous objectives.³⁹

But these words came on February 7. On the Great February Six not all provincial France had been so peaceful as suggested by the Grenoble Manifesto. On February Six some of the larger provincial communities had witnessed the branches of the different political leagues parading and fighting on their streets. Lille watched the students of the city gather on its Grande Place. Around them soon crystallized a huge crowd which kept shouting: "Down With The Thieves!" A certain tenseness had developed by 6:00 P.M. as the Communist elements started to dominate

³⁸ Bernard, Les journées ouvrières, pp. 20-21.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 21.

the crowd. Six platoons of Mobile Guards were kept busy most of the evening trying to clear the Grande Place.⁴⁰

These riots in Lille after 6:00 P.M. became especially violent. The inhabitants from the suburbs and the students filled every bit of space on the sidewalks around the Grande Place. The quadrilateral Grande Place was cordoned off by the police. Soon thereafter cries coming from one of the corners of the Grande Place announced that the Communists were on their way. As the notes from L'Internationale came nearer and nearer, the mounted guards decided to clear the cafes' terraces. They made several charges, causing men, women, and children to disperse in all directions.⁴¹

At 7:15 P.M., the Lille Communists crossed the Grande Place and attacked the police. This bold move brought on gunfire from both sides and ended with twenty arrests being made. The law officers showed no mercy as they disbanded the Communists. It was not until nine o'clock that some semblance of the usual calm in Lille returned. A patrol kept on the move all night to prevent any such column from organizing again.⁴²

Nancy, in eastern France, turned out to be another major center where disorder reigned for a while on February Six, for assembled at different points on the outskirts of Nancy, small columns moved towards

⁴⁰ L'Écho de Paris, February 8, 1934.

⁴¹ Le Temps, February 8, 1934.

⁴² Ibid.

a center. The usual cries were heard as these men began uniting and forming one long and thick column. The rioters then getting bolder threw firecrackers at the Mobile Guards on duty on the main streets. This led to innumerable clashes and developed into the type of hand-to-hand combat we have already observed in Paris. Many were wounded on both sides by the time order was restored. The local jails were filled and the police ordered everyone off the streets. The rioters who disobeyed were roughly treated.⁴³

In Lyons three thousand rioters watched six hundred young leaguers of the Action Francaise trying to form a column. The vigilant police constantly interfered with these plans and the formation was never realized. Some twenty arrests were made as the leaguers became irritated. Although numerous hit-and-run incidents continued in this city until 1:00 A.M., the police were always in command.⁴⁴

The other major demonstrations in the provinces took place in Nantes and Rouen. In Nantes around 7:00 P.M. the rioters managed to block traffic in the Place Royale for a short time; but the police brought pressure to bear and sent the trouble makers either home or to jail.⁴⁵ In Rouen, the Croix de Feu and the Jeunesses Patriotes took over the streets for a few moments. As the police charged these

⁴³ L'Écho de Paris, February 7, 1934.

⁴⁴ Le Temps, February 8, 1934.

⁴⁵ L'Écho de Paris, February 7, 1934.

columns, the young Croix de Feu leader, M. Levet, intervened to restore the peace.⁴⁶

The records on the effects of the February Six Riot in the provinces are incomplete. In face of this fact any conclusion reached on the matter can only be a tentative one. It would appear reasonable to aver that the provinces, like Paris, saw a minority assuming the leadership where there was trouble. This minority furthermore represented groups of different political hues. These disturbances in the provinces, however, never threatened the existence of French democratic institutions.

If the role of the provinces on February Six is a controversial matter, the same cannot be said for their reaction to the Paris riots. The provinces almost unanimously condemned the rioters for what they had done. We have already seen above what answer the workers of Grenoble and Vizille gave. In a similar vein came the response from the miners of Carmaux de Jaurès. The latter announced that they were ready to shed their blood to preserve French democracy against the "fascist reaction" and the "coup de force." In a manifesto, Carmaux de Jaurès reminded Paris, once again, that it was not speaking for France on February Six. The Confédération Générale du Travail, France's largest labor union, also took a similar stand. From all directions the provinces declared their willingness to defend Republican institutions.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Le Temps, February 8, 1934.

⁴⁷ Le Petit Parisien, February 8, 1934.

The U.N.C. sections throughout France joined this opposition to Paris shown by Provincial France. The great majority of these expressed their formal disapproval to the Paris U.N.C. for the part it had played on February Six. The provincial Union Fédérale des Anciens Combattants affirmed its profound attachments to the Republic and stood ready to fight for democratic liberties. The provinces thus gave their approbation to Daladier's call to rally to the defense of French democratic institutions.⁴⁸

Doumergue Forms a "National Government"

Gaston Doumergue, the man and the politician.--- The biting and sharp-witted weekly, Candide, like most of France's public opinion, was extremely enthusiastic about the man chosen to succeed Daladier. The reporter welcomed the leadership of Doumergue in these terms:

We have complained for a long time that France has been governed by old men. The first time we tried a ministry dominated by young men from the Chamber, you are all cognizant of what followed. Even they were shocked by what they had done.

Therefore, in what direction did we turn? Where else-- but towards a veteran politician.

It is, in France, an instinctive movement. It is a tradition. In moments when everything appears to be confused, we call upon our older men, to our sexagenarians or our septuagenarians. Thiers in 1871, Clemenceau in 1917, Poincaré in 1926, and Doumergue in February 1934, Why?

MM. Dormann et Salette, La participation des associations d'anciens combattants à la manifestation du 6 février 1934, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3387, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), pp. 657-658.

Age appears first of all as a guarantee of fairness. A man who is near the twilight of life has no more ambitious dreams. It is usually granted that he has no other ambition except what is good for our country.⁴⁹

The two dominant notes after the announcement of Daladier's resignation were: (1) a spontaneous enthusiasm for Doumergue, and (2) a return of hundreds of patriotic appeals advising France to keep faith with the Third Republic and democracy. The man who became the symbol for this rallying behind democracy was Gaston Doumergue.

Doumergue was born in southwestern France, at Aigues-Vives, on August 1, 1863. His father, Pierre Doumergue, was a vineyard cultivator, a Huguenot and, like his son, was conditioned to believe that the Third Republic had brought more religious toleration than any previous regime. Gaston attended the schools in nearby Nîmes, and in 1880 he met the qualifications needed to follow the courses at the Faculté de Droit in Paris. By 1885 he was a member of the Nîmes bar.⁵⁰

Soon after entering the legal profession, Gaston Doumergue was named to the Indo-China post of Hanoi by his friend Émile Jamais, Undersecretary of the Colonies. In 1891, Doumergue was transferred to Algeria. Not long afterwards he returned to Aigue-Vives, entered politics, won a seat in the Chamber, and went to Paris. The only notice he received in the press nationally was that he was the man nearest President Sadi Carnot when the latter was assassinated.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Candide, February 15, 1934.

⁵⁰ Maurice Verne, Le Président Doumergue (Paris, 1925), pp. 21-38.

⁵¹ Pierre Lafue, Gaston Doumergue (Paris, 1933), pp. 16-32.

Slowly Doumergue's prestige in the Chamber grew and, in 1902, he became the Minister of the Colonies in the Combes Ministry. Three years later his gracious manners had brought him many friends, and he was elected the Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies. In the Sarrien and Clemenceau Ministries, he was the Minister of Commerce; while, under Briand, he became the Minister of Public Education. Shortly before World War I he headed a short-lived Cabinet, and he had become the Radical-Socialist leader.⁵²

During and after World War I his political career kept Doumergue busy dealing with foreign affairs and visiting Austria, Italy, Germany, and Russia. The culmination of this life devoted to public service was his election on June 3, 1924 to the Presidency of the Republic. He stayed at the Elysée Palace until 1931, when he retired to his home in Tournefeuille in Southern France.⁵³

The historian Pierre Lafue then wrote the most remarkable biography of Doumergue in 1933. By early 1934 this work was a best seller in political circles and received many favorable reviews from the press. Lafue in evaluating the importance of Doumergue in modern French politics advanced the theory that the former President

would assure the alarmed Left because of his reputation for impartiality and traditional respect for the constitution. And though he kept smiling even when our democracy was unsteady, he knew when he had to be firm, take up his burden, and direct

⁵² Lafue, Doumergue, pp. 33-98.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 98-128.

the impatient and protesting Frenchmen around him towards the goal serving best the general welfare.⁵⁴

All biographies of Doumergue pointed out that he possessed three political qualities which in France were needed if one was to serve the country well: (1) he was a born compromiser; (2) he was extremely tactful and just; (3) he always upheld the ideals of French democracy in everything he did. An estimate of Doumergue by an earlier biographer had concluded that Doumergue had brought two important democratic traits to the Elysée: an element of equilibrium and a good sound common sense.⁵⁵ Another biographer emphasized that "the sound logic backed with calmness" Doumergue brought to a delicate French political problem made him the distinguished President he became.⁵⁶ It is important to keep these opinions on Doumergue in mind, for in our period, we will see that some contemporaries will try to make out that Doumergue was a "fascist dictator."⁵⁷

Doumergue answers the call.--After Daladier, on February 7, informed President Lebrun of his resignation, the President of the Republic decided to urge Doumergue to take up the premiership. Lafue had expounded the theory that this man was the only one who could solve France's problems. The rest of France was quite aware of this belief

⁵⁴ Lafue, Doumergue, p. 128.

⁵⁵ Verne, Doumergue, pp. 44-45.

⁵⁶ Etienne de Nalèche, La vie et les travaux de Gaston Doumergue (1863-1937) (Paris, 1939), pp. 5-24.

⁵⁷ For this view see Werth, Which Way France?

in 1934.⁵⁸ Many only hoped that Doumergue could be torn away from his books and his wife at Tournefeuille to serve France again.⁵⁹

M. Albert Lebrun with the help of the Presidents of the Senate and the Chamber, several senators, several deputies, and a few Municipal Councillors was finally able to convince Doumergue on the phone that he should return to Paris to help save his country. The former President had hesitated to leave the Midi, at first, because of the poor state of his health.⁶⁰

M. Pierre Laval was the key man in getting Doumergue to return to Paris. Laval had visited President Lebrun before Daladier had formally resigned. Lebrun informed Laval that Doumergue had resisted all "appeals to serve." The undaunted Laval took up the phone, was connected to Tournefeuille, and finally persuaded the hesitating Doumergue.⁶¹

Doumergue was wildly acclaimed by mobs as he arrived in Paris. Never had such a welcome been given to a French leader within the memory of many Frenchmen. He was seen as the "saviour of France."⁶² On that morning of February 8, there was no other man in France whom the public would have accepted so easily. In the past, his permanent smile had won him the nickname of "Gastounet," Alexander Werth, who

⁵⁸ Jacques Fischer, Doumergue et les politiciens (Paris, 1935), pp. 200-256.

⁵⁹ Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 186-187.

⁶⁰ Anon., "Memorandum," Journal des Débats, Vol. 2086 (February 16, 1934), 249.

⁶¹ Candide, February 15, 1934.

⁶² André Tardieu, Sur la pente (Paris, 1935), p. 11.

was to make a complete reversal of his estimate of Doumergue later on, also felt at this time the French enthusiasm for this ex-President and, in his earlier work, he called him "the Cincinnatus come to the rescue."⁶³

Forming the Cabinet.--- Doumergue decided to follow in M. Raymond Poincaré's footsteps and to organize a "National Union Government." The Cabinet once formed included every political party sitting in the Chamber except the Socialists, who refused to serve, and the Communists --who were not asked. The Right and the Center applauded this action. The Radical-Socialists, erstwhile friends of the Socialists, had not yet recovered from the February Six shock. They were willing to listen to anything within reason, for their very existence was at stake. So they were willing to acquiesce to Doumergue's demands.⁶⁴

The bonhomme shown in getting Cabinet members struck the public's fancy. For example:

M. Germain-Martin was asked by M. Doumergue to come to the Foreign Affairs' office. On arrival the good Gastounet shook his hands and quickly stated--with his down-to-earth accent:

"My dear Germain, you know naturally why I have called you here? You have the Finances!"

"The Finances, Monsieur le Président, the Finances but ... but I have scruples...."

"Oh, now, Germain...and I...you think that it pleases me to be back under the yoke? They told me they needed me. I need you. You accept. Good. Thanks, Germain."⁶⁵

⁶³ Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 186-187

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Candide, February 15, 1934.

Doumergue took all of February 8 for the consultations that resulted in his "National Union Ministry." On February 9, after the Premier had been elected the leader of the Radical-Socialists, Doumergue officially announced his Cabinet. Very shrewdly the Premier opened two new Ministries of State--of the nature of Assistant-Premierships--and gave the posts to MM. André Tardieu (Center Republican) and Édouard Herriot (Radical-Socialist). Like these two last-named, most of the Cabinet glowed with well-known French political figures such as: Henry Chéron (a senator) in the Ministry of Justice; Albert Sarraut (former Premier and senator) at the Ministry of the Interior; Germain-Martin (Left Radical) heading the Finances; François Piétri (Left Republican) handling the Military Marine Affairs; Aimé Berthod (Radical-Socialist) at home in National Education; General Denain taking the Ministry of Air; Lucien Lamoureux (Radical-Socialist) in Commerce and Industry; Adrien Marquet (Neo-Socialist) in the Department of Work; Henri Queuille (Radical-Socialist) turning to Agriculture; Louis Barthou (Union-Democrat and senator) who was to make such a name in Foreign Affairs; Henri Pétain in the War Department; P. E. Flandin (Left-Republican) taking care of Public Works; Georges Rivollet (U.N.C. Secretary-General) at the Pensions; Pierre Laval (Independent and senator) taking the Colonies; André Mallarmé (Left Radical) becoming the P.T.T. expert; Louis Marin (Federated Republican) in Public Health; and William Bertrand (Radical-Socialist) going to the Merchant Marine.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Anon., "Le Cabinet Doumergue," Journal des Débats, Vol. 2086 (February 16, 1934), 251.

This was the 96th Ministry of the Third Republic and Doumergue's Second. It included six former premiers: Doumergue, Herriot, Tardieu, Barthou, Sarraut, and Laval. Four members did not have seats in the Government. Doumergue, Pétain, Denain, and Rivollet. Rivollet's appointment was regarded by some as a compromise with the "Street Forces." But no man raised a voice against Doumergue taking in the U.N.C. Secretary-General at this time.⁶⁷

Then came a simple message from Doumergue to the French people:

I have been called to form a truce Government--one of appeasement and justice.

That Government is completed.

In its name I invite you to accomplish, as your part of this bargain, your duty by renouncing all agitation--and giving first place to what will benefit all France--and above all the Republic.⁶⁸

The Communists' "Call to Action"

Communists, a threat to Doumergue?--Would Doumergue be able to bring order out of chaos in France? The Communists, who had no Cabinet posts, hoped not, for they were about to present the Government with what became its first major threat. The Socialists, who were also not in the Cabinet, had hinted at dissension when they called a "protest meeting" for February 8. The Communists refused to associate themselves with this "protest meeting," but they announced that the "class conscious revolutionists" would demonstrate on the Place de la

⁶⁷Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 187-188.

⁶⁸"Doumergue," Journal des Débats, p. 251.

République on February 9. The Socialists thereupon postponed their meeting to February 12--the following Monday.⁶⁹

The Communist "call to action" declared that the anti-fascist proletariat had enough of these "Fascist techniques" of February Six and this new "National Union Government"! The Communists ordered their adherents, therefore, not to join the protest meeting called by the Socialists for February 8 on the Place de la Bastille, for the Socialists themselves were suspect.⁷⁰

As early as February Six, L'Humanité, the Communist news organ, had advised the proletariat to unite to throw out the "fascist gangs" parading the streets, to overthrow the Government which protected and encouraged fascists, and to march against what was becoming a "social democracy"--which would disunite the workers. A basic conflict was revealed as existing between the ideals held by the S.F.I.O. Socialists and the Communists.⁷¹

Because of this attitude taken by the Communists, the Socialists under Blum did not even protest, for fear that the Communists would disrupt their meeting. It was true that both the Communists and the Socialists saw the significance of February Six in the same light: it was a fascist-inspired plot; but the Communists were making it impossible,

⁶⁹ M. de Framond, La journée communiste du 9 février et les incidents communistes du 12 en banlieue, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3392, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), pp. 702-704.

⁷⁰ L'Humanité, February 9, 1934.

⁷¹ Ibid., February 6, 1934.

for the time being, to unite forces. The Socialist leaders refused to fight for Communist ideas; they wanted to march to preserve the workers' liberties which they felt were threatened at this point. Therefore February 9 became specifically a Communist day. It was organized and directed by those who preferred L'Internationale to La Marseillaise.⁷² Thus the Doumergue Government, sworn to uphold French democratic liberties, was faced with its first major challenge!

⁷² Werth, France in Ferment, p. 175.

CHAPTER XI

FEBRUARY NINTH AND THE "GREAT GENERAL STRIKE" (Reverberations)

The Communists Have Their Day

Events on February 9.-- In vain did the Préfecture try to discourage the Communists and the Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire, the pro-Communist union, from carrying out their demonstration on February 9. On the day before the Communists were to protest--around 4:00 P.M.--M. Doriot and three other representatives from the Communist Party and the C.G.T.U. were received by M. Bonnefoy-Sibour, the Prefect of Police. Sibour bluntly stated that he could not allow the Place de la République meeting on February 9. The Communists could not be shaken from their decision, and when they left the Prefect's office they insisted they were going ahead with their plans. In the press on the morning of the ninth, the Préfecture forbade the Communist reunion.¹

On February 9, around 7:00 P.M., between 1,500 and 2,000 people were assembled on the Place de la République. The police were there already covering their posts; they had taken extensive precautions for the evening, and they had occupied all strong points on or near the

¹M. de Framond, La journée communiste du 9 février et les incidents communistes du 12 en banlieue, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3392, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 704. See Figure 3 Map.

Place de la République. So carefully had these positions been assigned that during the night never were the police seriously menaced. This seven o'clock crowd was therefore quickly cleared off the Place. So systematically was this carried out that, even as late as 7:45 P.M., the République area was still neutralized.²

It was about 8:00 P.M., barely two hours after Doumergue had completed his National Union Government, that the Communists arrived on the Place de la République and found it inaccessible. Earlier an estimated four thousand Communists had gathered near the Gare du Nord and, when organized, had moved eastward towards the Place de la République. This column was dispersed by an ever cautious police on the République. The Communists then eventually formed a vast arc from the north to the southeast of Paris.³

A very thick pea-soup fog hung over Paris that evening and made it difficult to see clearly objects or individuals at any great distance. The raw night air also motivated the police and rioters to keep moving so as not to become too cold. Within the arc mentioned above, most of the streets converged at different angles on the Place de la République, the center selected by the Communists for their major "protests against fascism" to occur. As events would have it, this never materialized, for the alert police had not only cordoned off the area, but also blocked off all subway stations leading to the danger

³Framond, La journée communiste, p. 704.

⁴Marc Bernard, Le journées ouvrières des 9 et 12 février 1934 (Paris, 1934), p. 64.

zone. Any force hoping to get to the Republique that evening needed to break through strong detachments of Mobile Guards and Republican Guards. This proved impossible to carry out.⁴

About 8:00 P.M. barricades were mounted in the Faubourg du Temple, south of the Place de la République. The 250 Communists gathered there listened to the harangues of M. Heinaff who said: "Comrades, the barricades are completed here. Let us go and construct others on the Avenue Parmentier nearby. Let us march against the bourgeoisie-- against capitalism. Let us burn and bleed everything and everyone in our way." The police arrived at this point and, after a brief affray, Comrade Heinaff and the other ringleaders were incarcerated.⁵

From 8:00 P.M. on, the East of Paris, which was to be the main area for Communist demonstrations that evening, heard strange noises, resounded with flying bullets, listened to cries coming from the wounded, spotted galloping guards hurrying through the streets, and was filled with trucks and cars trying to race to numerous points. To the extreme southeast of this vicinity, at 8:15 P.M., one hundred Communists attempted an assault against the police ring around the Place de la Nation. Most of the Communists were arrested.⁶

Up to 9:00 P.M., the police kept dispersing one small Communist group after another, and resisted those who balked. A major maneuver

⁴Alexander Werth, France in Ferment (London, 1935), pp. 176-177.

⁵Framond, La journée communiste, pp. 704-705.

⁶Bernard, Les journées ouvrières, p. 63.

was also successfully carried out at this time by the law officers: that was the clearing of all people, crowds, and Communists on the key Boulevard Magenta--which connects the Gare du Nord with the Place de la République. The police had just completed this when the Communists, realizing that their protest rally was slowly turning into a failure, made a combined effort to seize the Place de la République. The police behind barricades were the recipients of diverse missiles for a short while, but their counterattack ended in the Communists scurrying away in all directions.⁷

By 9:00 P.M. the center of attention became the Gare du Nord which is located northwest of the Place de la République. Near here, at that time, the gardiens de la paix dispersed two hundred rioters who had assembled at the angle where the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis and the Rue Dunkerque meet before the Gare du Nord. Out of this incident came the development of a full-fledged riot during which revolvers opened fire from the rioters' side. The Brigadier-Chief Guinot was shot right through the head and taken while in severe pain to the hospital. Police then discovered gunfire coming from windows on the upper floors of nearby buildings. The Communists, in charge of the Gare du Nord area at the time, went about using hit-and-run tactics against the law officers.⁸

This Gare du Nord riot was soon counterbalanced by one that developed about 9:45 P.M. southeast of the Place de la République--

⁷ Framond, La journée communiste, p. 705.

⁸ Ibid.

where Boulevards Voltaire and Richard-Lenoir meet. Here the Communists had set up temporary barricades. As the police tried to dislodge them, the Communists opened fire. The Place de la République's police, which had seen a rather peaceful hour, were called on to send reinforcements. Two vans of thirty policemen each under Brigadiers Descombes and Perraud rushed to the salient point. The Communists, seeing the extra help arriving, began to rush inside nearby buildings. Throughout the evening shadowy figures kept emerging from these buildings and sending lead through the police ranks.⁹

Just as soon as the region southeast of the Place de la République came under police control, the Communists seized the Chaumont-Belleville area to the north. Numerous barricades had been constructed here. The police were sent to demolish these but could not do so. Just as the police vans began entering the area, sniper fire went into operation. Telegraph posts which had been sawed off were thrown down in such a way as to fall on the buildings on the opposite side of the street. Thus whole streets became impassable to police trucks. The gardiens de la paix who tried to get through on their bicycles were received by buckets of water, flower pots, and furniture hurled down from surrounding windows. As gunfire was added to these tactics the police were forced to take cover.¹⁰

In the meantime, the gardiens de la paix at the Gare du Nord were

⁹Framond, La journée communiste, p. 705.

¹⁰Werth, France in Ferment, p. 178.

still dodging bullets. When the shooting began here about 9:00 P.M., reinforcements had been sent for, and, by 10:00 P.M., they arrived. The police immediately reorganized and began converging on the Communists from all sides of the railroad station. While carrying this out, Inspector Broissiat with five men, moving to close one of the subway entrances, was confronted by one hundred men armed with revolvers. The police rushing to help their colleagues felt this was a "state of legitimate defense" and fired on the men coming at them. With guns blazing, the police sent the Communists running and took the Gare du Nord.¹¹

The Communists now concentrated on the Gare de l'Est not far to the southeast of the Gare du Nord. Police patrols coming in from the surrounding boulevards were showered with bullets. Débris mainly of asphalt and stone came to welcome the incoming law-officers. While a continuous firing from the rioters' side went on, the gardiens de la paix rushed the railroad station. Brutalities took place as the police clashed with the rioters. A gardien de la paix had his skull smashed while attempting to take the main entrance of the Gare de l'Est. Policeman Martin received a missile which ripped his head wide open, while a bullet hit and lodged in his left thigh. Gardien Girault raised a left hand and caught a bullet. In spite of the serious opposition given, the police took the railroad station.¹²

¹¹ Framond, La journée communiste, p. 705.

¹² Ibid.; also Bernard, Les journées ouvrières, p. 67.

By 11:00 P.M. the Communists started to move against the symbols of what they termed the "opiate of the people;" namely, the churches. The first church chosen to be burnt was Saint Joseph's Church on Saint Maur Street near the République. Inspector Desforges took an emergency patrol of one van with thirty gardiens de la paix, a platoon of mounted guards, and managed to stop the fire menacing Saint Joseph's and cleared the area.¹³

At 11:30 P.M. the Communists were still carrying on fights in half-a-dozen places in the northeastern quarter of Paris. The police, who had been relentlessly chasing them all evening, cheered the arrival of several truck loads of fresh gardiens de la paix and four platoons of Mobile Guards. The new arrivals formed two military columns and began systematically to clear all threatened points. The police soon had control of the east of Paris. The rioters who decided to try their luck against the guards' rifles were sorry they did so afterwards, for these policemen did not mollycoddle their opponents.¹⁴

By midnight, the Communist riot was completely over. The Place de la République, the Gare du Nord, and the Gare de l'Est were under police supervision. The rioters placed under arrest numbered 1,214. The casualty list read: 141 police wounded including four by gunfire, three by knife wounds, twenty club-beaten, twenty-nine knocked down by

¹³Bernard, Les journées ouvrières, p. 67; also L'Écho de Paris, February 10, 1934.

¹⁴Framond, La journée communiste, pp. 705-706.

fists or kicks, thirty struck by missiles, one severely bitten, two slashed by canes, and six wounded by falls. The rioters had to hospitalize sixty-four; twenty-four because of bullet wounds, eight from night stick blows, and the rest for various reasons. Of the wounded rioters, four died of bullet wounds.¹⁵

Thus the Communists had their night which had kept the police moving all over the east of Paris most of the evening. Never had the revolutionists been in possession of the announced assembly area: the Place de la République. What specific objective they had in mind it is difficult to say. What contributions these isolated combats made to getting rid of French fascism is even harder to comprehend. The main consequence of February Ninth was to make all of France aware of the Communist menace. Many Frenchmen, moreover, were asking themselves: How long were these chaotic conditions to continue?--How would it all end?¹⁶

February Twelfth: Paris and Provinces

Call for a general strike.--- On February 8, when the Socialists had postponed their "protest meeting," the S.F.I.O. leaders had put off the demonstration to Monday, February 12. On February 10, the C.G.T.U. threw in their fortune with the Socialists, but added that they had not been influenced by the Socialist initiative. They gave the impression that they had the same thought in mind, and that they

¹⁵ Framond, La journée communiste, p. 706.

¹⁶ Laurent Bonneval, Les journées sanglantes de février 1934 (Paris, 1935), pp. 209-216; also Werth, France in Ferment, p. 179.

realized that in union there was strength. The Confédération Générale du Travail (C.G.T.), the Socialist dominated union and the largest labor union in France, really deserved the credit on this matter. As early as February 7, the C.G.T. had announced a twenty-four hour general strike to serve as a major protest against attempts to impose "a fascist state" on France. The declaration revealed that this was made with the cooperation of the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, the Socialist Party, the Pupiste Communists, and others who cared to join them.¹⁷

In its manifesto of February 7, the C.G.T. denounced the "hideous fascism which had shown its face on the streets of Paris the night before." Although the C.G.T. was not satisfied with the operation of the democratic régime of late, it pointed out that democratic rule had its advantages. To keep these advantages, which outnumbered the disadvantages, and to correct the faults was its goal. Because reactionary forces were working to destroy the Republic and to replace it by a dictatorship along fascist lines, the workers who cared for their country were asked to unite. Thus, the C.G.T. concluded in its message that it was necessary to order the General Strike.¹⁸

That the General Strike organized by the C.G.T. was no rash impulsive action is made clear by plans formulated as far back as March 30-31, 1933, by the C.G.T.'s National Confederation Committee. The original motion on this subject, made by M. Jouhaux, was discussed and approved by a vote of the Committee. In this declaration the C.G.T.

¹⁷ Bernard, Les journées ouvrières, p. 72.

¹⁸ Le Peuple, February 7, 1934.

blamed irresponsible capitalism for bringing about the tragic world economic situation, and it asserted that capitalists only desired to keep themselves in power, even if it meant establishing a dictatorship to do so. In case such an extreme move should be undertaken, the C.G.T. resolution went on, the union would favor a "General Strike" as a first step to counteract it. As the C.G.T. was dominated by the Socialists, who believed that February Six was an attempted "fascist coup," the Union leaders quickly accepted this fascist explanation as factual.¹⁹

The January Riots made a very strong impression on the C.G.T. leaders, for through their official newspaper organ they published the following warning:

The Administrative Committee of the C.G.T., aware of the dangers presented by the reactionary forces, refuses to stand by and watch our established liberties threatened.

It does not believe that the need to cleanse the democratic régime at this time calls for the use of war methods. It therefore avows that the public liberties will be defended, even if the C.G.T. has to call a General Strike.²⁰

The C.G.T., using mainly the argument that "someone had to uphold France's democratic liberties," placed itself in direct opposition to any further rioting after February Six lest it led to a dictatorship. The organization declared that it had no desire to interfere in political matters but, if any more threats to democracy were made, the

¹⁹ M. Petrus Faure, Les manifestations du 12 février 1934, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3393, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 711.

²⁰ Le Peuple, January 31, 1934.

workers and the people of Paris would align themselves in defense of democracy. The C.G.T.'s spokesmen added that they were interested in getting justice just as much as the next fellow but, it must be understood, French democracy could not be made to suffer.

On February 6 also the Syndicats Confédérés de la Région Parisienne announced that they were unanimously behind the C.G.T.'s "fight for democracy." The next day, as we have seen, the C.G.T.'s Confederation Bureau decided to call a General Strike for Monday, February 12. That same evening, the C.G.T.'s representative met with leaders from the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, the S.F.I.O., the Socialist Party of France, the Socialist Republican Party, the Proletarian Unity, the Anarchist Union, the Fédération Ouvrière et Paysanne and the Associations Ouvrières de Production to discuss in a mass meeting the C.G.T.'s decision. All these organizations were so impressed by this meeting that they voluntarily associated themselves with the General Strike "to defend French democratic liberties."²²

On February 8, the day of the Communist "call to action," the C.G.T. made an appeal to all the workers to rise up to defend democracy and the fundamental liberties.

It is to affirm this unshakable faith in democracy that workers--all the workers--must refuse to work on Monday, February 12. We must show that the people's forces will not

²² Bernard, Les journées ouvrières, pp. 30-31; also Faure, Manifestations du 12, p. 712.

²³ Le Peuple, February 9, 1934.

stand by, as if deaf to what is happening, when endeavors are being made to substitute dictatorship for democracy.²³

What became an almost limitless number of associations now answered the call. As we noted above, the Syndicate Confédérés de la Région Parisienne seconded this. Among the other groups pledging themselves, from all over France, to come out on February 12 for the defense of French democracy were: the Fédérations de l'Alimentation, the Fédération du Batiment, the Fédération des Métaux, the Fédération des Cuirs et Peaux, the Fédération de Textile, the Fédération des Fonctionnaires, and the Fédération Postale Confédérée. Hotel, gas, teachers, clothing, and municipal unions also were added to this long list. Finally, the Communists and C.G.T.U., a bit embarrassed to see so many workers ready to fight for democracy, threw in their lot with all these labor unions. Never had French labor appeared so united on a public question.²⁴

Events in Paris on February Twelfth.— Whether the "General Strike" in Paris on February Twelfth was a "great" or a "great great" strike depends on the statistics accepted as accurate on the matter. The claims and counterclaims made on the numbers of strikers involved are controversial. It will never be possible to ascertain accurately what these numbers actually were. The official police records and those coming from the Prefects' offices tend to be very conservative as if to try to minimize the effects of the General Strike. Some

²⁴ Le Peuple, February 9, 1934.

²⁵ Faure, Manifestations du 12, pp. 712-713; also Le Peuple, February 11, 1934.

discussions with the police and high officials on this point have led the writer to discover that this is sometimes done.²⁵

The figures issued from the C.G.T.'s headquarters on the effectiveness of the "Great General Strike," on the other hand, are also questionable, for the desire was strong to show that the workers gave an unprecedented answer to the call to defend democracy. A study of both records would seem to indicate that probably near one million workers struck on February 12 in Paris out of a total of approximately a million and a half. The following summary briefly presents the two main sets of figures:

Group Striking	Sûreté's claims (IN PERCENTAGE)	C.G.T.'s claims (IN PERCENTAGE)
Railroad	Normal traffic	None striking
Metropolitan Subways	5	60
T.C.R.O. Bus	80	90
Gas Society of Paris	Important	80
Electricity	Partial	75
Water Department	100	100
Sanitary Department	60	75
Sewers Service	66	75
Funeral Administration	85	85
Post Offices, Tel. and Tel.	100	90
Tobacco Manufacturers	Partial	100
Teachers	Very High	80
Metallurgy	50	90
Chemical Plants	High	100
Newspapers and Presses	General	100
Total	Of 1,400,000 workers 45% STRIKING	Of 1,500,000 workers 65% STRIKING

*Source: Faure, Manifestations du 12, pp. 713-714.

²⁵ Faure, Manifestation du 12, p. 713.

On February 12, 1934 Paris gave the appearance of being a ghost city most of the day. Newspapers were not being sold as usual. The subways had few customers and were closed by 8:30 P.M. No surface transportation was available, for the strikers had effectively blocked the bus depots located in the suburbs. The Paris taxis were still out on strike. No mailmen made any deliveries. The theaters and movie houses, for the most part, did not even open their doors. The General Strike was the most important of its kind since the famous one of 1906.²⁶

The Civil Servants of Paris were the leading followers of the Socialist Party in the city, and they carried the brunt of responsibility for the success or failure of the General Strike in this area. The statistics given above indicate that nearly all the teachers, postal workers, telegraph and telephone operators, as well as a high percentage of the municipal departmental functionaries did not report for work. The railroads were kept running while the electricity, gas, and water supplies into the city were out off.²⁷

The General Strike leaders asserted afterwards that the "mass-stay-at-home movement" had been used to indicate what discomforts a prolonged strike could bring, if the people did not rise up against the "fascist threat." Others pointed out that if the fascists did take over, the strikers could not carry out such a strike. Besides,

²⁶ Le Temps, February 13-14, 1934; also Werth, France in Ferment, p. 180.

²⁷ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 182.

sabotage would be needed to shut Paris from electricity, gas, and water facilities. The gas reservoir plants in Paris contained an eight-day supply. To shut these off would have meant dynamiting these reservoirs. As for water and electricity, only a few individuals were needed to take care of the Paris branches, for dynamos and transmission towers did most of the work. About ninety per cent of the city then already had automatic telephone service, and axes would have had to destroy the lines to stop communication in this field.²⁸

The Vincennes-National demonstration.-- Besides the General Strike, Paris workers were asked to cooperate in bringing about a "protest meeting against fascism" in the Cours de Vincennes--near the extreme east borderline of Paris. This demonstration had no connection with the C.G.T.'s "call to action." M. Jouhaux, General-Secretary of the C.G.T., in fact, had demanded that the C.G.T. members keep away from this demonstration.²⁹

The Socialist Party had initiated the first plans to carry out such a "protest meeting." In its manifesto of Sunday, February 11, the Socialist Party, not only announced that it was behind the C.G.T. General Strike, but added that the Party

has given to all its provincial branches the necessary instructions for assuring the complete success of this proletarian mobilization.

In Paris, the Fédérations Socialistes de la Seine et de Seine-et-Oise has summoned for Monday, at 3:00 P.M., on the

²⁸ Bernard, Les journées ouvrières, pp. 94-95.

²⁹ Faure, Manifestations du 12, p. 726.

Cours de Vincennes, the laborers of Paris. A column formed on the Cours de Vincennes will proceed to the nearby Place de la Nation.

It was thirty-five years ago that a similar unity of the capital's population took place in these areas--for the triumph of the Republic.

Today it is for the defense of the Republic.

Hence reunion on Monday. Against the grafters. Against the royalists and the fascists. For the upholding of our liberties--for the workers' freedoms.³⁰

The Communists and the C.G.T.U. voted to associate themselves with the Socialists at Vincennes. Around 2:00 P.M., not only were the Communists organizing, but the Socialists were pleased to see the large numbers who began concentrating around Vincennes. By 3:00 P.M., as planned, an immense column estimated at about thirty thousand followers had been formed. The Socialists headed the column with such distinguished parliamentarians as Léon Blum, Vincent Auriol, Paul Fabre, Chaussy, Marsais, Uhry, Paggioli, and Graziani; while the Paris Municipal Councillors, the mayors of the suburbs, and leading newspaper publishers were also marching. Large banners expressed the reasons for so many men parading: "The Republic Will Not Be Murdered!", "Against The Fascist Dictatorship!" and "Death Before We Accept Fascism!"³¹

The column proceeded in an orderly fashion towards the Place de Nation. As this great human mass approached this latter point, the

³⁰ Faure, Manifestations du 12, p. 727.

³¹ Ibid.; also Bernard, Les journées ouvrières, pp. 85-86; and Le Temps, February 13-14, 1934.

Communists and the C.G.T.U. also moved onto the large square. The Communist and the C.G.T.U. intellectuals harangued the crowd for a while because such an impressive gathering refused to show a more aggressive spirit. The crowd murmured and seemed impatient with the Communist speakers. Shouts kept the monotonous tune of the "united front" clamoring over the crowd.³²

Tired of hearing the Communist speakers lamenting, the Socialists made it known, through their leaders, that their calm demonstration would not be endangered by wild orators. The Socialists therefore began clearing the Place de la Nation. The Communists, on the other hand, continued singing and shouting, while hundreds of policemen arrived. The Communists ordered their followers back to Vincennes, gave more speeches once there, and then disbanded.³³

At the height of the demonstration a huge crowd filled the Place de la Nation. The Communists claimed that 200,000 people had been there, while the Socialists asserted that 150,000 was more accurate. The conservative newspaper, Le Temps, could not see more than forty thousand.³⁴ All agreed, however, that no uncalled-for incident occurred that afternoon. This meeting had been a warning to the "fascists" of the power the democratic forces had when they wanted to organize. In many ways therefore the Vincennes-Nation demonstration

³² Faure, Manifestations du 12, p. 727.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Le Temps, February 13-14, 1934.

was a show of strength. It was the answer to the Great February Six Riot which had been negative in attitude.³⁵

Communist incidents in the suburbs.-- Far more serious on February Twelfth were the riots instigated by the Communists in the Paris suburbs. While the day of the General Strike and the "front unique" had been calm in Paris, while the Socialists and the Communists in the Place de la Nation had behaved themselves, the agitation that developed in the suburbs degenerated at times into scenes of violence.³⁶

The Paris suburbs in 1934 had 431,000 registered voters--of these 138,000 were Communists and 70,000 were Socialists. This "red belt" around Paris presented an extremely well organized group, and the danger of an invasion of Paris from these quarters was not treated as a laughing matter at the Préfecture. Fortunately for law-enforcement, many Communist voters were not "aggressive Communists." On the other hand, since early in the Twentieth Century, the center of Paris had become conservative, politically speaking. The peace-loving merchants and businessmen of the city, for a while awaited the "Red invasion from the suburbs" on February Twelfth.³⁷

The main centers of activity in the suburbs that day were: Gennevilliers, northwest of Paris; Aubervilliers, northeast of Paris; Malakoff, southwest of Paris; Boulogne-Billancourt, also southwest of

35

Bonnevay, Les journées sanglantes, pp. 232-233.

36

Le Temps, February 13-14, 1934.

37

Framond, La journée communiste, p. 710; also Bernard, Les journées ouvrières, pp. 73-74; also Werth, France in Ferment, p. 181.

Paris, but further to the outskirts than Malakoff; and Montrouge, which is to the south of Paris. It will be best if we analyze these trouble spots one at a time, instead on the hour-to-hour basis in the different areas.³⁸

From 4:00 A.M. on, four pickets were busy at work closing and barring the entrances to the Gennevilliers gas plant. The police, notified of what was going on, went to the gas plant, and dispersed the pickets. Around 9:30 A.M. a hundred marching men tried to enter a local factory, but were soon sent home by the police. At 11:00 A.M., the rioters got hold of four large waste cans and deposited their contents on the main highway in such a way as to hamper the street cars from operating. A barricade going up afterwards was soon demolished by a fast-stepping police. The rioters, later identified as Communists, rushed into nearby buildings and began throwing stones, bricks, shivers, broken pieces of metal, large bolts, and a conglomeration of nails in the police's direction. This shower of débris was to continue intermittently for a while.³⁹

The Gennevilliers' rioters by late afternoon had constructed six barricades in the center of the community. The police assaulted the barricades time after time throughout the evening. The dislodgement of these proved difficult and, at one time, a rioter unloaded his pistol on the onrushing police. In spite of the many law-officials

³⁸ Framond, La journée communiste, p. 710.

³⁹ Framond, La journée communiste, p. 707; also Le Temps, February 13-14, 1934.

wounded, the police finally seized the coveted positions. By midnight Gennevilliers was back to normal.⁴⁰

Aubervilliers can quickly be dismissed, for in that suburb, many workers tried to defy the General Strike and go to work as usual. Most of the businesses and industrial plants did open, but the workers were constantly threatened by the strikers on the outside. The police arrested many of the latter, but not until firing over their heads was used.⁴¹

In Malakoff, a very large crowd gathered all morning around the S.T.C.R.P. bus line as well as the streetcar depots. The rioters in one desperate attempt broke beyond the police line and smashed their way into nearby busses, only to be removed by an enraged police. While the rioters kept challenging the police around the bus depots, the local Communists called a mass meeting for 2:00 P.M. Once this mob had assembled, the police covering the main bus lines were systematically stoned. As the police led charge after charge against the rioters around 4:30 P.M., about thirty shots were fired from the crowd.⁴²

Thus began an hour long battle in Malakoff between the mob, Communist led, and the police. The exasperated gardiens de la paix finally poured gunfire through the rioters' ranks. The rioters took cover in nearby buildings and returned the fire of the police. It was

⁴⁰Framond, La journée communiste, p. 707.

⁴¹Faure, Manifestations du 12, p. 714; also Framond, La journée communiste, pp. 707-708.

⁴²Le Temps, February 13-14, 1934.

not until 5:30 P.M. that police reinforcement helped to crush the opposition. Many rioters during this one-hour battle were wounded, and one of them was killed. The police had paid a heavy toll in wounded themselves, but none of them died from bullet wounds. Although later witnesses agreed that local Communist public officials had been the instigators in Malakoff, it is impossible to get any order out of the testimonies of what actually did happen during most of the evening.⁴³

In Boulogne-Billancourt, the Communist Party made efforts to try to prevent any work taking place in the Renault plants. Around 7:30 A.M., six hundred Socialists and Communists broke into a fight over the matter, and the gardiens de la paix arrived in time to prevent any serious damage. The Renault people fed the workers during the noon hours in order to prevent any unnecessary trouble. In the afternoon the police successfully broke up a column of 1,500 rioters who tried to storm the Renault plants. As these demonstrators moved to the construction of barricades, the police were forced to fire. A rioter was killed. By midnight, all was back to order.⁴⁴

Finally, in the Montrouge region around 5:00 P.M., seven hundred rioters were put to flight by the local police when attempting to seize the S.T.C.R.P. bus depot. All these incidents in the suburbs resulted in one hundred arrests; in ninety-five police wounded, none

⁴³ Framond, La journée communiste, p. 708.

⁴⁴ Framond, La journée communiste, p. 709; also Le Temps, February 13-14, 1934.

by bullet; and in thirty-eight rioters seriously wounded, thirty-one by gunfire. The final count showed four rioters died, two from bullet wounds.⁴⁵

The General Strike in the provinces.-- All of France on February Twelfth had reacted to the C.G.T.'s "Great General Strike." The Prefects' statistics on the importance of this strike, as we saw for the Paris figures, are different than those coming from the C.G.T. In spite of this fact, a study of these reports leads one to conclude that obviously all of France had answered the "call to rise for democracy." Further analyses of these statistics indicate that the large industrial cities were more successful in cooperating than the smaller communities; and that, furthermore, the industrial departments were more vigorous than the agricultural districts.⁴⁶

Among the most successful striking centers were: Montluçon, Vichy, Charleville, Aix, Marseille, Saint-Quentin, Troyes, Angoulême, La Rochelle, Décazeville, Bourges, Tulle, Dijon, Saint-Brieux, Périgueux, Besançon, Évreux, Brest, Nîmes, Alès, Nice, Cannes, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Montpellier, Béziers, Saint-Malo, Rennes, Tours, Grenoble, Saint-Cloude, Blois, Nantes, Saint-Nazaire, Orléans, Angers, Cherbourg, Reims, Épernay, Châlons, Lorient, Denain, Lille, Roubaix, Metz, Lens, Calais, Clermont-Ferrand, Mulhouse, Belfort, Strasbourg, Lyons, Rouen, Le Havre, Argenteuil, Bézors, Versailles, Amiens, Carmeaux, Castres, Toulon,

⁴⁵ Framond, La journée communiste, pp. 709-710.

⁴⁶ Faure, Manifestations du 12, p. 714.

Avignon, Poitiers, and Sens.⁴⁷

Since it would be of very little value to take up the above one by one, we shall select certain "trouble spots" and a few typical areas.

Strikes were most important in the Département de Bouches-du-Rhône, especially in Marseille. The Prefect agreed with the C.G.T. that the strike was almost complete in most of the industries in the department. In Marseille, all transport services were suspended and the great majority of the stores, bars, and cafés stayed closed. Public services did not function except in water, gas, and telephone and telegraph. Post offices, docks, theaters, mines, and Air-France were empty.⁴⁸

Rioting did develop in the afternoon in Marseille, and the police were stoned while trying to bring back some semblance of order. The Marseille police, not so patient as their Paris counterparts, resorted to their pistols sooner than expected. Vandalism took place in many quarters of the city. During the evening, rioters speeding in a car sent gunfire through the police line. Intermittent series of gunshots were exchanged until 2:30 A.M. A bomb lighted up a sulfur plant during the early morning hours. The casualty list was very high in this important French port.⁴⁹

In contrast to the Chicago-like Marseille was the Département du

⁴⁷ Faure, Manifestations du 12, p. 714-726.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 715-716.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 716.

Calvados--a typical agricultural center. Here both the Prefect and the C.G.T. figures reveal that the strike was of very little importance. Such was the picture, as we have said, in the rural districts. Generally speaking, the highly industrialized departments, where clashes between the rioters and the police occurred, had difficulty in keeping the demonstrators calm. But, it must be added, except for a few of these trouble spots--such as Mulhouse where six rioters were seriously wounded, or in Toulon, where the assaulting police received a bombardment from broken bottles taken from a local beer plant--the General Strike evolved calmly all over provincial France.⁵⁰

Effectiveness of the "Great General Strike."--Newspapers on the Right, such as L'Écho de Paris, decided that the General Strike had not failed, but added that it had not come up to the standards demanded by the C.G.T. leaders. The Action Française facetiously termed the event: the "Great (Sûreté) General Strike."⁵¹ Of course, the Leftist organs, such as L'Oeuvre, Le Populaire, L'Humanité, and Le Peuple argued that their fondest hopes had been surpassed.⁵² The C.G.T. agreed with the Left, as did the C.G.T.U. The February Six Inquiry Commission voted that:

The General Strike of February 12, 1934, initiated by the Confédération Générale du Travail was undoubtedly the most important ever organized in France by workers' syndicalism. This show of strength did not have economic or corporative

⁵⁰ Faure, Manifestations du 12, pp.719-727.

⁵¹ Action Française, February 13, 1934.

⁵² Le Peuple, February 13, 1934.

overtone but, on the contrary, its goal was the uniting of the French working class to oppose what seemed--from their viewpoint--the appearance of fascist elements in our country. The Thirteen January Riots, as well as those of February Six and Seven, were taken by the C.G.T. to be definite proofs that such elements existed.⁵³

Omissions, Commissions, Depositions, and Union

Doumergue sets up parliamentary commissions to investigate.--

By February 15, 1934 France had returned to a more normal behavior in its political life. Gaston "Papa" Doumergue was applauded as the "man who saved France." Except for a very few dissenters, the newspapers and the Chamber were in accord with this acclamation. Everywhere in the country there was a release of the tension that had been there for too long already. The atmosphere of depression and disgust had given way to one of hope in democratic institutions and a desire for political stability, in view of the country's internal and external challenges. Whether Gaston Doumergue had brought this about did not really matter. What was important was that the French people believed he had and so credited him.⁵⁴

On February 15, 1934, as scheduled, Gaston Doumergue presented his government for approval by the Chamber. At three o'clock in the afternoon, the Premier entered the Chamber to be welcomed by wild acclamations coming from the Left, the Center, and the Right. As he passed by the different sections of the hemicycle, numerous deputies stood and applauded. It had been quite a while since a premier had

⁵³ Faure, Manifestations du 12, p. 711.

⁵⁴ Le Temps, February 16, 1934.

received such an ovation.⁵⁵

It was amazing to see what a change had taken place within the Chamber itself. Except for the usual insults given by the Communists to any bourgeois leader, the deputies accepted Doumergue with open arms. So great was the relief Doumergue brought that, when President Édouard Moncelle introduced "Gastounet," France's representatives roared their approval. When M. Arthur Ramette and his four Communist colleagues present began shouting: "Down With National Union! Down With The Assassins!" the Right, Center, and Left turned on them and warned them to quiet down--or else! M. Moncelle clearly showed that he would not stand for such rubbish from the Communists.⁵⁶

The whole Chamber was ready to submit to Doumergue's leadership. Many deputies expressed their shame for their past conduct. The Communists were the rowdies that day who felt no shame. They interrupted as often as they felt was wise, but Premier Doumergue smilingly shook off the Communist cackling as it came his way.⁵⁷

The "Saviour of France" began his short speech in a fatherly tone. He declared that his National Union Ministry was an attempt to create a "party politics' truce," until the present emergency was over. Doumergue's first request was: the Chamber must accept the responsibility of investigating the significance of February Six and expose

⁵⁵ Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, p. 243.

⁵⁶ Chambre des députés, Journal Officiel du 16 février, 1934,
15 ième Legislature, Débats Parlementaires (Paris, 1934), pp. 453-454.

⁵⁷ Werth, France in Ferment, pp. 191-193.

those who caused it to happen. This was received with seat-shaking applause.⁵⁸

Doumergue continued that his second task was to impose a much needed discipline so that moral order could return to Government life. Third, he desired rapid passage of the indispensable budget. Fourth, Doumergue felt that foreign affairs and the internal economic situation were interrelated and needed to be handled with a new vigor. Before these two last problems could be attacked, Frenchmen had better get peace inside their own homes, Doumergue added. The Premier concluded by demanding confidence on the above four-point program.⁵⁹

The interpellations were then put off until later, and the Chamber voted. Doumergue received 402 votes of confidence as against 125 opposed. In 1926, the much applauded Poincaré himself had obtained only 358 votes. This was one of the largest votes of confidence ever granted by the Third French Republic.⁶⁰ The Chamber was humble and obedient, for Doumergue not only obtained this overwhelming vote of confidence, but he also was granted his budget and "extraordinary powers to decree emergency acts," called the power of décrets-lois.⁶¹

On February 16-19, 1934, the Chamber voted the formation of two Committees of Inquiry. Each committee had forty-four members divided

⁵⁸ J.O.C. du 16 février, pp. 454-464.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Anon, "Le début du Ministère Doumergue," L'Illustration, Vol. 4747 (February 24, 1934), 218.

⁶¹ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 197.

into proportional representation. The Stavisky Inquiry Commission became known popularly as the "Thieves Committee." M. Guernut, a prominent Radical-Socialist, became its presiding officer. The February Six Inquiry Commission was known also as the "Murderers' Committee." Laurent Bonnevey, a Radical-Socialist who had been in the Chamber since 1902, became its chairman.

The Inquiry Commissions held daily sessions and gathered a mountain of dossiers. Witnesses were called, interrogated, investigated, photographed, and a "déposition" was made from their testimonies. The public, at first, made quite a lot out of the fact that these were not administrative committees, but rather parliamentary in nature. Arguments were developed later as to whether this was or was not a good move.

The February Six Inquiry Commission officially was called the "Commission d'enquête sur les événements du 6 février et jours suivants." The "jours suivants" took care of the probing into the events of February 7-12, 1934. M. Bonnevey was as impartial a chairman as could be expected under such circumstances. This February Six Inquiry Commission held its sessions in a room usually reserved for army briefings. A vast plan of the Place de la Concorde was on the walls and, as the numerous witnesses testified, reference was made to it. The forty-four committeemen sat around a horseshoe table, while the

⁶² Werth, *France in Ferment*, p. 197; also J.O.C. du 19 février, pp. 512-515.

⁶³ Robert de Beauplan, "Les commissions d'enquête," L'Illustration, Vol. 4750 (March 17, 1934), 296.

secretaries and witnesses occupied the center.⁶⁴

The Stavisky Inquiry Commission directed by Henri Guernut, a Radical-Socialist like Bonnevey, also did its work around a horseshoe table, but an extra half table had been fitted, at the center of the concave part of the horseshoe, to make more room for the deputies and the dossiers. Chairman Guernut, his secretaries, and his stenographers were placed on the extreme center of the horseshoe towards the outside.⁶⁵

For the rest of the year 1934 the work and discoveries of the two committees continually made the headlines. The results are amazing. The critics pointed to the coddling of political witnesses such as Chautemps. Others added that a political body could never be impartial or do an objective study of a political matter. Some witnesses complained of being treated roughly. The veterans, stated others, were received too kindly. And so the debate went on.⁶⁶

The present author believes that M. Bonnevey's Committee did much better work than the Stavisky Inquiry Commission which took almost three times longer to finish its work. The valuable evidence gathered by both is a mine for the historian, provided these records are balanced by the other documents available on the subject. As one reads these proceedings at a later date, he is impressed by the impartiality of both chairmen. It does appear beyond doubt, however, that the

⁶⁴ Robert de Beauplan, "La commission des journées sanglantes," L'Illustration, Vol. 4750 (March 17, 1934), 296.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Robert de Beauplan, "La commission Stavisky," L'Illustration, Vol. 4750 (March 17, 1934), 297; also Le Temps for all of 1934.

political witnesses were too often dismissed at a critical point. Probably as fair an estimate as exists--applicable not to just the one but to both committees--was the evaluation made by the Journal des Débats on the significance of the February Six Inquiry Commission:

The Committee charged with examining the events of February Six has completed, on its part, its modest curiosities. It has yesterday named a rapporteur général (M. Rucart) who has made very cautious declarations to the press. Such a rapporteur, who must possess the best of intentions, must at the same time be embarrassed. Between what the Committee expects of him and what the public demands, there are more than just shades of disagreement--there are contradictions. The Committee stands for lenitive conclusions. The public desires the truth and the exposure of those who were responsible. The investigation has had a confused existence--the Committee tried its best to confound everyone and everything--but the "dépositions" are there. And, furthermore, the essential facts are clear.⁶⁷

Doumergue as the nucleus for French unity.-- Our task does not involve a detailed history of the Second Doumergue Ministry. But, it would be a serious injustice if we left our account at this point. It is mandatory that an estimate of Doumergue's role in the "Democratic Crisis of 1934 in France" be brought into a sharper focus. This becomes a necessity, furthermore, because of the unjust accusations later writers made against "Gastounet."

Premier Doumergue was rather harshly criticized by his contemporaries for the few accomplishments made by his Ministry. Yet when the records are checked, the Premier does not come out so badly. First, Doumergue in his ministerial declaration had asked for parliamentary investigating commissions. These were voted as he demanded. Secondly,

⁶⁷Anon., "Les Commissions d'enquête," Journal des Débats, Vol. 2100 (May 25, 1934), p. 823.

Doumergue wished his budget to be accepted. On February 22, by 466 votes against 121, the Chamber did just that--and the Senate quickly approved. The proposed aggressive role in foreign affairs was undertaken by M. Barthou which many versed on the subject feel, was doing very well before he was shot. Compared to what the premiers of the Cartel des Gauches had done, this record cannot be labelled a failure.⁶⁸

Moreover in his ministerial address, Doumergue had referred to the need for the Government to bring a moral order into the administration. With this point in mind, on April 18 the Premier reorganized the central administration of the Ministry of the Interior and the Sûreté-Générale. This he undertook by using the décrets-lois granted to him by the Chamber only four days before. These reforms had been inadequate--and Doumergue was the first to admit this--because of lack of funds at the time.⁶⁹ In November, just before his Ministry fell, the Premier was considering the continuation of these police reforms so as to bring the Sûreté up to par with the Préfecture, improve the finances of both, and modernize the whole French police.⁷⁰

A paradox indeed faces the historian when he reaches the end of the Second Doumergue Ministry. For years there had been defenders in France of a stronger Constitution, but when the Premier proposed actually

⁶⁸ R.L., "Les premiers actes du Ministère Doumergue," L'Illustration, Vol. 4748 (March 3, 1934), 261.

⁶⁹ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 258.

⁷⁰ Chambre des députés, Journal Officiel de novembre 8, 1934, 15 ième Législature, Annexe 3936 (Paris, 1934), pp. 31-34.

to carry this out, his opponents said that he had "delusions of power," that he wanted to be a dictator, and that he was a "fascist."⁷¹

The parliamentary and constitutional reforms outlined by Premier Doumergue in September-November, 1934, were essentially those already offered by André Tardieu. These, Doumergue had sincerely declared, were urgent if authority within the democratic Government of France was to be restored. Here again Doumergue can be seen as carrying out the promise he had made in his ministerial declaration along the line of "moral order."⁷²

On his constitutional reforms, Doumergue used the radio to appeal directly to the people. His "fireside chats," of September 24 was the first broadcast he devoted to this subject. The Premier told the French people why he desired a strong President of the Cabinet. He outlined the pressing need for the Premier to be able to dissolve the Chamber without the consent of the Senate. The Radical-Socialist Party on October 28 opposed the giving of so much power to one man. Pierre-Étienne Flandin later confessed that once M. Doumergue and M. Herriot could not see eye to eye on constitutional reforms, Doumergue was finished. When the Radical-Socialists left his Cabinet on November 6, Doumergue resigned.⁷³

To render justice, it is necessary at this point to carry out an

⁷¹Jean Pierre Maxence, Histoire de dix ans: 1927-1937 (Paris, 1939), p. 283.

⁷²Werth, France in Ferment, p. 250.

⁷³Pierre-Étienne Flandin, Discours (Paris, 1937), p. 9.

unwelcome duty; that is, to criticize Alexander Werth's attitude towards Doumergue. In his work entitled France in Ferment, Werth is definitely more objective and reliable--here he calls Doumergue a "Cincinnatus come to the rescue." In his later revision, almost three years afterwards, the English journalist can see little that was good in Doumergue. This work entitled Which Way France? makes unfounded accusations against the Premier. Werth, for instance, accuses Doumergue of being a fascist. This last conclusion he bases on "a rumor" that Doumergue once was seen meeting La Rocque. Doumergue's motives are twisted by Werth who seemed to know the mind of Doumergue better on most subjects than did the Premier. Werth's harshness can in part be traced to the journalist's affiliation with the Radical-Socialist school of thought. Herriot was his and England's hero. In France in Ferment, Werth blames Doumergue for doing nothing about constitutional reforms, while in Which Way France?, he condemns him for attempting constitutional reforms! This matter is an important one because of the many American and British authorities on modern France who have accepted Werth's final interpretation of Doumergue as the correct one. The author must add that when he checked against the other documents, Werth's France in Ferment turned out to be a very remarkable and objective presentation.⁷⁴

Estimate of Doumergue's role.--- Doumergue was the indispensable man in France in 1934 if French democracy was to continue unhampered. It

⁷⁴Compare the following works which are based on Werth: Dennis Brogan, France Under The Republic (New York, 1939), and Richard Walden Hale, Jr., Democratic France (New York, 1941).

is difficult to see how chaos and anarchy could have been avoided if he had not been available. Around him crystallized all those who desired a return to French democratic unity. The deputies made no bones about how indispensable he was. There are few objective reasons why Doumergue's foremost biographer's words could still not be accepted in 1934, for he wrote:

Gaston Doumergue: Here is a republican who has found the secret of how to govern the Republic; here is a sincere democrat, and even a passionate one, who under the multi-party political system found a way to serve his country. Let us not say that such a task is impossible.⁷⁵

The last word on Doumergue goes to Laurent Bonnevey who, although a strict Radical-Socialist, was not blinded by party affiliation when he suggested Doumergue's part in the "Democratic Crisis" with the following words:

Even those who regretted the bitterness that filled Doumergue on November 11, and the harsh declarations he made as he departed from the capital, will never forget the service that he rendered his country and his Republic by leaving, ~~on~~ the night of February 7, his peaceful retreat of Tournefeuille to procure the benefit, if not of a durable internal peace, at least a long quiet truce for the French--who were on the brink of precipitating themselves into the abyss of an atrocious civil war.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Pierre Lafue, Doumergue (Paris, 1933), p. 4.

⁷⁶ Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes, p. 245.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION ON THE DEMOCRATIC CRISIS

What Has Been Done

Historiography of the subject.--- The historical works on the internal history of France in the early Thirties are extremely controversial and ephemeral. As has been pointed out throughout this study, the primary and secondary works on the period 1932 through 1934 in France came from such varied sources as memoirs, eye-witness reports, newspaper accounts, periodical analyses, and brochures written by survivors of the period. Of special importance to the research scholar are the invaluable materials left by the Stavisky Inquiry Commission as well as the February Six Inquiry Commission. Generally speaking, it is correct to state that most of the monographs on the January and February Riots were written by Frenchmen and tend to be biased and incomplete. It is amazing to discover that French writers who developed the subject during and after World War II have made so little use of the essential records left by the parliamentary commissions.¹

The Anglo-American historians have neglected to give adequate attention to the domestic events in France in the Thirties. The author can paraphrase the consensus of opinions given to him by French

¹ An annotated bibliography of the individual French works will be found at the end of this work.

scholars and politicians on this point as: "Americans understandably have given much attention to French foreign affairs in the period, but why have they allowed such a neglect of internal matters"? One bitter official added that French internal affairs were too confusing for American intellectuals to explain to the American public clearly. The first statement would appear to be correct, if we are to judge by the lack of substantial works produced by Anglo-American students on the "Democratic Crisis of 1934 in France."

Two Englishmen are still the leading authorities on the interpretation of the Thirties in France to the English-speaking world; these are, Alexander Werth, correspondent for the Manchester Guardian at that time; and Dennis Brogan, a Professor of Political Science at the University of Cambridge. This author has already commented at length on the importance of Werth. It will be recalled that the latter saw February Six as a fascist movement. Brogan, on the other hand, is difficult to rate as an authority, for he has included no bibliography to his France Under the Republic (Harpers, 1940). After careful scrutiny and comparison, this author discovered that Professor Brogan was dependent on Werth for his chapter entitled "And Knavish Tricks" which takes up matters discussed in this work.

Most of the historical writings by American historians on Modern France give but cursory attention to the events in France from 1932 to 1934. Examples of this type are: (1) John B. Wolf's France: 1815 to the Present (1940) and (2) Edward Mead Earle's Modern France (Princeton, 1951). In truth the only two worthwhile analyses by American historians

on the January and February Riots of 1934 are: R. W. Hale, Jr.'s Democratic France (Coward-McCann, Inc., 1941) and E. J. Knapton's France Since Versailles (Henry Holt, 1952). Both works devote only limited space to the topic, and both authors were depending on Werth. It must be added that no major American monograph on the subject has yet appeared.

Thus there has been little growth of historical perspective in America concerning the hectic events of January-February 1934. Yet this is the most written about internal development in France between the two wars by European scholars. In view of the paucity of material existing in the United States on the "Democratic Crisis" of 1934, the author has taken the liberty of going into much narrative and analysis --especially on the riots. At this point the author believes that it is essential to devote some space to the interpretations of February Six as seen by the European authorities in the field. This involves mainly a debate over terminology: a debate as to whether February Six was a "Civil War," a "revolution," or a "riot."

Civil War, Revolution, or Riot?

Was it a civil war?-- The influential periodical, L'Illustration, assigned a whole staff of investigators to the study of the significance of February Six on the very next day after the event occurred. Two weeks later the weekly published the results as seen by its research department. February Six was depicted as a day when Frenchmen, seething with rage, became bewildered by the clamors of the rushing multitudes on Paris streets which had been going on since New Year's

Day. Unable to comprehend what was happening, a minority of Frenchmen, unwittingly for the most part, organized what became virtually a "civil war." The battle fields were the vast Place de la Concorde, the Left and Right Banks of the Seine, and the Paris Boulevards. On these fields were matched one hundred thousand Parisians against several thousand guards and policemen. Defense lines were set up, assaulted, abandoned, and retaken. Assaults and retreats, attacks and counter-attacks, mass battalions and tactical units and hand-to-hand fighting were used by both sides. Thus all the elements associated with a "civil war" were there. "And so," concluded L'Illustration, "for a long time will this vision of a night of civil war stay with us."²

The "civil war" was also Henri de Kerillis' motif in L'Écho de Paris. Kerillis reported that on February Six "the Government of M. Daladier provoked a civil war in Paris." He developed this idea by pointing out that Frenchmen had been pitted against each other unmercifully, for had not the Mobile Guards fired on the crowd and killed and wounded many of their countrymen? He saw the enemy as being "the Stavisky Government, the Government of Thieves, the Government of Corruption, and the Government of Filth," that is by implication, the Daladier Government. The insurgents were the patriots, the veterans, and the decent people who, once aroused, fought for the cause of "national union." Further evidence that a civil war had occurred, added Kerillis, was the fact that a genuine mobilization had been

²Anon., "La soirée et la nuit du 6," L'Illustration, Vol. 4746. (February 17, 1934), 187.

undertaken by the political leagues. The men who answered the call had moved against the Concorde front to challenge the enemies--the armed Government troops.³

The historian, however, is confronted with very little objective evidence to uphold the civil war thesis. Politically speaking, only one government existed and not two to challenge each other. Both sides really used no trained troops; that is, military troops. The cause defended by both groups was never clearly stated as such. The rioters on this last point appear to be at odds, if we accept the political leagues' ideas as conveying the goal in mind, for some were royalists, others were nationalists, a small majority gave allegiance to communism, while others were vague in their doctrines. Thus without two governments, two armies, and two ideologies clashing it is difficult to take this civil war hypothesis seriously.

It might further be brought out that a civil war usually is of longer duration than was February Six. History does not record any civil war of such short duration--rather is the term coup d'état preferred. The author discussed this subject personally with a Frenchman who had witnessed the event and who granted that maybe the time element was against the civil war interpretation; but the same person argued that the rioters had a specific objective; namely, to take the Palais-Bourbon. In answer to this argument, Werth provides the speculation that:

³ L'Echo de Paris, February 7, 1934.

Materially the Chamber of Deputies represents nothing, the invasion could only have been of "symbolic" significance. But the moral effect of such a "symbolic" victory over the Republican régime would have been enormous; though it is difficult to see what the consequences of that victory would have been.⁴

Except for a literary approach to the subject, it is difficult to take this "civil war" view seriously. In addition, it should be noted, that no major authority on the Great February Six defends such a thesis. The author personally does not believe it is valid to so interpret the event under discussion as a "civil war."

Was it a revolution?-- Georges Scapini, the Rightist Deputy from Paris, became the main defender of the assertion that February Six was a day of revolution. Scapini expressed his "revolution theory" thus:

The truth is much more profound and infinitely more serious. For fifteen years, we have been in a state of virtual revolution. This revolution entered the active phase with this effusion of blood (on February Six). This revolution had as its sources many different causes.⁵

According to Scapini this revolution had reached the active phase on February Six because of: (1) socio-economic ideas, and (2) political deterioration. The key factor within the socio-economic elements was the "speculation parasite" which had infected French capitalism. He continued that this parasitical speculation had become a sort of privately run institution without controls or limits. As a result appeared the Stavisky Scandals. But, though this was the immediate

⁴Alexander Werth, France in Ferment (London, 1935), p. 160.

⁵Georges Scapini, Révolution: oui-Guerre Civile: non (Paris, 1934), p. 6.

reason for February Six, Scapini believed the weakness of France's leaders and the paucity of intelligence in public life had made it impossible for them to solve France's problems. These leaders, not seeing beyond their country's geographical limits had neglected and underestimated the international economic picture. February Six, Scapini felt, was a veritable revolution, for it made two changes inevitable: (1) the elimination of uncontrolled speculation, and (2) the adequate consideration by the French politicians of foreign influences.⁶

Another authority felt that February Six had been more a political revolution than anything else. Some sort of political upheaval had been in the making for many years, but it took February Six to reveal specifically that it "was monarchism's last stand" in France. The monarchist ideology directed by Maurras and Daudet made its last serious attempt to overthrow the Republic. February Six, continued this line of thought, revealed that both the Right and Left had drifted very far apart while under the Third Republic. The Great February Riot made both sides realize their follies had brought them back to the defense of the Republic. This was an unquestionable revolution because:

... a fact which for me is beyond question; that is, that without the demonstration of February Six, all would have remained in France as stagnant as it was since 1918.

⁶ Scapini, Révolution, pp. 6-10.

For the days of February sounded the knell of the old division of the Nineteenth Century between the Right and the Left.⁷

Other interpretations of the Great February Six were more cautious about labelling the event a "revolution," but suggested that it was an "attempted revolution," checked in its infancy and for the time being. One historian, seeking a good parallel in France's own political past, commented:

As in February, 1848, so in February 1934 Paris had been the scene of insurrection, extensive mob violence and bloody street warfare. The "famed February Revolution" brought defeat to the Orléanist Monarchy and ushered in the Second Republic. The current disorders, attended by scenes unparalleled since the days of the Commune in 1871, are today menacing the life of the Third Republic, and its early demise as well as the institution of one-person rule in any of several possible forms are subjects of daily discussion.⁸

In a limited sense, the idea of February Six as a revolution is acceptable. It is true, as M. Scapini stated, that speculation was uncontrolled in France during this period, and that most of the time cabinet changes only brought back the same old faces. It is also undeniable that on February Twelfth the Right and the Left were led to cooperate with each other because of the scare February Six had given them. The Left-Right rising to uphold democracy was further very obvious on the day Doumergue read his ministerial declaration before the Chamber. But to call the ending of a wild period of

⁷ Drieu la Rochelle, Chronique Politique: 1934-1942 (Paris, 1943), pp. 390-395.

⁸ Lowell Joseph Ragatz, The Background of the February Riots in Paris (London, 1934), p. 1.

speculation a revolution is stretching the meaning of the word a bit too much. The same holds true for the patching up of political disagreements.

To classify February Six as a major revolutionary day certainly would be incorrect. A revolution must result in the overthrow or renunciation of one government or rule, and the substitution of another, and it must also bring a "fundamental change." Certainly it is beyond doubt that the Doumergue National Government was somewhat different from the previous ministry headed by Daladier. Doumergue for one thing brought older and more experienced men into the Cabinet. The former President of the Republic, furthermore, showed more authority and found public opinion supporting him. That Daladier was overthrown "by the street" and not Parliament is an acceptable conclusion. The argument falls down on the matter of a "fundamental change." If a fundamental change had occurred in the Third Republic, it was difficult to say what it was. Political life still operated within a Third Republic frame, while the "men who served" were old familiar politicians to the French scene. Economically, small-scale capitalism still held sway over the nation. Religion had never been an issue. Thus, from all viewpoints, the full meaning of revolution when applied to February Six is unacceptable.

Was February Six a riot?-- Since there are aspects of February Six which make the terms "civil war" and "revolution" inappropriate, one is forced to evaluate it as a riot, and a very serious one. February Six has become a landmark in modern French history, and the

serious observer of French internal affairs can still see its repercussions even today. Witness, for instance, the influence it has had in destroying the faith in democracy of many Frenchmen and in sending them to the Communist fold. The writer prefers therefore to call it the "Great February Riot," as have many others who have attempted to explain it.

Marcel Lucain said that February Six was an "extremely serious riot" because of the use of dangerous weapons and the many dead and wounded. Lucain wrote that never in modern times had France witnessed so "bitter and important a riot." He expressed his horror at such a revolting development in his days by declaring:

And, no matter how sincere Frenchmen are in desiring that calm should return, that reason should rule, and that fraternal amnesty should be called into being, they cannot, unless they are implicated or apathetic, throw a curtain of silence over one outstanding fact, without precedent in our history: veterans and civilians were beaten unconscious with clubs; they⁹ were subjected to gunfire by a repression that showed no mercy.

Georges Arqué and Yves Dautun gathered an amazing collection of records dealing with the Stavisky Affair and February Six. They were convinced that their contemporaries were misinterpreting the meaning of these two events because they were using them for their immediate defense. Arqué and Dautun felt that the dispassionate history of the period could not be written until the 1950's. Until then, their generation was sure of only one fact: February Six had been a riot.¹⁰

⁹ Paris-Midi, February 7, 1934.

¹⁰ Georges Arqué et Yves Dautun, Une émeute (Paris, 1934).

Most of the press from the Right and Left agreed that February Six was a "riot." The C.G.T. called it a "shocking riot."¹¹ Figaro underlined that it was a "bloody riot in the Place de la Concorde and was so serious as capable of bringing on a civil war."¹² If the spokesmen for the C.G.T. and the typical "Grande Presse" agreed on a riot, so did the Left in L'Oeuvre:

Briefly, a night of riot. A premeditated riot, an organized riot. These encounters take us back to the worse bloody days of 1919 under Clemenceau.¹³

As we are again with a problem in semantics, let us define a riot as "wild and loose behavior, a tumult." Without doubt February Six was a wild day, and the sitting of the Chamber was unquestionably a tumultuous one. Furthermore, the events on the Place de la Concorde that day took February Six out of the category of "mild demonstration." The "human beast activities" placed it properly under "wild and loose behavior," a riot. The author believes that the account, described in great detail in Chapters Seven and Eight above, justifies the name "Great February Riot" as the proper label to tag to this momentous event.

Significance in History

Was there a "fascist plot" on February Six?-- The gravest accusation and the most accepted interpretation of the "Great February Six"

¹¹ Le Peuple, February 7, 1934.

¹² Figaro, February 8, 1934.

¹³ L'Oeuvre, February 8, 1934.

was that it was a "vast fascist plot." The writer must admit that he himself believed that such a plot existed as he began his research into the matter. Such a viewpoint had been borrowed from American textbooks on this period, as well as from some of the monographs on the Third Republic. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the English journalist, Alexander Werth, played no small part in this evaluation. Even in his excellent France in Ferment Werth wrote:

The man in the street missed the whole point, and only the politically educated working class realized, and were even inclined to exaggerate, the full significance of the "fascist coup." February Six was not followed by the establishment of a fascist dictatorship; but certainly Daladier was driven out by Fascist methods, by "direct action."¹⁴

This interpretation with little difficulty found many believers. M. Eugène Frot and M. Édouard Daladier were the fathers of this view in more ways than one, for they had insisted that there occurred an "attempted fascist coup d'état" on February Six against the French Republic. In his February Seven "appeal to calmness" address to the French people, Daladier had asserted that "certain political leagues had declared their wish to riot and had attempted a coup de force against the republican régime."¹⁵

The Communists were the most confirmed believers in the "fascist plot." Their leader, M. Maurice Thorez, was inaccurate in his historical details, for he twisted the facts and added others to fit

¹⁴ Werth, France in Ferment, p. 165.

¹⁵ MM. Jean Piot et de Nadaillac, Les décisions du gouvernement au lendemain du 6 février 1934 et la journée sur la voie publique, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3391, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934), p. 696.

the argument, but he was very effective and convincing. He clearly expressed the adopted Communist explanation when he recorded:

The coup had been carefully prepared since February 4th. The Fascist leagues came to an understanding among themselves. La Rocque and his troops were to come up at the decisive moment, and a detailed plan for the siege of the Palais-Bourbon was drawn up. With this common aim in view, each Fascist group launched its manifesto.¹⁶

Pierre Cot, a member of Daladier's Cabinet, still echoed the Government view during World War II with:

For on February Six, an excited mob pushed by the fascist organizations, the Action Française and the Croix de Feu notably, tried to invade the Chamber of Deputies, to establish a provisional government, and to crush the republican régime. Léon Blum, Daladier, and I knew this to be so, and we organized the opposition. In the battle between fascism and democracy, the date of February Six is a most important one.¹⁷

The Communist Youth Movement in France during this period purported to be yet more specific on the "plot" by revealing that Chiappe was the "shadow man behind this fascist plot." Their spokesman declared that the Communists had always suspected this questionable Prefect of Police as being a "sneaky one." Chiappe was further accused by the Communist Youth of attempting to establish the "capitalist fascists in power" so that they could dictate their policies to the nation.¹⁸

The C.G.T., France's largest labor union, had it published that

¹⁶ Maurice Thorez, France Today and the People's Front (New York, 1936), pp. 108-109.

¹⁷ Pierre Cot, Le procès de la république, Vol. I (New York, 1944), 43.

¹⁸ P. L. Darnar, Chiappe, un chef de bandit (Paris, 1936), p. 30.

the French people did not care for fascism or a Hitlerian régime. Its news organ announced that: "The Fascist Bands Had Organized Riots Around The Palais-Bourbon."¹⁹ The Socialist Party and its press, as we have seen, adopted the "fascist plot theory" and declared that:

The coup de force by the fascists had failed. The fascist reaction will not be allowed here. Fascist bands composed of Camelots du Roi, Croix de Feu, and Jeunesses Patriotes have assaulted the police with an unheard of savagery by taking recourse to clubs, razors, and revolvers.²⁰

The Socialists and the Communists kept using the "fascist plot theory" for many years afterwards--it might be added to certain political advantage. The Great General Strike, it will be recalled by the reader, was organized by the workers as a "protest against fascism." This fascist plot campaign resulted in all anti-fascists uniting to form the Popular Front under Blum afterwards.²¹

But must history accept this fascist plot verdict as the truth? Was there really a fascist plot? The author believes that there definitely was not any such plot on February Six. Those who say the contrary were never able to prove it. Furthermore, the proponents of this interpretation of the Great February Six never worried about objective evidence, but relied on appeals to the emotions. They emphasized what might have happened if.

But did the contemporaries all accept this fascist plot as the

¹⁹ Le Peuple, February 7, 1934.

²⁰ Le Populaire, February 7, 1934.

²¹ Le Populaire, February 13, 1934; also Le Temps, the 1935 issues.

truth? The answer to this question is "no." The conservative press was especially interested in removing this "fascist plot notion," and in its campaign we find the following excerpt:

The truth, here it is!

There was not, on February Six, any "plot by the Right." The first sittings of the Inquiry Commission--which has the duty of divulging all responsibilities incurred on that tragic day--have shown, with the evidence before them, that there existed no previous understanding among the numerous organizations that prepared the riot which was so savagely checked; and that the rioters were veterans, who had no other design but to protest peacefully against the imputable scandals brought on by the abuses of a political clique.²²

Georges Scapini, Deputy from Paris, also refused to associate himself with those who believed in such a plot. Scapini pointed out that a fascist movement always had a leader, a Fuehrer, or a duce. He could recall no such person in France to fit this requirement. The deputy averred that puerile arguments were being offered to label February Six a fascist coup.²³

Many witnesses later testified that the Inquiry Commission had tried to make them say such a plot existed even when they knew it was not true. No leaguers ever admitted that such a plot had been even discussed or thought of by the league leaders. The evidence is on their side of the argument.²⁴

In Chapter Five of this work, the author has shown that the interpretation of the political leagues as being the organizers of a "fascist

²² Le Temps, March 9, 1934.

²³ Scapini, Révolution, pp. 3-12.

²⁴ Candide, March 15, 1934.

plot" is erroneous. Those who say that February Six was a fascist plot use these leagues to prove their point. The leagues are all classified as "fascists." This, as we have shown, is far from being true. Even at best we can only credit the small leagues as having "fascist undertones." Often La Rocque is selected as the "leader of February Six." Acquaintance with the true facts of the Great February Riot quickly disposes of this notion as false. The author concludes with the February Six Inquiry Commission that no such a plot ever existed.²⁵

Was it anti-republicanism and was democracy at stake?-- In a conference held on February 23, 1934, M. Ybarnégaray, Deputy of the Basses-Pyrénées, demanded if the republic had been in danger on February Six. He answered this rhetorical question by admitting that he did not have all the facts, but added that he was already convinced of one fact--THE REPUBLIC WAS THREATENED. It was threatened by those who were in charge of keeping it alive, for they had allowed conditions to become chaotic. He concluded that the true gravediggers within the French Republic were the men who were the slaves of partisan politics.²⁶

The February Six Inquiry Commission concluded also that on February Six the Republic had been in danger. The commission went about to prove this point by quoting from the evidence and by digging heavily

²⁵ M. Marc Rucart, Rapport Général, Chambre des députés, Annexe 3383, Documents Parlementaires (Paris, May 17, 1934).

²⁶ Ybarnégaray, Le grand soir des honnêtes gens: le 6 février (Paris, 1934).

into the dossiers. The Commission recalled that during the January Riots this threat had grown more serious each day, because these riots were provoked and organized by the traditional anti-parliamentary enemies, the royalists. When the Solidarité Française founded by M. Coty, who called himself a "Bonapartist Republican," followed the royalist leaders into the Paris streets, Maurras' hopes for destroying the Republic went up.²⁷ On February 4, Maurras made no bones about his anti-republican intentions when he wrote: "As our friends have interpreted it for the past few days, the cry of 'Down With The Thieves!' was to be understood as meaning 'Down With The Republic!'"²⁸

In its Rapport Général, the February Six Inquiry Commission, however, inquired:

But is it not also true that the presidents of the Jeunesses Patriotes have never hidden their sentiments in favor of an authoritarian government? And was it not true that in the organization, in the administration, and in the charters of the associations, it was the authoritarian system which replaced the democratic system?--

If by "Republic" we mean the present type of democratic government, then we accuse those who tried to attack our democratic institutions, as did the rioters on February Six, of having placed the Republic in danger.²⁹

Victor Hugo once said that "the right to vote suppressed the right to insurrection." On February Six the rioters disregarded such a principle, for they attempted to take the Palais-Bourbon where sat the representatives elected by them. That same night a cry dominated all

²⁷ Rucart, Rapport Général, p. 1354.

²⁸ Action Française, February 4, 1934.

²⁹ Rucart, Rapport Général, p. 1354.

the others on the Concorde; namely, "On To The Chamber!" The Inquiry Commission here posed two questions: (1) Wasn't the attempt to take the Palais-Bourbon an act against the existing régime? and (2) when voters still had means to express their opinions peacefully, was it correct to try to force an opinion by using street forces as the rioters had done on February Six?³⁰ Georges Imann had earlier answered these questions as follows: "The Parisians, by marching on February Six to the Palais-Bourbon, desired to destroy Parliament."³¹

For months, through international contagion, the idea of establishing a dictatorship in France had won more and more followers. What dictatorship was it to be? We did not know! What dictator? We still had not discovered him! But in spite of these handicaps, the campaign went on ardently in the nationalist press of Paris and even in numerous conservative provincial sheets--the campaign against the institutions and the régime, and more particularly, against Parliament which was saddled with the blame for causing the world economic crisis.³²

The provinces of France agreed wholeheartedly with this belief that the rioters on February Six had hoped to overthrow French democracy and with it the Third Republic. A pastor speaking for the Angoumois section of France declared that on February Six the rioters had meant to throw the deputies in the Seine and overthrow the Republic. Another pastor from Brittany, feeling the same way, averred that:

³⁰ Rucart, Rapport Général, p. 1345.

³¹ Georges Imann, La journée du 6 février (Paris, 1934), p. 99 and p. 103.

³² Laurent Bonnevey, Les journées sanglantes de février 1934 (Paris, 1935), pp. 19-20.

We, simple provincials and protestant democrats, we would never accept as professors of morality, the leaders of February Six. They appeared to us as truly placing in peril the precious liberties fought for by our forefathers.³³

Democratic Crisis

Significance in history of February Six.— February Six was the dramatic climax of a "democratic crisis" which can be said to have become noticeable in France by 1932. The causes of the crisis can be taken further back than that date, of course, but it was only after the Elections of 1932 that post World War I France's democratic régime became seriously endangered. This first stage of the crisis can be termed the "latent" or "chronic" phase. During this "chronic phase," there appeared in France an increase in the distrust of French democratic institutions. The specific attacks against democracy took a technical viewpoint for they involved the questioning of such prosaic matters as the interpellations, the parliamentary questions, the constant ministerial instability, the French parliamentary committee system, the multi-party system, the value of a limited suffrage, and the disappointing results of the Elections of 1932.

During this "chronic phase" in the "Democratic Crisis" most of the criticisms against French democracy were kept on a high intellectual level and tended to be constructive in tone. Only a minority of the voters bothered to understand what these criticisms were. The truth of the matter was that many of these attacks had been under discussion

³³ Freddy Durrlemann, La cause et le six février (Paris, 1935), pp. 19-20.

for years in intellectual circles. These criticisms by themselves were not potent enough to bring about the overthrow of French democracy. What the critics of the French democratic system called "weaknesses" were also defended by pointing out that they were part of the Third French Republican tradition--they made politics more interesting. Thus this "chronic phase" was one of the increased intellectual exercise against the "weaknesses of French democracy." Moreover this movement developed into the sharpening and the remolding of the technical arguments so they could be understood by the uninitiated.

This first stage of the "democratic crisis" gradually entered into the "potential" or "acute phase"--a stage characterized by many more emotional and polemic attacks against the democracy than was usual. This "acute phase" gathered momentum as the economic crisis struck France after visiting most of the world. As the depression swept over the French population, as unemployment figures increased, as the farmers found the markets closed, and as the Government seemed to be unable to keep its Treasury in good order, the "capitalist offensive" began. This offensive was distinguished by the vicious threat it made against French parliamentary institutions and the premiership. This "capitalist offensive" soon was assisted in its attacks against the occupants of the Palais-Bourbon by the royalists. The royalist press, seeing the opportunity to reestablish the monarchy, began a devastating series of attacks against the government.

While the "capitalist offensive" and the royal press weakened many Frenchmen's faith in democracy, the German menace further increased

French anxieties over sécurité. The dominance of the German question led yet more Frenchmen to join the royalists and to preach that the French Government was to blame for the country's troubles. The press now kept itself busy trying to explain why French democracy was weakening. In this propaganda campaign emotional arguments and attacks on personalities abounded. The majority of Frenchmen may not have understood all the arguments as interpreted by the press, but they knew what the essential message communicated was: the Government was responsible for the "hard times" now hitting France.

While the intellectual attack against democratic institutions was becoming very dangerous to the existence of French democracy, the economic situation became worse. An unhappy people now began to listen more attentively to their anti-parliamentary press. The newspapers which criticized the "scapegoat" best were rewarded with higher circulations. The historian who studies the French periodicals and newspapers of this period is struck by the lack of pledges made by these public opinion media to support democracy. And although the French people could not say why they were allowing their emotions to react positively to this anti-parliamentary attitude, they knew that the government was doing little to alleviate their sufferings. This anti-parliamentary attitude gradually became overshadowed by a general atmosphere of disgust all over France with things as they were. This distrust became associated with the Third Republic.

This "acute phase" ended in many Frenchmen seriously questioning their faith in democracy when the Stavisky Affair exploded. The

democratic crisis then entered the third stage of its development; namely, the "active" or "violent phase." What had only been suspected before was now provided with facts and suggested lists of names of the "villains" responsible for the scandals. Every new revelation was taken apart by the venal press to the detriment of French democratic life. Many more Frenchmen, especially the political leaguers, joined actively in the movement against their democracy when the names of the French judges, lawyers, police, and deputies implicated with Stavisky were revealed. A political deterioration now occurred, as the press suggested that the future had yet more corruption and more thieves to disclose. The large headlines given the Stavisky Affair resulted in bringing the terrible assault against French democracy which was February Six.

Then on January 7, the Action Française's "call to action" was answered by the January Riots. It seemed from then on that no governments could do anything right. French democracy was meeting one of the severest tests in its history. In this "violent phase" of the "democratic crisis," it was fortunate for the Third Republic that the organized opponents of French democracy, the so-called political leaguers, had no program or leader acceptable to all France. The Chautemps Ministry with its Dalimier and Raynaldy Affairs, its refusal to allow parliamentary investigation of the Stavisky Scandals, and its attempt to reform the press only ended by goading the "street forces" into overthrowing the Government. A calmness was reached during this stage of the crisis when the Daladier Cabinet assumed power.

Daladier realized something had struck at the democratic institutions in France, but he decided to stick to the old political rules as usual. In his efforts to try to play the traditional parliamentary game, the Premier miscalculated. His mishandling of the Chiappe and Thomé-Fabre Affair brought the opponents of French democracy back on the streets. This time the crowd noticeably was much more numerous and had reached a point of extreme hate for the symbols that represented democratic France such as the police, the Chamber of Deputies, and even innocent by-standers who refused to join in the fight against the Government. The emotions, kept pent-up for too long by the majority of the political leaguers, broke out into full expression during the Great February Riot.

The rioters of February Six did not comprehend exactly what they hoped to accomplish that day, for they had no clear and coherent programs to follow. The "men in the street" that evening had lost faith in democracy, in their government leaders, and in themselves--for they were part of the French Republic. These men were groping for some leadership, but none appeared that was clear-sighted or constructive. The contradictory commands they heard during the riot only created more confusion in their minds. As the dejected rioters returned home on February Six, the realization of what had happened on the Concorde and in Paris sobered them to face reality. This turn in attitude brought on the end of the "violent phase" of the "democratic crisis." By midnight on February Six it was obvious that the crisis was already losing force.

Soon after Colonel Simon's counteroffensive on the Concorde on February Six, Daladier offered his description of what the riot had been: he declared it a "fascist plot." The public, desiring any plausible version at this time, eagerly accepted this one with very little questioning. A bit ashamed of what they might have done to their democracy, if circumstances had taken only a slightly different turn, they wanted to make amends. Except for a few die-hards, all of France entered into the "reaction" or "recuperative phase" of the "democratic crisis."

As the "recuperative phase" began, a whole day of repentance was ordered to "pledge oneself to the ideas of liberty and French democracy." The finger of accusation was pointed towards the "filthy fascists" who had brought French democracy to such a brink. Innumerable eulogies and pledges were now made in the name of democracy, and Premier Doumergue directed the French people back to their former allegiance. It is questionable whether any other French leader could have played the role as well at the time.

Provincial France came out of February Six with the cleaner conscience, and led the country in the return to the democratic faith. In fact, throughout 1934, the majority of Frenchmen returned as quickly as possible to accepting the Third Republic's institutions. And thus the "democratic crisis in France in 1934" passed away into French history. Its repercussions were to be felt for many years to come. French democracy still could not be expected to keep on the smooth road found in some of the other democratic nations, but the

cause of liberty could be thankful that it had not been completely destroyed during the hectic days that were January and February 1934.

The author, who believes that February Six has been neglected by the American students of modern French history, is convinced that this day in France, back in 1934, should be considered as one of the most important dates in the fight for democracy to survive in our world. It should be considered at least on the same level as the Quatre Septembre and the Seize Mai are already in the story which is that of the Third Republic.³⁴ As a threat to French democracy, the Great February Six Riot, when compared to the other major crises met by the Third Republic, was just as important and significant as had been the Boulanger and the Dreyfus Affairs. It was the most serious crisis French democracy had to face between the two World Wars.

Afterthoughts.-- Human curiosity always finds it stimulating to speculate on the "ifs" of history. The author, yielding to this temptation, desires to raise two of these "iffy questions": (1) What would have happened if the fascist rioters of February Six had succeeded in overthrowing the Third Republic? and (2) what would have resulted if the Communist Riot of February 9 had made France Communist?

If the fascists had seized control of the French government on February Six, the whole course of European history--and perhaps of the world--might have been changed. This new government could possibly have joined Hitler's Nazi Germany in an alliance against the democratic

³⁴For similar view see: Richard Walden Hale, Jr., Democratic France (New York, 1941), p. 344.

world; it could have led to an alliance with Italy and Mussolini. The first possibility would seem the unlikely, for French-German controversies in 1934 were a strong deterrent against any such rapprochement. But the alternative of an alliance with Mussolini's Italy was not so remote for in France, at that time, Mussolini was considered a greater figure than Hitler and was not looked upon disfavorably by many of the grand capitalists. The French role during the Italian War of 1859 and the Unification of Italy could have been used to advantage to cement the relationships between the two Mediterranean powers. Such an Italo-French rapprochement might have forestalled World War II by Fascist France and Italy bringing pressure against Nazi aggression.

The suggested developments above would have encountered some almost unsurmountable obstacles: (1) Germany and France were on extremely bad terms over reparation payments and the new aggressive tone emanating from the Chancellor of the Third Reich; (2) the bitterness over Alsace-Lorraine was often brought up in the Rhenish and Saar presses, not to mention numerous family and private circles within these two provinces themselves; (3) the Italian irredentists were still talking about the "robbery of Savoy and Nice" by Napoleon III, and (4) the Paris fascists had the task of convincing and winning over the conservative French provinces to their ideology. This "if the fascists on February Six had succeeded," collapses mainly because of the fact that February Six was not a premeditated fascist coup d'état. Despite the extravagant press attacks on the parliamentary régime, and the noisy January Riots, there was no fascist leader

recognized and ready to seize power on February Six.

Our second "if" is especially intriguing to one living in the mid-Twentieth Century when the Communist World has become such a gigantic force in international affairs. This "if" would assume that the French Communists would have been strong enough to control France in 1934. It would assume that February 9 might have been a successful Communist coup d'état. If this eventuality had occurred, would this have led to a quicker spreading of the Communist ideology throughout Western Europe? It might have brought a rapprochement between Russia and France. The democratic world would have been placed in a quandary then. The latter might have played the game of Realpolitik fully, and reluctantly made an alliance with Hitler and Mussolini to war against Communist France and Russia. The Red Scare in America had left sad memories as had the impulsive and half-hearted allied attempt after World War I to help the Whites to defeat the Reds. The anti-Bolshevik leadership being purged at that moment in Russia might have been strong enough to carry on a revolution from within successfully. In such a fight against the Stalinists the defection of Communist France from the Russo-French Pact could have brought allied success effectively and quickly. This flight into fantasy falls down on the inevitable truth that the French Communists in 1934 were extremely weak and were less ready to seize power on February 9, 1934 than the fascists had been three days earlier.

The reflective historian is further tempted to inquire whether such an event as the "Democratic Crisis of 1934 in France" is evidence

of the incurable precariousness of French democratic life. Comparing the alleged French and English temperaments is nothing new; but in modern European history the major English changes tend to be gradual and undramatic, while the French have a penchant towards introducing political changes explosively and dramatically. The Britisher may announce a new policy in the most perfunctory manner; the Frenchman has to dramatize such an announcement. The English emphasize reason; the French underscore emotions.

To understand France one must comprehend the heart and the mind of the French. To study the superficial facts of French history dispassionately is not enough. It may result in gathering many isolated facts under numerous titles, but not necessarily in an understanding of the French. France prefers theory over practicability, ideals over prosaic facts.

Compromising on the political plane is always a difficult matter in France. An Englishman will usually give in to reason; a Frenchman will not. Although the Frenchman can reason as skilfully as any other person, he prefers to do so intellectually. At times, he sees so many sides that the whole becomes to him incomprehensible. He finds himself defending those principles to which his emotions happen to react most vigorously. Thus he is unpredictable; he forms many political parties; he is a natural-born debater; he becomes stubborn when challenged; he is the ultra-individualist; and he admires intellectual radicalism.

This intellectual radicalism clashes with the French love for

order. The Frenchman is constantly torn between the two. This dichotomy is devastating in a world which demands order and conformity. It creates an unstable situation--a changing political force in the key country of Western Europe.

Whereas France in the past usually was able to express its emotional attitudes quickly and effectively, it seemed to have lost that ability under the Third Republic. Even the explosive event of February Six did not bring about the obviously needed changes in France's political and administrative structure. It would appear that France is still far from effectively adjusted to the new world of science, business, and democracy, which are some of the main currents of Western Civilization. There is no denying the fact that France is lagging behind in the political and economic fields. The sincere friends of France do not believe they can be honest and say otherwise. Destructive criticism will not help either for, unless France adapts to the changing world and improves the strength and effectiveness of its democratic structure, the free world will be that much weaker on the continent of Europe.

A pessimistic archivist in France told the author that "France has not yet faced the fact that it has entered a period of decline; that its voice in international affairs is worthless." To anyone sensitive to France's role in world affairs such a statement is repugnant. The future needs from France those contributions of which she gave so much in the past. The French people have a steadfast faith in their own destiny, and they are certain that France will not perish. No, it is

not decadence, but rather the "pangs of adjustment" that France is going through in the Twentieth Century. Those who know and love la belle et joyeuse France have confidence that France will, by herself, solve her problems and will keep on making those contributions to mankind which have to this day enriched Western Civilization.

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The study of the French press in 1933 and 1934 is an herculean task because of the vastness of the subject, the complicated indirectness used by some French reporters to cover up their opinions, and the lack of French newspaper sources in the United States on any but a fragmentary sense. French newspapers within our great archives are scattered, terribly incomplete, and discouragingly few. Really to get some understanding of the French press, the historian will make greater and firmer strides if he devotes many hours within the periodical and newspaper section of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, where the most important journals and periodicals are easily accessible.

The following analysis of the French press is based on the attitude taken towards internal affairs in the period 1932-1935.

Action Française, 1933-1934 series. The Royalist press.

Ami du Peuple, 1934 series. Edited by Pierre Taittinger in the period-- leader of Jeunesses Patriotes.

Candide, 1934 series. A weekly scandal sheet. Usually Rightist.

Humanité, 1933-1934 series. Communist organ.

Journal des Débats, 1933-1934 series. Oldest newspaper in France.

La Liberté, 1934 series. Leans towards Center.

L'Avenir, 1934 series. Conservative-Republican newspaper.

La Victoire, 1934 series. A Nationalist-Socialist daily.

L'Écho de Paris, 1933-1934 series. Henri de Kérillis' important journal d'information.

- Le Figaro, 1934 series. Ultraconservative paper of the upper bourgeoisie.
- Le Franciste, 1934 series. Official organ of the Francistes.
- Le Jour, 1933-1934 series. Authoritarian, nationalist view.
- Le Matin, 1933-1934 series. Journal d'information.
- Le National, 1933-1934. Jeunesses Patriotes organ.
- Le Petit Parisien, 1933-1934 series. Journal d'information.
- Le Peuple, 1933-1934 series. The C. G. T.'s organ.
- Le Populaire, 1933-1934 series. The Socialist organ.
- Le Quotidien, 1934 series. Nationalist in view.
- L'Ère Nouvelle, 1934 series. Radical newspaper.
- Le Temps, 1932-1935 series. In many ways the best paper to read. Conservative and very dull reading.
- L'Intransigeant, 1933-1934 series. Journal d'information.
- L'Oeuvre, 1934 series. Radical-Socialist organ.
- New York Herald Tribune (Paris Edition), 1934 series. Poor on 1934.
- Paris-Midi, 1934 series. A rightist organ.
- Paris-Soir, 1934 series. Best illustrated daily.
- Reveil du Contribuable, 1934 series. U.N.C.'s paper.

F. Periodicals and Articles

- Benda, Julien. "Enemies of Democracy in France," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 13 (January, 1935), 284-295. A French philosopher looks at the threats to French democracy coming from the Left and Right.
- Boris, Georges. "The French Press," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 13 (January, 1935), 317-327. Shows relationship between French press and opinion. Excellent.

DeWilde, John C. "Political Ferment in France," Foreign Policy Reports, Vol. X (July 18, 1934), 122-127. Excellent analysis of the political-economic situation in France from 1932-1934.

Journal des Débats. 1934 series. An excellent French periodical on political matters. Oldest in France. Leans towards Center.

La Grande Revue. 1934 series. Philosophical in approach.

Le Mois. 1934 series. Has outstanding writers. Too brief on internal matters.

Les Annales Politiques et Littéraires. 1934 series. Has important materials on domestic affairs throughout.

L'Europe Nouvelle. 1932-1934 series. Liberal periodical under Fabre-Luce until 1936. Later Pertinax became full editor.

L'Illustration. 1932-1934 series. The most outstanding periodical of the period. The February Six Riot materials are invaluable. No other surpasses it in details.

Revue de Paris. 1932-1934 series. A conservative periodical. Excellent.

Revue des Deux Mondes. 1932-1934 series. Oldest and most serious bimonthly. Represents the Right.

Revue Hebdomadaire. 1933-1934 series. The editor, Le Grix, in this periodical was pro-fascist and admired Mussolini.

Revue Mondiale. 1934 series. Socialist in view.

Revue Politique et Parlementaire. 1932-1934 series. Had authorities on various subjects write its articles. Very good.

G. Miscellaneous

Anon. Annuaire de la presse. Paris: Ch. Lorilleux et Cie, 1934-1935. Contains valuable information on the leading Parisian, provincial, and foreign newspapers.

Anon. "La civilisation écrite," Encyclopédie Française. Paris: Société de l'Encyclopédie Française, 1939. Contains a wealth of information on the French press, research in France, library facilities, and the like. Invaluable.

Bulletin de la Statistique Générale de la France et du Service d'observation des prix. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1934. A valuable collection of statistics on the economic picture in France in 1933 and 1934.

Editor and Publisher International Yearbook. New York: Editor and Publisher, 1934. Much factual information on the French press.

Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques, Annuaire Statistique, Vol. 50. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1934. The World Almanac of France.

United Nations. Statistical Yearbook. New York: United Nations, 1948 edition.

SECONDARY SOURCES

A. Biographies

Caillet, Robert, De la glorieta à la gloire. Carpentras: Éditions du Mont-Ventoux, 1939. Brief biography of Daladier and his ancestors. Very pro-Daladier.

LaPaquellerie, Yvon. Édouard Daladier. Paris: Flammarion, 1940. Best biography on Daladier in existence. Leaves much to be desired. The definitive work on Daladier has yet to come.

Lenglois, Paul. Vie et mort de Stavisky. Paris: DeNoel et Steele, 1934. A very lively and readable account, but extremely careless in details. Used by Werth for his sketch on Stavisky. Unreliable.

Verne, Maurice. Le Président Doumergue. Strasbourg: Bergen-Levault, 1925. One of the early biographies on Doumergue.

B. General Works

Brogan, Dennis. France Under the Republic. New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1939. Book X covers the period 1932-1934. Succinct remarks on the events by a candid British observer of French internal affairs.

Debu-Bridel, Jacques. L'agonie de la troisième république (1929-39). Paris: Editions du Bateau Ivre, 1948. Makes Tardieu the hero of French democracy in the thirties.

- Dorgot, Jean. France Is Divided. London: Frederick Muller, Ltd., 1945. Believes Anglo-Saxon world has underestimated importance of February Six in modern European history.
- Hale, Richard Walden, Jr. Democratic France. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1941. An interpretative history of high caliber in spite of factual mistakes.
- Leeds, Stanton B. These Rule France. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1940. Sees Daladier as a confused leader.
- Lévéque, André. Histoire de la civilisation française. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1950. Especially good on the Third Republic's institutions.
- Maxence, Jean Pierre. Histoire de dix ans (1927-37). Paris: Gallimard, 1939. A rightist's view of the period. Unreliable.
- Pritt, D. N. Fall of the French Republic. London: Frederick Muller, Ltd., 1941. Depends on Werth for this period.
- Simone, André. J'accuse. New York: Dial Press, 1940. A newspaperman's view of the men who betrayed France, including Daladier.
- Zévaès, Alexandre. Histoire de la IIIe République. Paris: Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Critique, 1946. A Socialist history. Good on France in the thirties.

C. Monographs

- Cameron, Elizabeth. Prologue to Appeasement. Washington: American Council on Public Affairs, 1942. An able study of French foreign affairs in the thirties based mainly on official documents and newspaper accounts.
- Desmond, Robert. The Press and World Affairs. London: D. Appleton-Century Co., Inc., 1937. Gives an excellent brief summary of the French press in the thirties.
- Détrez, Alfred. Dossier d'histoire: l'affaire Stavisky. Paris: Paillard, 1935. An account based on some Stavisky records. Leaves out important dossiers.
- Fox, Ralph. France Faces the Future. New York: International Publishers, 1936. A communist interprets the February 6-12 period for America.

- Galtier-Boissière, Jean. Mysteries of the French Secret Police. London: Stanley Paul & Co., Ltd., 1938. A study of the jealousy rampant in the French police system.
- Huddleston, Sisley. France and the French. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935. Invaluable chapter on the French press.
- Knapton, Ernest John. France Since Versailles. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1952. The first part of this work deals with the period covered in this work. A good introduction to the period.
- McKay, Donald C. The United States and France. Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1951. Important American authority on France presents his analysis. Scholarly.
- Micaud, Charles. The French Right and Nazi Germany: 1933-1939. Durham: Duke University Press, 1943. Good introductory remarks on the French press.
- Ollivier, Georges. La F. M. /Franc-Maçonnerie/ a-t-elle étouffé le 6 février? R.I.S.S., 1935. An antidemocratic view of February Six. Inaccurate.
- Ragatz, Lowell Joseph. The Background of the February Riots in Paris. London: Arthur Thomas, 1934. Concise but excellent.
- _____. The Monarchist Movement in France. New York: Roberts Foundation, 1934. Excellent.
- Sharp, Walter Rice. Government of the French Republic. New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1938. The best analysis of the French Government in the thirties in existence.
- Tevfik, Halim. Le nouveau régime de la presse. Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1937. Takes up the French press laws.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Lauréat Odilon Joseph Bernard, the son of Odilon and Rose Dumais Bernard, was born on December 26, 1922, in Lewiston, Maine. He spent part of his early years in St. Ephrem, Canada, but returned to the city in time to attend the parochial schools of Lewiston. After graduating from St. Peter and Paul Brothers' Academy, he attended Lewiston High School. He graduated from the latter institution in 1942.

After spending the summer of 1942 learning the métier of slasher-man in the Androscoggin Mill, Mr. Bernard attended the University of Maine on a scholarship for a two-semester period. He was called into the armed services in 1943. The major portion of his service years were spent in Europe where he acted as interpreter and surgical technician for the United States Army.

Mr. Bernard while in service attended Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida; and Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, under the Army Specialized Training Program. Granted credit for this work, he re-entered the University of Maine in February, 1946 and was graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Arts in History in June, 1948. During the school year 1948-1949 he served as graduate assistant in the Department of History and Government of the University of Maine. In August, 1949, he received the degree of Master of Arts in History and Government from Maine.

After teaching in northern Maine for a short while, Mr. Bernard took a position in the Memorial High School of Middleborough, Massachusetts. From 1951 through June, 1955 he taught American History, civics, journalism, problems of democracy, and sociology in Memorial High. In this period also he matriculated at the Boston University Graduate School as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. in History. In the fall of 1955 he became the Head of the Social Studies Department in Ipswich, Massachusetts, but he resigned this position in January, 1956 to become an instructor in history at the Boston State Teachers College.

