

Censorship of the Press in France 1917-1918

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Charles Sorrie

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the development and implementation of media control in France during the First World War. First it describes the evolution of the press control system between 1914 and 1916 and outlines its bureaucratic framework. The study then analyses the extent to which censorship of the press was useful in helping the French government achieve its aims during the particularly turbulent years of 1917 and 1918. The chapters are set out chronologically and contain sections that examine the role of censorship on a case by case basis.

The last two years of the war have been chosen for special examination in this thesis because in 1917 and 1918 France's war effort was increasingly strained simultaneously by both internal and external events. In 1917 France was threatened with rising war weariness, coinciding with the failed Nivelle Offensive, mutinies at the front and international calls for a negotiated peace settlement. In 1918, as Clemenceau began to rally the nation, France faced its most crucial enemy attack since the Marne in 1914.

Most of the thesis focuses on censorship of newspapers in Paris. These papers not only had far larger circulations than their provincial counterparts but often were read in the provinces more than were local papers. Finally by following a few papers specifically through these two years, it is possible to see the evolution of the way in which papers on the left, right and centre were monitored by the government.

This thesis argues that France's censorship system, while not perfect was effective in achieving the aims set out as its goals in 1914 by the War Ministry: to keep military secrets from the enemy and to help maintain public order.

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Thank you to the London School of Economics Academic Partnerships program for agreeing to fund me during a one semester academic exchange at Sciences Po, Paris, and Professor Jacob Vogel for agreeing to officially oversee my work while in Paris. I am also much indebted to the archival staff at the Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine in Nanterre and the Service Historique de la Défense in Vincennes, particularly Mme. Decuber from the latter.

Finally I would like to acknowledge and thank my parents Charles and Lynda Sorrie, whose moral and financial support has been indispensable to my academic career thus far. To them this thesis is dedicated.

Charles Sorrie, July 2014

Introduction: Primary Sources, Historiography and the Importance of Censorship in 1917-1918 France

The historiography of the First World War continues to grow as the conflict, one hundred years later, still inspires fascination and bewilderment among academics and among those for whom history is more a curiosity. This thesis examines a subject about which little has been written, particularly in English. It investigates the methods used by the French Government to both protect state secrets and control public opinion in 1917 and 1918 and evaluates its effectiveness in achieving these aims. Newspapers as the primary news source for citizens and soldiers were seen as useful tools by the French Government for shoring up public opinion in favour of the war effort. The written press, however, was also viewed as being potentially dangerous if left unchecked, because of its potential to leak state or military secrets and its capacity to foment unrest. Though works have been written which discuss the bureaucracy of the French information management system and the debates surrounding its practices, none have yet attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of French censorship in both achieving the aims set out for its use in 1914 and its value as a tool in helping France fight the war, particularly during the critical 1917-1918 period.

There are no extended monographs published in English on French censorship during the First World War, and only one in French. La Censure militaire et policière 1914-1918<sup>1</sup> by Maurice Rajsfus glances over most aspects of government directed censorship during the war. It includes sections on censorship of the press, advertising, pamphlets, the post, feminist movements, music, theatre and cabarets. His central argument is that the French government in censoring the press extended its powers beyond what was needed to preserve public order and military discipline. At some points he argues this point effectively. The best examples are his analyses of the censorship of trench letters written to soldiers' families<sup>2</sup> and of the censorship of the

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<sup>1</sup> M., Rajsfus, La Censure militaire et policière 1914-1918 (Paris 1999).

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp.143-152.

arts in Paris.<sup>3</sup> Though Rajsfus's study is adequately researched and is an interesting read, it contains several flaws which diminish its contribution to the field.

Rajsfus attempts to cover too much in 256 pages. Because he discusses broad subjects (political censorship 1914-1918, for example)<sup>4</sup> in twenty pages or less he is forced to make sweeping statements while using few examples to defend his arguments. Many of his most strongly worded passages appear to be only partially relevant to the material immediately preceding them. This is not helped by the fact that his tone is often sarcastic and polemical. It seems Rajsfus approached the subject from the outset of his research with a pre-conceived opinion that all censorship is immoral and all censors are mean-spirited. His conclusion, for example, is entitled 'Under the Gaze of the Perverse.' The present thesis is narrower in scope than Rajsfus's book, allowing for an analysis more heavily based on archival material, and is also more nuanced in tone and less politically partisan.

The longest study on censorship in France during the First World War is an unpublished 994 page thesis written by Olivier Forcade under the supervision of Jean Jacques Becker at the University of Paris-X (Nanterre).<sup>5</sup> Forcade's thesis is meticulously researched and is an essential research tool for scholars of the subject. It contains extensive charts, graphs and a vast bibliography. His primary interest is in the political debates surrounding censorship and the creation and bureaucratic structure of the French information management system. His central argument is that by 1918 wartime censorship was largely tolerated by both French citizens and by journalists. In addition he contends that by 1918 journalists had become so familiar with censorship practices that self-censorship became the primary method of French press control. Finally, he argues that censorship had a positive effect in rallying the nation behind the war effort.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, part 4.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, pp.51-69.

<sup>5</sup> O. Forcade 'La Censure politique en France pendant la Grande Guerre', doctoral thesis, (Paris, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, Conclusion.

An occasionally heated, though more often nuanced, debate exists between French historians of the First World War over the extent to which French citizens and soldiers accepted the draconian wartime measures of their government between 1914 and 1919.<sup>7</sup> Two prominent historiographical centres are at the forefront of the debate. Historians associated with the *Historial de la Grande Guerre*, (known as the *Historial*) located in Péronne,<sup>8</sup> have generally contended that the patriotism of citizens and soldiers led them to accept wartime measures and that this acceptance characterised an idiosyncratic wartime culture. Well-known scholars associated with this centre include Jean-Jacques Becker, Jay Winter, John Horne, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Annette Becker, Leonard V. Smith and Heather Jones. The other centre, the *Collectif de Recherche International et de Débat sur la Guerre de 1914-1918* (known as the CRID), is based in Toulouse.<sup>9</sup> Its primary argument in the debate surrounding *consentement de guerre* has been that draconian wartime policies such as strict censorship were imposed on unwilling French citizens and that many soldiers fought on primarily because they were offered no alternatives. Leading academics from this centre include Rémy Cazals, Nicolas Offenstadt, Frédéric Rousseau, Denis Rolland and André Loez.

Both Forcade and Rajsfus are associated with one of these schools, a fact reflected in their primary arguments. Forcade's primary argument is that preventative censorship by the state of the media was replaced by self-censorship as the war matured because governmental control over the news became both more acceptable and predictable to the press and to the citizenry. For this reason fewer attempts were made to print prohibited or provocative material. This argument implies that the majority of French journalists and even citizens wilfully subjected their freedoms of information and speech to the greater cause of winning the war. Though much of the work stemming from the *Historial* is more nuanced regarding this assertion, Forcade does little to

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<sup>7</sup> Many of the wartime laws employed in August 1914 including the 'State of Siege' (see Chapter 1) were not repealed until after the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles in October 1919. In France the term used in these debates for war acceptance is '*consentement de guerre*.'

<sup>8</sup> Its main contributors, however, live and work across France, the rest of Europe and the United States.

<sup>9</sup> The vast majority of academics working for the CRID work in various locations across France.



deviate from the school of thought in which his supervisor is a leading figure.

Although Rajsfus is not an official member of the CRID (he is primarily an expert on Vichy France and the Holocaust) his work is both highly praised as ‘a wealth of information’<sup>10</sup> and is cited in an article by the centre’s director, Rémy Cazals.<sup>11</sup>

Rajsfus’s assertion that French censors operated in bad faith is more simplistic and politically motivated than much of the literature that derives from the CRID. His conclusion, however that censorship was imposed upon the French population conforms with the majority of the centre’s scholarship regarding the debate over *consentement de guerre*.

This thesis agrees with Forcade’s conclusion that censorship played an effective role in consolidating civilian morale. It does not operate, however, under the assumption that the vast majority of French citizens, journalists and soldiers supported the repression of press freedoms. Given the absence of contemporary opinion polls, this argument is difficult to prove. This thesis rather presupposes that newspapers, as the primary source of information for citizens and soldiers, were powerful instruments in influencing opinion at home and at the front. The Government used media censorship both to protect military secrets and to filter news of politically sensitive events at home and abroad. Newspapers influenced a mass audience of readers, and the government in Paris orchestrated what was reported in the news. For this reason, censorship affected public opinion in a way often determined by Paris. This thesis argues that government policy regarding the press affected the way in which events and debates were portrayed in newspapers, and this had an impact on their audiences. It does not necessarily follow that a vast majority of citizens and soldiers were consciously aware of the extent of government manipulation of the press. Newspaper readers were presented with a plethora of papers from which to choose. The majority of readers selected journals that reflected their own politics or sensibilities and were therefore influenced by what they read, sometimes unknowingly.

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<sup>10</sup> Bibliography for the CRID, <http://www.crid1418.org/bibliographie/typologique/forguerre.htm#Bc>.

<sup>11</sup> R.Cazals, ‘1914-1918: Oser penser, oser écrire’, *Genèses*, No.46, (Jan.2002), p.42.

This thesis also agrees with Forcade that information management in France became more reliant on self-censorship during Georges Clemenceau's tenure as Premier than in the previous years of the conflict. Forcade argues that this resulted from the press's increased understanding of what was acceptable to print, which is correct but provides only part of the explanation of why papers were officially censored less under Clemenceau than under previous administrations. This thesis shows that under Clemenceau and his civil cabinet head Georges Mandel, the government (often Mandel himself) frequently provided newspaper editors with informal advice regarding prohibited material, sometimes over the telephone, before their drafts were submitted to the Press Bureau.<sup>12</sup> As a result, editors self-censored more thoroughly their papers before submitting drafts to the Press Bureau. Because of this practice there are fewer official censorship orders to be found in the available archival material for this period. Finally, during the closing months of the war, after the Ludendorff Offensives of Spring 1918, the majority of events related to the conflict provided positive news stories for the French and therefore less press supervision was required than previously. Although positive news was always proof-read by the censors, mostly to limit rumours, prevent exaggerations and protect military secrets, the censorship of news related to negative events was always given priority at the Press Bureau.

This thesis both complements and adds to the work already undertaken by Rajsfus and Forcade. Though it touches upon the debate surrounding *consentement de guerre*, this is not the primary focus of the study. It seems probable that public opinion towards government action varied throughout the country, making generalisation difficult. Rather than evaluate public opinion towards press censorship, this thesis evaluates the effectiveness of censorship as a tool of war. It examines how censorship was used by the government during the most significant events for the French during the crisis years of 1917-1918. It does this by assessing the goals of the government *vis-à-vis* the press during each episode and then demonstrates how the government

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<sup>12</sup> The Press Bureau was the main body for press censorship in Paris. Its establishment and function are discussed in Chapter 1.

proceeded to manipulate the news in pursuance of those aims. Neither Rajsfus nor Forcade deal directly with censorship on a case by case basis or write about how news of specific events was censored. This approach contributes greatly to our understanding of how the mechanics of French censorship operated at particularly stressful moments to protect military secrets and to steer public opinion.

There are several shorter studies written on French censorship during the First World War. Ross Collins's 'The Development of Censorship in World War I France'<sup>13</sup> is a concise 25 page overview of the bureaucratic structure and principal aims of the French wartime information management system, and provides a good starting point for those studying the subject. Collins's detailed account of the introduction of Circular 1000 (September 1915) and its impact on the standardisation of censorship policies across the country (See Chapter 1) is particularly insightful. Forcade's chapter on wartime censorship in the Encyclopédie de la Grande Guerre. 1914-1918<sup>14</sup> (a collection of writings published by the Historial) is also interesting because of its international, approach but is too short to provide detailed analysis.

Several shorter studies of specific events or individual aspects of censorship in France during the First World War were also helpful to the research for this thesis. Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains, a French historical journal once run by the late Guy Pedroncini, has published a number of articles on the subject. Particularly important are two articles written by Françoise Navet-Bouron. Navet-Bouron's article on censorship in France during the Battle of Verdun<sup>15</sup> outlines how the French Government directed a campaign in the press which cemented the battle's legendary character in the French national psyche long after it ended. Her study and chapter 3 of Paul Jankowski's book on Verdun<sup>16</sup> provide excellent analyses of how the 'Legend of

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<sup>13</sup> R. Collins, 'The Development of Censorship in World War I France', Journalism Monographs, No.131, (Feb. 1992.).

<sup>14</sup> O. Forcade. 'Information, Censure et Propagande', in S. Audoin-Rouzeau and J-J. Becker, Encyclopédie de la Grande Guerre. 1914-1918 (Paris, 2004), pp.451-457.

<sup>15</sup> F. Navet-Bouron, 'Verdun et la censure', Guerres mondiales et conflits Contemporains, No. 182, (Apr.1996), pp.45-56.

<sup>16</sup> P.Jankowski, Verdun: The Longest Battle of the Great War (New York, 2003).

Verdun' (see Chapter 1) was in large part orchestrated in Paris. Navet-Bouron's other article discusses censorship of issues related to women during the war,<sup>17</sup> and is an invaluable tool in researching the press's approach to the *midinettes*' strike of spring 1917 (see Chapter 4).

John Horne, a prolific historian of the First World War, has written several works related to this study. His article 'Information, opinion publique et l'offensive Nivelle du 16 avril'<sup>18</sup> is the best source written specifically on how the disastrous Nivelle Offensive of spring 1917 (see Chapter 3) was officially interpreted by the French media. As is characteristic of Horne's work, it is meticulously referenced and provides an essential research tool. His chapter in State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War<sup>19</sup> (of which he is also the editor) presents an interesting comparison between the attempts to combat German propaganda both domestically and in neutral countries by France and Britain. Finally, his monograph, Labour at War<sup>20</sup> contains a great deal of useful background information on the understudied Loire strikes of late spring 1918 (see Chapter 6).

The most detailed account of the relationship between the French Army and press during the First World War is a relatively short 122 page monograph by Jean-Louis Maurin entitled Combattre et informer.<sup>21</sup> Though written as a narrative it demonstrates how Generals Joseph Joffre (Western Front Commander until December 1916), Robert Nivelle (until late May 1917) and Philippe Pétain (thereafter) had distinctive approaches to army-media relations. It is a useful study because of its extensive collection of annexes and charts outlining the structure of the chain of command regarding the distribution of military information to the media. Another important

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<sup>17</sup> F. Navet-Bouron, 'La censure et la femme pendant la Première Guerre Mondiale', Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains, No.198, (May 2000), pp.43-51.

<sup>18</sup> J.M. Horne 'Information, opinion publique, et l'offensive Nivelle du 16 avril 1917', in L. Gervereau and C. Prochasson, ed., Images de 1917 (Paris,1987).

<sup>19</sup>J.M. Horne, 'Remobilizing for Total War : France and British 1917-1918', in J.M. Horne, ed., State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War (Cambridge, 1997), pp.195-211.

<sup>20</sup> J.M. Horne, Labour at War: France and Britain 1914-1918 (Oxford,1991).

<sup>21</sup> J-L, Maurin, Combattre et informer: L'Armée française et les médias pendant la première guerre mondiale (Paris, 2009).

work on this subject, though differing in primary focus, is Pyrrhic Victory<sup>22</sup> by Robert A. Doughty, an authoritative account of French strategy and operations during the War. Finally, Reporting the Wars by Joseph J. Matthews<sup>23</sup>, an international history of war correspondence from the Napoleonic period to the 1950's, contains an interesting chapter on the development of war correspondence during the First World War by placing the subject in an international context.

One of the most important and frequently cited works in this thesis is Les Secrets de la censure pendant la Guerre, published in 1932 by Marcel Berger and Paul Allard.<sup>24</sup> Berger and Allard worked as censors at the Press Bureau in Paris during the war and their book recounts their experiences during this period. They discuss the reaction of the French censorship system to almost all of the events covered in this thesis, and the book provides an invaluable resource because of its unique detailing of the inner workings of the Press Bureau. Not only does it discuss which orders were given to censors by their superiors (material that can be found in archives, see below), but it also provides insight into the personalities of the various Press Bureau directors and discusses the relationships between the Press Bureau and several important newspaper owners and editors. The limitations to this book as a research tool are those found when using memoirs in general. Thus the book not only relies in part on the memory of its authors but also is influenced by their personal feelings towards the personalities whom they discuss and, in a few rare cases, the necessities of press censorship itself. These deficiencies, however, in the case of this book are not significant enough to render it anything less than a highly significant source of information. Berger and Allard when writing the book clearly had access either to detailed personal notes from their time at the Press Bureau or to a copy of an old censor's log book, because their frequently cited dates provided when discussing censorship orders in all cases match the corresponding archival records. Moreover, their insight into the personalities of the

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<sup>22</sup> R.A.Doughty, Pyrrhic Victory: French Strategy and Operations in the Great War (London,2005).

<sup>23</sup> J.J. Matthews, Reporting the Wars (Minneapolis, 1957).

<sup>24</sup> Berger and Allard, Les Secrets de la censure pendant la Guerre (Paris, 1932).

key figures involved in censorship during the war do not conflict with most of what has been written by historians or that can be found in the archives. Finally, they do not appear to espouse a political agenda when discussing the act of censorship. Rather their main analytical point (the book is written as a narrative) is that the censor's task was busy, nerve-racking and thankless.

Much work has been done on the general history of the French press. The most thorough and informative study is a five-volume collection primarily edited by Claude Bellanger.<sup>25</sup> Though the third volume in the series (covering 1881-1945) only contains 40 pages dedicated to the French press during the First World War,<sup>26</sup> both it and the far more accessible but shorter and more international in focus *Histoire de la Presse* by Charles Ledré<sup>27</sup> are wonderful secondary resources for the history of the pre-war French press. Though more recent press histories have been written,<sup>28</sup> Ledré's remains perhaps the most useful one-volume study.

Several works have been published on the histories of specific newspapers, some focussing on 1914 -1918 more than do others. Though this thesis, which focusses on mainstream Parisian dailies, does not discuss the satirical journal founded during the First World War, *le Canard Enchaîné*, Allen Douglas's book on that paper during the conflict<sup>29</sup> provides interesting insights into the relationship between press leaders and government bureaucrats as well as the mentality behind the development of *bouillage de crâne*, a type of government-orchestrated propaganda (see Chapter 1). That Jean Dupuy, the influential editor and owner of *Le Petit Parisien*, was at the forefront of this state directed propaganda, is revealed in the official history of *Le Petit Parisien*.<sup>30</sup> For a detailed history of trench journalism in France during the war (another important

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<sup>25</sup> C. Bellanger, *Histoire générale de la presse française 5 vols.* (Paris,1972).

<sup>26</sup> C. Bellanger, *Histoire générale de la presse française. Tome III : De 1871 à 1940* (Paris,1972).

<sup>27</sup> C. Ledré, *Histoire de la presse* (Paris,1958).

<sup>28</sup> Far more recent but written for a mass audience and also international in scope is J-N. Jeanneney, *Une Histoire des medias: des origins à nos jours* (Paris,1996).

<sup>29</sup> A. Douglas, *War, Memory, and the Politics of Humor: The Canard Enchaîné and World War I* (Berkley,2002). For a further study of the history of the *Canard Enchaîné* see L. Martin, *Le Canard Enchaîné: Histoire d'un journal satirique (1915-2005)* (Paris,2001).

<sup>30</sup> F. Amaury, *Histoire du plus grand quotidien de la III<sup>e</sup> République : Le Petit Parisien 1876-1944* (Paris,1972), pp.1065-1068.

subject indirectly related to this study) the most important study is *Men at War 1914-1918* by Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau.<sup>31</sup>

There has been little written on the history of *Havas* during the First World War. This is unfortunate, because *Havas* as France's largest news agency played a crucial role in the dissemination of information to various newspapers by using its extensive network of foreign contacts. Curiously, Antoine Lefebvre's history of *Havas*,<sup>32</sup> the agency's only general history, dedicates just five pages to the First World War.<sup>33</sup> Bellanger's chapter on the French press during the First World War<sup>34</sup> entirely omits *Havas*'s role. None the less, this study demonstrates the frequency with which *Havas* was censored and reveals its vast network of correspondents. Indeed *Havas* appears more often than any other agency in the telegraph censors' logbooks of the archives at the *Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine* (see below), not because its reporters were censored more heavily than were newspaper correspondents, but because of the frequency of its telegram activity. Another study which unfortunately neglects the history of the First World War is the official history of the important Parisian daily *Le Figaro*.<sup>35</sup>

In preparation for this study much research was done into the history of French public opinion, society and governance during the war. As mentioned above, the evaluation of public opinion in France between 1914 and 1918 is particularly difficult because of the lack of public opinion polls from the period. Some important studies, however, have attempted to evaluate French public opinion during the war by studying newspaper journalism, newspaper readerships, police reports and prefectural and mayoral communications with the authorities in Paris. The most important of these studies, because it discusses the entire war period and uses departmental examples when commenting on France as a whole, is *The Great War and the French People* by

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<sup>31</sup> S. Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War 1914-1918: National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France during the First World War* English edition, (Providence, 1992).

<sup>32</sup> A. Lefebvre, *Havas: Les Arcanes du pouvoir* (Paris, 1992).

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, pp.175-185.

<sup>34</sup> Bellanger, *Histoire générale de la presse française. Tome III* pp.407-445.

<sup>35</sup> C.Blandin, *Le Figaro. Deux siècles d'histoire* (Paris, 2007).

Jean-Jacques Becker.<sup>36</sup> Becker skillfully evaluates the shifts in French public opinion during the war and convincingly argues that although significant cracks in the *Union Sacrée* existed by early 1917, the home front was scarcely in danger of collapsing at the war's end. This study along with his *La France en Guerre 1914-1918*<sup>37</sup> provided invaluable secondary resource material in researching this thesis because Becker's works, like this thesis, focus on the significance of individual events in influencing public opinion.<sup>38</sup>

Two other studies of French public opinion during the First World War provide examples of how methodologically this subject can be approached. France 1914-1918: Public Opinion and the War Effort by P.J.Flood<sup>39</sup> examines the shifts in morale during the conflict by focussing on the department of the Isère. He concentrates on three main influences on public opinion, namely the clergy, school teachers and the press. His approach not only avoids simplistic statements about the population in general but also contributes to our understanding of a relatively under-studied region of France.

Another important study is Pierre Miquel's book on French public opinion towards the Versailles settlement.<sup>40</sup> Not only does Miquel provide an excellent template for how to use press analyses as an indicator of public opinion, but also in his bibliography he includes an extensive list of contemporary French newspapers accompanied by a list of major contributors and in most cases mentions their political affiliations.<sup>41</sup>

For more general works discussing French society as a whole between 1914 and 1918, two studies provide useful starting points. Jean-Baptiste Duroselle's La Grande Guerre des Français<sup>42</sup> examines a multitude of issues related to France during the war (politics, economics, foreign affairs, public opinion, military fortunes etc...) in a chronological fashion and is an essential source for those interested in the

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<sup>36</sup> J-J. Becker, The Great War and the French People English edition, (Oxford,1993).

<sup>37</sup> J-J. Becker, La France en guerre 1914-1918: La Grande mutation (Paris,1988).

<sup>38</sup> Becker for example discusses the Mutinies of 1917, both Russian Revolutions of 1917, the *Midinettes* Strikes, the Ludendorff Offensives of 1918 and the Loire strikes of 1918. These subjects are all individually analysed in this thesis.

<sup>39</sup> P.J.Flood, France 1914-1918: Public Opinion and the War Effort (New York, 1990).

<sup>40</sup> P. Miquel, La Paix de Versailles et l'opinion publique française (Paris,1972).

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, pp.572-579.

<sup>42</sup> J-B Duroselle. La Grande Guerre des français 1914-1918 (Paris,2002).



interconnection between these aspects of French wartime society. Shorter, but with a more analytical focus on social history, is France and the Great War 1914-1918,<sup>43</sup> written by three historians from the Historial, Leonard V. Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker. Written in a clear, concise and accessible fashion, it is informative and enjoyable. Especially relevant to this thesis was the material in this study on the ‘crisis of 1917’ and particularly the attacks on ‘defeatism’ launched by Clemenceau and the far-right *Action Française* during the final trimester of that year.<sup>44</sup>

For French governance from 1914 to 1918, perhaps the best study remains The Forms of War Government in France by the eminent Sorbonne professor Pierre Renouvin.<sup>45</sup> Because the book was written 87 years ago, Renouvin’s access to archival material was limited. Renouvin none the less successfully broke the functions of government into chapters and made effective use of the sources available to him, mostly memoirs written by those directly involved in the wartime governments and the *Annales de la Chambre*, an official account of the debates in the Chamber of Deputies and a rough French equivalent to the British Hansard. French war aims are also relevant to Paris’s motives in manipulating the press. Especially informative on this subject are French War Aims against Germany 1914-1919 by David Stevenson<sup>46</sup> and Beyond the Balance of Power by Peter Jackson.<sup>47</sup> Finally, for an overview of French political history during the First World War, the best guide is perhaps the second of seven volumes written by Georges and Édouard Bonnefous on the political history of the French Third Republic.<sup>48</sup>

An excellent companion to the Bonnefous’ seven-volume history is the ten-volume memoir by Raymond Poincaré,<sup>49</sup> French President during the First World War.

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<sup>43</sup> L.V. Smith, S. Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, France and the Great War 1914-1918 (Cambridge,2003).

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, pp.113-146.

<sup>45</sup> P. Renouvin, The Forms of War Government in France (New Haven,1927).

<sup>46</sup> D.Stevenson, French War Aims Against Germany 1914-1919 (Oxford,1982).

<sup>47</sup> P.Jackson, Beyond the Balance of Power: France and the Politics of National Security in the Era of the First World War (Cambridge, 2014).

<sup>48</sup> G.Bonnefous, Histoire Politique de la Troisième République Tome II : La Grande Guerre (1914-1918) (Paris,1967).

<sup>49</sup> R. Poincaré, Au Service de la France : Neuf années de souvenirs (France,1926).

Volumes nine and ten, which cover 1917 and 1918 respectively, are written in the form of a diary and provide a weekly (sometimes daily) account of the inner workings of the French government from Poincaré's perspective. Though Pierre Miquel's<sup>50</sup> and John Keiger's<sup>51</sup> biographies of Poincaré are interesting, far more relevant to this study are the biographies of Clemenceau by Jean-Baptiste Duroselle<sup>52</sup> and Mandel by John M. Sherwood,<sup>53</sup> both of which discuss in detail the relationship between these central figures and the press.

Although censorship in France is the central topic of this thesis, it is important to make comparisons between the information management system in France and those of Britain and Germany. In all three countries the primary objectives of press censorship were to protect state and military secrets and to maintain morale on both the front lines and the home fronts.<sup>54</sup> Also in all three cases the left wing press was monitored far more heavily than its centrist or right-wing counterparts because it was suspected to be potentially subversive when discussing war aims or steering civilians and soldiers towards defeatism, pacifism or (after the Bolshevik Revolution) socialist internationalism. Finally, in all three countries the debate over the use of political censorship, (i.e. the repression of information related to domestic politics), never fully subsided before the armistice.

In Britain, though the administration of press censorship differed in practice from that in France, on paper the two bureaucracies which dealt with information management shared many similarities. As in France, the central body that dealt with press censorship in Britain was originally named the Press Bureau and both nations implemented their nation's laws governing freedom of the press in wartime during the first ten days of August 1914. Also as in France (see Chapter 1), the British Government linked the powers of its press bureau to a series of exceptional wartime

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<sup>50</sup> P. Miquel, *Poincaré* (Paris, 1984).

<sup>51</sup> J. Keiger, *Raymond Poincaré* (Cambridge, 2002).

<sup>52</sup> J-B., Duroselle, *Clemenceau* (Paris, 1988).

<sup>53</sup> J.M. Sherwood, *Georges Mandel and the Third Republic* (Stanford, 1970).

<sup>54</sup> In France political unity on the home front was referred to as the *Union Sacrée*. In Germany the term used was *Burgfrieden*.

measures. In Britain these fell under the aegis of the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA), implemented on 7 August 1914.<sup>55</sup> DORA originally included only three regulations<sup>56</sup> but by the end of February 1917 it had expanded to include 400 pages of rules covering most aspects of daily civilian life.<sup>57</sup> Within this text, six regulations pertained directly to press regulations.<sup>58</sup> Though the rules pertaining to censorship became more detailed as the war progressed, the primary purposes of censorship remained the same. On 26 October 1914 Sir Stanley Buckmaster, Director of the Press Bureau, issued a memorandum to all his censors informing them that their duties were ‘A. To prevent the publication of news injurious to the naval and military operations of the British Empire. B. To prevent the publication of news likely to cause needless alarm and distress among the civil population and C. To prevent the publication of news objectionable on political grounds: news for example, calculated to injure the susceptibilities of other Allies.’<sup>59</sup>

Both Paris and London had to confront the sensitive issue of ‘political censorship’ early in the war. Indeed at the same time in late 1914 as French War Minister Alexandre Millerand declared to the Chamber of Deputies that ‘there existed no political censorship’ (see Chapter 1) Buckmaster issued an internal memorandum in the Home Office declaring that ‘There is no censorship on internal political criticism

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<sup>55</sup> T. Rose. *Aspects of Political Censorship 1914-1918* (Hull, 1997), pp.10-35.

<sup>56</sup> These three clauses enabled the King in Council to make regulations designed to prevent communication of assistance to the enemy, to take whatever measures were needed to secure the safety of the troops, ships and military installations and to prevent activity likely to incite dissatisfaction or to prejudice the government’s relations with foreign powers. *ibid.*, p.107.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, p.107.

<sup>58</sup> Regulation 18 prohibited the collection of military or naval information of possible use to the enemy. Regulation 27 (introduced shortly after conscription) prohibited the spreading of false or prejudicial reports likely to interfere with the prosecution of the war or to prejudice relations with foreign powers. Regulation 27 C, introduced after the Bolshevik Revolution, required that papers publishing pacifist or socialist literature mention in their issues that the material had been presented to the Press Bureau or to a person authorised in behalf of the Secretary of State. Regulation 51 allowed military authorities and police constables to enter any house, vehicle, vessel, aircraft or premises where there was reason to suspect activity which might be harmful to the public safety of the realm. This could take place at any time of day or night and the authorities were permitted to seize any printed matter which might be deemed in contradiction to any regulation under DORA. Regulation 51 A allowed those aggrieved under Regulation 51 to appeal to Quarter Sessions. The major result of this regulation was that the authorities began to collect warrants before entering premises. Regulation 56 (13), introduced on 2 June 1915, changed the penalty for press violations from a court martial and a potential life imprisonment to a maximum prison term of six months and a possible fine. This regulation led the government to begin prosecuting more heavily the leftist press.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, p.17.

and censorship of all matter is exercised with an anxious desire to allow as free publication as is consistent with public safety.’<sup>60</sup> Political censorship in both countries became increasingly severe as the number of topics which were permitted to be discussed shrank and the number of rules and prohibitions imposed on newspapers multiplied.<sup>61</sup> In neither country was the debate over the legitimacy of political censorship fully settled before wartime powers were finally revoked.<sup>62</sup>

As in France, a bureau was established in Britain in early 1916 to develop propaganda for foreign audiences, particularly in neutral countries. This office emerged from a split in the Press Bureau which was divided into MI7a, which dealt exclusively with press censorship, and a new office dealing with foreign propaganda entitled MI7b.<sup>63</sup> In 1917 both France and Britain created agencies designed to combat local pacifism and enemy propaganda. In France this was the *Union des Grandes Associations contre la Propagande Ennemie*, in Britain, the National War Aims Committee.<sup>64</sup> More so than in France, influential press barons, particularly Lords Northcliffe<sup>65</sup> and Beaverbrook,<sup>66</sup> had tremendous influence on the direction of government propaganda. Both men worked closely with the government particularly under the Lloyd George coalition in which Northcliffe became the ‘Director of Propaganda in Enemy Countries’ and Beaverbrook the Minister of Information responsible for propaganda in Allied and Neutral Countries. While many politicians in France owned, edited or contributed to newspapers (the most notable being Clemenceau) they were politicians first and tended to use their papers as mouthpieces. No press baron in France (Jean Dupuy was the largest) was ever approached to join the French Cabinet during the war. They were, however, censored less often for

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<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>61</sup> Orders to papers which mentioned prohibited material were called *consignes* in France and D Notices in Britain.

<sup>62</sup> In Britain DORA expired automatically after the cessation of hostilities. In France, Clemenceau repealed the wartime Siege Law and the Press Law (see Chapter 1) after the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles.

<sup>63</sup> B. Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain* (London,2000), p.40.The French equivalent to MI7b was the *Maison de la Presse* (see Chapter 1).

<sup>64</sup> Horne. ‘Remobilizing for Total War.’ p.199.

<sup>65</sup> Alfred Harmsworth, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Northcliffe.

<sup>66</sup> William Maxwell Aitken, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Beaverbrook.

disobeying censorship orders than were their less influential journalistic colleagues.

The most significant difference between the application of censorship in France and Britain was that while in France it was mandatory practice for all papers to submit articles to the Press Bureau for moderation prior to publication, in Britain only telegraphs were subjected to compulsory revision.<sup>67</sup> Although the official (and implausible) reason given by the Directors of the British Press Bureau was that the government lacked the office space to accommodate a bureau entrusted with such a task as monitoring the entirety of the nation's press, it has been argued that the Home Office (if not the military) was reluctant severely to stifle the media.<sup>68</sup> Only when papers repeatedly discussed items such as battalion numbers were they referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions and even then if the verdict was doubtful, newspaper editors were given the benefit of the doubt.<sup>69</sup> The same logic applied to the censorship of the telegraph. F.E. Smith when head of the Press Bureau instructed censors to 'give all messages the benefit of the doubt; that is to say, if a message is considered to be on the borderline it is to be passed, not censored.'<sup>70</sup> This comment suggests that the British approach to censorship was more lenient than that taken by the French, whose inclinations were to censor rather than allow 'borderline' material to pass. The practical implications of such leniency when reporting on war news, however, were diminished by the fact that all telegrams emanating from France (and therefore much of the immediate front line news) passed through the French telegraph office and were monitored by French censors.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, the distinct wartime cultures in France and Britain influenced the tone of journalism, the nature of press censorship and the influence of the press on public opinion in each country. In Britain censorship was loosely enforced by the government

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<sup>67</sup> Papers were invited to submit their material voluntarily to the Press Bureau. Rose, Aspects of Political Censorship p.20.

<sup>68</sup> Millman, Managing Domestic Dissent chapters 2-4.

<sup>69</sup> Rose, Aspects of Political Censorship p.19.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>71</sup> This occasionally created the unfortunate consequence that material sent to Britain for publication appeared in an awkward version because it had been directly translated from French. N. Lytton, The Press and the General Staff (London,1920), p.68.

in part because of the Liberal proclivities of the Asquith Government and later because of the political astuteness of Lloyd George.<sup>72</sup> A grassroots political phenomenon which encouraged self-censorship, which contained dissent and was far more evident in British society than in France was the influence of the ‘Patriot groups’<sup>73</sup> of pro-war activists who used violence against dissenters. Such groups were in general neither explicitly encouraged nor were they prosecuted by the British Government,<sup>74</sup> and they were a significant force in deterring dissent in the media.<sup>75</sup> The differences in the practice of censorship between Britain and France were both legal and political in origin.

For an overview of the structure and mechanics of the British information management system during the First World War, Tania Rose’s Aspects of Political Censorship 1914-1918<sup>76</sup> is concise and accessible. She is most informative when discussing censorship of events in Russia, the subject of her doctoral thesis.<sup>77</sup> Brock Millman’s Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain<sup>78</sup> provides an excellent complement to Rose’s study for evaluating the effectiveness of the British Government in combating dissent. Millman is less informative in his discussion of the bureaucratic structures in wartime Britain than is Rose, but he details the various organisations which together comprised the British anti-war movement. He is effective in evaluating the threat posed by the various leaders of the anti-war movement and discusses their relationships to the national media. Millman convincingly argues that London took a flexible approach to media censorship because stifling free speech in Britain would have provoked added dissent. His argument is intriguing and the book would prove highly useful in a comparative study of censorship in Britain and France

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<sup>72</sup> Lloyd George as Prime Minister emphasised propaganda efforts but was concerned that the suppression of obscure political articles could potentially bring more attention to them than if they had been published. Millman, Managing Domestic Dissent Chapter 7.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p.99.

<sup>74</sup> They were however indirectly encouraged by *The Daily Mail* a paper owned by Lord Northcliffe and were supported financially by Lord Beaverbrook. Millman, Managing Domestic Dissent pp.122-123.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, pp.99-131.

<sup>76</sup> Rose, Aspects of Political Censorship.

<sup>77</sup> T. Rose., ‘Philips Price and the Russian Revolution’, doctoral thesis., (Hull,1988).

<sup>78</sup> Millman, Managing Domestic Dissent.

during the First World War.

For background material on the portrayal of the British military in the press a useful series of essays can be found in The British Army in Battle and Its Image by Stephen Badsey.<sup>79</sup> The most relevant essay found in this book for the subject of this thesis is ‘Douglas Haig and the Press 1914-1918’,<sup>80</sup> which like Millman’s work would provide invaluable material for any future project comparing state-media relations in Britain and France. For a first-hand account of relations between the British press and the British Expeditionary Force in France Neville Lytton’s The Press and the General Staff<sup>81</sup> provides a wealth of information and is full of interesting and entertaining anecdotes.<sup>82</sup> For an overview of British propaganda perhaps the most authoritative account is still British Propaganda During the First World War by M.L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor.<sup>83</sup> This book serves as a counterpart to Rose’s study<sup>84</sup> because while Rose outlines the bureaucratic structure of censorship in Britain during the war, Sanders and Taylor do likewise do so for the British propaganda mechanism. They then describe how propaganda operated in practice. Somewhat more accessible to non-experts on the subject is Keep the Home Fires Burning by Cate Haste.<sup>85</sup>

Analysis of wartime Germany also provides particularly interesting comparisons with the French model of information management. Germany, like France, (see Chapter 1) had developed a wartime emergency measures act in the Nineteenth Century, the Prussian Siege Law of 1851, which came into operation on 1 August 1914 and empowered military commanders across the country to suspend liberties such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of association.<sup>86</sup> Censorship of

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<sup>79</sup> S. Badsey, The British Army and Its Image 1914-1918 (London,2009).

<sup>80</sup> S. Badsey, ‘Douglas Haig and the Press 1914-1918’, in Badsey, The British Army and Its Image 1914-1918.

<sup>81</sup> Lytton, The Press and the General Staff (London,1920).

<sup>82</sup> Particularly vivid is Lytton’s description of a meeting at Parliament where he was scolded in person by Lloyd George and the entire War Cabinet who had summoned him from France for translating an interview with Haig ‘too literally’, *ibid.*, pp.69-70.

<sup>83</sup> M.L. Sanders and P.M. Taylor, British Propaganda During the First World War (London,1982).

<sup>84</sup> Rose, Aspects of Political Censorship.

<sup>85</sup> C. Haste, Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War (London,1977).

<sup>86</sup> D. Welch, Germany, Propaganda and Total War 1914-1918 (London,2000), p.14. In France the Siege Law of 1849 came into effect on 2 August 1914 (see Chapter 1).

the press was less controversial in Germany than in France or Britain because it had already been used extensively for thirty-five years before 1914.<sup>87</sup> In Germany the Siege Law specifically suspended ‘the right to express opinion freely by word, print or picture.’<sup>88</sup> Although France in August 1914 enacted laws that in practice had the same consequences their wording was more nuanced, a reflection of the cultural differences between the two nations.

The German press in the pre-war period, rather than constituting an independent check on government activities, generally championed both nationalism and imperialism.<sup>89</sup> The German tabloid paper, the *Generalanzeiger*, was more sober in tone than its French and British equivalents and the official organ of the SPD,<sup>90</sup> *Vorwärts*, trod carefully in its criticisms of governmental institutions. Indeed the paper was allowed more freedom to discuss economic and social issues during the war than was *L’Humanité*, the principal socialist paper in France, on the condition that it ‘enthusiastically’ supported the war effort.<sup>91</sup> More than in France or Britain, the German press was an agent of the *status quo* before the war, and continued to be so until 1918, when impending defeat became impossible to conceal and German morale had deteriorated beyond repair.

Still the Prussian military establishment distrusted the media from the outset of hostilities. Unlike in France and Britain, the German information management system was operated entirely by the military. Questions dealing with censorship, public opinion and propaganda were handled by Section IIIb of the OHL,<sup>92</sup> the ‘News Section’ (*Nachrichtungsabteilung*). This office was originally founded in 1870-71 and was designed as an intelligence gathering agency against France. In the fifteen years leading up to the war, however, the bureau began to deal primarily with censorship and

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<sup>87</sup> Between 1878 and 1890, under Bismarck and Wilhelm II over 155 newspapers and 1200 other publications had been banned under anti-socialist legislation. Welch, *Germany Propaganda and Total War* pp.28-29.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*, p.29.

<sup>90</sup> Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands. The largest socialist party in Europe at the outbreak of hostilities in 1914.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, p.32.

<sup>92</sup> Oberste Heeresleitung. The German High Command.



propaganda.<sup>93</sup> Unlike France or Britain, Germany already had its press bureau fully established before 1914.

For the entire war Section IIIb was run efficiently by Colonel Walter Nicolai.<sup>94</sup> Newspapers were presented daily at 11:00 by the military with official *communiqués*, and were prohibited from printing unofficial news related to military or international events.<sup>95</sup> Enforcement of this rule was less strict in Germany than in France because newspapers were in any case severely limited in their sources of information. *Wolff*, Germany's principal news agency, had cooperated with its three primary counterparts in the west, *Havas* in France, *Reuters* in Britain and *The Associated Press* in the United States before the war. Once the war began these ties were severed and *Wolff*, the sole provider to German newspapers of information related to international affairs, was limited to receiving information through neutral countries via its powerful telegraph agency at Nauen.<sup>96</sup> In February 1915, in an attempt to standardize censorship practices throughout Germany and to present official information from both *Wolff* and the OHL to the press simultaneously, a Supreme Censorship Office (*Oberzensurstelle*) was established which in October was further expanded at the behest of the Kaiser and renamed the War Press Office (*Kriegspressesamt*).

Three major tasks were assigned to the War Press Office. '1. To facilitate co-operation between the OHL and the civilian authorities with regard to the press. 2. To provide as much controlled information as possible to the various authorities and to the press. 3. To establish and supervise the uniform application of the censorship.'<sup>97</sup>

Germany's War Press Office performed the tasks that together were run by two French offices, a result of the dual information management system in France that was divided between civilian and military authorities.<sup>98</sup> The Supreme Censorship Office continued

<sup>93</sup> Welch, *Germany, Propaganda and Total War* pp.26-27.

<sup>94</sup> M. Creutz, 'Les Journalistes et la censure dans l'Empire allemand pendant la Grande Guerre', *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, No. 171, (Jul.1993), p.101.

<sup>95</sup> Welch, *Germany, Propaganda and Total War* p.38.

<sup>96</sup> Creutz, 'Les Journalistes et la censure dans l'Empire allemand', p.102.

<sup>97</sup> Welch, *Germany, Propaganda and Total War* pp.36.37.

<sup>98</sup> In France the Press Bureau (run by the general staff) was responsible for censoring the press and the

to operate as a branch of this enlarged bureau and its task was less arduous than that of its French counterpart. Papers were not subject to revision prior to publication but were reviewed later for indiscretions, meaning that time restraints did not apply to the same extent as in France. There were three penalties for violating censorship rules. ‘1. A warning indicating that a paper in the future may be subjected to censorship prior to publication. 2. Temporary preventative censorship of a paper. 3. A suspension, often only for a few days.’<sup>99</sup> These punishments differed markedly from in France, where suspensions and fines (usually after warnings) were the regular punishment for violators and where preventative censorship was imposed upon all newspapers.

Punishments of newspaper editors in Germany were rare largely because journalists rarely broke the rules. On 1 August 1914 editors as in France were reminded of their heavy responsibility towards the nation, but unlike in France were instructed that their goal was to ‘patriotically educate’ the German citizenry. This was accompanied by a series of veiled threats towards newspaper editors during the following week, particularly those on the left.<sup>100</sup> Censorship policies were also obeyed in Germany ironically because they were so confusing. The Supreme Censorship Office shortly after its creation had instructed the press that unofficial material related to military and international affairs was to be presented first to police authorities prior to publication. The Prussian Minister of the Interior Friedrich Wilhelm von Loebbel, however, instructed the police that this was only necessary regarding military news. Upon hearing this news the Supreme Censorship office in February 1915 declared that under the law of siege, the use of preventative censorship was ‘legally possible’ for both military and domestic news.<sup>101</sup> Since German papers received almost all their news either from *Wolff* or the OHL, there was little latitude in how papers could differentiate one from one another and it seems few made the effort. The majority of German

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*Section d'Information* (run by the military) was responsible for presenting official news to the media (see Chapter 1).

<sup>99</sup> Creutz, ‘Les Journalistes et la censure dans l’Empire allemande’, p.104.

<sup>100</sup> Welch, *Germany, Propaganda and Total War* pp.31-32.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.35-36.

newspapers for most of the war presented news in a uniform manner.<sup>102</sup>

Germany launched its wartime propaganda campaign in earnest before France or Britain. Germany as the violator of Belgian neutrality and the principal aggressor on the Western Front was placed on the defensive in the propaganda war in neutral countries. Propaganda until mid-1916 was directed by the Information Office, a subsection of the War Press Office.<sup>103</sup> In August 1916, with the appointment of Hindenburg and Ludendorff to the OHL the German propaganda campaign intensified dramatically at home and abroad. In the month before Hindenburg and Ludendorff's appointment the civilian government placed the responsibility for propaganda linked to the war economy, war related politics and both war-related film and photography under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ludendorff, however, who had argued for a Ministry of Propaganda (Germany would have one in the Second World War) had ensured that by spring 1917 this agency was under the direction of the OHL and in July 1918 changed its name to the Foreign Department of the Army High Command.<sup>104</sup> Though Ludendorff was a proponent of a vigorous propaganda campaign, the OHL proved to have little success in changing German morale or the opinion of Germany abroad. Though the OHL attempted to censor material related to food shortages<sup>105</sup> and military setbacks and to engage in 'patriotic instruction' of the troops through propaganda leaflets, posters, films and photographs, the signs of Germany's impending defeat by mid-1918 could no longer be concealed. The mainstream press began to report on Germany's military crisis only at the very end of the war. Most Germans (even journalists) were told by the OHL that German victory on the battlefield was assured until the very end, a factor which encouraged the 'stab in the back'<sup>106</sup> myth and a profound German distrust of the press. Though information management in Germany for most of the war was highly efficient in managing dissent

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<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, p.39.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, p.41.

<sup>104</sup> Creutz, 'Les Journalistes et la censure dans l'Empire allemande', p.106.

<sup>105</sup> Welch, Germany, Propaganda and Total War p.178.

<sup>106</sup> Dolchstoßlegende.

and maintaining morale, its rigidity and its short-term successes had damaging consequences and grave implications for the inter-war period.

There is little material in English or French on German information management during the First World War. The best starting point is David Welch's Germany, Propaganda and Total War 1914-1918.<sup>107</sup> Welch's study is a thorough analysis of the effect of both propaganda and censorship on German morale from 1914 to 1918. Welch does an excellent job of outlining the chain of command linking the OHL and the press, sets out the OHL's objectives regarding information management, and evaluates its successes in meeting them. Martin Creutz's 'Les Journalistes et la censure dans l'Empire allemande pendant la Grande Guerre'<sup>108</sup>, translated from the original German into French is an excellent and highly analytical appraisal of the effectiveness of the censorship system in Germany. Creutz like Welch argues that censorship in Germany was so effective that German citizens until the very end of the war did not realize the full gravity of Germany's military situation. He further contends, however, that the failure to keep even Germany's journalists informed of events at the front was symptomatic of an inflexible militaristic society. In German, the longest and most heavily referenced study of German state-media relations is Deutsche Pressepolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg by Kurt Koszyk.<sup>109</sup> As a primary source particularly important are the memoirs of Colonel Walter Nicolai.<sup>110</sup>

Research into the specific events covered in this study was essential before evaluating their influence on the operation of the French information management system. For the history of Nivelle's rise to power, his tenure as France's Commander in Chief and the disaster on the Chemin des Dames, Brigadier-General Eduard Spears's Prelude to Victory<sup>111</sup> is useful. Spears, as a British liaison officer to France, had met Nivelle as well as Haig, Robertson, Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson and other

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<sup>107</sup> Welch, Germany, Propaganda and Total War p.178.

<sup>108</sup> Creutz, 'Les Journalistes et la censure dans l'Empire allemande'.

<sup>109</sup> K. Koszyk, Deutsche Pressepolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg (Düsseldorf, 1968).

<sup>110</sup> W.Nicolai, Nachrichtendienst, Presse und Volksstimmung im Weltkrieg (Berlin, 1920).

<sup>111</sup> E.L.Spears, Prelude to Victory (London, 1940).

military chiefs who shaped Allied planning on the Western Front during the first half of 1917. Spears's character descriptions are vivid and first-hand. Also as both an officer and a witness, his description of the Nivelle Offensive's failure is particularly insightful. For a more detailed account of the Nivelle Offensive and indeed the entire French operational theatre during the First World War, helpful is Pyrrhic Victory by Robert A. Doughty.<sup>112</sup> Another study which provides insight into the general relationship between the military and the state and discusses Nivelle's influence on politicians in Paris is J.C.King's Generals and Politicians.<sup>113</sup> Finally, for an overall history of the Nivelle Offensive, its background and its legacy perhaps the most thorough study is Pierre Miquel's Le Chemin des Dames.<sup>114</sup>

The authoritative account of the French mutinies of June 1917 and that with which modern authors of the subject usually compare their own arguments is Pedroncini's Les Mutineries de 1917.<sup>115</sup> Pedroncini contended that the mutinies were primarily a result of the string of failed offensives by the French Army that culminated in the Chemin des Dames debacle, and that Pétain was personally responsible for restoring French morale at the front. Pedroncini's book was ground breaking primarily because it was the first study of the mutinies based entirely on unpublished material from the French military archives at Vincennes which was released in 1967. Particularly helpful for future generations of historians, Pedroncini in addition to his monograph also published a book entirely comprised of the archival material which he used for his monograph.<sup>116</sup> Published before Pedroncini's study were two useful books on the mutinies written in English. Dare Call it Treason by Richard M. Watt<sup>117</sup> and Mutiny 1917<sup>118</sup> by John Williams are both informative narratives which make extensive use of memoirs, newspapers and pre-existing secondary literature. Much of the post-

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<sup>112</sup> Doughty, Pyrrhic Victory.

<sup>113</sup> J.C. King, Generals and Politicians: Conflict Between France's High Command, Parliament and Government, 1914-1918 (Westport CT, 1951).

<sup>114</sup> P. Miquel, Le Chemin des Dames (Paris, 2008).

<sup>115</sup> G. Pedroncini, Les Mutineries de 1917 (Paris, 1999).

<sup>116</sup> G. Pedroncini, 1917 :Les Mutineries de l'armée française (Paris, 1968).

<sup>117</sup> R.M. Watt, Dare Call it Treason (New York, 1963).

<sup>118</sup> J. Williams, Mutiny 1917 (London, 1962).

Pedroncini historiography has been undertaken by historians associated with the CRID. The most notable of these has been André Loez's study,<sup>119</sup> which uses both a historical and a sociological approach to evaluate the reasons for which soldiers rebelled, and Denis Rolland's highly revisionist La Grève des tranchées.<sup>120</sup>

Robert Bruce's A Fraternity of Arms<sup>121</sup>, a study of Franco-American relations primarily in 1917 and 1918, provided useful background information. Bruce's Chapter 3<sup>122</sup> discusses the arrival of the first American leaders and then troops in France. It presents a personal background to General John Pershing, who it is argued had an ambiguous attitude towards the French prior to the conflict. It also discusses in detail the mentality of the French leaders towards the Americans, whom they tried to impress with a great deal of fanfare. For other material on the United States during the war, David Kennedy's Over Here<sup>123</sup> is the best social account of the United States during the war but devotes only one chapter to the American experience in France. Written for a general audience but highly relevant to this study is Byron Farwell's Over There<sup>124</sup> which contains an interesting account of the arrival of the first American troops in France. Though not directly related to the subject of this thesis, How we Advertised America by George Creel<sup>125</sup> is the authoritative account of American foreign propaganda.

The two most detailed accounts of the Stockholm Conference of 1917 are by Hildamarie Maynell<sup>126</sup> and David Kirby.<sup>127</sup> The former presents the Conference as a

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<sup>119</sup> A. Loez, 14-18: Les Refus de la guerre (Paris,2010).

<sup>120</sup> D. Rolland, La Grève des Tranchées : Les Mutineries de 1917 (Paris,2005) attacks Pedroncini's argument that the Nivelle Offensive was the primary factor for the mutinies. Instead, Rolland argues that this was one factor among many. He emphasizes the heightened awareness of socialism amongst the troops, the bitterness felt towards the interior and the impact of external political events.

<sup>121</sup> R.B. Bruce, A Fraternity of Arms: America and France in the Great War (Lawrence KA,2003).

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*,pp.60-96.

<sup>123</sup> D. Kennedy, Over Here: The First World War and American Society (Oxford,1980).

<sup>124</sup> B. Farwell, Over There: The United States in the Great War, 1917-1918 (New York, 1999).

<sup>125</sup> G. Creel, How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information That Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe (London, 2012).

<sup>126</sup> H. Maynell, 'The Stockholm Conference of 1917', International Review of Social History, Vol.5, No.1, (Apr.1960), pp.1-25 and pp.202-225.

<sup>127</sup> D. Kirby, War, Peace and Revolution: International Socialism at the Crossroads, 1914-1918 (London,1986) and D. Kirby. 'International Socialism and the Question of Peace: The Stockholm Conference of 1917', Historical Journal, Vol.5, No.3, (Sept.1982), pp.709-716.

lost opportunity to engage with Russia and argues that the Western socialist parties gained momentum in this period, with consequences for domestic politics in the inter-war period. The latter argues convincingly that the Stockholm Conference was a doomed endeavour from its outset. For information on labour militancy in France during the war, in addition to Horne's <sup>128</sup> Labour at War (see above), Jean-Louis Robert provides a highly detailed account of the Parisian *Midinettes* strikes of Spring-1917 in Les Ouvriers, la patrie et la révolution.<sup>129</sup> Better on the 1918 French strike movement (about which very little has been written - see Chapter 6) is, because of its national rather than Paris centred approach, Becker's The Great War and the French People.<sup>130</sup>

For the French interpretation of and reaction to events in Russia in 1917 and 1918, the first two chapters of Michael Carley's Revolution and Intervention<sup>131</sup> demonstrate how Paris immediately realised the threat posed to its alliance with Russia and to its financial interests in that country during the February Revolution and accordingly recruited the press particularly, on the left, to reassure readers that Russia would emerge a stronger ally from the turmoil. An interesting article which focuses on the French reaction to the February Revolution in the context of France's own revolutionary heritage and discusses the press in Paris is Ioannis Sinanoglou's article from 1980, 'Frenchmen, Their Revolutionary Heritage and the Russian Revolution'.<sup>132</sup> For a general history of the February Revolution, perhaps the best secondary source is The February Revolution, Petrograd 1917 by Tsuyoshi Hasegawa.<sup>133</sup> For a highly accessible narrative which outlines the period of Russian upheaval from 1891 to 1924 A People's Tragedy by Orlando Figes<sup>134</sup> is excellent.

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<sup>128</sup> Horne, Labour at War.

<sup>129</sup> J-L. Robert, Les Ouvriers, la Patrie et la Révolution : Paris 1914-1919 (Paris,1995).

<sup>130</sup> Becker, The Great War and the French People chapter 17.

<sup>131</sup> M.J. Carley, Revolution and Intervention: The French Government and the Russian Civil War 1917-1919 (Kingston,1983).

<sup>132</sup> I. Sinanoglou, 'Frenchmen, Their Revolutionary Heritage and the Russian Revolution', International History Review, Vol 2, No.4, (Oct,1980), pp.566-584.

<sup>133</sup> T. Hasegawa, The February Revolution, Petrograd 1917 (Seattle,1980).

<sup>134</sup> O.Figes. A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924 (London,1997).

There are several good military histories of the Ludendorff Offensives from March to July 1918 and the following Allied counter-attacks, often known as the Hundred Days, which led to the Armistice. From a French perspective Doughty's book mentioned above provides a detailed account of strategies and operations. For an international military history, the last two chapters of William Phillpott's War of Attrition<sup>135</sup> are highly informative. Finally the most in depth and up to date study to analyse the fortunes of war in 1918 is David Stevenson's With our Backs to the Wall.<sup>136</sup> In the first half of his book, Stevenson describes in detail the Ludendorff Offensives and analyses the reasons for their failure. This is followed by a similar account of the Hundred Days. The second half of this book is unique in its thematic approach and its chapters on manpower, shipping and the home fronts provided particularly useful material when researching the final two chapters of this thesis.

Unpublished primary sources and wartime newspapers comprise the vast majority of material used to gather information for this study. Three principal objectives directed the archival research behind this project. The first was to document what was prohibited from being published in the press. The second objective was to document what was permitted or encouraged to be written in the press and what was indeed published. The third and most difficult task was to discover the political and military motives for the establishment of the French information management system and for decisions to censor or permit material to be printed. Only after these three groups of information were collected, examined and cross-referenced was this study able to proceed analytically by evaluating the effectiveness and motives behind press censorship.

The archives of the French armed forces are located at the *Service Historique de la Défense* located at the Château de Vincennes in Paris. At the SHD, the most relevant materials to this study are the correspondence and internal circulated material of the

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<sup>135</sup> W. Philpott, War of Attrition: Fighting the First World War (New York, 2014).

<sup>136</sup> D. Stevenson, With Our Backs to the Wall: Victory and Defeat in 1918 (London, 2011).



War Ministry located in series 5N and in the GQG's<sup>137</sup> papers, located in series 16N. Series 5N 332-337 contain the correspondence between the government and the GQG and the memoranda distributed to the various ministries regarding press control. These files illuminate the bureaucratic structure of the information management system, particularly in 1914. Some particularly interesting documents in these folders are Clemenceau's orders to stamp out defeatists and the correspondence regarding AEF<sup>138</sup> censorship policies in 1918. 5N 338-358 is a continuation of the same material but contains more correspondence involving the Press Bureau. Of particular interest in these series are original copies of the Military Justice Code, Circular 1000, Nivelle's instructions concerning the 'Constant Delay' (see Chapter 3), Pétain's suggestions and memoranda regarding the measures to be taken in the wake of the June 1917 mutinies, material regarding rules and regulations for foreign war correspondents and a detailed list of all punishments administered to newspapers during the war for violating censorship. 5N 569 contains a great deal of correspondence between the Ministries of the Interior and of War regarding the accidental publication of forbidden material in the press, and contains copies of the articles in question. 5N 371 and 372 contain the specific instructions given to the police and to newspaper editors in the event of a journal's seizure or suspension.

5N 423-428 is an extremely useful subseries that contains daily government press analyses outlining the main arguments and articles in every major Parisian daily from July 1917 to December 1918. These were designed to be read for quick consumption by the War Minister and perhaps the Prime Minister. During the Clemenceau tenure these were first inspected by Georges Mandel and were extremely detailed (see Chapter 4). These press analyses unfortunately do not exist prior to July 1917. Subseries 5N 445-550 covers July 1915 to September 1919 and also is of paramount importance to this study. These files provide the only major collection of final drafts (*morasses*) submitted to the Press Bureau for censorship and include the censor's notes

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<sup>137</sup> *Grand Quartier Général*. French army headquarters.

<sup>138</sup> American Expeditionary Force.

and corrections in the original blue pencil markings.

The second most important archival collection is held at the *Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine* in Nanterre, next to the University of Paris-X. The censorship files at the BDIC, F rés 0270, contain original censors' registers from the Press Bureau. F rés 0270 C, CM and CG together document all of the orders given to the press by the Press Bureau prohibiting the publication of specific information. The first of these contains orders which were given several times a week and reveals the often highly specific nature of what was prohibited from publication. F rés 0270 CG contains 'general orders' that were less specific and which were on average issued approximately every two weeks, though this depended on the current situation. General orders, for example, were issued to the press not to cover specific events while the government formulated its initial reaction. Specific orders were then given as the event unfolded, instructing the press how to proceed. Also in this collection are the lists of all telegrams which were either censored or stopped (F rés 0270 TAC) and those which were allowed to pass (F rés 0270 TV and TI). F rés 0270 AVIS lists the 'advice' given to the press regarding what to propagate and F rés 0270 ENF gives a lists of orders which were disobeyed but not a list of sanctions.

The final major sources of primary information for this study were the published Parisian newspapers dating from 1917 and 1918, and indeed this thesis contains a great deal of press analysis. Although material from well over twenty papers was examined, some were given special attention because of their large circulations or political influence. Firstly, whereas papers were usually published daily, weekly or monthly this study focuses primarily on the national daily press, published in Paris. These papers had circulation numbers far exceeding those of their regional counterparts, and even had *départemental* regional issues with added material concerning local news, though these were often more expensive than their Parisian counterparts. During the First World War these were the primary sources of news information even for the

village peasantry.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore virtually all of the papers discussed in this thesis were freely available at the front. An attempt was made to study a range of papers which were representative of the entire political spectrum. For the mass-circulation centrist press particular attention was given to *Le Petit Parisien*, *Le Journal* and *Le Petit Journal*. Also in the centre, close scrutiny was given to *Le Temps* and *Le Figaro*. While these papers had far fewer subscribers (see Chart 2) they were highly influential in well-educated and political circles, *Le Temps* being considered the French ‘newspaper of record’ (see Chapter 1).

On the left, *L’Oeuvre* and *L’Humanité* were given special consideration, the former because of its high circulation and the latter because of its status as the official organ of the French Socialist Party. On the right, *L’Echo de Paris* was the highest circulation daily and therefore was closely studied as was the highly influential *L’Action Française*. While these journals can all be accessed at the Newspaper Archives of the British Library in Colindale (London) the best source for French newspapers of the First World War is the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris, whose website,<sup>140</sup> provides free access to the majority of journals used in this study.

Together these sources provide the necessary information to analyse the policies of the French government towards the press during the First World War and to evaluate its effectiveness in controlling the media. When studying the communications between the government and the press and cross-referencing the orders given to newspaper editors against the final published copies a clear theme emerges. Both the government and the GQG were highly aware of the importance of the written press for citizen and military morale and attempted to control public opinion by dictating orders to the press and by using preventative censorship. This system operated efficiently as the vast majority of orders were followed. Not all newspaper audiences would have believed everything they read, and many would have been able to read between the lines during

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<sup>139</sup> Bellanger, *Histoire générale de la presse française. Tome III* p.142.

<sup>140</sup> <http://gallica.bnf.fr/html/presse-et-revues/presse-et-revues>.

periods of intense censorship.<sup>141</sup> But successful manipulation of the written press by the government in Paris and by the GQG undoubtedly had a steadying effect on French morale, even if the extent of this effect is difficult to evaluate. In no other period of the conflict was this more important than during the crisis years of 1917-1918 when censorship contributed to preventing negative commentary or hysteria from enveloping the news media.

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<sup>141</sup> Citizens and soldiers for example would have been aware of events through their mutual contact during leave and not all letters between the front lines and the home front were monitored or successfully censored.

## Chapter 1: The Evolution and Organization of Censorship in France 1914-1916

The creation of a system to monitor the press during the First World War by the French military and government was in large part a reaction against the press's perceived role during the Franco-Prussian War and in the first forty years of the Third Republic. The first part of this chapter explains how the role of the media in France particularly after the legal implementation of press freedoms in 1881 led the government and the military to distrust journalists, whom they saw as opportunistic and unreliable. The discussion then moves to the legal framework for the French censorship system during the First World War. In addition to discussing the legal texts themselves this chapter outlines the major goals of French information management, a necessary step required before evaluating the system's effectiveness, the primary focus of this study.

A curious phenomenon during the first few days of August 1914 was the willingness of the French press to immediately and entirely relinquish its freedoms. This chapter argues that this was largely due to combination of patriotic adherence to the *Union Sacrée* and a belief amongst journalists (and many others) that the war would be short. Many journalists and politicians resented the use of political censorship (censorship of domestic affairs) after this short-war illusion had been dispelled, and the government was forced to justify its use. An explanation is given how this was accomplished by discussing the debates that took place on the subject in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate in 1915. The chapter concludes first by demonstrating the way in which the French information management system ironed out its inefficiencies in 1915 by standardizing practices across the country and by making the orders to papers less complicated. It then presents the battle of Verdun in 1916 as a formidable challenge to which the new information management system responded by hiring full-time war correspondents and by augmenting its propaganda network. By the end of 1916 the information management system which later dealt with the heightened period of crisis

for the French in 1917 and 1918 was fully in place.

*1871-1914: Censorship and the Role of the Media in Early Third Republic France*

The 43 years of peace on the European continent which followed the Franco-Prussian War constituted newspapers' 'golden age'<sup>142</sup> throughout the Western world.

Technological developments, an increase in literacy rates, prosperity accompanied by a sustained period of peace, the rise in popular political participation and the liberalization of state-media relations all contributed to this phenomenon. In France, the last ten years of the Second Empire were marked by an increasingly liberal attitude towards the press by the French Government. Napoleon III, however, continued to disdain the press and until the end of his reign threatened to imprison journalists or press leaders with whom he was displeased.<sup>143</sup> In 1870, Napoleon III surrendered to the Prussian army at the Battle of Sedan.<sup>144</sup> The Prussians notoriously had been informed of Marshal Patrice de MacMahon's troops' movements beforehand by an indiscreet article in the French daily, *Le Temps*. This unfortunate incident contributed to a distrust in military circles towards the press. Later it influenced the opinions of the French High Command regarding the press's appropriate role in wartime.

The 1871 *Communards* were repressive towards those with whom they disagreed (*Le Figaro* and *Le Gaulois* were both seized), and both Adolphe Thiers, head of state 1871-1873, and Patrice de MacMahon, President 1873-1879, did little to liberalize state-media relations. After the 1877 *Seize Mai* crisis and the 1879 presidential election which shifted political power to the republicans, the Third Republic's assembly began to consider a single press law to replace the 300 articles divided into 42 legal texts which had previously legislated press freedoms in France.<sup>145</sup> After four years of discussion the French assembly passed the 1881 Press Liberty Law on 29 July. It was among the world's most liberal press laws, and is still used today, albeit with some modifications.

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<sup>142</sup> Jeanneney, *Une histoire des médias* p.99.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*, p.98.

<sup>144</sup> M.Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War* (London, 1961) p.218.

<sup>145</sup> Jeanneney, *Une Histoire des médias* p.114.

The laws governing freedom of expression prior to 1881 were confusing and often contradictory. A result of this confusion was that the weight of their enforcement in individual cases depended heavily on the particular magistrates involved. The codification of laws regarding the press into one text ended much of this confusion. Some of the previous laws were kept. The 1819 and 1849 laws forbidding journalists to incite readers to break the law and those of 1848-49 prohibiting publications from attacking the principle of universal suffrage or from attacking individuals purely on the basis of their family ties or religion were all maintained (if not strictly enforced). Also upheld were the 1819 and 1849 laws forbidding the discussion of legal proceedings before their final verdicts had been made public.<sup>146</sup>

More important were the modifications to the existing legal system. The 1871 law forbidding previously unpublished quotations in the press was rescinded. Although full governmental censorship prior to publication had ceased since 1822, until 1868 papers had required 'permission' by the government to print their stories. This practice was eliminated under the 1881 law, as were the cautionary deposits papers had required to pay and which were often arbitrarily kept by the authorities who claimed rules had been violated. Only foreign owned papers which discussed politics or economics were now required to submit their material for prior examination. Whereas the laws of 1828 and 1868 had permitted only men to manage newspapers or operate a printing press, this was changed to include all adult French citizens.<sup>147</sup>

The central component to the 1881 Law was the freedom to publish, and its first article declared political freedom both for printing press publishers and for bookstores.<sup>148</sup> The 1870 law which required written permission from the Ministry of the Interior to operate either was repealed, with a new clause requiring simply a monthly payment of taxes and registration of the address from which material was

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<sup>146</sup> Bellanger, *Histoire de la presse*. Tome III pp.8-22.

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> Ledré, *Histoire de la presse* p.296.

printed.<sup>149</sup> An 1852 law was repealed that required papers to present all documents, accounts and sources to the government at the latter's request under the penalty of losing its above mentioned deposit. This practice had also been heavily abused by the government and was now under the 1881 legislation to be used only when a paper published false information. Finally, a bizarre feature of the law took the primary responsibility for the publication of libellous or false information away from the editors (1828 law) and placed it with the writers themselves.<sup>150</sup>

Assembly members from all parties saw the potential for political propaganda in the law and because the French assembly had formulated it over the previous four years it passed without debate. While the law significantly weakened the state's authority over the press in peacetime, it lacked a clause to indicate how it would be modified in wartime. Therefore, while the 1881 Press Liberty Law greatly influenced the relationship between the press and the government in the 33 years following its enactment, it was quickly replaced by the draconian wartime legislation introduced during the first week of August 1914.

During the 30 years after the 1881 Law was passed, French newspaper circulations grew rapidly. New innovations in printing (the linotype machine was invented in 1886), speedier delivery methods, improved telecommunications technologies (the telephone and the wireless telegraph) and the further development of photography all contributed to the boom. Papers became cheaper to produce and distribute, and increased prosperity amongst an increasingly literate population made papers relatively cheaper. The 1881 Law provided politicians and businessmen (often the same people), with a new opportunity to gain political exposure and to profit through the printing press.

Many of the well-established Parisian dailies became increasingly politicized or sensationalized after 1881, as sensationalism and slander sold papers. Press owners became the centre scandals often entailing allegations of bribery or other unscrupulous

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<sup>149</sup> Belanger, *Histoire de la presse. Tome III* pp.13-14.

<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*, pp-8-22.



acts launched in the pursuit of advertisement revenue. A new type of newspaper emerged which was often owned and operated by influential French politicians, by special interest groups or religious denominations. These papers, known as the *presse d'opinion*, became especially important during the Panama Scandal (1882-93) and the Dreyfus Affair (1894-1906). In both cases, highly charged political papers exposed corruption in a socially polarizing fashion. Significantly, both the influential far-right *L'Action Française* (1898) and the socialist *L'Humanité* (1906) were founded in response to the Dreyfus Affair. The Panama Scandal had been exposed by the anti-Semitic *La Libre Parole*, founded and edited by Edouard Drumont, who later became a staunch *anti-Dreyfusard*. Georges Clemenceau in his paper *L'Aurore*, had published Emile Zola's celebrated article of 1898 entitled '*J'Accuse!*' and addressed to President Félix Faure. Clemenceau had already in 1888-89 used his previous paper *La Justice* to encourage General Georges Boulanger's political downfall. Clemenceau was one of many politicians who used their own private media organs as personal mouthpieces in this period. In 1906, Clemenceau was appointed Premier in the final aftermath of the Dreyfus Affair and it was his journalistic experience in addition to his oratorical talent and political contacts that raised him to the apex of French politics. Between 1900 and 1910 numerous papers went bankrupt because of competition from larger journals with more political influence and greater ability to raise revenue through advertising. Several dailies therefore amassed extremely large readerships at their expense and polarized the French citizenry into more clearly defined political affiliations. By 1914, the largest French papers had wiped out much of their competition by charging less, printing more and by adopting political stances which appealed to broader groups in society. French society was deeply divided politically and religiously in 1914 and the press had done much to accentuate these fractures.

Papers from the political centre had the largest readerships. Those primarily designed for mass consumption were prone to sensationalist excess and *bouillage de crâne*<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Skull stuffing, more loosely translated as whitewash or eyewash. Shortly after the beginning of the war the term became used by those who were skeptical of news stories which omitted the horrors of war and

during the war. The largest of these was *Le Petit Parisien*, edited and owned by Jean Dupuy. Other mass circulation papers included *Le Petit Journal*, *Le Journal*, and *Paris-Midi*. Centrist Papers that were less sensationalist but more factual and more professionally written were *Le Temps* (the French paper of record)<sup>152</sup>, *Le Journal des Débats* (a foreign policy paper), *Le Soir* and slightly further to the right, the highly influential *Le Figaro*, *L'Echo de Paris* and *Le Gaulois*. The far-right press came from the *anti-Dreyfusard* tradition and was generally monarchist, Catholic and anti-Semitic. Examples included *L'Action Française*, run by Charles Maurras and Léon Daudet, *La Croix*, and *La Libre Parole*, a heavily anti-Semitic paper, run by Edouard Drumont. Finally, left-wing papers tended to represent either the French socialist party (SFIO)<sup>153</sup> or elements of French labour. The most influential left-wing paper was *L'Humanité*, the official organ of the SFIO. Also representing the SFIO were *L'Oeuvre* and *La Victoire*. Further left were *La Bataille* which was the official organ of the CGT, France's largest trade union federation and *La Bataille Syndicaliste*, organ of the *minoritaires* (a group which did not officially adhere to the *Union Sacrée*) section of the SFIO. Generally papers that represented the political extremes were less read, less influential and more heavily censored during the war.

The mass circulation dailies almost all cost five *centimes* and were affordable to all but the destitute. This not only helped to augment their circulations but also reflected the fact that these papers were primarily directed towards the masses, specifically workers, artisans and the petty bourgeoisie.<sup>154</sup> Also five centimes were populist papers on both

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consistently emphasized the glory of France's soldiers, known colloquially as the *poilus* (the hairy ones). The most famous journalist to criticize the use of *bourrage de crâne* even by his own colleagues at *Le Petit Journal* and particularly in 1917 and 1918 was Albert Londres. see A. Londres, *Contre le bourrage de crâne* (Paris, 2008). Also highly critical of the *bourrage de crâne* was the satirical journal *le Canard Enchaîné*.

<sup>152</sup> A newspaper of record is one which is widely distributed and because of its high level of professional journalism is considered authoritative. Also, papers of record are often given information to publish directly by the government.

<sup>153</sup> Not to be confused with the Republican-Socialist Party, a centrist party, *La Section française de l'internationale ouvrière* was the name of France's socialist party.

<sup>154</sup> Bellanger, *Histoire de la presse française. Tome III* p.142. *Le Petit Parisien*, *Le Journal* and *Le Petit Journal*, France's three most highly circulated papers for example all cost five *centimes*. *Le Petit Parisien* in 1914 had a daily circulation of well over one million. For a comprehensive list of newspaper circulations in 1917 see chart 2.

the left and right such as *La Bataille Syndicaliste* and *L'Action Française*, as was *L'Humanité*, which was funded by the SFIO. Papers which were more academically written catered to the more educated middle or upper-middle classes and were more expensive (ten or fifteen *centimes*).<sup>155</sup> The most expensive, such as the regional issues of *Le Temps*, cost twenty *centimes*.

By 1914, newspaper publishers and editors enjoyed an influence unequalled before 1881 in shaping French public opinion, particularly in urban areas. Censorship of the written press during the First World War had a more dramatic political impact than in conflicts before 1881 when readership was lower and the peacetime press had been more heavily monitored. Furthermore, public opinion itself played more of a role in elite decision making during the First World War than in previous conflicts because of the public's role in fighting 'total war.'<sup>156</sup> The French High Command had learned from its experiences during the Franco-Prussian War and the Dreyfus Affair that the press was unreliable and contained anti-military elements.<sup>157</sup> The French political leadership and High Command both had reasons to silence the press in the event of war. Their rationales were in large part founded on their interpretations of the increasing influence of the media over French society between 1871 and 1914.

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<sup>155</sup> *Le Figaro* and *Le Journal des Débats* each cost ten *centimes* and the Parisian edition of *Le Temps* cost fifteen.

<sup>156</sup> A term used to describe a conflict whereby the nations involved engage all of their available military, human, economic, natural and social resources.

<sup>157</sup> Many media owners and journalists who were *anti-Dreyfusard* during the Dreyfus Affair distrusted the military, seeing it as both dishonest and as posing a potential threat to French democracy.

Chart 2 – An outline of the Parisian mainstream press during the First World War.<sup>158</sup>

<b>Paper</b>	<b>Political Affiliation/ Concentration</b>	<b>Circulation on 1 November 1917</b>	<b>Notable Figures Involved<sup>159</sup></b>
<b>L'Action Française</b>	Far-right, monarchist, Catholic, anti-Semitic	156,000 (1 Oct. 1917)	Charles Maurras, Léon Daudet, Jacques Bainville
<b>La Bataille</b>	Far-left, syndicalist, official organ of the CGT	11,000	Léon Jouhaux
<b>La Croix</b>	Right, Catholic	142,000	J.Mollet, G. Goyeau, J. Guirand, General Pétetin.
<b>L'Écho de Paris</b>	Right	433,000	'Pertinax', Maurice Barrès, Marcel Hutin, Gabriel Bonvalot, Welliver
<b>L'Éclair</b>	Centre-left	16,000	René Wertheimer, Roujon, G.Motorgeuil, Admiral Degouy, Commandant de Civrieux,Maxime Leroy
<b>L'Éveil</b>	Left	20,000	Jacques Dhur
<b>Excelsior</b>	Emphasis on photography. Centre-left	132,000	Raoul Péret, Lémery
<b>Le Figaro</b>	Centre-right	43,500	Gaston Calmette, Alfred Capus, Robert de Flers, Denys Cochin
<b>Le Gaulois</b>	Centre-right	22,000	Arthur Meyer, René d'Aral, Colonel Rousset, François Mauriac
<b>L'Heure</b>	Centre, Republican	20,000	Marcel Sembat, Paul Aubriot, Léon Jouhaux, Alexandre Varenne. Léon Blum, Alphonse Aulard
<b>L'Homme enchaîné</b>	Centre, Republican	45,000	Georges Clemenceau, Bittard, Nicolas Pietri, Léo Gerville-Réache
			Paul Renaudel, Marcel Cachin,

<sup>158</sup> Circulation numbers for this graph are from Bellanger, *Histoire de la presse française. Tome III* p.428. Political affiliations and contributors can be found in Miquel, *La Paix de Versailles et l'opinion publique* pp.572-575.

<sup>159</sup> Some figures were involved with or owned more than one paper.

<b>L'Humanité</b>	Left, Official organ of the French Socialist Party	66,000	Marcel Sembat, Longuet, Mayeras, D.Renoult, Anatole France
<b>L'Information</b>	Financial	106,000	Paul Adam, Léo Chavenon, Charles Omessa, Admiral Degouy, Jules Moch
<b>L'Intransigeant</b>	Centre-right	255,000	Léon Bailby, Colonel Fabry, Philippe Crozier, Georges Lecomte, Pierre Mac Orlan
<b>Le Journal</b>	Centre	885,000	Charles Humbert, H.Bidou, Saint Brice, Geo London, Binet-Valmer, Paisant, Damour, Pradier, Raoul Péret, Boussonot, Brousse
<b>Le Journal des Débats</b>	Centre, Foreign affairs	28,000	Étienne de Nalèche, Gauvin, P. de Quirelle, H.Bidou
<b>Le Journal du Peuple</b>	Far-left, Anarchist tendencies	31,500	Henri Fabre, Severine, A.Charpentier, Mayeras, Lucien le Foyer, Charles Rappoport, Bernard Lecache, Henri Torrès, Paul Vaillant-Couturier, General Percin
<b>La Libre Parole</b>	Far-right, Anti-Semitic	20,000	Édouard Drumond, Paul Vergnet, Reverdy, Isoulet, Galli, General Petetin, Louis Marin, General de Saint-Yves, Joseph Denais
<b>Le Matin</b>	Centre	999,000	Banau-Varilla, Henri de Jouvenel, Stéphane Lauzanne, J.Sauerwein, Commandant de Civrieux
<b>L'œuvre</b>	Left	108,000	Gustave Téry, Jean Hennessy, Charles Saglio, Barthe, Admiral Degouy, General Verraux
<b>Le Petit Journal</b>	Centre	515,000	Albert Londres, Blumenthal, Fournol, Raoul Péret, René Viviani,

			Colonel Thomasson
<b>Le Petit Parisien</b>	Centre-left	1,683,000	Jean Dupuy, G.Lechartier, Landry, Cheron, Aulard, Colonel Rousset, Engerraand
<b>La Presse</b>	Centre, Republican	85,000	Escudier, André Lebey
<b>Le Temps</b>	Centre-left	58,500	Adrien Hébrard, F.Mommeja, General de Lacroix, Lieutenant d'Enraygues, Charles Rivet, A. de Guillerville
<b>La Victoire</b>	Centre, Nationalist	67,000	Gustave Hervé, G.Bienaimé

*1914: The Establishment of the French Wartime Censorship System.*

Though wartime information management was discussed by the French High Command in mid-1913<sup>160</sup> and perhaps even earlier, it was not until June 1914 after Adolphe Messimy's re-appointment<sup>161</sup> as Minister of War that serious planning began on how to structure a future wartime press bureau. Between June and August 1914, a group of experts drafted a report analysing the French press's role during the most recent European conflicts and outlined the framework of what became the French information management system during the First World War.<sup>162</sup> Pre-war planning enabled the War Ministry to quickly establish the Press Bureau on 2 August (the telegraph section was set up on 30 July), and thereby ensure that France's press was closely monitored from the outset of hostilities.

The fundamental structures and legal bases for wartime censorship in France were established at the beginning of August 1914. On 3 August the Government met with media owners and explained the structure of a new bureau designed to monitor the French telegraph<sup>163</sup> and the nation's newspapers. The bureau's authority to control

<sup>160</sup> Forcade, 'La Censure politique en France'.

<sup>161</sup> Messimy had previously been War Minister from June 1911 to January 1912.

<sup>162</sup> Rajsfus, *La Censure militaire et policière*, p.29.

<sup>163</sup> The telegraph was transmitted by both cable and by radio. For this thesis the cable telegraph will be

information derived from both the 1849 Siege Law, activated on 2 August, and from the 5 August ‘Indiscretions of the Press Law.’ The 1849 Law allowed the military to disband public gatherings and prohibit publications deemed to threaten public order. The 5 August ‘Indiscretions of the Press Law’ was debated on 4 August in the Chamber of Deputies and passed unanimously. The wave of patriotism that coincided with the Government’s appeal for a *Union Sacrée*<sup>164</sup> and the widespread belief in the probability of a short war inspired media owners and politicians alike to curtail freedom of expression. The 5 August Press Law provided a list of topics that were prohibited from being discussed in the media. While most of the subjects on the list were of a military nature, there was also a general ban on any article favouring the enemy or harmful to the spirit of the army or population.<sup>165</sup> Arbitrary enforcement of this last prohibition led to accusations of political censorship by media owners against the government, beginning in mid- September. In August 1914, however, the media fully supported the implementation of these two laws which together suspended the 1881 Freedom of the Press Law. Freedom of the press was not restored in France until 12 October 1919, after the German ratification of the Versailles Treaty.

While the War Ministry dealt exclusively with the Parisian press, censorship of the provincial press was conducted jointly by the War Ministry and the Ministry of the Interior. In 1914, the Parisian Military Governor was in charge of censorship in Paris while the government took refuge in Bordeaux. On 22 September War Minister Alexandre Millerand<sup>166</sup> ordered prefects throughout France to monitor ‘articles covering domestic politics,’<sup>167</sup> thereby including civilians in the censorship process.

This move marked the apex of civilian involvement in French wartime information

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referred to simply as the ‘telegraph’, the radio telegraph will be referred to as ‘radio’.

<sup>164</sup> The term, meaning ‘sacred union’, was first used on 1 Aug by Premier René Viviani in an address to France’s Deputies and Senators written by President Poincaré. It referred to an unwritten truce between France’s political parties and religious denominations for the purpose of defending the nation and its principles against German aggression. The timing of the appeal was significant because it came the day after the assassination of Socialist leader Jean Jaurès. Jaurès had explicitly argued against France’s socialists contributing to a ‘bourgeois war’, but closer to his death his views became more nuanced. The *Union Sacrée* was adhered to by all but the *minoritaire* sections of the SFIO and the CGT. This group was small at first but grew significantly as the war continued, particularly in 1917.

<sup>165</sup> R.Collins, ‘The Development of Censorship’, p.5.

<sup>166</sup> Millerand replaced Messimy as War Minister on 26 August.

<sup>167</sup> Circular signed by Millerand. Quoted in; Collins, ‘The Development of Censorship’, p.12.

management, as the prefects' role became significantly reduced in February 1915 and then again in 1917 when civilians were removed altogether from the censorship process. It also officially institutionalized political censorship, which immediately became a source of political contention and remained so throughout the war. On 12 August 1914 a Press Commission was established as a liaison between press leaders and the War Ministry. This commission was directed by Jean Dupuy, owner of *Le Petit Parisien*, and was designed as a vehicle for press leaders to communicate suggestions and complaints to the War Ministry. This commission could only prove useful if the War Ministry was able to provide the press with at least minimal information on frontline activities. The Commander in Chief of the French Army, Joseph Joffre, however, was determined to keep even the War Ministry largely uninformed of events on both the Western and Eastern Fronts.

The censorship system established in 1914 and early 1915 was operated jointly by the War Ministry and the GQG (see chart 1). The Press Bureau was responsible for overseeing censorship of the press in Paris and oversaw the regional censorship commissions in the *départements*. Penalties for insubordination were decided by the Press Section of the Civil War Cabinet of the War Ministry and were carried out by the Military Government in Paris and other regions. Military information was communicated to the press through official *communiqués* from the GQG's Information Section. The GQG along with all government ministries was permitted to provide the Press Bureau with new orders regarding press censorship.

Punishments for papers that violated orders from the Press Bureau ranged from warnings to seizures of particular editions and in more severe cases, suspension for at least one week and possibly indefinite suspension. The vast majority of punishments were warnings, and only when military movements or coordinates were published were seizures enforced.<sup>168</sup> Suspensions were, with a few exceptions, imposed on

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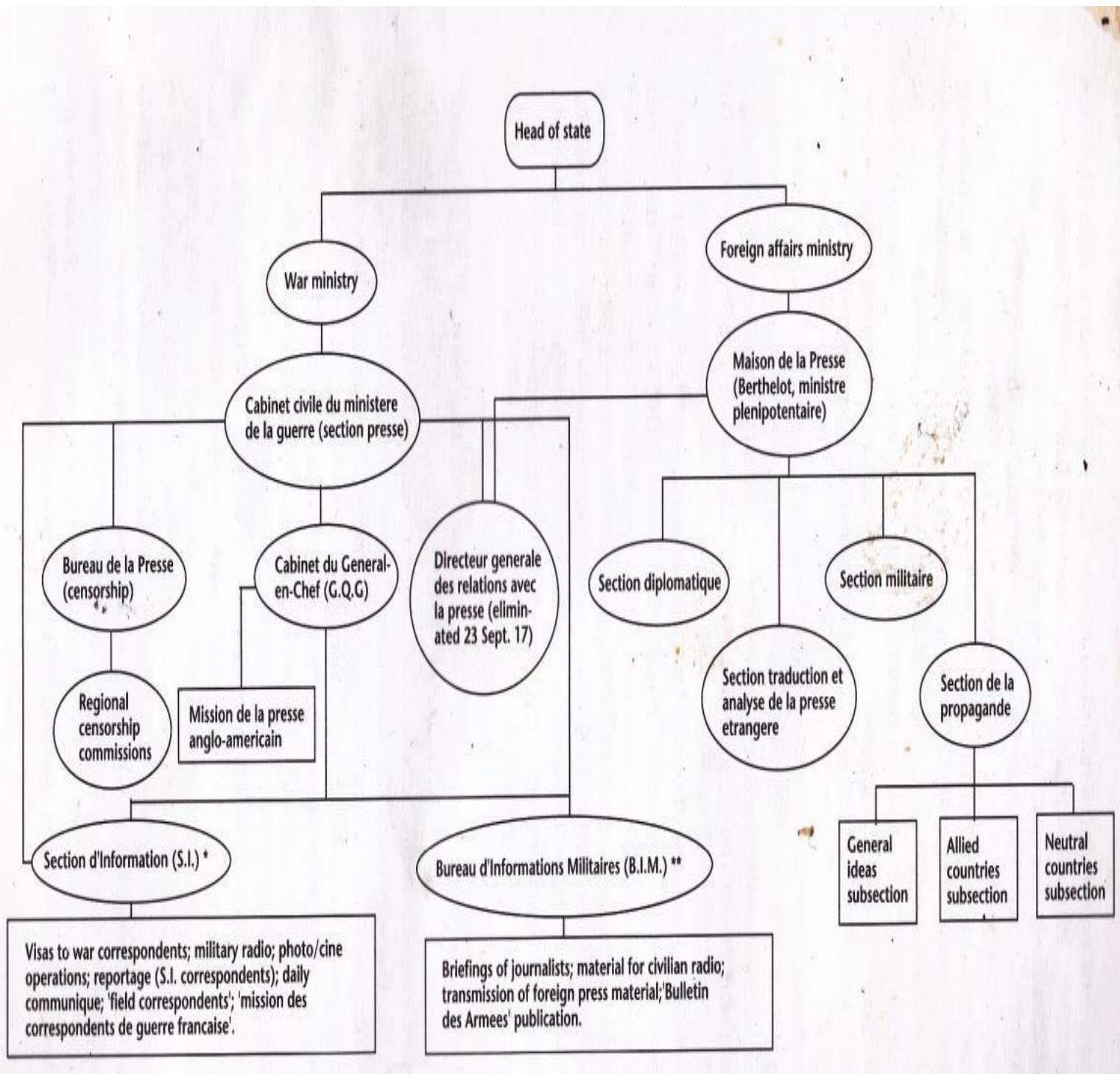
<sup>168</sup> There were a total of 92 seizures during the war, 85 of which were in 1916 and 1917. 84 seizures were ordered by the Ministry of War for discussing military details, most notably during the Battle of Verdun. All of the papers seized were on the left with the exception of *L'Action Française*, which was seized 5



papers that had repeatedly been seized and disproportionately to papers whose editors had little political influence.

The censorship system in France operated on the assumption that papers would obey the Press Bureau. Papers were required to submit each edition to the Press Bureau prior to publication. The Press Bureau censored the articles and often did not return them until just before the papers were to be published, which resulted in large sections of articles appearing blank. These blanks were a regular feature of the French press during the war and papers often published articles with blanked material several times a week. It is difficult to ascertain the exact effect of these blanks upon newspaper readers but it is logical to assume that they created a certain level of suspicion.

Ultimately, if a paper wished to test the system and publish forbidden material, it could do so. Minor offences were usually committed by editors with political influence, who often went unpunished. But in cases where papers were seized or suspended, the enforcement of this punishment was carried out by the Parisian Military Government.

Chart 1 – The Functions of Press Control<sup>169</sup>

<sup>169</sup> Collins, 'The Development of Censorship', p.20.

The lack of information available to the press was compensated for early in the war through a consistent use of *bouillage de crâne* and exaggeration. War Minister Alexandre Millerand sent a report on 15 September to all censors insisting that false news be prohibited from publication.<sup>170</sup> Particularly he forbade the publication of ‘stories of German atrocities which, by terrifying the population, run the risk of provoking the most terrible exodus’.<sup>171</sup> Millerand believed it dangerous to create false hope amongst the French citizenry and unnecessarily to incite public panic, and Messimy had been replaced on 26 August in part for his inability to combat widespread sensationalism in the press.<sup>172</sup> The order led to an immediate decrease in the level of journalistic sensationalism and a condemnation of such practices on 17 September in *L’Humanité*.<sup>173</sup> While outright falsification in French papers largely disappeared by the end of 1914, exaggerations of Russian accomplishments and vilifications of the German character remained constant journalistic themes throughout the war.

More important for the Press Bureau and for the GQG during the first few months of the war was how the press interpreted telegrams and official *communiqués* regarding French frontline operations. During the first month of fighting the GQG provided little or no operational information even to its own government.<sup>174</sup> The War Ministry in practice had little direct control over the GQG, and military leaders were highly apprehensive about civilian intervention in military affairs. Messimy, just before his replacement by Millerand, had ordered the High Command to issue daily *communiqués* to the Press Bureau which were distributed to the press. Prior to this order, newspapers under pressure to provide readers with frontline news even created their own fictitious accounts of battles.<sup>175</sup> Stories that covered the initial French operations in Alsace-Lorraine and in Belgium were inconsistent from paper to paper, and journalists were under increasing pressure to provide reliable coverage. Because

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<sup>170</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> J.M.Horne and A.Kramer, *German Atrocities 1914: A History of Denial*, (New Haven, 2001) p.184.

<sup>172</sup> Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory* p.83.

<sup>173</sup> Becker, *The Great War and the French People* p.42.

<sup>174</sup> J-J Becker, *1914. Comment les français sont entrés dans la guerre* (Paris,1977), p.525.

<sup>175</sup> Collins, ‘The Development of Censorship’, p.9.

the Battle of the Marne (6 to 13 September) took place after the army began to release official frontline information and because the press needed urgently to regain credibility amongst its readership, the battle was reported in a more sober manner than were previous operations.

The War Ministry provided newspapers during the Battle of the Marne with accurate though vague information. Joffre wrote to Parisian Military Commander General Joseph Galliéni (who ran the Press Bureau while the War Ministry was stationed in Bordeaux)<sup>176</sup>, admitting that, 'I never make known the object of operations nor my intentions.'<sup>177</sup> Rather than publish the daily *communiqués* and without comment, journalists followed official information with editorial analyses. Because the state censorship apparatus was still in its infancy, journalists had far more latitude to interpret official information than was the case once the Government returned to Paris in December.

Most of the major Parisian dailies, particularly the centrist *Le Temps* and *Le Petit Parisien*, provided an accurate assessment of the stakes involved at the Marne while constantly assuring the French citizenry of victory. Parisians were made aware of the real possibility that the city could be directly attacked as it had been in 1870 and the phrase 'Miracle of the Marne' later resonated with a population who realized the immediate danger as the battle itself ensued. *Le Temps* published an article which praised Galliéni's past achievements and urged Parisians to have faith in him as Military Governor of Paris while the government relocated to Bordeaux.<sup>178</sup> Journalists from all political leanings united together around the defence of Paris and chose to put internal politics aside by adopting self-censorship. In the war's initial stages, the press, denied detailed frontline information from the GQG and largely uncensored by the Military Government in Paris, could have caused widespread panic in Paris by

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<sup>176</sup> The French Government was headquartered in Bordeaux between September and December 1914. In fact Galliéni had little time for or interest in press censorship and delegated daily supervision duties to his subordinate Louis-Lucien Klotz.

<sup>177</sup> Renouvin, *The Forms of War Government* p.82.

<sup>178</sup> *Le Temps*, 4 Sept.1914.

predicting military failure. But at this particularly critical moment, the mass media demonstrated their solidarity with the *Union Sacrée*. In the first two weeks of September 1914, the press served to both prepare and inspire the French citizenry.

After the victory at the Marne, both the GQG and the War Ministry began to intensify press censorship. In the third week of September newspapers of all political persuasions had an increased number of columns slashed from their articles,<sup>179</sup> and the first newspaper suspensions were imposed. Louis-Lucien Klotz, Galliéni's second in command in Paris and future Finance Minister in the Clemenceau Cabinet, oversaw the press bureau and quickly became known as 'the Scissors.' Clemenceau's *L'Homme Libre* was suspended on 29 September to 7 October at Interior Minister Louis Malvy's insistence for publishing an article on the unsanitary conditions under which soldiers were returned from the front. Clemenceau and *Le Figaro* editor Alfred Capus had already begun earlier in the month to criticize the arbitrariness and inconsistencies inherent in the government's censorship of the press. Clemenceau's suspension only strengthened his resolve, and criticism of political censorship became one of his *causes célèbres* for the next three years. When Clemenceau became Premier in November 1917, he not only instituted his own distinct form of political censorship but personally sought revenge on those who had slighted him.

The last three months of 1914 marked the beginning of several trends which characterized state-media relations throughout 1915. Pressure from writers and some politicians forced members of the French Cabinet to justify the use of political censorship<sup>180</sup>, as it became more arbitrarily imposed. The news section of the GQG<sup>181</sup> and the War Ministry's Press Bureau increasingly censored official *communiqués*, and the periods first before the Battle of the Marne and then between mid-September and December after the Government was no longer immediately preoccupied with

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<sup>179</sup> Becker, *The Great War and the French People* p.51.

<sup>180</sup> Renouvin, *The Forms of War Government* p.44.

<sup>181</sup> The *Section d'Information* (SI) was under the direction of the GQG until May 1917. After this date it was nominally responsible to the War Ministry but in practice was still directed by the GQG. This agency provided daily *communiqués* from the front, handed out visas to war correspondents and gave special briefings to journalists. Collins, 'The Development of Censorship', p.20.

defending Paris, saw the most extensive applications of military censorship for the entire war (see graph 1).<sup>182</sup> On 16 December, the War Ministry circulated an additional list of subjects forbidden from publication which was significantly longer than the list included in the Law of 5 August. While again the list mostly consisted of military subjects, it also prohibited ‘articles which may anger the public or the armies, articles discussing warfare or diplomacy which may favour the enemy and all interviews with Generals.’<sup>183</sup> The Press Bureau became more organized as its bureaucracy expanded in December upon the executive’s return to Paris, but still no method had been found to standardize censorship throughout the country, an issue raised with the War Ministry by the National Press Union<sup>184</sup> on 28 October.<sup>185</sup> In 1914, the French Government had decided that wartime censorship would be applied from above rather than relying on the spirit of the *Union Sacrée* for journalists to self-censor. Indeed, the reliance on self-censorship during the Battle of the Marne was an accidental by-product of the government’s temporary lodging in Bordeaux and Galliéni’s relative indifference towards press censorship. Though the *Union Sacrée* gradually broke down as the war progressed, never again were journalists given the opportunity to comment on frontline events as independently as they had been during the Marne. The application of wartime self-censorship from mid- September 1914 onwards, rather than used out of patriotism alone, became increasingly applied to avoid the growing reach of *Anastasie*’s<sup>186</sup> scissors.

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<sup>182</sup> *ibid.*, p.16.

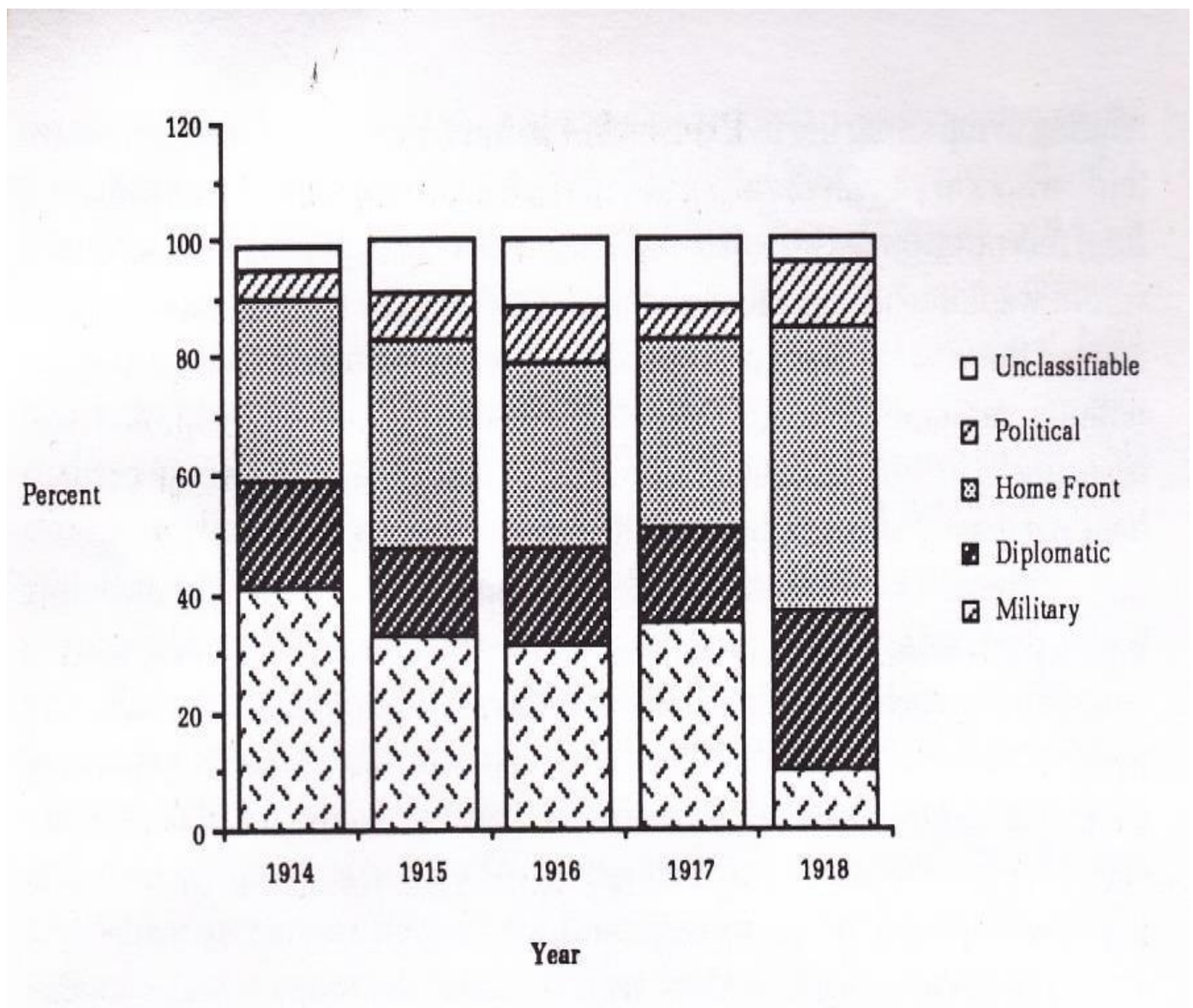
<sup>183</sup> Order issued by the Press Bureau. BDIC F rés 0270 C, 16 Dec.1914.

<sup>184</sup> Journalists and press owners, like virtually every other industry in France, had their own union. During the First World War, it had little power because mediation between the government and media was largely dealt with through a newly established ‘General Director of Press Relations’ at the War Ministry (abolished on 23 September 1917).

<sup>185</sup> Forcade, ‘La Censure politique en France’, p.82.

<sup>186</sup> *Anastasie* also referred to as *Madame Anastasie* was the nickname for the French censorship system. The image of *Anastasie* was one of an old grumpy woman with a large pair of scissors.

Graph 1 – Military censorship and censorship of the home front in France from 1914 to 1918.<sup>187</sup>



<sup>187</sup> Collins, 'The Development of Censorship', p.16.

*1915: The Stabilization and Evolution of the French Censorship System.*

Though the Chamber of Deputies met briefly on 22 December 1914 to vote in war credits for 1915, it was not until 12 January that it began to meet again regularly. The War Ministry now regained primary control over the Press Bureau. For most of 1915, M. Caqueray oversaw the institution. Caqueray, a naval officer, was described by those who worked under him as being vigilant and entirely dedicated to his job.<sup>188</sup> Though his tenure in office marked the highest point of tension between the military, government and the press over censorship policies in France during the First World War, it was also in 1915 that the Press Bureau became more efficient and censorship policies became standardized throughout France.

In February 1915, Millerand moved quickly to reduce civilian involvement in the censorship of regional newspapers. Though it is uncertain whether the impetus for this policy came directly from GQG, Millerand in general supported Joffre's policy of keeping civilians out of the business of information management.<sup>189</sup> Prefects were removed as direct censors and instead were to appoint local civilians (usually journalists, lawyers or teachers) to replace them on local Censorship Commissions, though these civilian censors had little authority over their military counterparts. When disagreements occurred between the newly appointed civilians and the local military censors, military representatives could override civilian appointees. On 3 April, civilians were prohibited (unless they had the approval of the local military representatives) from censoring articles that attacked the government or carried false information.<sup>190</sup> Later in 1916, this development would facilitate the dissemination of military propaganda. Millerand since late 1914 had been under increasing pressure to

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<sup>188</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.27.

<sup>189</sup> King, *Generals and Politicians* p.32. This was an example of Joffre's secrecy towards the civilian government.

<sup>190</sup> Rajsfus, *La Censure militaire et policière* p.39. See also Malvy's memoirs, L. Malvy. *Mon Crime* (Paris, 1921). Civilians were later replaced altogether as censors, mostly by injured soldiers, by War Minister Paul Painlevé in 1917, though the replacement was never fully implemented.



defend political censorship, and with the removal of prefects from Censorship Commissions whose particular function was to censor articles related to internal politics, Millerand now claimed that there was now no 'political censorship,' only 'civil censorship.'<sup>191</sup> But Millerand fooled no one and the rest of 1915 featured a heated debate between French politicians, journalists and intellectuals over the subject.

The debate which surrounded the legitimacy of political censorship in France pitted the War Ministry, the Ministry of the Interior and the right-wing press (led by Charles Maurras of *L'Action Française*) against deputies from the French left and radical republican journalists and politicians such as Georges Clemenceau. Because the term 'political censorship' carried negative connotations in a country with widely ingrained republican values, Millerand and Malvy consistently claimed that political censorship did not officially exist. Malvy, in a typically convoluted statement on 15 April, wrote in *Le Temps*: 'There exists only a military censorship, but it is true that it is applied not exclusively to military and diplomatic questions, but also to articles containing violent attacks on the Parliament and the Government, and to those calculated to disturb public opinion from the standpoint of national defence.'<sup>192</sup> These types of comments infuriated many who wished to openly and honestly debate the issue of political censorship in France. In mid-1915, a campaign led by various press unions, Clemenceau and several socialist deputies, particularly Paul Meunier, was launched in the press against political censorship.<sup>193</sup> The debate came to a head at the end of 1915 when Meunier, with Clemenceau's backing, proposed a bill to significantly alter the practices of the French censorship system. The Viviani Government had been replaced on 29 October in part because of its apparent inability and unwillingness to stand up to Joffre during the Sarrail Affair.<sup>194</sup> Aristide Briand upon becoming Premier argued that

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<sup>191</sup>Though 'political censorship' and 'civil censorship' in practice meant the same thing, the latter term was considered more politically palatable. In an unconvincing fashion Briand claimed that since after February 1915 Prefects were no longer directly involved in censorship, it was no longer political. Rather it involved the monitoring of civilian affairs, Renouvin, *The Forms of War Government* pp.43-44.

<sup>192</sup> *ibid.*, p.44.

<sup>193</sup> Meunier later founded the socialist daily *La Vérité* in 1917 and was imprisoned in 1919 for espionage.

<sup>194</sup> A scandal which surrounded the dismissal of a Republican General, Maurice Sarrail who was then appointed to lead the French expeditionary forces in the Dardanelles and Salonika. For more on the Sarrail

censorship of the press had not been imposed strictly enough, though he did not blame anyone personally.<sup>195</sup> Importantly, he vociferously argued in favour of political censorship. The Meunier Bill failed and political censorship remained an entrenched feature of French wartime information management even after Clemenceau's appointment as Premier in November 1917. However, Briand's condemnations during the debate of the government's tolerance towards the media had been little more than conciliatory gestures to the political right. As Premier, he moved quickly to form a relationship with press leaders, promising them that he would personally attend to their suggestions and complaints while in office, and appointing Jules Gautier, a civilian, as the new Director of Press Relations.

Briand's main achievement in information control management was to introduce the *Maison de la Presse* which created propaganda designed for readerships abroad. Briand's equivocation in declaring his affinity for harsh press censorship while making conciliatory gestures to major press editors satisfied no one, and when he was finally replaced by Alexandre Ribot in March 1917, he was missed by few in the media.

Another, more technical issue in 1915 was the Press Bureau's attempt to standardize censorship practices throughout France. Between February and September, the number of official orders given from the Press Bureau to regional Censorship Commissions multiplied.<sup>196</sup> The list of themes of prohibited material became so long that the mention of almost any information pertaining to international relations, domestic politics or to events on the frontline became officially forbidden. Decisions over which articles to censor became increasingly arbitrary, and regional commissions had varying standards of severity. Regional inconsistencies led to the publication of information or opinions which were banned in neighbouring areas.<sup>197</sup> Though the Parisian Press Bureau officially had the final decision on such matters, several cabinet members and military

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Affair see J.C. Tannenbaum, General Maurice Sarrail 1856-1929 a Radical and Republican General (Chapel Hill, 1974), Chapter 5. See also King, Generals & Politicians.

<sup>195</sup> Briand and Viviani had simply changed places and Viviani was now the Deputy Premier.

<sup>196</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C.

<sup>197</sup> Forcade, 'La Censure politique en France', Chapter 4.

officials tried to find solutions to the problem. Unfortunately, there was little agreement between the War Minister, the Premier and regional military commanders on how to resolve the dilemma, and the result was a series of confusing and contradictory orders sent to the regional press commissions.<sup>198</sup> The War Ministry at the end of September finally solved the problem by issuing a manual entitled Circular 1000,<sup>199</sup> which consisted of a series of general guidelines for censors. Circular 1000 was highly successful in standardising censorship throughout the country and also made journalists fully aware of the criteria according to which their material was being monitored. The introduction of Circular 1000 was the most significant step taken during the war to increase the Press Bureau's efficiency.

The French censorship apparatus matured over a year of repairing its fundamental deficiencies. The horrific fighting in 1916 at Verdun put this system to the test. Whereas the establishment of full-time war correspondents in February resulted in more incoming news from the front, the heavy enforcement of military censorship under Circular 1000 had the offsetting effect of strictly limiting how journalists could interpret this new influx of information. Papers during Verdun were forced to stick to the accounts given to them by the GQG, and so many papers were censored for elaborating on *communiqués* that the Press Bureau eventually stopped giving official explanations for the slashing of specific passages. Vague whitewashed articles characterized most of the reporting on Verdun because France was usually on the defensive during the battle.<sup>200</sup> France's media however at the same time was able to turn the few moments where France was on the attack into sensationalist though effective propaganda stories.

Photographs were increasingly printed in French papers, and while the horrific nature

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<sup>198</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C.

<sup>199</sup> An uninspired title, Circular 1000 was the 1000th order which had been given by the Press Bureau since the beginning of the war (September 1915).

<sup>200</sup> The high point of military secrecy towards the press during Verdun was during April when the Germans began a new offensive after capturing Fort Douaumont. Any attempt even to make up for the lack of detail provided by painting a foreboding picture of the circumstances was forbidden. *L'Humanité*, for example, was censored for stating 'Even the Crows are scared.' Navet-Bouron, 'Verdun et la censure', p.52.

of modern war was often a key photographic theme, the Press Bureau deemed it illegal both to post images which could be used by enemy artillery outposts and, (in June), to represent the use of poison gas in photographs. Journalists deemed it less risky to report details of British military operations than those which primarily involved Frenchmen. One result of this was that even after the British offensive on the Somme beginning on 1 July, papers in France still criticized the British for not helping France at Verdun.<sup>201</sup> Complaints from British officials regarding practices in the French media had begun in April 1915 during the Gallipoli campaign, and increased in July 1916. As a result, the detailed mention and particularly the criticism of British operations by the French press or by news agencies became forbidden on 17 September.<sup>202</sup> Most of the Somme campaign was described only vaguely in French papers while the fighting raged.

Verdun could not be so easily brushed aside in the French media. For Verdun, Briand had a distinctively new approach on how to use the media. In a prophetic letter addressed on 15 December 1915 to his War Minister and Interior Minister, Briand declared, ‘Since the beginning of the war, the necessity of a strong information services organization and of propaganda has highly influenced the information which citizens have received. We wish now also to manipulate public opinion by initiating both domestic and foreign propaganda campaigns.’<sup>203</sup> Events in 1916 provided him with the perfect opportunity to implement his agenda.

#### *1916: The French Censorship System put to the Test.*

Verdun (21 February to 18 December) and the Somme (1 July to 18 November) were the two most notable battles of 1916 on the Western Front, and are ingrained respectively in the collective French and British historical memories. At the beginning of 1916, Briand established the *Maison de la Presse*, an agency controlled by the Foreign Ministry designed to direct French propaganda abroad. Military correspondents until

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<sup>201</sup> Navet-Bouron, ‘Verdun et la censure’.

<sup>202</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 17 Sept.1916.

<sup>203</sup> SHD 5N 346, 15 Dec.1915.

1916 were officers who reported information to the GQG's Information Service in addition to performing their duties as soldiers. This arrangement resulted in less information being transmitted to the Press Bureau and to the press as frontline fighting intensified. During the initial German attack at Verdun, French officers were so overwhelmed that they were rendered completely incapable of providing reliable news coverage. As a result, the capture of Fort Douaumont in February led to conflicting reports in several papers and was a shock to readers who had been completely uninformed of the attack on the fort.<sup>204</sup> Briand saw the danger that a news blackout might cause panic, and perhaps saw the opportunity to implement the use of full-time war correspondents. The extra time dedicated to reporting would enable the correspondents not only to record information but also to act as propagandists. Shortly after the Battle of Verdun began, the French military began to hire officers and enlisted men as full-time war correspondents working directly under the GQG's Information Service.

The French citizenry by 1916 were more critical of their news providers and of their government than in August 1914. Debates surrounding political censorship had been made public and the patriotic zeal that had accompanied the *Union Sacrée* had begun to wane. A news blackout in February and March 1916 could have led to widespread panic and suspicion. On the other hand, it would have been inconceivable for papers to invent military events, as they had done during the operations preceding the Battle of the Marne. Newspapers during Verdun were provided with more information than prior to 1916, but the information they received was distorted and the latitude given to journalists to deviate from official censorship policy was virtually non-existent.

Jules Gautier, a soft spoken civilian,<sup>205</sup> was expected to be capable of forging a closer working relationship between the press and the War Ministry, but in January 1916 he quickly acquired an unexpected reputation for operating with an iron fist as director of

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<sup>204</sup> Navet-Bouron, 'Verdun et la censure', *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporaines*, p.182.

<sup>205</sup> Gautier was a state prosecutor. Forcade, 'La Censure politique en France', p.318.

the Press Bureau in Paris.<sup>206</sup> The Battle of Verdun, according to the Press Bureau's censorship files located at the *Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine*, was the most heavily censored single event in France during the First World War.<sup>207</sup> Georges Clemenceau was one of the first victims of censorship during the battle. While Clemenceau's paper *L'Homme Enchaîné* had been censored repeatedly since 1914, it caused a minor scandal in March 1916 for attempting to publish an article entitled 'The Capture of Douaumont,' which was labelled 'defeatist.' Clemenceau did not in fact publish the article himself, but passed the censored text to *Le Journal*, *La Victoire*, *Paris-Midi*, *L'Éclair*, *L'Echo de Paris* and *Le Petit Parisien*. *Le Petit Parisien* as a result was forced to cancel 200,000 copies which contained the article.<sup>208</sup> Although it was not uncommon for Clemenceau to give censored articles to other papers which were less susceptible to punishment (*Le Petit Parisien* was seldom punished for offences) he must have taken particular pleasure in angering Jules Gautier, who was a personal enemy of his.<sup>209</sup> Clemenceau had connections in the telegraph office and had seen a report on 3 March which stated, 'The Germans have managed to penetrate into the village of Douaumont where the fighting continues.' Upon seeing the telegram he immediately wrote an article entitled, 'The Capture of Verdun.' Marcel Berger and Paul Allard, two ex-censors from the telegraph section of the Press Bureau, when making reference to this incident sarcastically referred to Clemenceau as '*défaitiste en Chef*.'<sup>210</sup>

Military censorship during the Battle of Verdun was accompanied by an increase in propaganda. Because the new full-time military correspondents produced twice as much information as the previous breed, newspapers had more positive information to use which was less likely to be censored. While papers at first attempted to report on

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<sup>206</sup> He developed a particularly bad relationship with Jean Dupuy, editor of *Le Petit Parisien*, *ibid.*, p.351.

<sup>207</sup> This was in large part because of the extraordinary length of the battle which encompassed almost all of 1916. 50 of the 92 newspaper seizures during the war occurred during Verdun. Forcade, 'La Censure politique en France', pp.883-884.

<sup>208</sup> Navet-Bouron. 'Verdun et la censure.' pp.51-52.

<sup>209</sup> *ibid.*, Clemenceau through his long political career, though he possessed a high number of admirable qualities, also had the propensity to make personal enemies of his political opponents. Many of these he would later attack maliciously as Premier (see Chapter 5).

<sup>210</sup> Berger and Allard. *Les secrets de la censure* p.52.

military affairs, particularly on the few occasions when the French were on the offensive, by the end of the battle in December self-censorship on military affairs was in full effect. In fact, mention of Verdun had become so routine in the logbook of orders at the Press Bureau that the orders themselves began to become less specific. Whereas early in the battle, censors explained their reasons for censoring particular information or events, after a few months the orders simply read ‘nothing on Verdun’ and then closer to the end of the year ‘Verdun.’<sup>211</sup>

During the first month of Verdun, the government became more involved in creating *bouillage de crâne*. Added information from the GQG’s new war correspondents did not translate into more accurate reporting on events at the front. The Press Bureau used the orders in Circular 1000 to censor military news during the periods when France was on the defensive (most of the battle), but encouraged the press to emphasize the moments when the French were on the attack or when they were successful. Military specifics were heavily censored as they had been for the entire war. The most unpleasant aspects of the battle were hidden from the public beginning as early as 3 March when an order was given by the Press Bureau that ‘nothing negative be mentioned concerning Verdun.’<sup>212</sup> In addition to this general directive, papers were told not to mention the presence or execution of spies or injured soldiers<sup>213</sup> (which had previously been allowed), or the use of poison gas by French soldiers,<sup>214</sup> or the general nature of trench warfare<sup>215</sup> (which had also been previously allowed). While military information was heavily censored, papers were encouraged to create heroes out of the leaders at Verdun, particularly Pétain.

Although Pétain and Nivelle indeed were successful commanders at Verdun, several of the myths attributed to them such as the famous sayings ‘We shall have them’ (Pétain) and ‘They shall not pass’ (Nivelle) were heavily circulated by propagandists

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<sup>211</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 1916.

<sup>212</sup> *ibid.*, 3 Nov.1916.

<sup>213</sup> *ibid.*, 18-19 Mar.1916.

<sup>214</sup> *ibid.*, 12 Aug.1916.

<sup>215</sup> *ibid.*, 8 Apr.1916.

and it is unsure to this day whether Pétain was responsible for the former remark. Ross Collins is correct when he hints that within weeks the political aspects of Verdun became more significant than the military ones in the French press.<sup>216</sup> It was a combination of government directed propaganda and censorship that forced the press to characterize Verdun in this fashion.

Journalists would have been less likely to portray the battle of Verdun in the same way as they had the Marne two years earlier if left unsupervised. Journalists had been willing to self-censor whilst the army defended Paris, in 1914 at the height of the *Union Sacrée*. Getting the press to portray equally positively the government's insistence on the French Army not being bled dry defending Verdun (a battle in which the stakes were less clear) required coercion. Because public information surrounding Verdun was so heavily manipulated, it is doubtful that French citizens were fully aware of the strategic importance of Verdun while the battle was waged, unlike at the Marne. Verdun proved a unique case for the French censors and for the press. Unable to report truthfully the nature of events at the front the press was forced to walk a fine line between vagueness and fictional exaggeration. The result was the creation of the 'Legend of Verdun.'<sup>217</sup>

### *Conclusion*

France's freedom of the press, which it had enjoyed since 1881, suddenly disappeared in 1914 in the face of national emergency. Press leaders, who were particularly distrusted by France's military chiefs were not included in the construction of the bureaucratic framework for press censorship in France but rather were presented with a new bureau and a list of orders in the first week of August 1914. The fact that there was little or no resistance from the press and that press leaders willingly gave up

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<sup>216</sup> Collins, 'The Development of Censorship', p.18.

<sup>217</sup> The Battle of Verdun for the remainder of the war and for decades later acquired a mythical status in the French ethos as a symbol of German cold-bloodedness staved off by selfless determination. In France it was often compared to the Battle of Thermopylae. Jankowski, *Verdun* pp.62-63.



their rights to publish demonstrates the pervasiveness of the *Union Sacrée* and the prevalence of the short war illusion during the opening phase of the war. The fact that many of these same editors and press owners began to openly complain about the rigidity and abuses of censorship by the end of 1915 suggests that by then the *Union Sacrée* had begun to deteriorate and the short-war illusion had dissipated.

Commitment to the *Union Sacrée* by the press was fundamental in ensuring the effectiveness of the French war-time censorship system. Although papers had to submit their copies for censorship prior to publication and had to obey the orders given to them to censor prohibited material under the threat of punishment, in the end papers printed their own material. Papers could in theory disobey the Press Bureau and risk the threat of punishment, and there was no guarantee that the Parisian or regional military governments would seize all copies before they went into circulation. Perhaps the most positive influence of the press's adherence to the *Union Sacrée* was its effective use of self-censorship during the Battle of the Marne, which did a great deal to limit sensationalism and panic at a particularly dangerous moment.

The French censorship system was again put to the test by the eleven-month battle of attrition at Verdun. In response to Verdun, the system matured from a tool designed to censor sensitive information into one that also propagated positive news. The result was vague coverage by the press for large periods of the war while Germany was on the attack and then overwhelming coverage of French successes. This became the standard model for French military censorship for the rest of the war.

1914 to 1916 marked the evolution of the French censorship system into an effective governmental tool by which to protect military secrets and to manipulate public opinion, its two primary goals. 1917-1918, however, witnessed the censorship system being placed under even heavier strain. At the same moment as France's censorship system had become fully developed, combining censorship with the manipulation of public information, France entered into a two-year period marked by military failures and both civil and military unrest. French leaders had to alter the Press Bureau's focus

accordingly. The events in 1917 and 1918 almost brought the *Union Sacrée* to breaking point. As French fortunes waned, the Press Bureau and the GQG attempted to apply the techniques of news manipulation that they had learned at Verdun, despite increasing cynicism in the interior. None the less, because of the bureaucratic developments in the French information management system in 1915 and 1916 the French censorship system was prepared to deal with the press as each crisis unfolded

## Chapter 2: Spring 1917: New Partners<sup>218</sup> and the Opening of a New Phase for the French War Effort

### *Introduction*

Two significant series of events took place for France in the late winter of 1916 and in Spring 1917. Each are helpful in explaining many of the fundamental motives behind the policies of the French information management system. The first involved changes in France's leadership, both political and military. Nivelle replaced Joffre French Commander in Chief of the Western Front in December 1916 and three months later Alexandre Ribot replaced Briand as Premier. This chapter demonstrates how in both cases the press was pushed to protect all of the figures involved, particularly by maintaining Joffre's status as a household war hero instead of explaining the reasons for his replacement, and by protecting Ribot after he made disapproving comments about the February Revolution. These are examples of how the Press Bureau chose to mask the mistakes made by public officials rather than allow newspapers to discuss them openly.

The frequent use of political censorship remained a constant theme between the governments of Briand and Ribot. The first three wartime Premiers (Viviani, Briand and Ribot), who had very differing political backgrounds and ideological focuses, all promised reform in the use of political censorship yet did little to change the high frequency of its usage. This chapter shows how Briand and Ribot were able consistently to defuse the debate over the practice of political censorship.

The second series of events discussed in this chapter took place outside France. The February Revolution is the first major example during the First World War of how the French information management system was able to manipulate the press into portraying potentially ominous news into a positive news story. In doing so the government allowed several specific rules from Circular 1000 to be broken on the condition that

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<sup>218</sup> The Americans officially joined the war as an 'associated power' of the Allies. Bruce, A Fraternity of Arms p.xiv.

papers towed the government line, namely that the February Revolution was a positive event for France. Enforcing the rules was less important than having the press accurately portray the government-approved message. As during Verdun, those in charge of press control followed a ‘grand design’ in their policies, in this case to limit panic and sensationalism. The other external event important to France’s war effort was the entrance into the war of the United States in April. This chapter demonstrates how France’s government managed the news of what was an entirely positive development.

#### *A. Nivelle Replaces Joffre as French Commander on the Western Front.*

On 13 December 1916, a presidential decree appointed General Robert Nivelle as Commander of the French Armies of the North and Northeast. Joffre’s replacement coincided with the formation of a new Briand government with a smaller cabinet. This cabinet reshuffle created its own minor incident at the Press Bureau when the Parisian daily *Le Matin* was allowed to publish unofficial details about the new ministry after *Le Temps* had previously been prohibited from printing identical information.<sup>219</sup> The article in *Le Matin* was in direct violation of an order from the Press Bureau prohibiting unofficial information regarding the ministerial re-ordering<sup>220</sup>. It had probably slipped past the censors because of an order given on 10 December, the day that the article was slashed from *Le Temps*, that ‘for politics we can loosen a little’.<sup>221</sup> The Circular 1000, which was distributed to all members of the Press Bureau in its original form on September 30 1915, had been designed to prevent such mistakes by standardising censorship practices throughout the country, but was never fully successful in doing so. Frequent disputes between the Press Bureau and newspaper editors over the re-printing of banned information persisted until the end of the war.<sup>222</sup>

The proceedings during the ten sessions of the Chamber of Deputies’ Secret

<sup>219</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République. Tome II* p.207.

<sup>220</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 AVIS, order issued by M. Berthelot, 10 Dec.1916.

<sup>221</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 AVIS, order issued by M.Peycelon, 9 Dec.1916.

<sup>222</sup> The Press Bureau released both general orders (*consignes générales*) and specific daily orders (*consignes*) to the press.

Committee held between 28 November and 7 December accelerated Joffre's downfall. Both Joffre and Briand were primary targets of attacks emanating from both the political left and right. Whereas Briand was criticised for his policies towards Romania and Greece, Joffre was accused of neglecting the '*Armée D'Orient*' and its entire operational theatre.<sup>223</sup> The session ended with a governmental vote of confidence. Although Briand won the vote by 360 votes to 141, his influence had clearly diminished as six months prior he had won a similar vote on 22 June by 444 votes to 80.<sup>224</sup> During these sessions in June, held during the middle of the Battle of Verdun, Joffre had already been harshly criticised for 'mystifying the war of attrition.'<sup>225</sup> It now seemed a politically opportune time to replace Joffre with someone popular both with France's citizenry and its politicians.

Briand, with backing from Poincaré, had prepared Joffre for his replacement at a lunch meeting on 3 December.<sup>226</sup> Joffre, who had been CGS<sup>227</sup> of the French Army since 1911, was widely praised as the 'victor of the Marne' and was popular with the French citizenry, who affectionately referred to him as 'Papa Joffre.' But he also had a strained relationship with the government, towards which he was highly secretive, and was viewed by many in Paris as having been caught off guard at Verdun.<sup>228</sup> The Press Bureau was quickly informed of Joffre's imminent replacement and the day after the General had been told to suggest a successor, an order was given by the Director of the Press Bureau 'not to speak in any form whatsoever of possible modifications in the High Command.'<sup>229</sup>

The Press Bureau firstly prevented this information from appearing because of its importance as a military secret. But Joffre's popularity on the home front also necessitated caution over how the press would be permitted to comment. Some news stories regarding Joffre's replacement could be dangerous in creating rumours, in

<sup>223</sup> Miquel, *Le Chemin des Dames* pp. 40-41.

<sup>224</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République. Tome II* p.206.

<sup>225</sup> P.Miquel, *La Grande Guerre* (Paris, 1983), p.375.

<sup>226</sup> Miquel, *Le Chemin des Dames* p.42.

<sup>227</sup> Chief of the General Staff.

<sup>228</sup> D.Stevenson, *1914-1918: The History of First World War* (London,2004), p.174.

<sup>229</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 AVIS, order issued from Director of the Press Bureau, 4 Dec.1916.

informing the enemy<sup>230</sup> and in lowering public esteem for France's generals who had recently been praised so highly in the press during Verdun.

Though compared to Joffre Nivelle had little previous experience as a strategist,<sup>231</sup> he was for many reasons considered an attractive replacement. He was a popular hero throughout France for his role in the successful recapture of Forts Douaumont and Vaux as Commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army at Verdun. He was comfortable with and well liked in political circles, was supported by Joffre without being overly attached to him, as a Protestant he avoided the Republican prejudice against practising Catholics, and he spoke fluent English. By simultaneously presenting a new, leaner cabinet with added authority over the military, by introducing Nivelle as the new Commander in Chief, and by promoting Joffre to the largely ceremonial role of 'General in Chief of the French Armies, Technical Military Advisor to the Government, Consultative Member of the War Committee,' Briand presented the press with little scope for immediate criticism.

Nivelle's appointment was reported in the press by a few significant Parisian dailies on 13 December (*Le Petit Parisien*, *L'Humanité*, *L'Action Française* and *Le Petit Journal*) and by all other major dailies the next day. It is significant that the national press avoided directly contrasting Joffre with Nivelle because direct attacks on politicians and military leaders were routinely censored. The Press Bureau's first official order regarding Joffre's replacement was that no mention be made of the 'distribution of the command of the Armies of the North and Northeast or of their three groups'.<sup>232</sup> Restraint by the media and the Press Bureau's primary concern with censoring military details allowed for a cautious yet relatively uncensored (self-censorship excluded) discussion in the press regarding the change in the French High Command. Joffre still commanded great prestige and the government ensured that his public image would remain intact.

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<sup>230</sup>For example an article that the Press Bureau prevented from reaching the newspapers in Marseilles, which described 'the creation of a new War Committee presided by one of the most popular personalities in the French Army, which as a consequence has announced a grand offensive destined to liberate the invaded territories, BDIC F rés 0270 AVIS, Formal order, 10.Dec.1916.

<sup>231</sup> Nivelle because of his success at Verdun had enjoyed a meteoric rise in the French Army in 1916. He had never however commanded a unit larger than an army. King, *Generals and Politicians* p.140.

<sup>232</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 AVIS, orders issued by Colonel Barjonet, 13.Dec.1916 and 17.Dec.1916.

Between 13 and 26 December, when Joffre was named ‘*Maréchal de France*,’ most of the mainstream press praised Nivelle and promoted his image as the hero of Verdun.<sup>233</sup> After 26 December, similar praise was lavished on Joffre for several days, with frequent references to his role as the hero of the Marne. A front page article in *Le Petit Parisien* on 13 December was particularly complimentary to Nivelle. It stated that the paper had sent a correspondent to Verdun to speak with him and that he was ‘courteous,’ was ‘strong in both body and mind’ and ‘did not speak much, but that is his style.’<sup>234</sup> The next day, both *Le Temps* and *La Croix* praised the new Commander in Chief. *Le Temps*, however, had a passage slashed from one of its two articles which discussed the degree of confidence the paper had in Nivelle’s abilities. The excision was probably a result of the Press Bureau’s policy of removing any comments which could be interpreted as exaggeration or creating false hope among the populace. *La Croix*, a Catholic paper, was more nuanced in its praise of Nivelle but in a surprising act of self-censorship did not criticise the new Commander in Chief for his Protestant faith.

It seems that none of the major papers attempted openly to criticise Joffre’s replacement with Nivelle. Joffre had a reputation for hostility towards the press and for secrecy towards his own Government. Press owners were probably optimistic that the new General, who had an amicable relationship with the media, would be more forthcoming in providing it with new information. This would indeed turn out to be the case when later Nivelle rashly made known to the media that a new major offensive with high expectations for territorial gain along the Chemin des Dames was in preparation. Even had some in the press wanted one, it is highly doubtful that the authorities would have allowed an open debate over such a significant change in the High Command or for Joffre to be publicly humiliated.

The press emphasised Joffre’s ceremonial promotions over his ‘replacement’ or ‘demotion.’ The major exception was an article in *Le Petit Journal*, which (on 13 December), appears to have been the only major Parisian daily to state explicitly that

<sup>233</sup> Miquel, *Le Chemin des Dames* pp. 23-24.

<sup>234</sup> *Le Petit Parisien*, 13 Dec.1916.

Joffre's 'active role had been terminated' and that he had been replaced by Nivelle, a decision which 'had been predicted already for several days'.<sup>235</sup> The article published a large photograph of Nivelle and praised him highly while giving little mention to Joffre. It is surprising that this article, which could have been perceived as being disrespectful to the ex-Commander in Chief, had not been censored by the Press Bureau. This censors' neglect perhaps resulted from an order given by the Director of the Press Bureau that day which ordered censors to 'stop slashing political articles.'<sup>236</sup> *Le Temps* on 14 December was careful to mention that the GQG would keep Joffre on as a technical advisor because they 'will want to keep the services of the victor of the Marne.'<sup>237</sup> Two days later, an article in *Le Temps* published a commentary from *The Daily Telegraph* which noted that Joffre would always be the one who kept the Allies together on the Western Front and remain the victor of the Marne, 'which history may prove to be the decisive battle of the war.'<sup>238</sup> Though on 19 December *Le Petit Parisien* referred directly to Joffre's replacement, it was careful to state that he had been promoted.<sup>239</sup> Once Joffre was named 'Maréchal de France' he was praised in a similar manner to Nivelle. This praise would be the last time when Joffre would be frequently mentioned in the press. The reality of his practical demotion was largely hidden in the press by the government and Joffre was to remain a hero on the home front.

The announcement of the re-constituted Briand Cabinet and of the new French Commander in Chief coincided with a period of change and confusion at the Press Bureau. This probably contributed to the relatively low number of orders given by the Bureau. Two contradictory directives were given on 13 and 15 December. The first, to 'stop slashing political articles,' was followed two days later by another advising to 'not allow attacks against the regime, the President of the Republic or any pacifist

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<sup>235</sup> *Le Petit Journal*, 13 Dec.1916.

<sup>236</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 AVIS, order from the Director of the Press Bureau, 13 Dec.1916. The French word used for slash is *échoppage* which stems from the French word *échoppe* (scalpel).

<sup>237</sup> *Le Temps*, 14 Dec.1916.

<sup>238</sup> *Le Temps*, 15 Dec.1916.

<sup>239</sup> *Le Petit Parisien*, 19 Dec.1916.



articles.’<sup>240</sup> The discrepancy between the two orders may reflect the influence of a debate which took place on 14 December in the Chamber of Deputies, which demonstrated the growing disdain felt by the SFIO for ‘political censorship’ as well as the line taken by the Briand Government towards censorship. Finally, because Finance Minister Alexandre Ribot represented the Government in the session (Briand was at a Senate meeting), it gave clues to Ribot’s personal views on media control. This was significant because Ribot would replace Briand as Premier in March.

The debate was over two proposed amendments to the provision of war credits for the first trimester of 1917. Deputies Charles Bernard and Emmanuel Brousse, both socialists, proposed to withdraw 10,000 francs from the Press Bureau’s budget. Brousse proposed in addition to put an immediate halt to the practice of ‘political censorship.’<sup>241</sup> However, Bernard did most of the talking during the debate, and was routinely applauded by his fellow socialists.

Bernard’s three central arguments were that the Press Bureau should not give certain papers preferential treatment, that the government should not be able to shield itself from criticism by censoring articles on domestic politics, and that ‘the exercise of censorship as it has been used for some time does not respond to the needs of the country which is eager for both controversy and clarity’.<sup>242</sup> He began with an article that had been allowed in *L’Heure* but not in the evening paper *L’Intransigeant*, which he described as ‘persona non grata.’ The article discussed a German prisoner of war who had accidentally hit a live shell while digging with a pick axe and had narrowly survived. The article commented in a way that was meant to be humorous, that he probably wished he had been given a less dangerous task than transporting shells along the Paris-Lyon railway. Bernard questioned the sensitivity of the article’s subject matter by asking ‘Gentlemen, could the Briand Ministry be placed in peril because of the publishing of such an article? Are the qualities or strategy of General Joffre being

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<sup>240</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 AVIS, 15 Dec.1916.

<sup>241</sup> ‘Annales des débats de la Chambre des Députés’, 14 Dec.1916. *Journal Officiel* (Paris,1924), pp. 2263-2265.

<sup>242</sup> ‘Annales de la Chambre, Débats,’ 14 Dec.1916. p.2263.

put into question?’ He then cited another article that had been banned from publication in *Le Grimace* but had been printed in 1881 in the *Journal du Peuple*. After reading this polemic, which included such statements as ‘public opinion is a prostitute,’ ‘the best reasoning falls on the deaf’ and that ‘the words justice and legality’ were the ‘preferred gargles of the Third Republic,’ he paused and said ‘signed Briand.’ Bernard commented that the media had the right to publish this article because it showed Briand’s disdain for the public.

Ribot gave a prepared response agreeing with Brousse’s proposition to cut 10,000 francs from the Press Bureau’s Budget but not to abolish political censorship. He stated that ‘there needs to be reforms concerning the exercise of censorship,’ and that ‘freedom of speech need to be more respected than it has been in these past times’ but that ‘in the interest of national defence, it is indispensable that there is a censorship under the responsibility of the government.’<sup>243</sup> These statements reflected Briand’s increasing concessions to the left but also his predisposition to seek a consensus. In fact by 1916 Briand was aware of the growing criticism of political censorship and had already begun to loosen restraints on articles related to domestic politics.<sup>244</sup> Bernard agreed to support Brousse’s amendment, and the proposition subtracting 10,000 francs from the Press Bureau’s budget but retaining the Bureau’s right to use political censorship passed.

Though Ribot acknowledged that articles such as that written by Briand should be handled differently in wartime from in peacetime, strangely, he did not defend either the Press Bureau or even Briand. Because Ribot personally articulated the government’s position in the debate and would make statements in the same conciliatory vein at the beginning of his premiership, many in the media believed he would take a more lenient line than had Briand. But there was little in Ribot’s character or background to justify this belief. Ribot was politically to the right of Briand, had a certain deviousness to his character and was more interested in foreign than domestic

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<sup>243</sup> ‘Annales de la Chambre, Débats’, 14 Dec.1916, p.2264

<sup>244</sup> Forcade, ‘La Censure politique en France’, p.138.

affairs.<sup>245</sup> Even during the debate on 14 December Ribot, perhaps unintentionally, demonstrated his true feelings towards political censorship by stating ‘we will not allow certain campaigns in the press to hide behind the rubric of politics which have other intentions’, which he along with Deputy Raffin-Dugens agreed was the behaviour of the ‘royalists in the past.’<sup>246</sup> Ribot was personally less involved in the practice of censorship than was Briand but his tenure as Premier would reverse any liberalising tendencies which had begun in late 1916.

A report from 30 December adopted during a secret session of the Senate Army Commission<sup>247</sup> placed further pressure upon the Government to address the issue of political censorship. Senator Jules Jeanneney’s report claimed that the censorship system was faulty and unrepresentative of France’s republican institutions. Contending newspapers should be seized only as a last resort, and he mentioned Ribot’s comment in the Chamber that ‘the system needs to be reformed and that freedom should be more respected than it has been these past times’. The report considered that the public had lost its right to express itself. The five conclusions unanimously agreed upon by the committee were:

1. The Government should use all means necessary regarding diplomatic or military news and do what it can to combat excitement or disorder instigated by the press.
2. The only articles which should be censored are those which violate the 4 August Law and which go against the national interest.
3. The only reason a paper should be suspended, even in the short term, is if it is to prevent public disorder.
4. It is unnecessary to implement new legislation to make censorship function. Rather, it is the current legislation that must be applied properly.
5. The French public opinion must be taken into as high regard as that in the Allied countries. The French populace have the ability to judge and the right to know.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Stevenson, *French War Aims* pp.64-56.

<sup>246</sup> *Annales de la Chambre, Débats*, 14 Dec.1916, p.2264.

<sup>247</sup> Chaired by Georges Clemenceau, the Senate’s Army Commission was appointed in response to a similar body in the Chamber of Deputies. Its primary purpose was to give advice on the state of equipment and munitions. But it commented and questioned ministers on a large array of affairs. Renouvin, *The Forms of War Government* pp.124-125.

<sup>248</sup> BDIC O Pièce 38.544, Report to the Senate Army Commission from Senator Jules Jeanneney.

Political censorship was now being openly attacked in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Briand had kept few of the unofficial promises he had made to the press when his cabinet first took office to soften the use of censorship for political purposes. Now the burden of addressing such a volatile issue would fall upon his successor.

*B. A Change in the French Political Leadership: Ribot Replaces Briand.*

On 20 March 1917, Ribot replaced Briand, thereby becoming France's third head of government since the outbreak of hostilities. Briand's resignation was prompted by a crisis which began on 14 March during the fifth secret session of the Chamber of Deputies<sup>249</sup> and resulted in the resignation of War Minister General Hubert Lyautey. During a series of technical discussions regarding military aircraft, Lyautey refused to comment on the grounds that the discussion should take place in a public session. Once a public meeting had been granted, Lyautey delivered a prepared speech (previously undiscussed with Briand)<sup>250</sup> in which he maintained that technical details related to defence should not be discussed with parliament even in secret sessions. This was the first occasion during the war when a War Minister had not been forthcoming with Parliament about the military's progress in reinforcing France's armaments.<sup>251</sup> Lyautey's action created a commotion in the Chamber and sparked outrage particularly on the far-left. Several Socialist deputies shouted that 'now all that is needed is to get rid of the Parliament' and that 'the Minister of War's words constitute a

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<sup>249</sup> The Chamber of Deputies met throughout the war as the Law of Siege required uninterrupted presence of parliament, Renouvin, *The Forms of War Government* p.99. The sessions of the parliamentary and senate committees however were private. Beginning in 1916 the chamber began to conduct secret sessions, at first to discuss matters related to Verdun. 100 votes were required from the chamber to initiate a secret discussion and only the one question decided upon could be discussed. The first session took place on 16 June and was followed by another 10 between 28 November and 10 December (all initiated by the SFIO). Four more took place in 1917 until Clemenceau as Prime Minister abandoned the practice, arguing that it caused public distrust in the government.

<sup>250</sup> R.Poincaré, *Au Service de la France. Neuf années de souvenirs. Tome IX. L'Année Trouble 1917* (Paris, 1932). p. 74.

<sup>251</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République. Tome II* p.229.

provocation'.<sup>252</sup> As the decision was taken in the Chamber to reconvene in private (unanimously passed), Lyautey offered his resignation to Briand. Briand was unable to find an immediate replacement as War Minister and therefore offered his own resignation to President Poincaré. Poincaré's first choice to replace Briand had been Paul Deschanel, President of the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>253</sup> Deschanel preferred, however, to retain his position in the Chamber and therefore Poincaré asked Ribot.

Though discussion of Lyautey's resignation was at first officially allowed, the Press Bureau on 15 March insisted that the media be banned from launching 'attacks against the Government or against the Parliament',<sup>254</sup> and cited Circular 1000 which prohibited 'violent attacks on the Government.' Lyautey had stepped down during a public session of the Chamber and therefore the Press Bureau could not prevent the media from mentioning the event, but the orders given by the Bureau were extremely vague and articles discussing Lyautey were largely open to interpretation by individual censors. *L'Action Française* on 15 March published a heavily censored article highly praising the ex-War Minister, and the next day in an unusual article explained to its readers how it had not been seized.<sup>255</sup> It explained that the Press Bureau had failed to inform the newspaper's editors until two o'clock in the morning about the offending material. It then had to print fewer copies than usual as it was forced to print them at the last minute, thereby explaining why many newsagents did not receive a copy. It referred to the episode as an accident and affirmed its support for wartime censorship of the media. The editors of *L'Action Française* probably sincerely held this view. However, they also were well aware of the inconsistent application of the occasionally ambiguous orders executed by the Press Bureau and thought it prudent to officially display the paper's support for the Bureau. This approach appears to have worked as *L'Action Française* was rarely censored for its comments on Lyautey's resignation, even when it challenged the Government's authority by suggesting that it choose a

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<sup>252</sup> *ibid.*, pp.227-228.

<sup>253</sup> *ibid.*, p.230.

<sup>254</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 15.Mar.1917 and 17 Mar.1917.

<sup>255</sup> *L'Action Française*, 15-16 Mar. 1917.

successor who ‘supports the military over the civilian Government,’ and praised Millerand as someone who did this between 1915 and 1916.<sup>256</sup>

During the next two days, first *L’Oeuvre*, and then *L’Excelsior* and *L’Evenement* were seized for reprinting an article on Lyautey that had originally been published in *Le Figaro* against the orders of the Press Bureau. These sanctions were part of a common trend whereby papers on the left were harshly reprimanded for reprinting material that was passed (supposedly by mistake) by the censor in the mainstream press. This marked the final act of political censorship under the Briand premiership. Briand upon becoming Premier had spoken against the abuse of political censorship and *Le Journal du Peuple* on 19 March suggested that his government had fallen partially because it had not abolished the practice. Ribot immediately addressed the issue of censorship in an attempt to calm an increasingly forceful attack on the government’s use of the Press Bureau to protect itself from criticism.

Ribot formed his new cabinet on 20 March. It consisted largely of highly experienced politicians already known to the public, and Ribot’s choices provoked little criticism. More important for the media was his first ministerial address to the Parliament on 21 March, which outlined his stance towards censorship. Ribot declared:

In its relations with the press, which has as its role to inform and to support public opinion, the government must strictly use the power given to it by law to suppress false news and tendentious information which is likely to mislead minds. It must stop campaigns which are obviously intended to discredit our republican institutions or to press for the dissolution of our national defence forces. But it will ensure that liberty of discussion is respected and the Government prefers criticism, even if unjust, to a feeble and enervating optimism.<sup>257</sup>

I have indicated here that I am speaking in the name of the government; Yes, we will repress all propagation of news that serves to trouble and unsettle the country: that which is false, even good news which exaggerates in a positive fashion is just as bad as that which is pessimistic and serves, involuntarily perhaps the interests of our enemies: we will not back down from the task at hand. We will also prevent campaigns against republican institutions.....

<sup>256</sup> *L’Action Française*, 17 Mar.1917.

<sup>257</sup> A portion of this translation is taken from Renouvin, *The Forms of War Government* p.49.

We will not allow for certain campaigns to exist within the context of liberty that obviously have as their goal, the weakening of the national defence or the dissolving of the national defence forces. Gentlemen, the limit can sometimes be difficult to trace: we carry out our responsibilities and do so in good faith.<sup>258</sup>

While this speech reaffirmed the Government's commitment to censorship and its mention of the protection of republican institutions could be seen as directed towards editors on the political extremes, its underlying message was meant to be conciliatory. The press was encouraged to be honest and even openly to criticise individual members of the government. Furthermore, the press was reminded of its responsibility to keep its readers from holding unrealistic expectations or from panicking. Finally, Ribot's statement that the government acted 'in good faith' implied that it would not stifle criticism of individual politicians. This was significant, as a growing tendency for the Press Bureau to shield powerful politicians had been a major grievance for the Socialist Party under the Briand Government. The speech was widely applauded by the Socialists in the Chamber,<sup>259</sup> and Ribot appeared to have succeeded in placating the left.

On 24 March Ribot's speech was placed *verbatim* into the directives list used by the censors at the Press Bureau. The suggestions by newly appointed Minister of War Paul Painlevé to the censors on how to implement this speech were as indirect as the speech itself.

The services of press control should in all circumstances draw upon these general directives. It is up to them to discern, in the most liberal sense, but by continuing to demonstrate firmness, critiques which constitute free discussion and to ensure that attacks against the institutions and notably the parliament will not be tolerated. Pacifist articles are those which primarily seek to weaken the national defence; censorship should redouble its vigilance in this regard. Finally, the morale situation needs to be envisaged day by day, without

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<sup>258</sup> SHD 5N 333, letter from the War Ministry to the General Commander in Chief of the Armies of the North and North East, Military Governors of Paris and Lyon, Regional Military Commanders, The General Commanders of Morocco, Tunisia, and of the North African Troops and the Prefectural Military Governors, 24 Mar.1917.

<sup>259</sup> *Le Temps*, 23 Mar.1917.

pessimism but also without exaggerated optimism.<sup>260</sup>

Ribot and Painlevé had acknowledged that political censorship was a sensitive subject both in Parliament and with the press but had kept the Press Bureau's instructions open to interpretation and little was changed in practice. Ribot, like his two predecessors, used the Press Bureau to shield the government from domestic criticism.<sup>261</sup>

Two themes in the coverage of Ribot's inauguration most concerned the Press Bureau.<sup>262</sup> The first was the view in much of the media that the new Cabinet essentially constituted a reformed version of the previous wartime cabinets, composed of the politicians and bureaucrats who had run the government since the beginning of the conflict. This editorial line was permitted on the condition that the cabinet ministers were not personally attacked.<sup>263</sup> On 21 March, *Le Temps* took the lead in praising the new cabinet and commented that the editors had been hoping for a more coherent, firm and united leadership that was more moderate regarding censorship.<sup>264</sup> It seems probable here that the editors of *Le Temps* were trying to court the new Premier.

Some papers acknowledged the lack of change in cabinet ministers but with little comment, such as *Le Figaro*.<sup>265</sup> Alfred Capus, the paper's fiercely patriotic editor, wrote that in wartime it was unpatriotic to question the composition of cabinets.<sup>266</sup> Such uncritical commentary was unsurprisingly welcomed by the Press Bureau and was practiced in this case by most of Paris's dailies. *Le Petit Journal* seems to have been the only major Parisian paper censored for severely criticising the political makeup of the new Cabinet in its article 'La Vieille Maison' on 21 March. The

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<sup>260</sup> SHD 5N 333, letter from the War Ministry to the General Commander in Chief of the Armies of the North and North East, Military Governors of Paris and Lyon, Regional Military Commanders, the General Commanders of Morocco, Tunisia, and of the North African Troops and the Prefectural Military Governors, 24 Mar. 1917. and BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 24 Mar. 1917.

<sup>261</sup> Renouvin, *The Forms of War Government* p.49.

<sup>262</sup> A third theme, Ribot's relationship to the Russian Tsar and his opinion of the Russian socialists, is discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>263</sup> *Le Temps*, 19 Mar. 1917.

<sup>264</sup> *Le Temps*, 21 Mar. 1917.

<sup>265</sup> *Le Figaro*, 20 Mar. 1917.

<sup>266</sup> *Le Figaro*, 21 Mar. 1917.



formation of the new Cabinet was not contested in Parliament, which had voted unanimously (though with 50 abstentions and 53 abstentions in absentia)<sup>267</sup> to support it.

The second issue with which the Press Bureau was concerned was Ribot's speech on censorship. The Bureau's instructions for examining the media's criticisms of censorship practices were vague. The principal censorship handbook Circular 1000 dedicated only one sentence to the subject. 'Allow moderate critiques on the establishment and the operation of censorship but not those which are insulting or offensive to the censors, even if the article is a reproduction.'<sup>268</sup> Consequently, the Press Bureau's practice on the subject was often inconsistent. On 22 March *La Croix* had an article formally<sup>269</sup> censored for the obscure reason that it included 'tendentious commentaries on the discourses of M. Ribot.'<sup>270</sup> A few days later, *Le Journal du Peuple* had a larger article slashed for discussing whether Ribot would abolish political censorship. Ribot, who had begun his term as Premier by appeasing the press, had (in contrast to Briand and Clemenceau before and after him) therefore made no immediate impact on the application of political censorship.

Ribot's tendency was to be fairly relaxed towards the opposition. But under his tenure the cabinet member who dealt with the Press Bureau most directly was the new War Minister, Paul Painlevé. Painlevé was particularly responsible for accelerating the implementation authorized on 24 March 1916 to shift all responsibility for hiring censors from the Ministry of the Interior to the military. This order had not been strictly enforced, particularly in the provinces, and Painlevé the day after becoming War Minister ordered that it now be executed immediately.<sup>271</sup> He was successful in replacing all censors responsible to the Ministry of the Interior with those hired by the military within a month. Censorship of both military and domestic political affairs

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<sup>267</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République*. Tome II p.233.

<sup>268</sup> SHD 5N 346, Circular 1000, 22 Mar.1915.

<sup>269</sup> Occasionally orders given by the Press Bureau were given 'formally.' This implied that the consequences for disobeying such orders would be more severe.

<sup>270</sup> SHD 5N 438, 22 Mar 1917.

<sup>271</sup> SHD 5N 333, letter from the War Ministry to the Commander in Chief of the French Armies and to France's Military Governors, General Commanders and General Commissioners 21 Mar.1917.

therefore was now ultimately managed by the military. Whereas Clemenceau upon becoming Premier in November 1917 criticised Ribot, along with Painlevé and Louis Malvy, Ribot's Ministry of the Interior, for their failure to stamp out pacifism,<sup>272</sup> political censorship tightened under Ribot. Ribot entered office when 'the short war illusion' had long faded and as a series of dramatic developments began to seriously harm morale.

*C. Chaos in Petrograd and the Prospect of a Weakened Alliance: The February Revolution in Russia.*

By the beginning of 1917, war weariness had affected Russia more than any other belligerent. Since the outbreak of hostilities, Russia had suffered almost two million men killed, five million wounded and two and a half million taken prisoner.<sup>273</sup> In addition, shortages of domestic supplies of all kinds, particularly food, had created a high level of discontent. The February Revolution began on 8 March<sup>274</sup> when roughly 100,000 protesters, mostly female textile workers and male metal workers, demanded bread, with some calling for the Tsar's resignation. The next day, 150,000 workers took to the streets and many were armed. During these two days the Cossacks who were in charge of maintaining public order proved either unwilling or unable to disperse the crowds.

By 10 March roughly 200,000 workers were protesting in Petrograd and the Tsar that evening decided to end the movement by force. The next day, during which 75 protesters were killed, has been referred to as the 'Second Bloody Sunday.'<sup>275</sup> On 12 March, when ordered to march against the demonstrators, one group of the Petrograd

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<sup>272</sup> Pacifism or defeatism in France was understood as support for peace under any circumstances other than total Allied victory and the dictation of peace terms to Germany.

<sup>273</sup> Carley, *Revolution and Intervention* p.3.

<sup>274</sup> The dates cited here will be those from the Gregorian Calendar, used in Western Europe and North America at the time, rather than from the Julian Calendar used in Russia.

<sup>275</sup> The first 'bloody Sunday' was on 22 January 1905 when it is believed that roughly 1000 demonstrators were shot down on the Tsar's orders.

garrison shot their commanding officers and initiated a mutiny. The same day saw street battles between workers, soldiers, and policemen as well as drunken looting during which large numbers of civilians were killed or wounded. Policemen were hunted down and murdered. This sudden emergence of chaos in Petrograd instigated rapid political changes.

On 12 March, the leaders of several major Russian political parties joined the revolutionaries and declared a 'Provisional executive committee of the soviet of workers' deputies' and announced that a vote would be cast for its representatives.

On 14 March a dual power system was negotiated between the Soviet and the Provisional Government led by Prince Lvov and composed of Duma deputies including the socialist Alexander Kerensky. Finally on 15 March, only one week after the revolution had begun, Tsar Nicholas II abdicated. This rapid succession of events ended the Romanov Dynasty and marked a new era in diplomacy between Petrograd and Paris.

To French statesmen, the Franco-Russian Alliance was crucial to the Allied war effort. Russia fielded the world's largest army and provided a second front. Though many in the French government, particularly the left and the Radical Socialists, were uncomfortable with France's alliance with autocratic Russia, the partnership had been the foundation of French security against Germany since 1894. Therefore upon the news of regime change in Petrograd, the greatest concern in Paris was whether the new Russian government would continue the fight against the Central Powers. Some, such as the French Ambassador to Petrograd Maurice Paléologue, believed the alliance to be dead immediately following the Tsar's abdication.<sup>276</sup> Others, such as Nivelle, believed the Germans would now sign a separate peace with Russia by July.<sup>277</sup> He and General Maurice Janin appealed to the French socialists to contact their counterparts in Petrograd. As a result, ex-Socialist Cabinet Minister Jules Guesde, Minister of Armaments Albert Thomas (also a Socialist) and editor of *L'Humanité* Paul Renaudel

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<sup>276</sup> Stevenson, *French War Aims* p.66.

<sup>277</sup> Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory* p.341.

all wrote to Kerensky in favour of continuing Russia's war effort.<sup>278</sup> Many in Paris believed that the Revolution would revitalise Russia<sup>279</sup> and this was going to be the officially approved message to be propagated in the press.

After being reassured by the new Foreign Minister Pavel Miliukov that Petrograd would continue to fight Germany, some hoped that Russia under the new government would be more effective than under the hopelessly inefficient Tsarist regime.<sup>280</sup>

Beginning in April, French statesmen became increasingly nervous about the growing power of the Petrograd Soviet *vis-à-vis* the Provisional Government because of the former's demand for a negotiated peace and insistence that it be made without annexations or indemnities.<sup>281</sup> But at first the prevailing sentiment in Paris was one of restrained optimism. This optimism was reflected in both the journalistic coverage of the February Revolution and in the relatively lax censorship of that reporting by the Press Bureau.

Though some in Paris suspected that revolutionary chaos was approaching Petrograd,<sup>282</sup> few had expected the Tsarist regime to collapse so suddenly. It was not until 12 March that telegrams began to reach the Press Bureau with 'details on the troubles in Petrograd' and all were immediately stopped.<sup>283</sup> They were the first news received from Russia at the Bureau in eleven days.<sup>284</sup> During the 10-day news blackout from Petrograd between 2 and 12 March, the most chaotic and violent events of the February Revolution went unnoticed and unreported in the French Press.

The first news received at the Telegraph Section of the Paris Press Bureau from Petrograd on 12 March was stopped in its entirety. During the next two days however, the telegraph went relatively uncensored, though the press was mostly prohibited from reporting the incoming news. The news from Russia on 13 and 14 March outlined a

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<sup>278</sup> Carley, Revolution and Intervention p.7.

<sup>279</sup> D. Stevenson, The First World War and International Politics (Oxford, 1988), pp.148-149. See also Sinanoglou 'Frenchmen, Their Revolutionary Heritage and the Russian Revolution'.

<sup>280</sup> Stevenson, French War Aims p. 66.

<sup>281</sup> Carley, Revolution and Intervention p.6.

<sup>282</sup> Poincaré, Aux Service de la France. Vol IX pp.148-149, and Carley, Revolution and Intervention, p.4.

<sup>283</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 12 Mar.1917.

<sup>284</sup> Berger and Allard, Les Secrets de la censure, p.154.

vague image of disorder. The only telegrams that were stopped during these two days were those mentioning that the Duma had been placed under siege. Even news of the closure of the Petrograd Bourse was allowed to pass.<sup>285</sup> Many of the major Parisian dailies were censored on 13 March for discussing ‘interior politics in Russia’<sup>286</sup> and it was not until 15 March that the press was permitted to begin reporting on events in Petrograd. The censors were particularly concerned about an article in *Le Journal* which attempted to print that ‘the troops in Petrograd have used their weapons.’<sup>287</sup> It is unclear where the writers of *Le Journal* obtained such knowledge, as it had not been cleared by the Telegraph Section of the Press Bureau. In fact there is no evidence of such news ever being sent from Petrograd. It is possible that *Le Journal* obtained the information from a foreign, perhaps British source.<sup>288</sup> Though censorship of the telegraph was loosened on 13 March, and then two days later on 15 March, violence on the streets of Petrograd initiated either by the authorities or by the mob was and remained a particularly sensitive and highly censored aspect of the February Revolution.

It is clear that the press before 15 March had little knowledge of the unfolding developments in Petrograd. *Le Temps*, for example, reported on 14 March (three days after Second Bloody Sunday) that ‘there had been no violent occurrences and that because soldiers were still being saluted, the events in Petrograd were only economic protests and represented a struggle between bureaucracy and nation.’<sup>289</sup> In contrast, though on 16 March censors at the Press Bureau were instructed to ‘closely watch the situation in Russia,’<sup>290</sup> from that day onwards virtually all aspects of the events in Russia were allowed to be reported. The main exception to this rule was the high level of street violence in Petrograd, which remained explicitly prohibited from

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<sup>285</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 AFS 13-14 Mar.1917.

<sup>286</sup> SHD 5N 438, 13 Mar.1917.

<sup>287</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 13 Mar.1917.

<sup>288</sup> The Consignes générales of the Press Bureau at the BDIC show that many of French papers obtained much of their information regarding events in Petrograd until 17 and 18 March from sources in London. BDIC F rés. 0270 CG, 13-17 Mar.1917.

<sup>289</sup> *Le Temps*, 14 Mar.1917.

<sup>290</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 16 Mar.1917.

publication.<sup>291</sup> On the home front, the Government's main concerns were that the French Socialist Party should encourage the new Russian regime to continue fighting against Germany and that French soldiers and citizens not be discouraged by the potential weakening of or abandonment by France's eastern ally. Once the revolution became a '*fait accompli*,' the Press Bureau continued to encourage positive reporting emphasizing the willingness of the Provisional Government to stay in the war and condemning the inefficiency of the Tsarist regime.

After 15 March the Press Bureau allowed detailed articles on the events in Petrograd to be published on the condition that they were written in a neutral fashion, contained little commentary and did not spread false rumours. Furthermore, three particularly sensitive subjects remained, the reporting of which were heavily monitored. The first was the level of street violence in Petrograd. All telegrams from *Fournier* or *Havas* detailing this were stopped. The euphemism at the Press Bureau for telegrams that were censored for discussing the scale of violence in Petrograd was that they contained 'excessive details on the Russian Revolution.'<sup>292</sup> The directors at the Press Bureau wished to downplay the violence on the streets and feared that reports of it could undermine public order in France. On 16 March, 16 papers were censored for this reason, including *Le Petit Parisien*, *The New York Herald* and *L'Humanité*.<sup>293</sup> The next day 11 papers were censored and telegrams stopped from *Le Journal*, *Turadio*, *Havas* and *Le Petit Parisien*.<sup>294</sup> Individual violent events were not to be detailed through comments such as 'there has been spilling of blood'<sup>295</sup> or references to the 'massacre of police officers'<sup>296</sup> but could be mentioned in passing if they omitted high casualty figures. It seems that the only remotely detailed account of 'Second Bloody Sunday' in the Paris press of mid-March was in *Le Figaro*, which was able to sneak in a comment that many were murdered by the Tsar's troops when ordered to fire because

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<sup>291</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 17 Mar.1917.

<sup>292</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG.

<sup>293</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 16 Mar.1917.

<sup>294</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 17 Mar 1917.

<sup>295</sup> *La Croix*, 17 Mar.1917.

<sup>296</sup> *Le Gaulois*, 17 Mar.1917.

‘the crowds were dense.’<sup>297</sup>

In the minds of many French citizens, the word ‘revolution’ had the potential to evoke images of France’s own violent past, an association of which both censors and journalists were highly aware. One particularly interesting article from this period directly alluded to the French Revolution when discussing events in Russia. Published on 17 March in *L’Action Française*, it was entitled ‘1830 in Petrograd.’ It compared the events in Russia to those in France in 1830 by stating that the struggle was between ‘nationalism and liberalism.’ It suggested that ‘monarchies like other forms of Government have to renew themselves,’ as when ‘Alexander III replaced the system of Catherine and Peter the Great’<sup>298</sup> (and presumably when the Bourbon Charles X was replaced by Louis-Philippe of the House of Orléans). The article ended with the hope that the situation in Russia would not end up as a revolution, and portrayed the events in Petrograd as representing progress and being generally peaceful and progressive. It was probably for this reason that the article went almost entirely uncensored. A more mainstream example representing the comparisons made in the press between events in Russia and France’s own turbulent past was published in *Le Temps* on 17 March under the headline ‘New Regime in Russia’: ‘To those who are alarmed by the inevitable conditions surrounding these grave and necessary changes, let us recall our own example. At this hour when France performs heroically on the fields of battle, as the admiration of the world, she must not forget the historical origins of her own rights and liberties.’<sup>299</sup> This quote not only reflected the patriotism of the centrist press but also only alluded vaguely to the violence of the 1789 Revolution. This article was not censored, and the type of writing it represented was the preferred method of journalism for the censors at the Press Bureau.

The second particularly sensitive subject for the Press Bureau was the portrayal of the Government’s responses to the events in Petrograd. On 17 March, the Press Bureau

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<sup>297</sup> *Le Figaro*, 17 Mar.1917.

<sup>298</sup> *L’Action Française*, 17 Mar.1917.

<sup>299</sup> *Le Temps*, 17 Mar.1917.

prohibited the media from claiming that ‘the Government is pre-occupied with events in Russia.’<sup>300</sup> The same day, *L’Humanité* and *Le Figaro*<sup>301</sup> published a salutation letter from the Socialist members of the French Chamber of Deputies to their counterparts in the Duma. *L’Humanité* along with *Le Journal* and *Le Journal du Peuple* had all been warned against publishing the letter.<sup>302</sup> *L’Humanité* had specifically gone against the Press Bureau’s orders and yet only received a warning for doing so.<sup>303</sup> This is particularly surprising as one of the last acts of the Briand Government was an attempt to prevent the letter from being sent.<sup>304</sup>

On 18 March the Socialist ‘event’ was allowed to be discussed in the press,<sup>305</sup> but the letter itself was prohibited from being re-published. Some right-wing papers such as *L’Action Française* and *L’Echo de Paris* used this opportunity to criticize the decision to send the letter. *L’Echo de Paris* criticised the response of the French Socialists to the February Revolution as being overly welcoming compared to that of the British Government. Andrew Bonar Law, British Chancellor of the Exchequer, was quoted as stating that ‘it is prudent to wait and see what is made of it’ when being asked whether he would officially support the Russian Revolution.<sup>306</sup> All papers which attempted to re-print the letter were prohibited from doing so and even the often leniently treated *Le Temps*<sup>307</sup> and *Le Petit Parisien*<sup>308</sup> were formally censored on 18 and 19 March respectively. Ironically, on 17 March both *Le Temps* and *Le Petit Journal* were censored for complaining that the letter itself had been allowed to be published, which officially it had not.

Shortly after news of unrest and revolution in Petrograd broke out, *L’Humanité*

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<sup>300</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 17 Mar.1917.

<sup>301</sup> The letter appeared in *Le Figaro*’s press review section and therefore had been copied directly from *L’Humanité*.

<sup>302</sup> SHD 5N 491, 16 Mar.1916.

<sup>303</sup> SHD 5N 438.

<sup>304</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.176.

<sup>305</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 18 Mar.1917.

<sup>306</sup> Excerpt from *L’Echo de Paris* re-printed in *L’Action Française*, 19 Mar.1917.

<sup>307</sup> *Le Temps*, 18 Mar.1917.

<sup>308</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 19 Mar.1917.



praised the socialist aspects of the new regime (the right to strike,<sup>309</sup> the new uncensored Russian press<sup>310</sup> and the autonomy granted to Finland),<sup>311</sup> but did so in a manner designed to reassure its French readership that Russia would remain in the war. On 21 March, *L'Humanité* published a declaration from the Provisional Government to the Russian people arguing for a continuation of hostilities with Germany, and argued that the new ban on censorship in Russia was beneficial because it demonstrated the profound patriotism of Russian journalists.<sup>312</sup>

*L'Humanité* praised the February Revolution as a progressive step towards liberty in Russia but also, after being asked by several prominent politicians in Paris, urged the new government in Petrograd to continue fighting Germany. In addition to the fact that its editor had aided the government by using its contacts amongst the Russian socialists to encourage a continuation of hostilities, the paper was also mostly towing the Paris approved editorial line. Because *L'Humanité* served the Government's and therefore the Press Bureau's purpose of reassuring French readers that Russia would remain in the war, it was allowed to break certain rules which other major newspapers were not. The writers of *Le Temps* on 17 March were indeed correct when they complained that *L'Humanité* had been behaving as though it had special privileges.

Upon Ribot's appointment as Premier on 20 March 1917, he was placed in the difficult position of having to portray the events in Petrograd as being less damaging than he personally suspected. At the same time however, he felt obliged to pay homage to Nicholas II whom he had considered a loyal and reliable French ally. On 20 March, Ribot sent a letter to Miliukov. The letter, which was widely published in the centrist and right wing press, did not pass judgement on the revolution but hoped that the two nations could continue together to fight the war. Ribot also expressed his opinion in his closing remarks before his Government's first vote of confidence in the Chamber on 21 March. He began with a tribute to the Tsar: 'This admirable gesture

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<sup>309</sup> *L'Humanité*, 18 Mar. 1917.

<sup>310</sup> *L'Humanité*, 21 Mar. 1917.

<sup>311</sup> *L'Humanité*, 22 Mar. 1917.

<sup>312</sup> *L'Humanité*, 21 Mar. 1917.

of the Tsar which shifts public opinion towards this dynasty which is proud of its past. There is nothing more beautiful. We should be inclined to believe that the Tsar has always been, is still and will be tomorrow, a loyal ally to France. This 25-year old alliance was our guarantee in peacetime; he wished it to be so, his father wished it to be so and he executed the wishes of his father with an indisputable loyalty. We owe him an homage in front of this tribune.’ (loud applause).<sup>313</sup> Then he briefly expressed his hope that the ‘noble Russian nation passes its evolution towards liberty without violence and profound troubles.’<sup>314</sup> It was clear that Ribot was unenthusiastic about regime change in Petrograd and the Press Bureau now needed to shield him from public criticism. Many republicans and socialists alike had long found the Third Republic’s alliance with the most autocratic regime in Europe to be hypocritical and distasteful. Many of these critics, furthermore, were prominent in the media.

The Press Bureau acted quickly to contain criticism of Ribot’s speech. On 21 March, immediately after the confidence vote, it issued two directives. The first order stated ‘do not allow newspapers to distort Ribot’s declaration on the Russian Revolution. It should not be shown that he is giving an example to the other Allied countries to support the monarchy.’ The second directive on the other hand stated that ‘Ribot is not to be shown to disfavour the Russian monarchy by supporting the socialist letter’.<sup>315</sup> The next day, an order was issued that stated ‘do not allow talk about Ribot or his opinion on the Russian Revolution.’<sup>316</sup> Notably, on 21 March, the Press Bureau also stopped all incoming telegrams discussing the recognition of the new Russian regime by neutral powers, particularly the United States.<sup>317</sup> Finally, on 31 March, all government opinions of the Romanovs emanating from either Paris or London were prohibited from publication.<sup>318</sup> The Press Bureau worked quickly to block criticism

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<sup>313</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République. Tome II* pp.232-233.

<sup>314</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 21 Mar.1917.

<sup>316</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 22 Mar.1917.

<sup>317</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 21 Mar.1917.

<sup>318</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 31 Mar.1917.

of the new Premier from every angle.

Ribot's reaction to possible regime change in Russia had the potential to be highly incendiary to public opinion and troop morale if mishandled by the media. The Press Bureau particularly wished to prevent left-wing and radical-socialist papers from condemning Ribot for praising the Tsar. But it was also possible that Ribot would backtrack on his remarks or even praise the Russian Socialists once it became clear that they supported the continuance of fighting. Either way, Ribot was vulnerable to criticism from the media, and the Press Bureau felt he was best protected from all sides if his opinions regarding Russia were entirely prohibited from publication. The Press Bureau was successful in preventing criticism of Ribot, though it appears that it was surprisingly not an issue over which the media was willing to fight. The only major paper that appears to have been censored for attempting to discuss Ribot's reluctance to accept the socialists' letter to Russia was *La France* on 23 March.<sup>319</sup> This censorship order, however, which prohibited the media from discussing the French head of government's opinions on the most significant international event affecting France at the time testifies to the willingness of the Press Bureau to silence open discussion in the media regarding information that was not of direct usefulness to the enemy on the battlefield. Political censorship was alive and well under France's newly installed government.

On 15 March, when news was first allowed to be transmitted through the telegraph and two days later on the radio<sup>320</sup> that Nicholas II had abdicated, a directive was issued that 'nothing is allowed to be said negatively of the Tsar.'<sup>321</sup> Between 15 and 17 March, the Press Bureau silenced all news related both to the Tsar's first decision to choose his son Prince Alexei as successor and then his final choice of Grand Duke

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<sup>319</sup> SHD 5N 492.

<sup>320</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 AFS, 19 Mar.1917, and BDIC F rés 0270 AFS, 17 Mar.1917. It always took longer for information to clear for transmission on the radio telegraph than the cable telegraph because the Germans could hear the former.

<sup>321</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 15 Mar.1917.

Michael, by stopping all telegrams arriving from Russia on the subject.<sup>322</sup> On 17 March, however, the Grand Duke's manifesto which stated his desire to rule as monarch only if chosen democratically was allowed to be published,<sup>323</sup> although commentary regarding the future decisions of the Provisional Government on this subject was forbidden<sup>324</sup> as was any reference to the Grand Duke Michael as the 'Tsar.'<sup>325</sup> In addition, direct commentary on the Grand Duke's decision to accept the throne 'conditionally'<sup>326</sup> as well as the possibility of the Tsar's moving to England<sup>327</sup> were subjects both prohibited from publication. Only once it appeared certain that the Tsar would not return and it was highly probable that the Romanov dynasty had been permanently replaced by a republican Government determined to carry on the war, was the press given *carte blanche* to attack Nicholas.

Attacks on the Tsar in the media were usually accompanied by commentary suggesting that the new regime was better equipped to fight the Central Powers than he had been, a theme which appeared daily in the press. While there was no document which stated that attacks on the Tsar would be permitted in the press after 17 March, this was effectively the case. When on 15 March a directive had first been issued protecting the Tsar from attack in the French media, the future political status of the Romanov dynasty was uncertain. Once the threat of creating inter-allied discord by insulting the Russian head of state had subsided, it was considered even reassuring to public opinion if the press praised the new Russian republic as a liberal government and as a reliable ally.

The officially sanctioned line taken by the Parisian press continued to be that the new regime would be more effective in fighting the Central Powers than was its sluggish and bureaucratic predecessor. Although some centrist papers, particularly *Le*

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<sup>322</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 AFS, 15-17 Mar.1917, and BDIC F rés. 0270 TAC, 15-17 Mar.1917.

<sup>323</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 17 Mar.1917.

<sup>324</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 18 Mar.1917.

<sup>325</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 17 Mar.1917.

<sup>326</sup> *L'Echo de Paris* on 18 March had a telegram from London censored for stating this explicitly. BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 18 Mar.1917.

<sup>327</sup> SHD 5N 438, 25 Mar.1917.

*Figaro*, paid homage to the recently deposed Tsar,<sup>328</sup> and even said that ‘the most treasonous act a people can take is to make a revolution during wartime’<sup>329</sup> the vast majority of the French press congratulated the Russian people for liberating themselves from autocracy and promoted the new Russian regime as capable of producing an improved fighting force. Even *L’Action Française* changed its position and wrote that bureaucratic inefficiency had made the Tsar ‘a traitor to the French cause.’<sup>330</sup>

Whereas *L’Action Française* was unlikely to attack the conservative Ribot, papers such as *Le Petit Parisien* and *L’Humanité* which would normally be less restrained obeyed orders by not mentioning the Premier’s sympathy for Nicholas II when they now denounced the monarch. An article written on 20 March in *Le Petit Parisien* best represented the officially sanctioned line of critical journalism aimed at the Tsar after his abdication. ‘France, this grand liberal nation, has joyfully received the news of these events which have in a few hours replaced and eliminated a power detested by all. This power at the same time tyrannical and weak, was incapable of providing for its people, of organising the rear, or of employing all the forces of the country to fight the enemy which occupied the national territory. Its power is no more. The Provisional Government which today has the destiny of Russia in its hands is energetically fixated on victory and has the unanimous consent of the nation. The problems that face the new Russia are immense. She must reconstitute her entire political structure. But by doing this she will double her moral forces to organise and obtain victory.’<sup>331</sup> The goals of *Le Petit Parisien*’s editors were in perfect harmony with those of the War Ministry and the Press Bureau. According to the paper’s official history, it attempted to reassure its readers in two ways: ‘1. By confirming daily to its readers that no matter what, the Provisional Government would continue the fight alongside the allies. 2. To point out that one of the principal motivations of the new government is to reorganise the army

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<sup>328</sup> *Le Figaro*, 17 Mar.1917.

<sup>329</sup> *Le Figaro*, 19 Mar.1917.

<sup>330</sup> *L’Action Française*, 31 Mar.1917.

<sup>331</sup> Amaury, *Histoire du plus grand quotidien de la IIIe République: Le Petit Parisien, 1876-1944* p.1066.

and to mobilise the participation of the Russian nation at war so to beat the enemy forces.’<sup>332</sup> Once the Tsar had abdicated the press was allowed to disobey the government’s orders not to insult Nicholas II. The Press Bureau however was far less lenient over speculations as to whether Russia would now remain in the war.

The third particularly sensitive issue for the Press Bureau during the February Revolution was Russian war aims and capabilities. Most important was the question of whether Russia would remain an effective ally or continue to fight at all. Any explicit suggestion of Petrograd potentially signing a separate peace was forbidden. Because of this there was no discussion attempted or permitted in the media over the repercussions of such a separate peace, most importantly the movement of German troops from the Eastern to Western Front. Similarly, the press made few attempts to question whether the new government would repay its large debt to the French Government. While the order prohibiting mention of a potential separate peace was not given by the Press Bureau until 25-27 March,<sup>333</sup> telegrams or articles mentioning any separate peace between Russia and the Central Powers had been censored or stopped at least as early as 18 March.<sup>334</sup> Stéphane Pichon, Clemenceau’s future Foreign Minister, on 15 March had an article censored in *Le Petit Journal* (he was its editor) for the mere mention of pacifists in Russia.<sup>335</sup> When the Press Bureau first learned of the Tsar’s abdication, it issued a *communiqué* to media owners that Russia would remain alongside its allies in their ‘war of sacrosanct law’.<sup>336</sup> This message was sent before Paris had received a concrete guarantee from the Provisional Government to that effect. Much of the press, however, needed little encouragement to give such an assurance.

Hypotheses about the potential effects of the Russian Revolution on the autocratic regimes in Germany and Austria-Hungary were permitted but were not allowed to be

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<sup>332</sup> *ibid* .

<sup>333</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 25-26 Mar.1917, and BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 27 Mar.1917.

<sup>334</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 18 Mar.1917.

<sup>335</sup> SHD 5N 491, 15 Mar.1917.

<sup>336</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.156.

included in telegrams received from abroad. In other words, the commentators were permitted to speculate on this question but were not provided with any evidence. The central question in the ensuing articles was whether the democratic revolution in Russia would spread to the Central Powers and thus facilitate peace. The earliest example of this line of reporting in a major Parisian daily seems to be on 14 March when *La Croix* published an article insisting that ‘if the Germans were counting that destabilisation in Russia would lead to a separate peace, they were cruelly mistaken.’<sup>337</sup> While on 17 March an article in *L’Humanité* congratulated the Russians who ‘had finally liberated themselves from a weakening regime that sucked all of the nation’s immense riches (moral, intellectual and material).’ It referred to Germany as a nation where the ‘imperial system is wounded’ and asked ‘are its days numbered?’<sup>338</sup> This line of reporting lacked details but had the ability to convince readers of the positive effects of the Russian Revolution not just for France’s allies but the potential negative consequences on its enemies.

It is understandable why the Government wished to encourage unrest in the Central Powers. The implication, however, that if Germany became a democracy it would make peace with the Allies, potentially violated one of the Press Bureau’s most fundamental rules. Since the beginning of the war the Bureau had been determined to prevent discussion of war aims or the promotion of a premature peace. Newspapers could allude to this possibility only if they portrayed the Russian Revolution as assisting the fight against Germany.

It is ironic that at the same time a conservative minded Premier was appointed in Paris, it was the leftist press that best served the interests of the government during the Russian upheaval. *Le Petit Parisien* (centre-left), one of the least censored papers, unflinchingly supported the new regime from 15 March onwards. The paper’s agenda was to make the new regime in Petrograd attractive to the French public as an

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<sup>337</sup> *Le Croix*, 14 Mar.1917.

<sup>338</sup> *L’Humanité*, 17 Mar.1917.

effective and even improved ally. In doing this it unashamedly engaged in a great deal of government encouraged *bourrage de crâne*. Similarly, *L'Humanité* never wavered in its support for the new regime in Petrograd or in its condemnation of the defunct Tsar. The paper's editor Renaudel had been recruited by officials in the Quai d'Orsay to help convince both the socialists in Russia and the socialists at home to support the new regime.<sup>339</sup> *L'Humanité* was able to get away with insulting the Tsar because the paper served the more important purpose of promoting the new regime in Petrograd. Censorship rules were flexible on the condition that papers followed the general narrative and goals set out by the Press Bureau.

The Ribot Ministry had a message it wished to communicate to France's people. Many in Paris were concerned with the disagreement between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet over war aims.<sup>340</sup> The Bureau, however, did not issue an order banning discussion of that subject and it appears not to have been of interest to the press in any case. In fact the February Revolution is an example of the Press Bureau proving highly flexible in enforcing its own rules. The only two directives that appear to have been enforced without exception were the ban on criticising Ribot and that on explicitly predicting a Russian exit from the war. All other rules were flexible as long as the media towed the government line and engaged in state sanctioned *bourrage de crâne*. The flexibility given to the media on what the Bureau deemed to be relatively minor issues was a means to a greater end, namely the projection of a united front in the press which reassured French citizens and soldiers that Russia was not leaving them as an ally against the Central Powers.

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<sup>339</sup> Carley, *Revolution and Intervention* p.7.

<sup>340</sup> *ibid.*, p.6.



*D. New Partners: The United States Enters the Conflict*

On 6 April 1917, the United States of America declared war on Germany. The American declaration of war was primarily occasioned by two events in February 1917. The German resumption of unrestricted warfare on 1 February,<sup>341</sup> Wilson's receipt of the decrypted 'Zimmerman Telegram' later that month on the 24<sup>th</sup> and then its publication on 1 March in the American media<sup>342</sup> (editorial commentary and specific details being heavily censored in the French media),<sup>343</sup> moved both the American press and President Woodrow Wilson personally towards a pro-war stance. Wilson had won re-election in November 1916 under the slogan 'the man who kept us out of the war.' Wilson's 'Peace without Victory' speech on 22 January 1917 was a late example of Wilson's intention to have the United States conduct a role as mediator rather than direct participant in the conflict. Before 3 April, stories related to public opinion in America had been closely monitored by the Press Bureau and negative reporting on Wilson in particular was strictly prohibited. On 3 April a telegram was stopped from *The Chicago Tribune* criticizing the American *esprit de guerre*.<sup>344</sup> American opinion now was only reported as being entirely behind the war effort and American pacifists were either vilified, or reported as having shifted largely to a pro-war stance. Because of the suddenness of America's move towards armed involvement in the war, and because of its timing (shortly after the February Revolution in Russia), the reaction of the French press was one of surprise, delight and of high praise for America in general and Wilson in particular.

Wilson delivered his war message to Congress on 2 April 1917, and then quickly introduced the motion to declare war in both houses. News of both the House of Representatives' and the Senate's approval were immediately telegraphed to France

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<sup>341</sup> This action rescinded the Sussex Pledge of 4 May 1916.

<sup>342</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918* p.314.

<sup>343</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC.

<sup>344</sup> SHD 5N 438, 2-3 Apr.1917.

and went uncensored by the Press Bureau.<sup>345</sup> From 3 April the story was covered intensively in the Parisian press. The media from the entire political spectrum saluted the American decision and published the mutually flattering public correspondence between Washington and Paris. This praise was characterised by a series of stories which varied little from paper to paper and by descriptions of American flags flying throughout Paris<sup>346</sup> and along the French front.<sup>347</sup> Also highly flattering was the letter written by the ‘France-America Committee’ entitled, ‘In praise of the United States.’<sup>348</sup> The Press Bureau had no reason to censor praise for France’s new partners and therefore allowed it to go unchecked.<sup>349</sup>

The mainstream press’s praise for America in the two weeks following Wilson’s speech on 2 April seems almost coordinated. *Le Temps* and *Le Figaro* ran several articles that were practically identical. Perhaps the most common theme (and one which Wilson himself mentioned in his letter to Poincaré)<sup>350</sup> was reference to the French involvement in the American Revolutionary War. Nivelles’s letter to American General John Pershing was published on 11 April and stated that Wilson’s words ‘evoked the fraternity between the two countries when La Fayette and Rochambeau were on American soil.’<sup>351</sup> Painlevé’s address to the French troops, published the next day, reminded the soldiers of ‘the past when the two countries fought together.’<sup>352</sup> Some articles implied that the decision for American entry was influenced by France’s earlier aid to the United States. *Le Temps* published an article on 6 April, once it was imminent that the US would declare war on Germany,<sup>353</sup> which stated that, ‘The Americans have never forgotten how twice in their history, France has come to their

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<sup>345</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 AFS.

<sup>346</sup> For an example see *Le Petit Parisien*, 4 Apr.1917. This issue in fact had an American flag printed on its cover in the top right hand corner.

<sup>347</sup> *L’Action Française*, 6 Apr.1917, and *Le Figaro*, 8 Apr.1917.

<sup>348</sup> *Le Petit Parisien*, 12 Apr.1917.

<sup>349</sup> There are no records of orders given at the Press Bureau to control or dampen praise for the United States after 3 April.

<sup>350</sup> Poincaré, *Au Service de la France. Vol IX* pp.102-103.

<sup>351</sup> *Le Temps*, 11 Apr.1917.

<sup>352</sup> *Le Petit Parisien*, 13 Apr.1917.

<sup>353</sup> The daily news in general reported the events which transpired the previous day.

aid.’<sup>354</sup> *Le Figaro* perhaps provided the most Franco-centric interpretation for the American declaration of war against Germany. On 12 April, the paper published an article declaring that Washington was joining the Allies not only because of ‘the amicable traditions and principles of civilization but also because of the admiration merited by our army in 32 months of heroic war, the noble attitude of our civil population and the inalterable correctness of our financial procedures.’<sup>355</sup> While this type of commentary served and was intended to bolster French spirits, a more serious discussion also took place in the French press regarding American motives, war aims and capabilities.

Because the Press Bureau was a branch of the War Ministry it is safe to use War Minister Paul Painlevé’s statements issued to a group of American journalists and published on 7 April to determine which themes were encouraged in the French press regarding America’s motives for war. Painlevé told the group,

President Wilson’s address today is one of the great feats of history. For the first time since the world has existed, a powerful nation has voluntarily entered into a terrible war which ravages a faraway continent not to defend its interests or for glory, not even for its right but for the rights of all people including those with whom it is preparing to fight. His words of war, so full of measure, nobility and disinterest, constitute the most moving homage that can be made for peace between all people and for the future League of Nations. Amongst the suffering and the blood a new conscience of humanity has awoken on the face of the Earth. It triumphs over the despotism and violence of all evil forces. The same call to liberty that raised the banners of Washington and La Fayette, healthier and more powerful than ever, will raise in triumph our united flags.<sup>356</sup>

Virtually all of the major themes given as motives for American entry to the war as by the French press in the weeks following 3 April can be found in this speech: American selflessness, world peace following the war along with the League of Nations, the portrayal of Germany as evil (several papers used Wilson’s 2 April address as proof

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<sup>354</sup> *Le Temps*, 6 Apr. 1917.

<sup>355</sup> *Le Figaro*, 12 Apr.1917.

<sup>356</sup> *Le Petit Parisien*, 7 Apr.1917.

that Germany had started the war)<sup>357</sup> and the historic bond between France and the United States. Virtually none of the major Parisian papers strayed far from this narrative. On 4 April *Le Temps* printed an article which stated that 3 April ‘was a major date in the history of the United States and an important date in the history of humanity.’ It also framed the United States as a country which until very recently had wished to stay out of European affairs but was forced into the conflict as a response to German violence. Finally, it stated that the main aim for Washington in the war was the attainment of peace. On 6 April, *Le Petit Parisien* published a letter by Ribot in the same vein which asserted, ‘the United States is not fighting for its own interests but is contributing to the war between justice and violence.’<sup>358</sup> Of all the major Parisian dailies, only *L’Humanité* even questioned Washington’s motives and then by answering its own question came to the same conclusion as the others. On 5 April, the paper asked if the Americans were going to war to back up the war financiers and if Wilson was ‘fighting the war for Wall Street.’ The paper stated that the answer was no and that the Americans in fact added to the moral cause of the Allies.<sup>359</sup> *L’Humanité* on 7 April published an article which on the surface questioned American motives but then claimed that the only American goal was international peace. ‘Those who believe that the Americans are fighting without interest are imbeciles. They are fighting for peace and for the League of Nations.’<sup>360</sup> France and the United States were not the only democracies referred to in the press as being part of a new democratic alliance against the ‘despotic’ Central Powers. The newly democratised Russia was also discussed in conjunction with the arrival of the United States on the Allied side.

The February Revolution in Russia had been portrayed in the French media as an event which ultimately strengthened Russia’s ability to fight the Central Powers. American

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<sup>357</sup> For an example, see *Le Temps*, 5 Apr.1917. Also in this issue is a statement by Ribot asserting that Americans were naturally pacifists and that German aggression had brought the United States into the war.

<sup>358</sup> *Le Petit Parisien*, 6 Apr.1914.

<sup>359</sup> *L’Humanité*, 5 Apr.1917.

<sup>360</sup> *L’Humanité*, 7 Apr.1917.

entry was now paired with it and the two events were presented as dealing a double blow to Germany rather than the replacement of one partner by another. The centrist press, led by *Le Temps* and *Le Petit Parisien*, defined the new advantage for the Allied powers as being military. One article published on 8 April in *Le Temps* was intended to be read as a news story regarding the future arrival of American troops in France. In fact, however, roughly two thirds of the article discussed Russian mobilization and was meant to show that Russia was still very much in the war. This approach was most exaggerated, as was often the case, in the populist daily *Le Petit Parisien*. On 4 April, an article in *Le Petit Parisien* stated ‘The American intervention following the Russian Revolution is the supreme warning for the German people, if they are capable of understanding this double and formidable lesson.’<sup>361</sup> The Government’s strategy of encouraging the press to sell the ‘new Russia’ as an improved fighting force, complemented the press’s proclivity to emphasize the future importance of France’s new American partner.

America’s military and financial contribution to the Allied effort was allowed to be discussed in detail by the French media. Most of it had been declared publicly in Washington and therefore would have been difficult to censor. Wilson’s decisions to implement general military service and to raise an army of 500,000 men by the end of 1917 were widely circulated in the press beginning on 4 April. Two days later it was announced that 3,400,000,000 dollars had been allocated in war credits in Washington. On 8 April, it was announced that the Americans would now lend the Allied powers three billion dollars at a rate of no more than 3.5 percent. Two days later it was announced that American Secretary of the Treasury, William McAdoo, believed this sum to be insufficient, and that Washington would have to raise another five billion dollars as well as take a 25 billion dollar loan from the American people. America’s limited military strength in April 1917 went almost without comment in the French press. Instead, the focus was almost entirely placed on America as an economic giant.

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<sup>361</sup> *Le Petit Parisien*, 4 Apr.1917.

No attempt was made by the Press Bureau to censor the exact figures surrounding American re-armament, loans or the allocation of war credits. Furthermore, because the press did not attempt to question America's effectiveness as a military ally, the Press Bureau did not have to order the media to desist from doing so. The press sought to play up America's role as a financial power rather than question its military might. The United States was the world's largest economy and neither the press nor the Press Bureau had reason to downplay the figures America would invest in the Allied war effort.

The press was prevented from making comments suggesting the proper course for future American actions or for creating a timetable for when the Americans should arrive in Europe. Although there was no specific order given at the Press Bureau to this effect, all papers that attempted to comment on how America 'should' help France in any way that was not officially declared in Washington were prohibited from doing so. Thus on 7 April, a telegram from *Havas* was stopped from London. It stated 'The German forces will not be broken until the United States actually joins the fight.'<sup>362</sup> Such comments had the ability to simultaneously irritate Washington, insult French and British troops and cause panic on the French home front. Even worse, on 13 April, *The London Agency*<sup>363</sup> was censored for attempting to comment that the United States should adhere to the Treaty of London,<sup>364</sup> a secret and highly sensitive agreement signed by France, Britain, Russia and Italy in April 1915. Because the French telegraph service at the Press Bureau was able to catch this telegram and stop it, it is probable that most of France's newspapers remained unaware of the text of this treaty until it was published in the Russian newspaper *Izvestia* in November. 1917 was a tumultuous year on the French home front and was characterized by the growth of internationalism, pacifism and what was referred to in the Parisian political establishment as *défaitisme*. Public knowledge of the treaty would have provided

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<sup>362</sup> SHD 5N 438, 7 Apr.1917.

<sup>363</sup> It is not entirely clear what it meant in the register by *The London Agency* but as a French press agency operating in London it is most likely *Havas* or perhaps *Fournier*.

<sup>364</sup> SHD 5N 438, 13 Apr.1917.

added ammunition to the anti-war movement.

The press had several other concerns pertaining to military and naval affairs. Perhaps the Press Bureau's main concern was to censor information regarding ships travelling between the United States and France. This included the names of ships, the ports from which they departed or to which they were destined and whether any vessel had been sunk by German torpedoes. The rule at first applied only to American warships but then was expanded to include merchant vessels. On 5 April the Press Bureau forbade mention of the torpedoing of American ships.<sup>365</sup> The next day, an order was issued to 'not mention the arrival in France of American warships.'<sup>366</sup> Two American ships were sunk during this period. The first was *the Aztec*,<sup>367</sup> sunk off the coast of Brest on 1 April and believed to have struck a mine. The second, *The Missouriian*, was sunk on 5 April by a submarine with no casualties. The sinking of *The Aztec* was reported in the French media on 4 April,<sup>368</sup> the day before the reporting of such incidents was banned. However, the Press Bureau successfully kept news of the sinking of *The Missouriian* out of France's newspapers. News related to the seizure of German vessels in American ports was allowed to be published on 7 April. Afterwards, the Bureau for the remainder of the war monitored all news regarding vessels and diplomatic missions travelling between the United States and France and attempted to ensure their details remained undisclosed in the media. Unfortunately mistakes occurred. The first was the unpunished reporting in the media of the sinking of an American steamship, *The Seaward*, in the Mediterranean, printed first on 8 April.<sup>369</sup> Later in June when American troops began to arrive in France, censorship of troop movements became a point of contention between Washington and Paris.

Shortly, after the American declaration of war on Germany, Joffre and Justice Minister René Viviani were selected to lead a diplomatic mission to the United States. On 5 and 6 April the Press Bureau ordered 'Do not allow mention of the mission to the

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<sup>365</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 5 Apr.1917.

<sup>366</sup> SHD 5N 344, 6 Apr.1917.

<sup>367</sup> The *Aztec* was the first openly armed American ship to be sunk in the Great War.

<sup>368</sup> *Le Temps*, 4 Apr.1917.

<sup>369</sup> *L'Humanité*, 8 Apr.1917, and *Le Petit Parisien*, 9 Apr.1917.

United States.’<sup>370</sup> On 14 April, the press was allowed to mention the diplomatic mission but not the names of its participants,<sup>371</sup> a fact some papers made clear.<sup>372</sup> This order was then repeated on 16 and 17 April. (There was however on 14 April an article which went unpunished mentioning a separate French military mission to the United States, led by Paul Azan.<sup>373</sup>) On 17 April it was explained at the Press Bureau that ‘the Mission to the United States cannot be jeopardised by the official release of the names on the council. No commentary is allowed, nor are details of the voyage, the name of the vessel, the place of departure etc...’<sup>374</sup> Only the ‘official note’ was allowed to be published regarding the mission.<sup>375</sup> News of the mission’s arrival in the United States was allowed to be reported in the press only on 25 April after the Press Bureau had first prohibited the news from being published the day before.<sup>376</sup> The mission’s return to France in May was dealt with by the Press Bureau in an almost identical manner.<sup>377</sup> Shortly after, all news regarding the eventual installation of an American army headquarters in France was banned.<sup>378</sup> Tightly controlled censorship of the French mission to the United States not only closely followed the order given on 6 April prohibiting the publication of all movements of vessels travelling between the France and the United States. It also, however, followed the pre-existing practice of prohibiting the media from detailing the exact movement of diplomats and politicians travelling between countries or publishing troop movements in general. This was the beginning of a sustained focus on naval censorship at the Press Bureau, which intensified in June with the arrival of American troops. The decision to censor news of ship movements simply expanded to the Atlantic the existing practice of prohibiting the publication of troop movements and of casualty statistics.

The United States had a much longer and less contested history of press freedoms than did France. Upon America’s entry to war, censorship in the American press became an immediate hotspot for debate in Washington. Eventually Wilson, himself an

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<sup>370</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 5-6 Apr.1917.

<sup>371</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 14 Apr.1917.

<sup>372</sup> *Le Figaro*, 14 Apr.1917.

<sup>373</sup> *Le Temps*, 14 Apr.1917.

<sup>374</sup> BCIC F rés 0270 C, 17 Apr.1917.

<sup>375</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 17 Apr.1917.

<sup>376</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 24-25 Apr.1917.

<sup>377</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 17 May 1917.

<sup>378</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 20 May 1917.



advocate of press control, with the help of George Creel, head of the United States Committee on Public Information (a propaganda organization roughly equivalent to the French *Maison de la Presse*) set up a voluntary set of guidelines for the press to follow.<sup>379</sup> Washington after April 1917 sent a group of censors to France, led by the famous war correspondent Frederick Palmer (Theodore Roosevelt once called him ‘our best war correspondent’)<sup>380</sup> who were then trained by and in some ways beholden to the French Press Bureau.<sup>381</sup>

The French information management system had two fundamental goals in dealing with the media’s coverage of the American entry into the First World War. The first was to ensure that the press present the event as positively as possible without sounding ungrateful by commenting on the lateness of the decision or seeming pushy in demanding specific American actions. The press coverage, in part orchestrated by the government, of the February Revolution in Russia which argued that the event would produce a more effective Russian fighting force, meshed perfectly with the news of the American arrival. The press was able now to present the Allies as a militarily powerful united democratic front against the Central Powers. As war weariness was on the rise in France, the Government, the media and the Press Bureau all sought to take advantage of a positive news story by portraying the news of the American declaration of war in the most positive light possible. The second aim of the French censorship system was to extend the strict ban on reporting the movement of military units in France to the Atlantic. Finally, the greatest feat for the censors in Paris following the American declaration of war was the prevention of the news of the Treaty of London from reaching French readers. By applying both positive reinforcement and preventative censorship, the Press Bureau was effective in ensuring that French newspaper readers were presented with an uplifting news story about the arrival of a

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<sup>379</sup> S. Casey. ‘Censoring the Great War: World War I and the Birth of America’s Modern Military-Media Relations’, (Unpublished manuscript), p.7.

<sup>380</sup> Farwell, *Over There* p.88.

<sup>381</sup> The Parisian Press Bureau maintained the final say over what was telegraphed through the Paris telegraph agency.

new ally, while preventing harmful or embarrassing information to both Paris and Washington from being published.

### *Conclusion*

From late winter 1916 to the first half of spring 1917, France was at a crossroads both morally and militarily. Though the Battle of Verdun which had ended in mid-December had been portrayed in the press as a heroic victory of mythic proportions the battle had taken a large toll on French morale. Joffre, a popular war hero for his role at the Marne in 1914, was replaced at the end of Verdun and the press was prohibited from referring to his replacement as a demotion. Instead of playing down Joffre's prestige among France's citizenry, and perhaps prompting questions about the GQG's performance, papers when reporting on Joffre were to follow a policy where if they had nothing pleasant to say, they were to say nothing at all. Instead his replacement, Nivelle, who had already been feted as one of the heroes of Verdun, was endlessly praised. By the end of 1916 French censorship policy had become clear - negative events were to be downplayed or ignored, positive ones were to be constantly featured.

The period between December 1916 and April 1917 saw a tightening of control over the press by the French Government. Under Ribot the Press Bureau tightened its grip over the media through the use of both censorship and propaganda. When Ribot first replaced Briand as Premier, he made several public promises to loosen political censorship but was always vague on how this would be achieved. In fact he continued the same policy as his two predecessors of muzzling criticism of France's political leadership. In December after the last major debate of the war on political censorship in the Chamber of Deputies, the Senate Army Commission launched a report which condoned the use of political censorship but at the same time stated that the main enemy was 'defeatism.' This marked the beginning of an era when left-wing politicians were increasingly attacked in the media that would climax under the Premiership of

Clemenceau. Political censorship remained in place in part to protect army leaders and right-wing politicians. Ribot was protected in this manner from a potential backlash against his comments on the February Revolution, in part because his comments deviated from the line to be officially propagated in the media.

Coverage of the February Revolution was vague at first. The press had obeyed the government's wishes by publishing positive articles on the new regime and repeatedly suggesting that Russia would remain in the war. Indeed, by getting the left-wing press on board with the government's agenda the War Ministry was able to present the February Revolution, a potential source of panic at home and at the Front, as a positive event for the future of the French war effort. During this period rules were relaxed particularly concerning *L'Humanité's* commentary on the socialist nature of the new government in Petrograd. Papers were permitted to break minor rules if they followed the government's narrative of events. The War Ministry and the Press Bureau were successful in preventing open discussion of war aims in the French press and in stifling any suggestion of a premature peace in the wake of the February Revolution.<sup>382</sup> This was a markedly different policy from that followed when the press had been more freely permitted to discuss war aims between summer 1916 and the Doumergue agreement with Nicholas in February-March 1917.<sup>383</sup> Factory workers were not provided with many of the details of the violent acts committed by their equivalents in Petrograd. It is doubtful, however, that street violence would ever have erupted in Paris in 1917 on a similar scale. Although some French strikers and demonstrators did use revolutionary slogans when a strike movement developed in May and June 1917, the strike leaders took little inspiration from the events of the February Revolution. Though it is impossible to gauge the possible consequences had the Press Bureau been more lenient with the Parisian press during the February

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<sup>382</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C.

<sup>383</sup> The Doumergue Agreement, named after French Minister of Colonies Gaston Doumergue, was a secret agreement between France and Russia. For France it guaranteed 'at the very least' the 1790 frontier in Alsace-Lorraine, including the whole of the Saar, with the rest of the left bank being divided into small states under French occupation until the full execution of the peace treaty was concluded. Russia was given 'complete liberty' to fix its western borders with Germany and Austria-Hungary. D.Stevenson, The First World War and International Politics, pp.117-118.

Revolution, it is clear that the Press Bureau attempted to be as reassuring as possible about an event that could have had devastating consequences for the French war effort.

In contrast, the American entry into the First World War was a purely positive event. America's main contributions were financial and industrial and therefore these aspects were heavily played up while commentary on the country's relative military weakness was suppressed (though in any case little was attempted). Most important for the Press Bureau, America's entry brought in a new period of heightened naval censorship. This policy was enforced more strictly after the arrival of the first US troops in June and, after a few hiccups, became a major focus of French censorship for the rest of the war.

## Chapter 3: Crisis

### *Introduction*

Just as the media began to carry positive news stories covering the entrance of the Americans into the war, France entered several months of internal and external crisis. The next two chapters discuss a period that more than any other during the war tested the French information management system in its aim to maintain a positive picture. For the Press Bureau, Nivelle's succession to Joffre posed a new set of difficulties. The government had normally censored all news of upcoming offensives, but found it impossible to do so while the country's top commander himself discussed them freely. This chapter begins to shed light on the influence of the GQG in French press censorship during the war by examining Nivelle's tenure, a theme which is continued in the next chapter when discussing Pétain.

Several themes from previous chapters are continued here. During the lead up to the Nivelle Offensive launched on 16 April the press loosely enforced its rules when it presented its readers with optimistic journalism, in this case with negative consequences. During discussions over the Stockholm Conference the same leniency was applied in an attempt to distract readers from more potentially volatile stories and to make the left appear isolated and weak. This period marked the beginning of a sustained and largely tolerated attack on the left by the mainstream press which continued until the end of the war. This chapter sets out to explain that occasional disobedience of the government by the press did not imply failure on the part of the Press Bureau but rather might be instigated by a deliberate neglect on the government's side.

Finally, this chapter demonstrates how the Press Bureau dealt with governmental or military failures. While this theme was explored in the previous chapter in the discussion of Joffre's replacement, in the case of the disaster on the Chemin des Dames, the Press Bureau had to monitor both battlefield defeat and a process of

backtracking in the press which had previously delivered high expectations for the attack. Significantly Nivelle was not only shielded from criticism but remained a popular war hero until after 1918.

A. *Disappointment in Champagne: The Nivelle Offensive on the Chemin des Dames.*

After months of preparation and co-ordination with France's British allies, the French launched an attack in Champagne along the Chemin des Dames on 16 April 1917. The main goal was to break through the German defensive lines within 48 hours and then to battle with the German reserves in open territory. Nivelle orchestrated the plan as a major adaptation of another previously designed by Joffre. Nivelle was a respected commander, particularly for his role at the Battle of Verdun, and was a charismatic speaker. In his first two months as French Commander in Chief he convinced many in the government in Paris, including Briand, and the War Cabinet in London led by Prime Minister David Lloyd George, that he had discovered a path to victory in 1917.

The Nivelle Offensive failed to achieve its primary objectives. Although the French army captured 20,000 prisoners and advanced seven kilometres in the first five days of the attack,<sup>384</sup> these accomplishments did not result in the decisive blow to the German army which Nivelle had promised. French losses during the offensive numbered 130,000 killed and wounded<sup>385</sup> To most in the army and in Paris, these losses were unjustified by the limited gains of the operation. Nivelle's failed attack led to his replacement by Pétain on 15 May 1917 and weakened the 'cult of the offensive' which had been prevalent within the French High Command since the outbreak of the war.

The offensive took place at a low point in French civilian and troop morale. First in

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<sup>384</sup> H. Strachan, *The First World War* (London, 2006), pp. 241-242.

<sup>385</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918* p. 177.

January and then in May,<sup>386</sup> industrial strikes took place in several of France's largest cities. On the home front, war weariness and the influence of pacifist agitators had begun to threaten the *union sacrée*. At the front, the failed Nivelle Offensive added to the grievances of an army exhausted by three and a half years of relentless warfare. The strain on France's soldiers imposed by the bloodletting at Verdun (February-December 1916) had been exacerbated by the dashed hopes of victory. Nivelle's failed offensive played a significant role in instigating the mutinies in the French army of late May-June 1917.<sup>387</sup> It also convinced France's leaders to wait until the arrival of the American army in large numbers before the French Army launched any new major offensives.

Nivelle was not only more forthcoming with information towards the press than was Joffre but he even expressed his high expectations for the upcoming offensive to politicians and occasionally to ordinary citizens at home and abroad.<sup>388</sup> Although the press was forbidden from printing specific details of future operations, Nivelle's optimism was reflected between February and April 1917 in major newspapers in France and particularly in Britain by references to 'the next great Allied offensive.' The Press Bureau's *Consignes Générales* reveal a marked increase in orders given to the press forbidding the mention of future operations at the beginning of February. André Tardieu in *Le Petit Parisien* was singled out personally by Nivelle because of his indiscretions when writing on the upcoming Spring Offensive, which Nivelle claimed compromised national defence.<sup>389</sup> Tardieu had suggested that Nivelle's idea to require a 'constant delay'<sup>390</sup> in the press when reporting upon the location of

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<sup>386</sup> Strachan, *The First World War* p. 243.

<sup>387</sup> As mentioned in the introduction to this study, the extent to which the failure of the Chemin des Dames Offensive directly instigated the mutinies has most recently been reconsidered by André Loez. Loez, *14-18 : Les Refus de la Guerre*.

<sup>388</sup> Spears, *Prelude to Victory* p.41.

<sup>389</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 8 Feb.1917.

<sup>390</sup>The constant delay dictated that the simultaneous mention of a unit and its location be prohibited from press publication until a specific period after the fact. Nivelle proposed and eventually passed a three month delay on 15 April. Prior to this these details were prohibited from publication until the Press Bureau saw fit, a rolling delay period which depended on the discretion of the Press Bureau Chief after each incident. SHD.5N.346. Communication between Nivelle and the Ministry of War. 18 and 22 Mar.1917.

French units was part of the preparations for a new offensive.<sup>391</sup> As a result of the Press Bureau's subsequent monitoring of *Le Petit Parisien*,<sup>392</sup> France's most heavily circulated daily wrote little on the upcoming offensive for the next two months.

Tardieu was later proved correct in his assertion when Nivelle finally approved the constant delay on 15 April, one day before the attack on the Chemin des Dames.

Nivelle's official reason for implementing the delay was to ensure that those soldiers who were decorated for merit were publicised as contributing to a specific 'glorious affair.'<sup>393</sup> It is probable, however, that Nivelle wished to use the constant delay as a tool to prohibit the publishing of troop movements during offensives and to control information when operations were reported by the press retrospectively. Although Nivelle was replaced before the constant delay came into effect (after the offensive), the policy proved a useful tool in shaping the media's portrayal of the events on the Chemin des Dames.

Nivelle not only espoused optimism but also sought vehemently sought to eradicate defeatism. His attack on France's growing anti-war campaign was twofold. First, he was concerned with the growing number of anti-war pamphlets being circulated on the home front and most importantly on the front lines. These were most often distributed at train stations to soldiers arriving from or travelling to the front while on leave, and increasingly at labour union meetings. In late December 1916 Nivelle began to press Louis Malvy, the French Interior Minister, to create a list of individuals who were known to be involved in antimilitarist propaganda and to send all information held by the *Direction de la Sûreté Générale* regarding those individuals to his office.<sup>394</sup> He later wrote a letter to War Minister Hubert Lyautey which stated that 'The volume of pacifist propaganda in the army is increasing.' In this letter he listed 'pamphlets,' 'soldiers on leave at meetings' and 'soldiers in touch with the ringleaders' as the

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<sup>391</sup> SHD 5N 346, Nivelle to Ministry of War, 8 Feb.1917.

<sup>392</sup> On 2 February, the War Ministry responded to Nivelle, that Tardieu would be monitored specifically by the Press Bureau. BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 12 Feb.1917. The censorship of Tardieu's article is also mentioned in R.Poincare, *Au Service de la France Tome IX* p.59.

<sup>393</sup> SHD 5N 346, letter from Nivelle 'To the Armies', 15 Apr.1917.

<sup>394</sup> Pedroncini, *Les Mutineries de 1917* p.46.



principal issues to be addressed. He proposed that ‘The pamphlets should be seized in the works where they are printed; meetings where discussion is not limited to strictly professional matters should be forbidden; the revolutionary paper *Natchalo* should be suppressed; Sebastien Faure, Merrheim, Hubert and the dozen or so agitators who support them should be vigorously opposed, the pacifist propaganda smashed and normal working conditions enforced in the war plants and arsenals.’<sup>395</sup>

In addition to dealing with the proliferation of anti-war pamphlets distributed by soldiers at the front, Nivelle moved quickly to eradicate defeatist articles from French newspapers. His communications with Lyautey led the latter to order the Press Bureau to advise papers to be ‘more vigilant with pacifists.’ The scolding tone of the memorandum delivered to the censors as communicated by Maurejouis, the Chief of the Press Bureau, shortly after Joffre’s replacement, suggested a sense of urgency.<sup>396</sup> Nivelle began also to restrict certain papers from circulation at the front, an action previously used only in extreme circumstances. Correspondence between the Under-Secretary of the Cabinet in the War Ministry, M. Besnard, and Nivelle in early March 1917 suggests that Nivelle personally obstructed left leaning papers from reaching front line soldiers, though the archival material is unclear as to which ones. However, when asked if he wished officially to be charged with deciding which papers should be allowed to circulate amongst the troops, he declined.<sup>397</sup> He was asked this because of allegations that the current inspectors were treating certain papers unfairly. These allegations continued after 8 March<sup>398</sup> and his unwillingness to change the status quo by taking personal responsibility for what press items reached the front could suggest that he believed the inspectors were doing a fine job in performing an unpleasant and politically sensitive task. More likely, however, it indicates that he had a lot of other more pressing things to do.

Nivelle did much to convey optimism in the press regarding his abilities. When

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<sup>395</sup> Watt, *Dare Call it* Treason pp.153-154.

<sup>396</sup> SHD 5N 372, 26 Dec.1916.

<sup>397</sup> SHD 5N 346, correspondence between Besnard and Nivelle, 1, 5 and 8 Mar.1917.

<sup>398</sup> SHD 5N 346, letter from the Interministerial Press Commission to the Minister of War, 12 Mar.1917.

asked on 15 January by the Press Section of the GQG to comment on an article in which he was highly praised, he responded that while he was the enemy of all publicity, the morale of the country came first.<sup>399</sup> Beginning in February, all of the major Parisian papers began to set the stage for an upcoming Allied offensive. Although no specific details were given as to when or where it would take place,<sup>400</sup> the articles mostly insinuated that it would be launched in the spring. Because the left and right-wing newspapers were preoccupied between February and April with events in Russia, labour disputes and America's entrance into the war, it was the mainstream centrist papers in Paris, particularly *Le Temps* and *Le Matin*, that focused most closely on the upcoming offensive. These papers were among the worst offenders in raising expectations that France would end the war quickly through a spring attack. They presented the two months preceding the attack as a 'calm before the storm,' in which 'we get ready for the big battles that may lead us to the end of the war.'<sup>401</sup> One of the first examples predicting the upcoming offensive was a heavily censored article published on 4 February in *Le Temps*. The author wrote, 'The reigning calm on our entire front gives leisure to military writers to discuss future Allied operations.' The article then stated that Germany's one sensitive area was its army 'and it is that which we must fight.'<sup>402</sup> Eleven days later, the paper published an article which supposed that the Germans (but also their adversaries) were preparing for new large-scale battles for which the French were much better prepared than at the beginning of the war.<sup>403</sup> This optimistic tone in the Parisian press was increased with the news of the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line between mid-February and March.

The main explanation given in the French press for the retreat was that the Germans were ill prepared for the coming battle and were unable to defend their

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<sup>399</sup> SHD 5N 346, Nivelle responding to a letter originally sent from the *Direction Générale des Relations avec la Presse*, 18 Jan.1917.

<sup>400</sup> Many articles complained that the press was forbidden or unqualified to estimate or provide precise details about the locations or dates of offensives. Examples include but are not limited to *Le Temps*, 4 Feb.1917, and an article entitled 'Taisez-Vous' in *Le Matin* 21 Feb.1917.

<sup>401</sup> *Le Temps*, 7 Feb.1917.

<sup>402</sup> *Le Temps*, 4 Feb.1917.

<sup>403</sup> *Le Temps*, 15 Feb.1917.

current positions.<sup>404</sup> Although it was acknowledged in French papers that the retreat was considered a stroke of strategic genius in the German media,<sup>405</sup> French journalists portrayed it as an act of desperation. A typically bleak portrayal of the German position appeared in *Le Temps* on 4 March. It stated, ‘The enemy has working against him a growing number of desertions, the refusal of soldiers who do not wish to work, trenches under fire and finally the difficulty of managing the fear of a new offensive. In short, his retreat is complete.’<sup>406</sup> Even the more recently monitored *Le Petit Parisien* reported extensively on the retreat in March and celebrated the ‘liberation’ of towns such as Noyon and Péronne.<sup>407</sup> These negative portrayals of Germany’s military fortunes in early March were not based on solid evidence but rather typified the *bourrage de crâne* which always portrayed France in a favourable light relative to its adversaries regardless of the circumstances. This misrepresentation was encouraged by the Press Bureau through a lack of censorship.

It also was a reflection of the self-deception which existed at the top of the GQG leadership. Under Nivelle, France’s military leadership refused to acknowledge that the withdrawal would impede the upcoming offensive. Later Nivelle did little to adjust the attack accordingly.<sup>408</sup> The Press Bureau from late February began to monitor less vigorously newspaper references to rumours of and preparations for imminent British and French offensives. As a result, the French public was aware of and had high expectations for an attack in April.<sup>409</sup> In late February and early March stories emerged which suggested that the upcoming Allied offensive would be delayed first because of the harsh winter<sup>410</sup> and then because of the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line.<sup>411</sup> The latter was portrayed as a defensive move against Allied attacks, undertaken from a position of weakness. In the month between the German

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<sup>404</sup> *Le Temps*, 1 Mar.1917.

<sup>405</sup> See for example, *Le Temps*, 19 Apr.1917.

<sup>406</sup> *Le Temps*, 4 Apr.1917.

<sup>407</sup> Loez, *14-18 : Les Refus de la Guerre* p.116.

<sup>408</sup> Spears, *Prelude to Victory* Chapter 12.

<sup>409</sup> Horne, ‘Information, opinion publique et l’offensive Nivelle’, pp-72-73.

<sup>410</sup> *Le Matin*, 27 Feb.1917.

<sup>411</sup> *Le Matin*, 2 Mar.1917.

withdrawal and the 16 April offensive, the press portrayed Nivelle as a strategist who was adjusting his plans for the upcoming attack accordingly. On 5 March *Le Matin* agreed with Britain's *The Observer* that 'the Nivelle method requires minute care and a perfection of details. The enemy has perhaps caused delay in our plans but if they think they have taken the initiative from Field Marshal Haig and General Nivelle, their hopes are in vain.'<sup>412</sup> It is ironic that the press chose to disobey the Press Bureau's orders which prohibited it from discussing future operations,<sup>413</sup> by portraying Nivelle as a flexible commander who altered his plans according to the circumstances. Nivelle in fact had stuck stubbornly to his original plans despite the unfavourable weather and the German withdrawal.

The majority of the Press Bureau's orders forbidding the mention of future operations were given in January and February.<sup>414</sup> In March and April however, articles referring to an Allied attack were published more frequently and went mostly unpunished. Nivelle was a well-known self-promoter and tended before the April offensive to withhold bad news from official *communiqués*.<sup>415</sup> There appears to be little or no evidence, however, that France's military and political leaders urged the Press Bureau to encourage optimism regarding Nivelle's offensive. It is more likely that the Bureau became overburdened with censoring first the news of the February Revolution in Russia and then the American entry into the war.

Nivelle's offensive on 16 April lacked the element of surprise. It had been discussed in Allied newspapers since the end of January<sup>416</sup> and in late March, the French press also regularly published articles from German newspapers which referred to an approaching Allied offensive. Neither the press nor the Press Bureau, however, were primarily responsible for the failure to keep the offensive a secret. Between 15

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<sup>412</sup> *Le Matin*, 5 Mar.1917.

<sup>413</sup> SHD 5N 334, Consignes générales, 8 Feb.1917.

<sup>414</sup> SHD 5N 346.

<sup>415</sup> Spears, *Prelude to Victory* p.130.

<sup>416</sup> On 2 February, two articles first published in Britain on 27 and 30 January on Nivelle and the upcoming attack were prohibited from being reproduced in France by the Press Bureau. BDIC. F rés 0270 C, 2 Feb.1917.

February and 3 March,<sup>417</sup> the Germans captured an order in Champagne dated 29 January and signed on 16 December by Nivelle which outlined the orders, goals and conditions surrounding a general offensive in April on the Aisne. Nivelle was aware that the enemy had captured copies of the blueprints but this news (like that of the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg line) did not force him to radically change his plans. Responsibility lies with the press and the Press Bureau in Paris not for the disclosure of military secrets to the enemy but for the deliverance of false hope to France's citizenry and its soldiers. Because the expectations for the upcoming offensive were so high, the resulting blow to morale from its failure was more severe.

High hopes for future Allied fortunes in the months preceding the Nivelle Offensive climaxed in the French press during the first two weeks of April. The Press Bureau on 5 April requested that *L'Echo de Paris* cut an article by Maurice Barrès which asked, 'Is it today audacious to talk of resurrection? The wind, is it not blowing along our fronts? I write these words while in the Chamber in an atmosphere of hope.' Although the paper agreed to slash the article, in fact it did not do so and the offence went unpunished.<sup>418</sup> At this point it seems that the Press Bureau did not punish papers which published items on the upcoming offensive, because the offending articles were considered good for morale both at home and at the front. Papers for months had consistently been allowed to violate these rules and therefore it would be difficult to attribute the Press Bureau's tolerance entirely to neglect. On 9 April, the British launched what was later known as the Battle of Arras. The attack achieved moderate tactical advances along the Scarpe and captured the heavily defended German position at Vimy Ridge. The French press, long starved for good news from the front, portrayed the British advances as victories which could potentially trigger the collapse of the German war machine. It also suggested that the success of the British offensive foreshadowed a similar positive outcome for the imminent French attack. Although the

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<sup>417</sup> Edward Spears reports the date to be 'around 15 February', Spears, *Prelude to Victory* p.124. Pierre Miquel quotes Crown Prince William as mentioning 3 March as the date of the acquisition, Miquel, *Le Chemin des Dames* p.131.

<sup>418</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.161.

Allied capture of Vimy Ridge was highlighted in French papers, the way in which setbacks related to the offensive were portrayed foreshadowed the style of reporting prevalent during the Chemin des Dames Offensive. Most notably, the slowdown of the British advance on 10 April was largely attributed to the weather as it was later in Champagne, and enemy counter-attacks were originally downplayed much as they were on 17 April after the first day of the Nivelle Offensive.

The preparatory bombardment for Nivelle's offensive began on 12 April and was immediately reported in the press. Once the infantry attack was launched on 16 April, it was ensured by the GQG that the press was solely dependent upon the official *communiqués* for its information regarding events on the Chemin des Dames. At 23:20 on 16 April, the Press Bureau was told to 'stick to the *communiqué*.'<sup>419</sup> This order was in reference to a *communiqué* sent twenty minutes earlier (23:10) which stated, 'Between Soissons and Reims after an artillery preparation which has lasted several days we have attacked on a front of 40 kilometers...Fierce fighting, we have pushed until Lisières, west of Berméricourt and up to the canal of the Aisne. 10,000 prisoners.'<sup>420</sup> The press's complete reliance on official *communiqués* for information on the offensive was established on the first day of the attack and lasted for at least the next five days.<sup>421</sup> Because the *communiqués* were uniformly positive and omitted negative news, the press enthusiastically portrayed the attack as a major Allied victory. Only the most well informed, prudent readers would have deciphered the minor nuances within the *communiqués* and realized that the attack had failed almost immediately to achieve a significant breakthrough of the German lines.<sup>422</sup>

Military censorship was absolute during the first five days of the offensive. On 16 April six papers, including *Le Petit Parisien* and *Le Figaro*, had articles slashed for providing 'precisions on military operations,' a code name for any details on the course of battle not specified in the *communiqués*. This number rose to ten papers

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<sup>419</sup> *ibid.*, p.164.

<sup>420</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>421</sup> Horne, 'Information, Opinion Publique et L'Offensive Nivelle du 16 Avril 1917', pp.72-73.

<sup>422</sup> Marechal Joffre is said to have realized the attack had failed in part because of the mention of the enemy's 'stubborn resistance' in the official *communiqué* of 16 April, Spears, *Prelude to Victory* p.514.

slashed on 17 April and nine on 19 April with the same official explanation given.<sup>423</sup> Between 16 and 17 April every major Parisian daily with the exception of *Le Temps* was censored by the Press Bureau at least once and most several times.<sup>424</sup> The most common censored military information surrounded analyses of the *communiqués*. Because the *communiqués* were vague regarding the progress by French troops, so too were the details reported in the press.

Censors were expected to allow certain journals such as *Le Petit Journal* to continue publishing *bourrage de crâne* even though information had been circulating at the Ministry of the Interior that the Germans had recaptured several lost villages. Since the battle of Verdun newspapers had had reporters at the front and some information had slipped by the telegraph censors at the Press Bureau. A few papers attempted to describe the results of the attack as an ‘offensive balance,’ but even this was prohibited.<sup>425</sup> Everyone in charge of French information management – the GQG, the censors and even the better informed newspaper editors – were aware that they were presenting a misleading representation of the events of the first few days of the attack by omitting negative information. It was ultimately Nivelle and the GQG who orchestrated this deception by ensuring that only the optimistically vague *communiqués* released by the *Section d’Information* could be referenced when publishing news related to the attack. Until 30 May 1917, this was the agency responsible for all official briefings to journalists, visas to war correspondents, transmission of foreign press material, and daily *communiqués*. After this date, the agency was split into the *Section d’Information* and the *Bureau d’Informations Militaires*. The first was responsible for visas to war correspondents, military radio, photo/cine operations, correspondents of the *Section d’Information*, daily *communiqués*, and field correspondents. The second dealt with the briefings of journalists, material for civilian radio, the transmission of foreign press material and

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<sup>423</sup> SHD 5N 348, 16-19 Apr.1917.

<sup>424</sup> SHD 5N 494, 16-17 Apr.1917.

<sup>425</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* pp.166-167.

the publication of the *Bulletin des Armées*.<sup>426</sup>

The press was encouraged to maintain a positive approach to the events in Champagne. Whereas the importance of the battle for the war effort was often compared to the Marne or Verdun, only the moderate achievements specified in the *communiqués* could be published. Elaboration upon these official statements was forbidden. *L'Action Française* was censored when in an article that prematurely declared 'French victory' a claim was made that 'all' of the German lines were being pierced simultaneously.<sup>427</sup> Headlines which proclaimed 'The Victorious Advance of France's Troops' (*Paris-Midi*)<sup>428</sup> were matched with positive yet extremely vague *communiqués* that described the capture of enemy prisoners and the successful repulse of German counter attacks. In most Parisian dailies during the first few days of the operation, the sensational headlines were unjustified by the evidence given.

Because the GQG and the press had raised such high hopes amongst France's citizens for positive results, there was tremendous pressure to put a positive perspective on events between 16 and 19 April. A perfect example of the mainstream press's approach appeared on 18 April in *Le Temps*. The article stated that, 'A large battle has begun, the largest since the Battle of the Marne. Neither in preparation nor in the attack were our troops favoured by the weather. Nevertheless, our soldiers launched towards the enemy positions with a spirit, an ardour and resolution which shows that the *poilu* knows perfectly well why he fights. The first day has been successful. We have advanced everywhere and we have taken a large number of prisoners. The French Army has placed its feet on positions that Napoleon himself proved to be difficult.'<sup>429</sup> Before the battle, the press and the GQG had described it as potentially ending the war within days. During the first four days of the attack, the GQG and the press together had a vested interest in presenting the moderate results on the Chemin des Dames in a positive fashion with the hope that the situation on the

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<sup>426</sup> Collins, 'The Development of Censorship', p.20.

<sup>427</sup> SHD 5N 494, 17 Apr.1917.

<sup>428</sup> SHD 5N 494, 17 Apr.1917.

<sup>429</sup> *Le Temps*, 18 Apr.1917.



ground would improve both to encourage morale and to avoid them appearing foolish. Beginning on 18 and 19 April however, once it became clear that the situation on the Chemin des Dames was unlikely to improve, Nivelle, the War Ministry and the press began a new phase of damage control.

Reports began to surface on 19 April which suggested that the French attack on the Chemin des Dames would not achieve the anticipated breakthrough. A common statement in the press was that the offensive was a significant tactical victory and should be acknowledged as such. French setbacks and losses remained unreported and the capture of enemy prisoners, guns and territory continued to be stressed. The tendency now was to avoid any mention of a 'breakthrough' and to praise the heroism of the French *poilus* in the face of adverse weather conditions and sustained enemy counter attacks. On 19 April, a letter was sent from the *Section Presse*,<sup>430</sup> to the Press Bureau reminding censors that papers were bound by the Law of 5 August 1914 to present only information transmitted by official *communiqués* when discussing the 'Nominations and mutations in the High Command, military orders and the placement and movement of armies and detachments.' The reminder was not unusual, as similar statements had been issued during previous battles. The letter, however, went on to insist that papers are 'obviously' not to judge for themselves whether the circumstances based on the indications given to them, real or not, posed an inconvenience from the point of view of secret operations or of national defence.<sup>431</sup> The War Ministry was aware that the press knew the situation on the front was worse than was being communicated officially by the GQG, and wanted to maintain strict control over reporting.

Between 19 and 22 April, censorship of the press hardened. On 19 April *Le Gaulois*, a centre-right daily, had an article slashed which detailed Pétain's background.<sup>432</sup> This was an early example of what became the delicate monitoring of the press's

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<sup>430</sup> A section of the Civil Cabinet of the War Ministry which delivered orders to the Press Bureau and dealt with correspondence between the GQG and the War Ministry regarding matters pertaining to the press.

<sup>431</sup> Letter from the *Section Presse*, 19 Apr.1917.

<sup>432</sup> SHD 5N 494, 18-19 Apr.1918.

commentary on Nivelle's replacement by Pétain, a two-stage affair which came into full effect on 15 May.<sup>433</sup> Papers now were censored or slashed for declaring an outright French victory.<sup>434</sup> Whereas between 17 and 19 April German *communiqués* were published in French papers which described the German armies as being 'menaced by a formidable presence,'<sup>435</sup> once the *communiqués* began to reflect the German tactical victory in repelling the French attack their publication became forbidden. Though enemy *communiqués* no longer appeared daily in the French press, they were still published if they mentioned French successes, regardless of their inaccuracies. French success on the Chemin des Dames after 19 April however was infrequent and therefore so was the appearance of German *communiqués* in French newspapers.

From 20 to 29 April, when Pétain became Chief of the General Staff, the press's coverage was increasingly vague and articles became shorter and infrequent. The last major article *Le Figaro* published on the offensive before 29 April was ten days earlier when an article declared that 'Many do not recognise modern victory, certainly 17,000 prisoners is a victory' and that 'even the Germans themselves are saying they have been beaten.'<sup>436</sup> Such claims were easy to make because the German *communiqués* allowed to be published were chosen to convey the impression that the German army had been much more heavily worn down than was the case. Also, the claim that modern victory is difficult to recognise was typical of the lowered expectations from the offensive which became common as coverage of the battle slowed down.<sup>437</sup>

Whereas several papers, particularly *Le Matin*, attempted unsuccessfully to discuss

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<sup>433</sup> Nivelle's authority was first seriously undermined by Pétain's appointment as Chief of the General Staff on 29 April. Papers were prohibited from explicitly discussing how Pétain's promotion would diminish Nivelle's authority, but several alluded to the fact in various ways.

<sup>434</sup> SHD 5N 494, 19 Apr.1917.

<sup>435</sup> *Le Temps*, 19 Apr.1917.

<sup>436</sup> *Le Figaro*, 19 Apr.1917.

<sup>437</sup> During this period, coverage of the British offensive near Arras also became less detailed as the offensive too began to stagnate. This was in large part due to the order given on 19 April that the press not discuss the British offensive outside the information provided by official *communiqués*. SHD 5N 494, 19 Apr.1917.

the disappointing results on the Chemin des Dames after 22 April,<sup>438</sup> it was not until after 29 April with the announcement of Pétain's appointment that an open discussion of what went wrong began slowly to emerge. Nivelle was still not allowed to be attacked personally and even the mention of Pétain was expected to be accompanied by praise for Nivelle. On 29 April, the Press Bureau ordered that '1. Nothing be mentioned on General Mangin.<sup>439</sup> 2. General Nivelle remains in his function. Nothing negative is to be said on his subject. 3. For General Pétain, all praise is acceptable.'<sup>440</sup> The Press Bureau handled Nivelle's replacement in a similar fashion to when Nivelle himself had replaced Joffre in December 1916. Like Joffre, and for many of the same reasons, Nivelle was shielded from immediate criticism in the press once he had fallen from power. Nivelle, like Joffre, had been a household name and a war hero and his disgrace could lead to a public questioning of the GQG's efficacy. *Havas* had a telegram stopped on 29 April for suggesting that Nivelle's replacement was imminent<sup>441</sup> and on 1 May every major paper in Paris with the notable exceptions of *Le Temps* and *Le Figaro* was censored for discussing 'modifications in the High Command.'<sup>442</sup> Papers referred to the efficiency of the German defence and had even been encouraged to 'talk up the Germans.' Another common explanation given for the achievement of only modest tactical gains was the weather. This was an acceptable explanation for the Press Bureau because the assertion that the weather had suddenly difficult become moved blame away from Nivelle.

At the beginning of May, opinions emerged in the French press on potential lessons to be learned in the wake of 'The Offensive of 16 April.' On 1 May the GQG released an official *communiqué* in an attempt to explain the lack of surprise on 16 April. The explanation was that a note captured by the enemy had revealed the plans

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<sup>438</sup> SHD 5N 494, 19-21 Apr.1917.

<sup>439</sup> General Mangin was a particular target for criticism by the press for his role on the Chemin des Dames. On 19 April *Le Journal de Peuple* almost ran an article entitled 'Mangin the Butcher.' Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.167.

<sup>440</sup> *ibid.*, p.170.

<sup>441</sup> SHD 5N 438, 29 Apr.1917.

<sup>442</sup> SHD 5N 438, 1 May 1917.

for attack in advance.<sup>443</sup> Though this was a significant factor in warning the Germans, the fact that this note provided no further explanation revealed a high level of cynicism on the part of the GQG. First, the British press had already mentioned the attack before the note had been captured. They had received the information from Nivelle in January while he was in London.<sup>444</sup> Second, Nivelle was immediately aware that the note had been captured in February, two months before the attack, and did not alter his plans accordingly. Third, as April approached the French press mentioned the upcoming attack more frequently and by March even cited April as the date for the offensive. Although officially this was prohibited by the Press Bureau, papers were seldom punished for mentioning the plan and were even encouraged by GQG and the War Ministry to be enthusiastic about its outcome. Only factors which on the surface placed no direct blame on the GQG were allowed to be given as reasons for the meagre results in Champagne.

Some papers tried to state the obvious by revealing the glaring contrasts between Nivelle's promises before the attack and the results achieved. *L'Echo de Paris* and *La Bataille* attempted to blame Nivelle and Mangin directly for their roles in the battle but were prevented from doing so.<sup>445</sup> Others, such as *Le Petit Parisien* and *Le Journal*, were permitted to discuss less politically charged aspects of the battle such as the effect of artillery fire. On 30 April, an article in *Le Petit Parisien* openly called for a government investigation into the 'operation' launched on 16 April. It argued that only the government had the means to conduct such an undertaking because 'after every part of a battle, newspapers are given the news and then articles are not allowed to say anything against the actions. It is what it is and we must add that it is generally just.' The author then went on to argue that the report should study the orders given, the results of the aviation and infantry reconnaissance and should question whether the weather conditions were appropriate for such an attack.<sup>446</sup> Four days later, the same

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<sup>443</sup> SHD 5N 494, 1 May 1917.

<sup>444</sup> Spears, *Prelude to Victory* p.41.

<sup>445</sup> SHD 5N 438, 2 May 1917.

<sup>446</sup> *Le Petit Parisien*, 30 Apr.1917.

paper changed its opinion that only the government could conduct a proper investigation into the battle, and provided its own explanation. On 3 May, *Le Petit Parisien* published an article by Abel Ferry entitled, ‘The Lesson of the Last Offensive’<sup>447</sup> saying that, ‘In this war, success is determined by the usage of the means at the disposal of the commanders. The genius of the chief is that he can do nothing against these mathematical necessities. The extent of the attack is limited to the number of cannons and the amount of munitions available. He is a prisoner of his materiel. A large amount of materiel on a small front means success is probable, little materiel on a large front means defeat and certain losses.’ He then went on to argue that, ‘The second important element is transport’ and ‘Surprise is the third. It is not possible that during every trimester, there is action based on organisation conducted during the previous trimester and focussed on a single battlefield. The enemy will know.’ The author continued ‘At the beginning of 1917 chances to rupture the front presented themselves. The enemy was menaced on 300KM and could potentially ignore a single principal mass of attack. The retreat neutralised three quarters of the line. This left 30 KM of front in Artois and 30 in Champagne. The attack was expected and the results were limited.’ Ferry went so far as to prophetically suggest that the negative effect on morale to the troops from the offensive could potentially lead to mutinies.<sup>448</sup> This was the first major, albeit indirect, criticism of the High Command in the Parisian Press which was allowed to be published in the wake of the Chemin des Dames Offensive and it appeared in France’s most heavily circulated daily. It is remarkable that this was published.

The discussions in the press regarding the Nivelle Offensive had gone unpunished in March and early April by the Press Bureau, in part due to the Bureau’s preoccupations with censoring news of the February Revolution in Russia and the official American entry into the conflict. A similar situation now existed as the Bureau was primarily concerned with monitoring news of the May 1917 strikes in

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<sup>447</sup> *Le Petit Parisien*, 3 May 1917.

<sup>448</sup> Loez, *14-18 : Les Refus de la guerre* p.129.

Paris.<sup>449</sup> The hectic environment at the Press Bureau<sup>450</sup> appears to have forced the agency to prioritise the censorship of certain events based on their political implications and how recently they took place. This was particularly the case when the censors were simultaneously faced with numerous potentially sensitive articles, as in early May.

The GQG took notice of an increase of pessimism found amongst French troops in mid-May. In a letter sent to the *Section d'Information* on 14 May, the GQG again revealed a great deal of cynicism about its relationship with the press. The letter contended that French newspapers were giving too little space to French operations and too much to British ones because the French papers preferred to borrow articles from British papers rather than use the information transmitted by the *Section d'Information*. 'This produces a regrettable effect on the army. The apparent disproportion between our efforts and those of our allies, so contrary to the reality, can only have a troubling effect on the nation's morale.'<sup>451</sup> The press had chosen to neglect coverage of the Nivelle Offensive in favour of the British effort at the Battle of Arras in part because the latter achieved more significant results and had lasted two weeks longer.<sup>452</sup> But the situation was made more complicated for the French Press because of the enormous restrictions placed upon it by the GQG and the Press Bureau. Because the French press was reliant solely on vague and misleading official *communiqués*, it was severely limited in what information it could report and what opinions it could express. No negative information was communicated to the press by the GQG, and the achievements described were vague and devoid of perspective.<sup>453</sup> Therefore, the

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<sup>449</sup> The Press Bureau's order registers reveal that from 1 May, these strikes became the agency's main priority. BDIC. F. rés 0270 C, and BDIC F rés 0270 CG.

<sup>450</sup> Marcel Berger and Paul Allard often referred to their work at the Press Bureau as busy and hectic. Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure*.

<sup>451</sup> Collins, 'The Development of Censorship', p.18. The French press often supplemented the vague information given to it by GQG with information obtainable through the British press, which naturally focused more heavily on events related to British activity than those related to France. British and American press missions had been authorized by GQG beginning in September 1916. These missions allowed journalists from those countries to conduct guided visits to the front. GQG only granted French journalists the same authorisation in June 1917. Maurin, *Combattre et informer* p.81.

<sup>452</sup> The Battle of Arras took place 9 April-16 May. The Nivelle Offensive took place from 16 April-9 May.

<sup>453</sup> The number of enemy prisoners or guns taken or the tally of enemy soldiers killed were never compared to French losses.

French press was forced to portray the events in Champagne in a vaguely positive fashion and with little detail.

British *communiqués* were more informative than those released by the GQG. Furthermore, London had placed far fewer restraints upon the opinions which journalists in Britain were permitted to express.<sup>454</sup> French reporters therefore were often better informed on the Battle of Arras than they were on the Nivelle Offensive. Responsibility for the French press's reluctance to write about France's own soldiers lay with the GQG which placed little faith in the French press to encourage public morale in the face of a tactical stalemate and strategic defeat. The GQG's complaints that French military actions were being neglected in favour of British ones were seconded by War Minister Paul Painlevé and prompted the decision to split the *Section d'Information* into two agencies which became effective on 30 May. This eased the censor's work load and allowed the two agencies to concentrate more on media tools such as photography and film which were previously neglected.<sup>455</sup> The division of the *Section d'Information* and the creation of the *Maison de la Presse* (at the beginning of 1916) were the two most significant events in the development of the French wartime propaganda machine. The division was initiated by a debate over press censorship and by the limitations imposed on the French press when describing the *poilus'* achievements. From May 1917, the Press Bureau was as involved in advising the press about what topics it should address as it was in ordering what topics the press must avoid.<sup>456</sup>

After Pétain replaced Nivelle as France's lead general, it remained prohibited for journalists to criticize Nivelle personally but there was a certain degree of leniency by the Press Bureau in allowing papers to imply that Nivelle's replacement had been deserved. On 16 May, an article in *Le Petit Parisien*<sup>457</sup> stated, 'This decision will not

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<sup>454</sup> In Britain, wartime press censorship was far more voluntary than in France with a much heavier reliance on self-censorship. Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent* pp.42-44.

<sup>455</sup> Collins, 'The Development of Censorship', p.18.

<sup>456</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C AVIS.

<sup>457</sup> *Le Petit Parisien*, 16 May 1917.

come as a surprise to the army, the parliament or anyone who in the past month has been able to read between the lines of the official communications from the High Command.’ The author then stated, ‘This is not the opportune moment to discuss the reasons for the replacement.’ ‘But, the choice could not be better.’ Though the author made a clear assertion that it was time to replace Nivelle, he finished, possibly in part to avoid censorship by writing, ‘Nivelle still deserves to be a commander of an army group. His compensation is just based on his role at Verdun and a general of his valour should continue to serve the country.’ The paper (which, because of the scepticism of its writers, had been amongst the most heavily monitored Parisian dailies in the two months preceding the Nivelle Offensive) was now permitted to engage publically in honest dialogue regarding the offensive’s legacy.

The writers at *Le Figaro* also took Pétain’s appointment as an opportunity to express their opinions on the offensive. In an article entitled ‘Origins and Results of the Offensive,’<sup>458</sup> the author began by saluting Nivelle as ‘one of the most gallant men in the world and one of the proudest soldiers in the army... The victory of yesterday brings with it the foundations of victory tomorrow.’ Then the author changed tack and questioned Nivelle without referring to him directly. ‘We heard rumours that the German retreat would enable an offensive by us or the English, but this has not been the case..... Never has there been a battle launched without mistakes, but placing the objectives within a timeframe and then blabbing about it was the first mistake.’ In both articles, Nivelle was directly praised then indirectly criticised. The Press Bureau could not entirely conceal the defeat on the Chemin des Dames and worked to ensure that comments in the press were balanced while allowing critical commentary.

Ribot addressed the Chamber on 22 May regarding the 16 April Offensive. His comments were brief but were heavily applauded by the majority of those in attendance, a rare occurrence in the Chamber of Deputies during the war. He pointed out that while France could always celebrate after a victorious battle, it must never do

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<sup>458</sup> *Le Figaro*, 16 May 1917.



so before one had been launched.<sup>459</sup> ‘The offensive could not have given all the results for which we were waiting. Without a doubt, hopes were excessively high and mistakes were made. But the accomplishments were significant.’<sup>460</sup> It was acknowledged briefly by France’s political elite that Nivelle’s hopes were too high and that the country had engaged in premature triumphalism. This sentiment though was never wholly allowed to be echoed in the press and Nivelle remained largely beyond reproach in the media until after the war. Ribot’s comments were also intended to mark the final discussion over the consequences of Nivelle’s gamble. The media after 23 May remained largely silent for the next two months about the Chemin des Dames. The press had stopped writing about the battle and was dealt with harshly when attempting to do so. Everyone wanted to forget Nivelle’s failed venture.

After three months, the ‘constant delay’ had expired and papers were in theory allowed to discuss the military details of the Nivelle Offensive. The GQG immediately informed the Press Bureau that it ‘saw no reason why the combat on the Aisne should not be portrayed as a great success.’<sup>461</sup> While the wording from this order may be interpreted as somewhat equivocal, it was in practice a strictly enforced directive. No frank discussion took place in the media until after the war. The GQG feared that an uninhibited public inquiry into the event and its background might further damage morale at both the front and in the interior. During the summer an internal investigation, the Brugère Commission, presided by Generals Brugère, Foch and Gouraud was established to ‘study the conditions in which the offensive of 16-23 April took place in the valley of the Aisne and to determine the role of the general officers who exercised command’. Its final report, concluded on 30 September and 4 October, concluded that Nivelle had ‘not been up to the crushing task that he had assumed.’ Paul Painlevé who had become Premier in September described the report as ‘too much like rose water’.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République. Tome II* p.237.

<sup>460</sup> *Le Petit Parisien*, 23 May 1917.

<sup>461</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 21.07.1917.

<sup>462</sup> Greenhalgh, *Foch in Command: The Forging of a First World War General* (Cambridge, 2011), pp.237-238.

The press agreed and condemned the report after it was released. Condemnation of the Brugère Commission's findings however were quickly overshadowed by reports on a series of various political scandals headed by Clemenceau and *L'Action Française*.<sup>463</sup>

The press chose, like the government in Paris, to forget Nivelles's tenure at the GQG.

The futile endeavour on the Chemin des Dames was largely forgotten in the French press until the end of the war.

*B. A Socialist International Peace Offensive: The Proposed Stockholm Conference.*

On 22 April 1917, an international peace conference was proposed by the Bureau of the Socialist International and was designed to be a follow-up to two previous socialist wartime meetings in Switzerland at Zimmerwald (5 to 8 September 1915) and Kienthal (24 to 30 April 1916).<sup>464</sup> Although the SFIO had decided not to attend, its *minoritaires* faction began to rally in favour of the conference on 6 May.<sup>465</sup> Ribot and Malvy had in any case decided to prohibit passports for the conference<sup>466</sup> and convinced the French cabinet also to forbid French members from attending.<sup>467</sup> The Stockholm Conference, however, became an open point of debate again when the Russian socialists launched a new appeal on 15 May.<sup>468</sup> On 28 May, upon the encouragement of two French socialists, Marcel Cachin and Marius Moutet, who had returned from Petrograd the day before, the SFIO after much debate unanimously resolved to accept the Stockholm invitation unconditionally.<sup>469</sup>

Ribot, who at first vacillated on whether to test the *Union Sacrée* by denying passports for Stockholm to the French Socialists, ultimately announced to the Chamber on 1 June that passports would be refused.<sup>470</sup> His decision was influenced by

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<sup>463</sup> Miquel, *Le Chemin des Dames* pp.246-249.

<sup>464</sup> Whereas Stockholm was proposed by the BSI, Zimmerwald and Kienthal were organized by elements of the left and centre from both belligerent camps as well as socialists from the neutral countries. D.Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics* p.157.

<sup>465</sup> Loez, *14-18 : Les Refus de la guerre* p. 154.

<sup>466</sup> Poincaré, *Au service de la France Tome IX* (Paris, 1932), p.132.

<sup>467</sup> Stevenson, *French War Aims* p.68.

<sup>468</sup> Loez, *14-18 : Les Refus de la guerre* p.154.

<sup>469</sup> Stevenson, *French War Aims* p.68.

<sup>470</sup> *ibid.*

the insistence of his Cabinet members and, most importantly, Pétain who on 31 May, at the height of the mutinies, declared that if passports were granted for Stockholm, he could not answer for discipline in the army. The Stockholm initiative and its rejection by the government had significant consequences for domestic and political unity in France for the rest of the war. The debate over whether to attend manifested itself in the French press between mid-April and late June, a period when France had been first bitterly disappointed on the Chemin des Dames and then affected by a series of strikes in Paris followed by a mutiny at the front.

Most Parisian newspapers began to report on Stockholm on 23 April, the day after the invitations for the meeting were first issued. It was not until 8 May, once the decision had been made at the Council of Ministers not to issue passports for the conference, that the Press Bureau declared that ‘no mention’ was ‘to be made of the refusal of all passports for Stockholm.’ This order, however, was followed up with two qualifications which confused the original and made it difficult to implement. The first was that ‘The refusal of the Council of Ministers to allow passports for Stockholm passes BUT do not allow the reproduction of news given by the agencies that there is a reason to suppose that the socialists want to go to Stockholm, but cannot acquire the passports to cross the border.’ The second was more specific, and ordered that ‘No reproduction be made of an article in *L’Intransigeant*<sup>471</sup> concerning the refusal of passports to the *Minoritaires*. Also stop news that M. Brizon asked Ribot for a passport to go to Stockholm.’<sup>472</sup> The Press Bureau therefore allowed reporting on Stockholm in all cases except by socialists who argued in favour of attendance, and even this latter was haphazardly enforced. Over the next two days, telegrams were stopped which discussed French invitations to Stockholm,<sup>473</sup> particularly those which linked the

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<sup>471</sup> France’s most heavily circulated nightly paper.

<sup>472</sup> It is Pierre Brizon’s request that appears to have been the basis for the assertion by the ‘agencies’ that the Socialists and the *Minoritaires* did in fact wish to attend. BDIC. F. rés 0270 C. 08.05.1917. Pierre Brizon was a Socialist deputy and a vociferous critic of the government. For his role in the meetings at Zimmerwald, Kienthal and the proposed meeting at Stockholm see, R. Ducoulombier, *Camarades ! La Naissance du Parti Communiste en France* (Paris, 2010).

<sup>473</sup> SHD 5N 438, 11 May 1917.

conference to the on-going strikes in Paris.<sup>474</sup> The Press Bureau had acted too late and too indecisively to prevent the press from freely discussing Stockholm. By the first week of May, many newspapers, most notably *Le Temps* and *L'Humanité*, the two dailies which for the next month and a half most forcefully debated the conference proposal, had already clarified their positions.

Several papers engaged in a heated debate regarding Stockholm. The exchanges between papers were in fact public discussions between politicians who argued over the conference through the papers which they owned or for which they wrote. *Le Temps*, a paper usually admired for its unbiased factual analyses, covered Stockholm more closely than any other paper and argued forcefully against it. On 29 April, before the Press Bureau had passed orders on Stockholm, the paper published an article which dismissed the supporters of Stockholm as ‘Socialists who believe that the reconstruction of the International should be the supreme goal of the war and who sacrifice all ideals of justice and condemnation against those who have unleashed the scourge.’<sup>475</sup> *Le Matin*, another centrist paper, published articles even earlier in the month which referred to Stockholm as a ‘German, socialist plot,’<sup>476</sup> an argument which was often repeated by that paper<sup>477</sup> and later by *Le Temps* in late May after the French Socialist Party voted in favour of sending delegates to Stockholm. The centrist press was on the attack, placing socialist papers such as *L'Humanité* on the defensive for most of May. Unsurprisingly, the right-wing press opposed the Stockholm proposal from early on. Maurras in *L'Action Française*<sup>478</sup> wrote on 24 April that the Conference was ‘a German attempt to get from the new Russian regime what they could not from the Ancien Régime. Namely, a separate peace,’<sup>479</sup> and then on 9 May that the ‘preparations of the Minoritaires to go to Stockholm are an act of destruction

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<sup>474</sup> SHD. 5N 438 9 May 1917.

<sup>475</sup> *Le Temps*, 29 Apr.1917.

<sup>476</sup> *Le Matin*, 17 and 19 Apr.1917.

<sup>477</sup> One article on 13 May for example argued that ‘The congress which claims to represent the global proletariat is really an expression of international pangermanism.’ *Le Matin*, 13 May 1917.

<sup>478</sup> The other was Leon Daudet.

<sup>479</sup> *L'Action Française*, 24 Apr.1917.

and anarchy.<sup>480</sup> Such accusations placed left-wing papers, particularly *L'Humanité*, in the difficult position of defending the socialist internationalist agenda while having to affirm the French left's patriotism and commitment to France's national defence and greater interests.

Paul Renaudel, editor of *L'Humanité*, was from the *Majoritaire* section of the party and personally opposed Stockholm, though not vehemently.<sup>481</sup> *L'Humanité* throughout May simultaneously published articles which represented the cautious *Majoritaires'* and enthusiastic *Minoritaires'* approaches to Stockholm. The latter increasingly featured in the paper after the Russian appeal for a conference on May 15 and in the lead up to the Socialist Party conference on 28 May. Renaudel's articles were moderate, and generally defended the Socialist Party as a patriotic institution against attacks published in *Le Temps* and in the right-wing media. He also defended the *Minoritaires* as a group whose opinions were legitimate and were well intentioned, even if he did not fully agree with them.

An article written by Renaudel on 9 May typifies *L'Humanité's* journalistic approach that month. He wrote that he was not surprised by the negative reactions to the Socialist Party's decision. 'Bourgeois around the world see socialist unity as a grave threat.'<sup>482</sup> While the 'bourgeois' would mostly have agreed with the socialist decision not to attend Stockholm, it was the unity of the party which Renaudel believed they perceived as threatening. Later in the article he argued that the *Minoritaires* group would not be 'forced to define itself' by outside forces. Renaudel defended the *Minoritaires* against accusations of unpatriotic leanings by stating first that 'it is not simply a national crisis which currently needs to be resolved but also an international one.' Then in response to accusations that the French socialists were being duped by German Social Democrats, he revealed his general editorial stance as a *majoritaire* socialist by arguing that '*L'Humanité* has always argued that the German

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<sup>480</sup> *L'Action Française*, 9 May 1917.

<sup>481</sup> The failed motion was supported by Jules Guesde, Marcel Cachin and Marcel Sembat. *Le Temps*, 28 May 1917.

<sup>482</sup> *L'Humanité*, 9 May 1917.

Social Democrats lie.’ He ended the article by declaring, ‘We will not give the adversaries of socialism the joy of declaring the death of the International. But the International must regenerate itself.’<sup>483</sup> The French Socialist Party was being attacked from all sides and spent much of May reaffirming its patriotism and defending its intentions.

In most cases, the Press Bureau lightly censored media coverage of the Stockholm proposal or chose to alter specific lines or words rather than slash entire articles. An order issued by the Bureau on 8 May was unspecific as to what socialist arguments were prohibited. No mention was to be made of news arriving from ‘agencies’ that socialists wished to attend Stockholm but were prohibited from doing so. Telegrams after this order were more closely monitored and often stopped or censored, particularly following the Soviet appeal on 15 May. On 17 May, a telegram from *Havas* in Rome was censored outlining the organisation for the proposed conference. By the end of May all telegrams discussing Stockholm were either censored or stopped.<sup>484</sup> But because the articles in the socialist press, particularly in *L’Humanité*, were based on opinion rather than analyses of forbidden information they were not specifically covered under the order. Only in late May after the appeal from Petrograd did the SFIO move towards accepting the Stockholm proposal. As a result, it was only in the days immediately preceding the Socialist National Council on 28 May that Pro-Stockholm opinions began to appear unequivocally in the mainstream socialist press.

*L’Humanité* first began regularly to publish *minoritaire*-influenced articles on Stockholm with a short article on 14 May entitled, ‘Why we Must go to Stockholm,’ and then a much longer one the next day which outlined the socialist definition of a ‘just peace.’ In an article on 15 May entitled, ‘The Liberty of the World,’<sup>485</sup> Renaudel began by quoting *Le Temps*, which had declared that ‘It is not the job of the workers’ international to determine the conditions for a just peace, which is the task not of a

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<sup>483</sup> *L’Humanité*, 9 May 1917.

<sup>484</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC.

<sup>485</sup> *L’Humanité*, 15 May 1917.

party or a group of parties but of the common effort of the Allied governments responsible before the nations which are defending their existence by defending the cause of liberty in the world.’ Renaudel retorted that *L’Humanité* did not accept *Le Temps*’ thesis. He argued the paper claimed the right for socialism, both national and international, to clearly state what it believes are the conditions for a ‘just peace’. ‘Whereas *Le Temps* states that it is the job of the Allied governments to determine peace, we say it is the right of the people.’ Though the paper’s concept of a ‘just peace’ was clearly an international one, Renaudel stopped short of mentioning the German people or the German Social Democrats, who were hated and distrusted by the vast majority of French politicians and journalists.

On 23 May *L’Humanité* began to run daily articles each written by a member of the SFIO. The paper now clearly violated the purpose of the orders given by the Press Bureau. Several of the authors including Paul Mistral,<sup>486</sup> the influential *majoritaire* socialist mayor of Grenoble, argued unequivocally in favour of Stockholm. The purpose of the Press Bureau’s orders was to prevent those in the Socialist Party who had been in favour of Stockholm, but who had been previously outvoted by the majority of their party, from proclaiming an injustice that they, as individuals, were being denied the right to travel to Stockholm. But *L’Humanité* had run articles since early May arguing both positions regarding Stockholm and had even provoked a heated debate with the right-wing press and the mainstream centrists, led by *Le Temps*. These articles increased in number after the Petrograd appeal and it became obvious that the party was moving towards accepting the Stockholm invitation. It was too late for the Press Bureau to act.

There are several reasons why the Press Bureau might not have acted more quickly. The censors’ registers from May clearly demonstrate that civil unrest in Paris was the primary concern of the Press Bureau during that month. Another possibility is that the War Ministry was aware (the War Minister having taken part in the decision) that the

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<sup>486</sup> *L’Humanité*, 24 May 1917.

government was not going to grant passports to Stockholm in any case and therefore chose to concentrate censorship efforts on more immediate threats. Finally, because the shift had only begun after the Petrograd appeal on 15 May, it was seemingly unapparent to everyone until a few days before the Socialist National Council on 28 May that the party was moving towards a unanimous decision to support Stockholm.

On 29 May, the day after the Socialist Party voted to attend Stockholm, the Government acted quickly in attempting to prevent a further escalation. An order was issued by the Press Bureau which stated, ‘Do not allow the mention of a possible re-issue of passports for Stockholm.’<sup>487</sup> For the next three days, no significant mention was made in the press concerning passports, but the debate remained heated, particularly between the writers of *L’Humanité* and *Le Temps*. Renaudel, writing in *L’Humanité*, had previously argued against Stockholm, but now defended his party’s stance. In an article entitled ‘For a Just Peace,’<sup>488</sup> Renaudel insisted that ‘It would be wrong to insinuate that the Socialist Party is unpatriotic.’ Two days later an article in *Le Temps*<sup>489</sup> responded. ‘*L’Humanité* has published that it would be a profound error for France to judge that the Socialist Party’s belief in national defence has weakened. We do not make this insinuation because we do not believe that the socialist leaders have the power to weaken the will for national defence. We never have doubted the patriotism of good citizens regardless of their political stripes.’ After this disingenuous comment directed at Renaudel, the author went on to write about the dangers of recognising an ‘International’ and declared that to attend Stockholm would be a ‘criminal undertaking.’ The Press Bureau’s orders on 29 May had therefore failed to dampen the controversy.

On 30 May, the Press Bureau ordered that papers wishing to comment on passports for Stockholm must ‘wait for M. Ribot.’ Later that day, the Premier explained that the question would be examined at a Council of Ministers that Friday and the President would call to inform the Press Bureau of what path to

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<sup>487</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 29 May 1917

<sup>488</sup> *L’Humanité*, 29 May 1917.

<sup>489</sup> *Le Temps*, 31 May 1917.



follow.<sup>490</sup> Two days later, Ribot announced at the Council that if passports were requested for Stockholm they would be denied. For the two next weeks, the debates in the press remained similar. *Le Temps* on 2 June attacked *L'Humanité* by stating that there was no excuse for its approach to Stockholm. The article argued that to enforce peace through a socialist international would amount to treason towards the peoples as it would supersede the authority of their governments.<sup>491</sup> On the same day, *L'Action Française* published a smug article which demonstrated its satisfaction that 'The *Grande Journée* of yesterday did not result in what they (the socialists) were waiting for, or what they had planned.' During the next two weeks, the writers of *L'Humanité* increasingly chose not to respond to the onslaught against them in the right-wing press and *Le Temps*. Until 16 June when the paper published the socialist declaration on Stockholm,<sup>492</sup> it gave little space to Stockholm.<sup>493</sup> Its restraint during this period was admirable in the light of the attacks launched against it by the writers at *Le Temps* and echoed by dailies further to the right. On 13 June, in an article entitled 'Illusion and Trickery,'<sup>494</sup> an author for *Le Temps* complained that the socialist media, *L'Humanité* in particular, had continued to write about passports for Stockholm. This open debate in the press only came to end after 19 June<sup>495</sup> when the Press Bureau finally decided to 'Stop all articles and wires on Stockholm.'<sup>496</sup> Although discussion in the press continued after this date, it became less personal and more nuanced. The censors were now able to slash articles for the mere mention of Stockholm and even opinion pieces were more closely monitored regardless of the factual information they contained.

The refusal of passports for Stockholm had initiated the most sustained wartime

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<sup>490</sup> BDIC F. rés 0270 C, 30 May 1917.

<sup>491</sup> *Le Temps*, 2 Jun. 1917.

<sup>492</sup> *L'Humanité*, 16 June 1917.

<sup>493</sup> The notable exceptions were on 7 June when it was declared that the fight for Stockholm 'was not over' *L'Humanité*. 9 Jul.1917 and two days later when *L'Humanité* called the Government decision an 'error'. *L'Humanité*, 9 Jun.1917.

<sup>494</sup> *Le Temps*, 13 Jun.1917.

<sup>495</sup> The decision was in large part influenced by the publication in *L'Humanité* on 16 June of the Socialist declaration in Parliament regarding the refusal of passports. *L'Humanité*, 16 Jun.1917. The declaration was largely conciliatory in nature and assured that the refusal of passports for Stockholm would not cause disunity in the government. Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République. Tome II* p.266.

<sup>496</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 19 Jun.1917.

debate in the French Chamber over foreign policy.<sup>497</sup> The Stockholm proposal had similarly produced one of the most significant and least censored debates in the French press during the war. The debate had been relatively uncensored on the condition that the press refrained from attacking political personalities too blatantly or from linking the proposal to the strikes in Paris which took place at the same time.<sup>498</sup> Both Stockholm and the strikes received coverage in the press, but only with regard to Stockholm were papers allowed to debate publicly and suggest what course of action the government should follow. The initial leniency shown to the press over Stockholm was cited by several army officers as one reason for the outbreak of mutinies in the French army a month later. The subject of peace was listed in Pétain's report on 23 August 1917 as one to avoid in the future because of the risk to the morale of French soldiers. Stockholm was given as a specific example of the dangers of discussing premature peace. 'Going to Stockholm is to make peace. For the trooper, if we can afford to go to Stockholm then we must make peace and this lowers military morale.'<sup>499</sup> The extent to which the failure of the Stockholm proposal incited the troops to mutiny is debatable, however, some soldiers or citizens who read the discussion of Stockholm in the press might have been radicalized by the intense debate particularly between the writers of *L'Humanité* and *Le Temps*. Pétain and the GQG, as discussed in the next chapter, used the press as a scapegoat for the mutinies to divert blame away from themselves.

The government may have allowed the debate to take place because it diverted attention away from the strikes in Paris, but also because most of the press supported the government's position in refusing passports for Stockholm. The attacks on the leftist press led by the usually objective *Le Temps* placed *L'Humanité* squarely on the defensive and forced it to defend the patriotism of the socialists who had argued in support of the Socialist International. This was the first major occasion during the war when newspapers were allowed to comment directly on government policy and make

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<sup>497</sup> Stevenson, *French War Aims* p.69.

<sup>498</sup> The debates over Stockholm and the strikes in fact came to a head simultaneously at the end of May.

<sup>499</sup> Pedroncini, *1917. Les Mutineries de l'armée française* p.269.

suggestions for future action. The right-wing press was permitted to get away with personal attacks against prominent personalities on the left, whereas the left did not attempt to attack Ribot or others in the cabinet and would have been prohibited from doing so. This leniency towards personal attacks from the right foreshadowed what later transpired under the Clemenceau Ministry in its campaign against 'defeatists.' The press was allowed to conduct a debate on government policy over Stockholm because the majority of the coverage supported the government's position.

### *Conclusion*

Beginning in April 1917, France entered a period characterised by disaster at the front and socio-political crisis in the interior. After Verdun, Nivelle had raised high expectations for an offensive that would quickly end the war on French terms. The press, with the intentions of raising morale in the interior, deceived itself, the French public and France's soldiers into believing that the Nivelle Offensive would inevitably be successful and even devastating to the German war effort. The government's allowance of such high hopes to manifest themselves in the press alerted even the Premier to the potential dangers when the media were improperly monitored or when the Press Bureau too loosely followed its own rules.

When the offensive failed, the GQG ensured that the press was kept as uninformed as possible and that no blame was attributed to France's generals. Nivelle's implementation of the 'constant delay' facilitated this process, and censorship managed to limit discussion in the media on the Chemin des Dames at the moment when it could have most harmed morale. The government decided a month later to no longer discuss the offensive, and the GQG waited another two months before ordering the press to portray the attack as a victory. Whereas *bourrage de crâne* had previously been the domain of the mainstream press and the War Ministry, the GQG now encouraged it also. Nivelle remained a hero after his replacement as had Joffre before him.

Nivelle had a different approach to the media from Joffre or Pétain. He was less

cautious than both when it came to censoring military information and even boasted about future operations. He also was aware of increasing pacifism in the interior and its effects on the troops. Unlike Joffre, who simply withheld all news when things went wrong, Nivelle under similar circumstances insisted that things were going to plan. One of the major lessons learnt by Pétain and which influenced his relationship with the press after his replacement of Nivelle was the negative effect of *bourrage de crâne* on an increasingly cynical readership at the front as in the interior.

The Ministry of the Interior also showed a certain cynicism in its dealings with the press during this period. The debate allowed to unfold in the press over the Stockholm Conference was unprecedented for its personal attacks, particularly on the left by *L'Action Française* and also notably by the usually restrained *Le Temps*. These were early examples of the type of attacks that later became common after the mutinies, particularly against Louis Malvy and Joseph Caillaux. The War Ministry also allowed the debates over Stockholm, not just because they distracted readers from the strikes that were taking place in Paris at the time and from the recent debacle on the Chemin des Dames, but also because they relieved pressure on an overburdened Press Bureau. The French information management system allowed minor rules to be violated when lenience suited greater purposes.

Though the environment at the Press Bureau in Paris was always stressful, the period between April and July 1917 was perhaps its busiest. Numerous setbacks happened concurrently during this period, and the Press Bureau needed to prioritise certain issues as more important than others. It was important above all else that the press not link the events together and portray them as constituting a national crisis. The Press Bureau was successful in this objective and was consequently was able to weather much of the storm until the crisis period was over.

## Chapter 4: Crisis Continued

### *Introduction*

This chapter continues to explore how the French information management system operated during spring 1917, the low point for French military fortunes and for morale both at the front and in the interior. For the first time since 1914, large scale industrial strikes took place in Paris and in other urban centres. The Press Bureau had now to censor news of an event which manifested itself publicly and which large numbers of citizens witnessed first-hand. Furthermore the strikes, at first, were led by women. The government had to decide how the media should be permitted to interpret the presence of women in what was a very male dominated French labour movement.

Again the press was often allowed to disobey specific rules under the condition that it presented current events positively. This leads to the question of how and when journalists were able to judge whether their material would be permitted to pass even if it violated minor regulations. During the 1917 strikes, as with the censorship of other events concerning domestic affairs, the answer is found in the censor's logbooks at the BDIC. At the beginning of the movement few orders were given, and they were not reissued when violated. Later, however, when news of the movement was heavily repressed, orders were given far more frequently and were more sternly worded. Indeed, the government used censorship to present the picture it wished to appear in the media rather than haphazardly enforcing the rules.

The spring 1917 French mutinies were extremely dangerous both militarily and for their capacity to incite panic and to encourage the anti-war movement in France. The chapter explains how self-censorship played the fundamental role in protecting perhaps France's biggest wartime secret from the Germans when it was most important to do so and then how the Press Bureau later worked to contain news of the repression of the

mutinies. In the former case, the actions of France's journalists demonstrated in a similar way to the Battle of the Marne in 1914 that the media could usually be trusted to keep military secrets. The GQG, however, still held a profound distrust of the media, particularly in reporting on political affairs.

The focus then turns to the legacy of the mutinies on press censorship, characterised by an increase in direct military involvement in policy formation. After the mutinies the GQG and particularly Pétain blamed careless journalism as a major cause of dissent in the army. The questionable legitimacy of Pétain's accusations is evaluated in conjunction with the GQG's growing role in press censorship and the development of propaganda. Under the short lived Painlevé premiership (12 September-16 November 1917) the GQG regained much of the control over the publication of military information that it had lost under Nivelle. Pétain personally designed the GQG's policies towards the media and until Clemenceau's appointment as Premier in November was briefly the most influential figure in French media censorship.

The French information management system also worked to censor another positive news story in the press related to the Americans. In June the first American officers and troops arrived to much fanfare in Paris but a slip up at the telegraph agency led to a row between the Press Bureau and the AEF, which led to the American decision to install its own bureau in Paris. The chain of events which were set in motion as a direct result of a mistake by one individual censor demonstrate the strain placed upon the Press Bureau to operate faultlessly especially when dealing with military information and illustrates the potential consequences of an inefficient censorship system. The French censorship system quickly adapted by focussing more heavily on naval censorship and did not repeat the same mistake for the remainder of the war.

A. *The Midinettes on Strike. The French Labour Movement of May-June 1917.*

The 1917 strikes occurred in two waves with the first taking place in January and the second in the spring. The former was centred largely in Paris and northern France, though there were strikes in other French urban areas too. The latter was more widespread and engulfed many of France's provincial centres.<sup>500</sup> Women played a key role in both movements as they were paid much lower wages than their male counterparts and stood no risk of being sent to the front. Both 1917 strike waves began in the textile and clothing industries, though in the spring the movement also spread significantly into the armaments industry, making it more threatening to the Government. The government's eventual reaction to this unprecedented level of wartime labour activity<sup>501</sup> was a mixture of conciliation and legislative reform.

Both 1917 strike movements were at least partially successful in obtaining their economic goals. Armaments Minister Albert Thomas in January 1917 adopted minimum wages for workers in war production and ensured regular salary increases to combat the effects of inflation, but at the same time outlawed all strikes by war workers and imposed compulsory arbitration. This initiative was paired with a renewed attempt to 'comb out' munitions workers for front line duty.<sup>502</sup> The spring 1917 strikes, though largely spontaneous and uncoordinated, were in direct defiance of Thomas' January 1917 program.

The spring 1917 strikes were successful almost everywhere in obtaining wage increases. Their successes were due to negotiations between a conciliatory Malvy and the CGT whose membership had tripled to 300,000 in 1917.<sup>503</sup> In Paris there were 133,000 strikers<sup>504</sup>, over 80% of whom were female.<sup>505</sup> Some strikers showed early signs of pacifism or defeatism but these tendencies should not be exaggerated. They were

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<sup>500</sup> Horne, *Labour at War* p.180.

<sup>501</sup> There were 696 strikes in total in France in 1917, whereas there were 315 in 1916 and only 98 in 1915. Rajsfus, *La Censure militaire et policière* p.13.

<sup>502</sup> *ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>503</sup> *ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>504</sup> Robert, *Les Ouvriers, la patrie et la révolution* pp.123-124.

<sup>505</sup> Rajsfus, *La Censure militaire et policière* p.180.

manifestations of a temporary lull in morale and patriotism influenced by the failure of the Chemin des Dames Offensive in April 1917 and the successful February Revolution in Russia. While many strikers sang the ‘Internationale’ and flew red banners, negotiations with the government and official demands were always presented as purely economic.

The most significant period of the strikes was between 11 and 30 May. During these three weeks the strikers were strongest numerically and were most successful in achieving their aims. The strikes were first led by women from the garments industry known as *midinettes*,<sup>506</sup> but these had largely ended by 23 May and were completely over by 28 May. In late May more industries followed suit such as the telegraph agencies, banks, domestic service and others. Though none of these workforces were so entirely involved in the strikes as were the *midinettes* in mid-May<sup>507</sup> the total number of strikers in Paris was largest between 29 and 31 May, which later became referred to as ‘The Three Glorious Days.’<sup>508</sup> During these three days, war workers became the driving force of the demonstrations and some strikes became violent, particularly those which involved or were directed by the CDS.<sup>509</sup> Though this comparison must not be exaggerated, these strikes along with those that lasted until mid-June were mildly reminiscent of the violent anti-war strikes which took place a year later. Specifically they were anti-war, male dominated and were less successful than the purely economic protests led by the *midinettes* two weeks earlier. Of the 133,000 strikers involved in a total of 197 strikes<sup>510</sup> in Paris during the May-June 1917 strike wave, 390 were arrested by the time the movement faded out in late June.<sup>511</sup>

The strikes took place at the same time as the debate over Stockholm, one month after the Chemin des Dames débâcle and at the beginning of the high point of the

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<sup>506</sup> The English translation for *midinettes* is ‘seamstress’ or ‘shopgirl’. The former is more accurate in this case. The word may also imply that the woman is young, carefree and naïve. It carries with it a certain taint of condescension. <http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/midinette>

<sup>507</sup> Robert, *Les Ouvriers, la patrie et la révolution* pp.125-126.

<sup>508</sup> *ibid.*, p.131.

<sup>509</sup> The *Comité de défense syndicaliste* was a radical *minoritaire* group within the CGT, led by Raymond Péricat. This powerful group had little influence over the textile union and therefore did not significantly influence the actions of the *midinettes*. *ibid.*, 130.

<sup>510</sup> *ibid.*, pp.123-124.

<sup>511</sup> *ibid.*, p.144.



mutinies. Because of their timing, they were a sensitive topic for their ability to destabilize French public opinion. But whereas Stockholm was largely a political debate which could easily be monitored by the Press Bureau, the strikes were visible to on-looking citizens in Paris and in other urban areas. Instead, the Press Bureau sought to limit the information known to the press and any commentary which discussed the details of and motivations for the strikes. The government's primary goal was to prevent the strikes being presented as anything more nefarious than simple demands for higher wages by a group of female clothing workers who were largely uninterested in politics. It was only once the strikes became influenced by the CDS that the government hardened its control over their media coverage.

On 16 May, the Press Bureau first attempted to prevent the press from mentioning strikes in the clothing industry.<sup>512</sup> Although a few papers such as *L'Heure*<sup>513</sup> and *Le Journal de Peuple*<sup>514</sup> had articles slashed in the next few days for attempting to provide coverage, most of the mainstream papers obeyed.<sup>515</sup> As the movement began to grow and to become more visible however, the War Ministry realized it was no longer realistic to censor reporting of the strikes altogether. On 21 May, the Press Bureau ordered 'Not to mention the strikes except for the bare fact. Nothing on heated demonstrations, seditious cries or the extension of the movement.'<sup>516</sup> It seems that the first mention of the term *midinettes* in the censors' registers appeared the next day when *Havas* attempted to pass a wire on the 'strikes of the *midinettes*.' At first the wire was allowed to pass but then was stopped later that night.<sup>517</sup> Two days later on 24 May, *Havas* was allowed to pass another wire about the *midinettes*<sup>518</sup> and after this the term became commonly used in the press. Ironically however, the strikes in the garments industry had already begun to wind down by this time.

During the height of the strikes led by the *midinettes* in mid-May, the topic of

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<sup>512</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 16 May 1917.

<sup>513</sup> SHD. 5N 438, 18 May 1917.

<sup>514</sup> SHD. 5N 438, 20 May 1917.

<sup>515</sup> Oddly, *La Bataille* published an article on the strikes on 17 May against the orders of the Press Bureau, and was only given a warning. SHD 5N 438, 17 May 1917.

<sup>516</sup> BDIC. F rés 0270 C, 21 May 1917.

<sup>517</sup> BDIC. F rés 0270 AFS, 22 May 1917.

<sup>518</sup> BDIC. F rés 0270 AFS, 24 May 1917.

female strikers was allowed to be dealt with openly in the press. Because the demands of the *midinettes* were largely economic, the government deemed them to be relatively unthreatening. Upon the success of the *midinettes* in being granted most of their demands on 19 May, *L'Humanité* published an article the next day entitled 'The Strike of the Clothing Manufacturers. It has finished with the triumph of the *ouvrières*.'<sup>519</sup> The article stated that the strikers were getting a raise because of rising living costs (*la vie chère*) and had been granted the five-day work week (*la semaine anglaise*). At the end of the article, the author wrote that the 'success of the *midinettes* has now led the hat makers to follow suit.' Although the next day, the Press Bureau prohibited the press from claiming that the movement was expanding, this order appears to have been loosely enforced on the condition that the press only discussed female-led, economically motivated strikes that were outside the war munitions industry. On 25 May, *L'Humanité* published an article entitled 'The Strike Movement has grown again.'<sup>520</sup> The article began by stating that 'Yesterday over twenty thousand women from over fifteen corporations were on strike. Today, their numbers have risen again. The movement launched by the female workers in the clothing industry has proved an example to all women that regardless of where they work, they have the same rights and needs.' Although this article was moderately censored by the Press Bureau,<sup>521</sup> the paper was still permitted to demonstrate its support for the *midinettes*. This enlightened approach to female collective bargaining, however, was hardly expressed unanimously in the press.

Although *L'Action Française* was permitted to condemn the strikes, it was prohibited from taking aim specifically at female workers and therefore published little on the movement of the *midinettes* while it took place. On 22 May, in the wake of the overwhelming success of the *midinettes* movement in achieving its goals, *L'Action Française* attempted to publish a scathing report on the female strikers which included remarks like 'why pacifists have to be feminists.'<sup>522</sup> A vast amount of the article was slashed including this passage but it is unclear whether the Press Bureau

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<sup>519</sup> The French word *ouvrières* means female workers. *L'Humanité*, 20 May 1917. Interestingly the paper chose this word instead of *midinettes* perhaps accidentally or possibly as a sign of respect.

<sup>520</sup> *L'Humanité*, 25 May 1917.

<sup>521</sup> SHD 5N 438, 25 May 1917.

<sup>522</sup> SHD 5N 438, 22-23 May 1917.

chose to censor the article because it condemned the *midinettes* or because it linked the strikes to pacifism. The fact that *L'Action Française* was one of nine papers censored that day,<sup>523</sup> almost all of which were from the far-left or right, suggests the latter.

On 30 May the GQG launched a report on the press and its effects on morale in the Third Army which stated that soldiers were complaining that their 'wives were being shot.' It concluded that the press 'needed to be watched' and that the most pressing issue was the media's coverage of 'the movement in Paris' because many soldiers believe that 'peace will come through revolution.'<sup>524</sup> This report did not immediately affect the way in which women were portrayed in the media (the female led phase of the movement had come to an end), but it did lead to a further hardening of censorship by the Press Bureau of the media's coverage of the strike movement. Pétain later included strike movements as a subject to avoid in the press in his final report of 23 August 1917 explaining the reasons for the French mutinies.<sup>525</sup> Clemenceau, who had spoken strongly against the strikes in the Senate on 7 July,<sup>526</sup> strictly enforced the ban when he became Premier in November. Even before this the Press Bureau on the night of 24-25 August<sup>527</sup> banned the word *chômeuses*<sup>528</sup> from usage in the press. There were few examples of blatant sexism towards the *midinettes* in the media in mid-May, because their goals were economic and were relatively moderate. In late May, however, when the strikes moved into war industries and became more political, the media's interpretations of the strikes became more heavily opinionated and the Press Bureau became increasingly concerned over the tone of press coverage.

*L'Humanité* closely followed the rapid extension of the strike movement in late May. On 25 May the paper featured an article which commented on how the movement had spread into the hat makers and rubber makers unions. From then on, the paper published daily details on every new group that participated in the strikes. It

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<sup>523</sup> SHD 5N 438, 22 May 1917.

<sup>524</sup> SHD 5N 438, 30-31 May 1917.

<sup>525</sup> Pedroncini, 1917. *Les Mutineries de l'armée française* p.269.

<sup>526</sup> Robert, *Les Ouvriers, la patrie et la révolution* p.123.

<sup>527</sup> Navet-Bouron, 'La Censure et la femme pendant la Grande Guerre Mondiale', p.45.

<sup>528</sup> An unemployed female.

seems the paper was permitted to discuss the extension of the strikes because it continued to focus on the feminine aspect of the movement. On 27 May, an author in *L'Humanité* commented, 'The movement has extended to the point that we may finally consider the creation of a central body to address the needs of women in corporations.'<sup>529</sup> Whereas the role of women still remained central to the articles in *L'Humanité* the paper did mention, in passing, the increasing role of male actors, particularly of Léon Jouhaux and the CGT.

By this time, other papers had ceased pretending that this was still, in fact, a strike dominated by women from the clothing industry. On 27 May, an article in *Le Figaro* by Alfred Capus entitled 'The Government and the Strikes'<sup>530</sup> warned that 'The strikes of the *midinettes* have produced unsavoury characters on the streets of which we need not warn the government. The people should ensure that these strikes remain about wage disputes between workers and bosses.'<sup>531</sup> Further to the right, *L'Action Française* condemned the strikes more forcefully and even suggested that they were orchestrated by German agents. In a 28 May article entitled 'The Mongers of Disorder,'<sup>531</sup> Leon Daudet wrote, 'It has been indicated that the strikes of the *midinettes* and bodies of feminine workers are degenerating slowly under the influence of the *Boches* or the *Pro-Boches* and are being tolerated in Paris.' The same article stated that 'German agents are pushing for a *pro-Boche* peace and are paying and influencing the public.' Until now the Press Bureau had been lenient towards papers that reported on the strikes, but with the strikes growing and their media coverage becoming increasingly heated this tolerance was unlikely to last.

Beginning on 26 May, newspapers were increasingly censored for comments on the strikes. Between 26 and 31 May the strikes grew rapidly in both size and intensity, and the Press Bureau issued several new orders prohibiting the press from including specific details on the movement. On 26 May, after a photo was published of the strikes in *L'Excelsior*, all photos of strikes were forbidden. The next day, papers were

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<sup>529</sup> *L'Humanité*, 27 May 1917.

<sup>530</sup> *Le Figaro*, 27 May 1917.

<sup>531</sup> *L'Action Française*, 28 May 1917.

prohibited from publishing any sanctions taken against functionaries because of the strikes in various services of the Ministry of War such as the telegraph agency. On 28 May, it became prohibited to mention strikes of ‘war employees’ or to comment on violence or stone throwing. On 30 May, as the strikes moved more heavily into arms factories, a ‘formal’ order was given not to mention strikes in munitions factories. Finally on 31 May, the last of the ‘Three Glorious Days,’ an order was given by the Director of the Press Bureau to be ‘severe on strikes, no titles indicating that strikes are spreading, no mention of strikes in munitions factories.’ Finally the formal letter ordered journalists to ‘no longer make blanks or to indicate the number of lines censored.’<sup>532</sup> Although the new orders specified what details on the strikes were prohibited, in theory they added little to the existing orders from 21 May stating that nothing be mentioned on the strikes except for the bare fact. Furthermore, it was acknowledged at the time by censors working at the Press Bureau that the final order regarding the omission of blanks in articles was impossible to enforce.<sup>533</sup> The result of these new orders, none the less, was a heavy increase in the number of articles censored between 26 May and the end of the strikes in June.

On 26 May, three left-wing papers were censored for discussing the strikes: *L’Eveil*, *Le Journal du Peuple*, and *L’Humanité*. The next day, five papers were slashed, including the moderate papers *Le Petit Journal* and *Le Petit Parisien*. This number continued to grow steadily along with the intensity of the movement until a climax was reached on 31 May when 19 papers including all the mainstream Parisian dailies (with the notable exception of *Le Temps*) were censored for discussing the strikes (16 were censored the same day for discussing Stockholm).<sup>534</sup> Although only one paper, *Le Bonnet Rouge*,<sup>535</sup> was suspended during this period (for fifteen days),<sup>536</sup> the

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<sup>532</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 26-31 May 1917.

<sup>533</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.174. Papers were often given a very short time (a few hours) to correct the offending passages in their editions before they were scheduled to be sent to distributors. Erasing material from articles (thereby leaving blanks) was a faster method of correction than the re-typing of entire pages.

<sup>534</sup> SHD 5N. 438. 26-31.05.1917.

<sup>535</sup> One of the most heavily censored papers of the war, it became implicated in a treason scandal after its administrator, Emile Joseph-Duval, was apprehended at the Swiss border with a check for 150,000 Francs

editorship was so rigorous that the Bureau was forced to consider how to limit the number of blanked paragraphs. Few papers decided blatantly to disobey the Press Bureau by continuing to focus on the anti-governmental elements of the strike movement. The forceful role of the Press Bureau succeeded in preventing the press from encouraging the May 1917 strikes at the point when they were most dangerous to public order. But for some, the government had not acted quickly enough.

A report from the Third Army on 30 May mentioned the strikes in Paris as influencing the ‘strikes in the army’ and explained that ‘all of the soldiers read the newspapers.’<sup>537</sup> The referred to strikes in the army were the ongoing mutinies in the French front lines, most notably in the vicinity of Soissons. The apex of the mutinies occurred between 20 May and 10 June. A postal control report from 5 June argued that the strikes were partially responsible for the mutinies and a letter written in response to this report named the ‘strikes in Paris’ as the most important element affecting troop morale. On 18 June, one week after the mutinies had largely subsided, a report from the GQG focused on the ‘cause of the disorder.’<sup>538</sup> The report stated that the soldiers ‘are determined that there is a *boufrage de crâne*’ and that there is ‘a revolutionary movement in the interior that people would like to see soldiers join.’ Later the report described a belief amongst the soldiers that ‘the women in Paris are being massacred by Annamites<sup>539</sup> and black troops’<sup>540</sup> These reports had a strong impact on both Pétain and Clemenceau in their approaches to the media in dealing with strikes during the last year of the war. In July, the mere mention of strikes began to be disallowed by the Press Bureau, and Clemenceau on becoming Premier in November entirely prohibited the mention of labour activity in France or abroad.

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for German banker Marx von Mannheim. The paper went out of circulation on 18 July 1917. SHD 5N 357.

<sup>536</sup> SHD 5N 357, list of sanctions taken against newspapers carried out by the Military Government of Paris.

<sup>537</sup> SHD 5N 438, 30 May 1917.

<sup>538</sup> SHD 5N 438.

<sup>539</sup> Colonials from French Indochina.

<sup>540</sup> SHD 5N 438.

The accusations by Clemenceau and later by Pétain in July and August that the press was partially responsible for the mutinies because of its reporting on the strikes in Paris were exaggerations. The mutinies began over a week before the press's reporting of the strikes became negative. The press was forbidden to mention the arrest of women and did not do so. Fears involving Annamites were not grounded in the press's reporting but were founded upon racist rumours circulated at the front. The Press Bureau was indirectly responsible for allowing a few alarmist reports to be published in the press during the second phase of the strikes in late May. The government had foreseen the dangers in the press's reporting on a growing labour movement early on, but saw the news of a successful economically motivated movement led by women who were deemed to be largely apolitical to be harmless. When the movement became more politically motivated and dominated by the CGT and more specifically the CDS, censorship of the press was gradually increased. Another important factor was the increasing pressure placed on censors at the Press Bureau at this time as a result of the Stockholm debates and the monitoring of information on the repression of the mutinies.

Clemenceau and Pétain ensured from the summer of 1917 that strike activity became heavily censored until the war's end. Both men had personal and political motives for exaggerating the negative effect of the press's tolerance regarding the strikes of May-June 1917 on public and military morale. On the one hand, Clemenceau later used the event to attack his political rivals Interior Minister Louis Malvy and Joseph Caillaux, both of whom he had arrested for treason in 1918. The 1917 strike movement in Paris marked the beginning of Clemenceau's unwritten alliance with the right wing press, particularly *L'Action Française*, in attacking 'defeatists' and 'pacifists.'<sup>541</sup> On the other hand, Pétain partially used the press as a scapegoat for the mutinies in the French

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<sup>541</sup> This alliance was particularly ironic because the writers at *L'Action Française* until this point had considered Clemenceau one of their worst enemies. For much of the war *L'Action Française* had run columns attacking Clemenceau for his actions as Premier from 1906 to 1909. For *L'Action Française*, an organ of the Catholic, monarchist far right, Clemenceau was a natural enemy as an atheist and a staunch republican.

army. More importantly, Pétain sought to retain for the GQG some of the power over the media which was lost with Joffre's replacement by Nivelle in December 1916. The media and the Press Bureau reacted to the strikes as the events themselves unfolded. The Bureau would have been unwise to enforce too strictly its orders to report only the bare facts of the strikes since citizens in France's urban areas who witnessed the events first hand would have viewed this move with suspicion.

### *B. Crisis at the Front: The French Army Mutinies of May-June 1917*

The exercise in futility on the Chemin des Dames had a devastating impact on the army's morale. On 29 April, the same day that Pétain was appointed Chief of Staff of the French Army, the first true mutiny was reported. The soldiers of the Second Battalion of the 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment refused to renew their attacks along the Chemin des Dames and took over their encampment. Just two weeks earlier, the battalion had lost two thirds of its men during the initial stage of the Nivelle Offensive and, rather than being disbanded, was reinforced with new draftees.<sup>542</sup> By 15 May, 26 similar incidents had taken place. In the second half of May, such incidents of 'collective indiscipline'<sup>543</sup> became more frequent, involved greater numbers of men and were better organized. Some even began to resemble the councils which were beginning to appear in the Russian Army.

During the apex of the mutinies in the first week of June, some incidents became violent<sup>544</sup> and attempts were made to commandeer railway cars and take them to Paris to negotiate with the government. The vast majority of incidents involved refusals to attack rather than to defend established positions. By the end of June, the mutinies had affected up to 50 divisions and as many as 30,000 soldiers. 3,427 soldiers were convicted of offenses and 554 were sentenced to death. In the end, 55 soldiers were in

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<sup>542</sup>A. Wiest, *The Western Front, 1917-1918* (London,2008). p.48.

<sup>543</sup> A euphemism used by the GQG for the uglier word 'mutiny'. Watt, *Dare Call it Treason* p. 185.

<sup>544</sup> There were 80 acts of 'collective acts of indiscipline' in total, 21 of which (26.2%) involved either acts of violence or suggested acts of violence such as explicit threats or shots fired. Loez, *14-18 : Les Refus de la guerre* p. 332.



fact executed.<sup>545</sup> The mutinies were not only dangerous in their own right but also came at a particularly critical moment for the French war effort. The Russian Revolution and the appointment of the Ribot Government in March, a series of industrial strikes in France's major cities (particularly Paris), and a failed offensive on the Chemin des Dames which resulted in a change in military leadership all contributed to the mutinies and were events which, when compounded, created uncertainty for France's future. The successful prevention of the news of the mutinies during their most dangerous period from reaching both the enemy and the French public was one of French censorship's greatest wartime accomplishments.

The mutinies also left a harsh and immediate legacy on wartime relations between the French military and the press. As the events transpired, several army commanders, including Pétain, complained to the Ministry of War that the men who were engaged in the acts of indiscipline had been under the influence of the press. Furthermore, postal control reports confirmed that all soldiers read the newspapers and a large number mentioned events such as the Stockholm Conference or the strike movement in Paris in their correspondence.<sup>546</sup> Pétain's final report on the mutinies to the Ministry of War on 23 August 1917 provided a list of subjects for the media to avoid and another which the press should propagate. His suggestions were similar to those made by Clemenceau upon becoming Premier in November. The two men were entirely dissimilar in their backgrounds and in their personalities. But they were in full agreement (albeit for completely different reasons) when it came to imposing more governmental and military control of the media as a result of its sinister influence during the mutinies. For this reason, the legacy of the mutinies and their subsequent effect on press censorship in France until 1919 is in some ways a more complex and significant subject than the mechanics surrounding the censorship of the mutinies themselves.

One of the great mysteries surrounding the mutinies is how they were concealed

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<sup>545</sup> *ibid.*, p.53.

<sup>546</sup> SHD 5N 438.

from both the enemy and the home front. While this remains obscure, there is enough evidence to enable a preliminary answer. Hopefully more information will be revealed in 2017 when a new series of archival documents at Vincennes on the mutinies will be released. The archival material currently available demonstrates that the news of the mutinies was largely concealed through a combination of factors. Intense monitoring of the press by both the censors at the GQG and the Ministry of War (Press Bureau), self-censorship by the mainstream press and press agencies, an increase in postal control and a constant barrage of complaints launched at the press by the GQG were all contributing factors.

Archival material from the *Service historique de la défense* reveals a particularly intense period of press monitoring by both the Press Bureau and the GQG beginning on 21 May, just as the mutinies began their highest period of intensity.<sup>547</sup> On 21 May, Minister of War Paul Painlevé wrote a letter to the GQG and to France's regional military commanders emphasising the importance of a previous note from 24 March ordering all civilian censors to be immediately replaced by military personnel. Although a higher percentage of military personnel functioning as censors in Paris and in the provinces perhaps contributed to a tighter control over information related to the mutinies (a military affair), there is no direct evidence that this was the case or that this order was implemented immediately. In fact, a follow-up letter by Painlevé sent on 30 July which ordered that Prefects replace local civilian censors with almost any available soldier willing to perform the task suggests that this was a difficult order to implement.<sup>548</sup> The order did reflect, however, an increased interest in censorship at the highest level of the War Ministry just as the mutinies began their most intense period.

The publication of an article entitled 'The Troops Rest' which reached the front lines on 27 May initiated a barrage of letters from the GQG to the Press Bureau over the next few days about the negative effect of the press on troop morale. A letter from

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<sup>547</sup> The apogee of the 1917 French Mutinies was from 20 May to 10 June. Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, eds., *Encyclopédie de la Grande Guerre* p.1292.

<sup>548</sup> SHD 5N 372, Letter from Paul Painlevé to GQG and regional military commanders, 30 Jul.1917.

General Prion which complained that the article made frontline service ‘appear pleasant’<sup>549</sup> led Maurejouis, the Head of the Press Bureau, to send out a scolding memorandum to his staff the same day. Maurejouis stated that ‘The results of many seizures have been insufficient’ and that he now wanted ‘to be notified as quickly as possible when the orders for seizures have been given and how many papers have been seized.’<sup>550</sup> On 30 and 31 May, reports were filed by Generals Ducher, Gounod, Franchet d’Espèrey and Humbert giving their explanations for the mutinies. All of the reports mentioned the negative effects of the Russian Revolution, Stockholm and the strikes in Paris on troop morale and specifically blamed the negative influence of the press.<sup>551</sup> Whereas Ducher<sup>552</sup> and Humbert<sup>553</sup> both stressed the need to monitor the press, Franchet d’Espèrey suggested themes which it should propagate. In his report on 31 May, Franchet d’Espèrey recommended that the mainstream media should stress four subjects in particular: ‘1. German aggression. 2. The Negative situation in Germany. 3. The intense advantage given to the Allies by the American intervention. 4. That all they need to do is hold on to win and not become industrial slaves to the Germans.’ He then recommended that these be ‘repeated every day because they have been effective elsewhere.’<sup>554</sup> These reports in addition to a series of postal control analyses filed by his staff greatly influenced Pétain’s report of 2 June. In the report, Pétain ordered that ‘what the army must do now is monitor potentially harmful organizations in the interior (ones that provoke indiscipline).’ His second recommendation was to monitor the press more closely. ‘Papers must be instructed to use the highest discretion when discussing the Russian Revolution, pacifist tendencies, reports between officers and soldiers, advice from soldiers, strike movements and the question of peace.’ In addition to the topics which should be prohibited from publication in the press, he also suggested that ‘The positive theme of the American

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<sup>549</sup> SHD 16N 298, 28 May 1917.

<sup>550</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 28 May 1917.

<sup>551</sup> SHD 16 N 298.

<sup>552</sup> SHD 16 N 298, 30 May 1917.

<sup>553</sup> SHD 16 N 298, 31 May 1917.

<sup>554</sup> SHD 16 N 298, 31 May 1917.

entry into the war should be encouraged.’<sup>555</sup> Pétain stressed the importance of the press’s role in the mutinies more than did the other officers. Other officers had based their reports on evidence given to them by subordinates who had recorded the events at the front. Pétain synthesized these reports and included postal reports which also appeared to demonstrate the press’s influence on troop morale.

During the mutinies, postal control doubled to a rate of 500 letters per regiment inspected daily.<sup>556</sup> On 30 May, two reports were released by the GQG analyzing troop correspondence.<sup>557</sup> The report that came directly from the Postal Control Service was brief but pointed. The press was reported as being overly pessimistic regarding the Nivelle Offensive and it was demonstrated that soldiers were writing home about Russia and the strikes. In particular, the fact that women were striking made them most agitated.<sup>558</sup> The second report, influenced by the first, came from the GQG and more heavily emphasized the negative influence that postal control reports were having on the High Command’s impression of the press. The report began by claiming that the press had given the impression to the troops that their failure on the Chemin des Dames was the fault of their commanders. It then explained that the press’s reporting of the Russian Revolution led to a widespread belief at the front that the government was considering making peace. As a result, the report stated, ‘tone of the press is responsible for depression.’ It then claimed that the media ‘wants to see the troops led by a directionless government.’ This statement was important because it not only demonstrated that the GQG believed the press to be irresponsible but also that there were papers that purposefully sought to weaken the war effort. It was this mentality found at the highest levels of the GQG that later found resonance with Clemenceau. The report concluded by naming two principal dynamics which most influenced the mutinies and stated that the two were related: ‘A. Local and unique reasons. B. More importantly the malaise caused over military and political events by

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<sup>555</sup> SHD 16 N 298, 2 Jun.1917.

<sup>556</sup> Rajsfus, *La Censure militaire et policière* p.137.

<sup>557</sup> SHD 16 N 298, 30 May 1917.

<sup>558</sup> SHD 16 N 298, postal control report, 30 May 1917.

the press. Both dynamics are linked and the press needs to change its tone. This problem did not occur during either the Somme or Verdun.’<sup>559</sup> Although it is unclear what exactly the report meant by ‘local and unique reasons’ it is clear that the GQG intended to divert attention away from its own share of responsibility for mutinies. This was particularly true in the case of the press’s coverage of the Chemin des Dames. The fact that the soldiers were writing to the home front about the failure of that offensive did not necessarily imply that they were influenced to do so by the press. Their opinions were also to a great extent influenced by first-hand experiences and through the spreading of rumours amongst the troops. Certain fears such as those surrounding the violation of Parisian women by ‘Annamites,’ had no foundation in media reports. The fact that soldiers read the news and discussed current events did not mean that all of the opinions they expressed (often while inebriated) during the mutinies derived directly from newspapers. This explanation, however, proved a convenient one for the GQG, and it changed little until the end of the war.

Self-censorship played the most significant role in preventing news of the mutinies from being published between 20 May and 10 June. It was not until 30 May that orders were given to censor all civil and military correspondence in the departments of the Oise and the Somme for indiscretions.<sup>560</sup> Before this date, when postal control had been doubled but was not absolute, it is highly probable that at least some messages concerning the mutinies were sent from the army zone to the home front. No papers in the interior, however, attempted to publish articles on the mutinies. Although in accordance with ‘Circular 1000’,<sup>561</sup> all press reporters were cleared from the army zone once the disturbances began, and even Deputies of the Chamber could not visit it,<sup>562</sup> local reporters would have either been informed of the mutinies by witnesses or would have witnessed the disturbances, which were often in the centres of towns and villages. No attempts were made by the local presses in the areas affected by the

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<sup>559</sup> SHD 16N 298, GQG report on troop correspondence, 30 May 1917.

<sup>560</sup> SHD 16N 298, 30 May 1917.

<sup>561</sup> SHD 5N 346.

<sup>562</sup> Renouvin, *The Forms of War Government* Chapter 4.

mutinies to publish stories on the events. Finally, though there would have been reporters from *Havas* and *Fournier* (France's two main news agencies) in the vicinity of the mutinies, no telegrams concerning them were sent to the telegraph agency in Paris. From 1 June an attempt was made by the Press Bureau and the GQG to maintain secrecy by limiting the number of telegrams regarding the censoring or seizure of newspapers.<sup>563</sup> Perhaps the clearest evidence for the effectiveness of this policy was that even the censors who worked at the Press Bureau's telegraph agency were unaware of the full extent of the mutinies until after they had been repressed.<sup>564</sup> Undoubtedly then a great deal of self-censorship existed during the most dangerous period of the mutinies. Self-censorship it appears was practised not only by press agencies and national newspapers but also by citizens on the home front and local newspapers which chose not to publish the news. It would be cynical to assume that this self-censorship were based solely on the fear of reprisals, but it also would be naive to reject this motivation as a contributing factor. It was a combination of the fear of punishment by the government and national or patriotic interest which inspired such a large number of Frenchmen and women to keep secret what was perhaps the most sensitive military information of the entire conflict.

Although the national press began to enquire into the repression of the mutinies after the first week of June, there appear to have been only two instances when the press in Paris alluded to the mutinies before this time. On 4 June, an article was published against the Press Bureau's orders in *Rappel* and in *XIX Siècle* entitled 'I had a Dream.'<sup>565</sup> The article discussed a supposed dream by the author in which committees of soldiers made the tactical decisions for upcoming offensives. With a sarcastic tone, the tactics suggested by the soldiers involved the most rapid possible advance of infantry and the full scale forward thrust of men without regard for loss of life. Both papers were 'severely warned'<sup>566</sup> for their indiscretions but neither paper was seized or

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<sup>563</sup> SHD 5N 371, 1 Jun. 1917.

<sup>564</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure pendant la guerre* p.181.

<sup>565</sup> SHD 5N 345, 4 Jun. 1917.

<sup>566</sup> SHD 5N 357.

suspended. *Rappel* was a medium to small sized daily and the readership numbers for *XIXè Siècle* were probably deemed insignificant. Both papers heeded the warnings given to them for the offence, and neither was sanctioned again for the remainder of the war.<sup>567</sup> The second instance was an article by Henri Fabre in *Le Journal du Peuple* which commented on the censorship of the mutinies and their repression. On 15 June, this article described the ‘indulgence that governs the suppression of understandable nervousness’<sup>568</sup> and was more easily recognized and censored by the Press Bureau. Censors became fully aware of the mutinies after the 9 June prohibition on the publication of information related to the military justice code.

On 5 June, after the first two soldiers had been condemned to death for their actions in the mutinies, Poincaré decided that he would grant full powers to the GQG to carry out executions of prisoners without prior presidential approval.<sup>569</sup> On 7 June, the day before Pétain notified Painlevé of these changes of the Military Justice Code (Articles 208 and 217),<sup>570</sup> *L’Oeuvre* published an article entitled ‘The Pardoning of Death Sentences.’ Although the publication of the article went unpunished, it prompted the Press Bureau to prohibit the ‘rumour’ in the article to be spread further in the media<sup>571</sup> and then on 9 June to give the order, ‘Do not allow discussion or commentary on the subject of the decree modifying the laws of 10 and 17 August 1914 and 8 June 1916 on the revisions of judgments of war councils that will be in the Official Journal of 10

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<sup>567</sup> SHD 5N 357.

<sup>568</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.182.

<sup>569</sup> Poincaré, *Au Service de la France Tome IX* p.156. Presidential pardons for military executions had been re-instated that spring.

<sup>570</sup> Pedroncini, 1917. *Les Mutineries de l’armée française* p.235. Article 208 of the Military Justice Code stated that all individuals who are convicted of having provoked soldiers to switch over to the enemy or rebel armies or to have provided the means for those to do so or to make war against France shall be condemned to death. If the guilty person is from the military, he shall be punished by the military. Article 217 stated that the following are considered in a state of rebellion and shall be put to death: 1. Soldiers who united in groups of at least four men act in concert to refuse the first order given by their chief. 2. Soldiers in numbers of at least four take up arms without authorization and act against the orders of their chiefs. 3. Soldiers who in numbers of at least eight take to violence by making use of their arms and refusing to obey their superiors by dispersing or by coming back into order. Nevertheless, in all of the cases overseen by this article, the death penalty will only be inflicted upon the instigators or the leaders of the revolt and the soldiers of the highest rank. Others found guilty will be punished with five to ten years of public service or if there are officers, with ‘destitution,’ including imprisonment of two to five years. In the cases overseen by point three of the present article, if those who are found guilty have delivered violence without using their weapons, they will be punished with five to ten years of public service or if they are officers, with destitution including imprisonment of two to five years. SHD 5N 347.

<sup>571</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 7 Jun.1917.

June.’<sup>572</sup> *L’Oeuvre* then attempted to publish an article entitled ‘Military Doctrine and the Powers of the State’ on 12 June and the Press Bureau successfully prevented it from doing so.<sup>573</sup> The final prohibition of public statements regarding the suppression of the mutinies or the delegation of Presidential powers to pardon death sentences appears to have been made on 3 July when the *Ligue des Droits de l’Homme*, a highly active and influential civil liberties group, was prevented from reproducing a commentary on military justice.<sup>574</sup> The repression of the mutinies along with the events themselves, though they had inevitably become common knowledge within two months of their occurrence, remained entirely prohibited subjects for the press until the end of the war.<sup>575</sup>

The principal legacy of the mutinies for press censorship was a gradual tightening of military control over the media between June and September 1917. In June Pétain developed a close relationship with Poincaré<sup>576</sup> and Painlevé which added to his influence over the Press Bureau. Pétain wished to regain some of the military control over the media that had been lost under Nivelle but had a starkly different approach from Joffre on what influence the military should have over the press. Joffre had been primarily concerned with the tight control of information related to battles and weapons and with glorifying French military achievements. By contrast, Pétain sought not only to prevent the press from publishing military secrets but also to control the editorial lines of newspapers writing on both military and domestic affairs. Pétain had been particularly concerned with the press’s editorializing of the Chemin des Dames Offensive. On 11 June a postal control report on the mutinies<sup>577</sup> asserted that the most significant influence on the troops was negative reporting about the Chemin des Dames. The report went on to state that there had been a

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<sup>572</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 9 Jun.1917.

<sup>573</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 12 Jun.1917.

<sup>574</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.182.

<sup>575</sup> Even as late as 16 July 1918 a report given at the French Supreme Court by M. Pérès on the mutinies was forbidden from reproduction in the press. *ibid.*, p.181.

<sup>576</sup> It was during this period that Pétain convinced Poincaré that he could not guarantee discipline in the army if the government approved passports for Stockholm (31 May) and also that the mutineers were in contact with the CGT (3 June). Poincaré, *Au Service de la France Tome IX* pp. 149 and 154.

<sup>577</sup> This appears to be the earliest usage of the word ‘mutinies’ in the files at the *Service Historique de la défense* at Vincennes, 16N 298, 11 Jun. 1917.



systematic denigration of Nivelle, that the press was ‘anti-militaristic’ and that Stockholm and the Russian Revolution both encouraged soldiers to ‘push for peace.’ The report specifically accused *Le Journal du Peuple*, *Le Pays*, *Le Petit Renois* and *Le Petit Parisien* as being the papers most responsible for publishing pacifist or harmful material. In June Pétain established ‘press missions’ during which journalists and writers were taken on visits to units at certain points on the front. The resulting articles were then censored by the GQG before being submitted to the Press Bureau for further inspection. On 23 August, Pétain gave his final report outlining the reasons for the mutinies and suggested how the press could help prevent similar events from occurring in the future.

Pétain officially announced the end of the mutinies after the French capture of La Malmaison on 24 October.<sup>578</sup> His final report on the mutinies was, however, written two months earlier and focused heavily on the impact of the press on troop morale. During July the only significant incident in the press over the mutinies had been the publishing of an article in *L’Echo de Paris* on the 30th which described soldiers resting at the front and resulted in a scolding letter by the GQG to the Press Bureau.<sup>579</sup> Pétain’s report from 23 August to the Ministry of War<sup>580</sup> is the most significant document demonstrating the effect of the mutinies on military-press relations in France for the rest of the war. Pétain outlined five subjects to be avoided in the press and then seven which should be stressed. Pétain argued that the press should be forbidden from discussing:

1. Military Law. This included ‘theoretical hypotheses’ on the subject and all propositions which ‘in practice are unrealistic.’ Included in this section, he added ‘the demobilization of older, called up classes, probation and allowances, reparation of damages, bids for permissions and social projects after the war.’
2. Articles citing unjustified claims (rumours).
3. Periods of instruction behind the lines and the maintenance of strict

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<sup>578</sup> Smith, et al., *France and the Great War* p.122.

<sup>579</sup> SHD 5N 346, 30 Jul.1917.

<sup>580</sup> SHD 5N 346, Pétain to the War Ministry, 23 Aug.1917.

discipline during rest time. 'Papers too often cite the story of soldiers resting while taking leave from the trenches without taking into consideration the dangers of complete inaction and the obligation to constantly maintain through training the cohesion and warrior spirit of a troop without knowing what circumstances may force the high command to make the units suddenly end their rest time and re-enter the trenches.'

4. Articles which by nature create a divide between officers and men. He gave as an example an article by M. Mourier on 18 August in *Le Journal* entitled 'Justice for the Combatants' which produced a 'deplorable effect in the army.'
5. The systematic denigration of the High Command and the military leaders, critiques of the organization of the army and reports detailing certain sessions of the parliament. 'All of these critiques are carefully remembered and commented upon by hard headed sowers of indiscipline. They are a powerful solvent of all confidence in military leaders.'

Pétain's dramatic tone was intended to influence Poincaré and Painlevé during the mutinies and afterwards to tighten military control over the press. His letter revealed not just a politically conservative approach to free speech but also a legitimate caution towards the media in the wake of one of France's most serious military crises of the war.

Pétain's report then described which subjects he believed should be encouraged for discussion in the media:

1. Operations. 'Articles related to an operation should be inspired by the following directives. A. The soldier must believe in the *communiqué*. B. The soldier is highly suspicious and speaks often of *bourrage de crâne*. C. The soldier is very sensitive to all comments mentioning his unit or actions in which he took part. D. Avoid long term predictions. Papers have a tendency to exaggerate the strategic advantages of tactical operations. This constitutes *bourrage de crâne*.' 'Absolute sincerity is necessary but papers should be sure to avoid: A. Reproductions of articles that are intended to make readers believe a certain governmental action. B. Censorship through slashing.' This procedure possibly presents more dangers than allowing full articles. Blanks allow the reader to imagine things that are otherwise unbelievable.
2. Peace. There is no doubt that this is a question which preoccupies the troops. 'The will to return home.' It is important to show them that life in France under a *paix blanche* would be worse than under a victorious peace. Show them Germany's postwar economic ambitions. These would be achieved with the help of its reconstructed merchant navy which would impose commercial treaties which would be ruinous

for France and its products and would condemn the French people to an irreversible misery. Insist on the gravity of the crimes committed, disseminated constantly through images, cinema, talks by repatriated citizens, the systematic destruction, pillages and brutalities committed by German soldiers whether they are Prussian, Bavarian, Saxon or from Baden. Discuss often the treatment of our prisoners and the miserable state of those that have returned to France. For the soldier there are a few articles which inspire faith: We have been attacked, the unquestioned integrity of our territory, going to Stockholm means making peace. For the troops, to allow those to go to Stockholm signifies that we are obliged to make peace and this diminishes military morale. The soldier appreciates articles which appeal to his sentiment of revenge for historical or sentimental reasons.

3. Articles dealing with the question of Alsace-Lorraine. Alsace-Lorraine must become French again. Make it known that that our rights over these provinces which were torn away by force and against the will of their populations have been recognized unanimously by our allies and that by claiming their return to France we are not fighting a war or conquest but one of restitution.
4. Articles discussing foreign nations. Do not twist the truth. Make the soldier aware of the real difficulties of their situation. It would be a good idea to stress the disagreeable influence of the indiscipline which has overtaken the Russian regiments and to show the advantage the enemy has taken from the weakening in morale which has developed because of propaganda and intrigues. The soldier has little faith in America. We must show the effort of that nation by showing things as they are without exaggeration so as to avoid future disillusion. Re-affirm the strong interest taken by America in our operations, our finances and our future but insist on the idea that while France accepts the help of its allies<sup>581</sup> it is not asking them to fight its battles in its place.
5. Due respect towards leaders. In renditions of military events, do not separate the officers from their troops. The leaders have given up so much of their person that we cannot put them into question. Always exalt whenever possible *l'esprit de corps* by reciting the great actions executed together as a group and by exalting the bravery of troops and the conduct of leaders.
6. The interior situation. The civil regime should always be shown at its best and it should be stressed that with few exceptions we are not suffering. The soldier whose life is in constant danger does not take well to reading articles on pre-war quarrels or stories on strikes. He is irritated to learn that his comrade detached and working in a factory is taking part in strikes for a raise in salary, already very high especially considering he is happy to work behind the lines for 0.25 Francs per day. It should be demonstrated that products from the soil are selling quite well and that women and children who are struggling are highly paid. It is advantageous to compare prices with those

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<sup>581</sup> Though America was officially an 'associated power' of the Allies, the Americans were frequently referred to as allies both in government correspondence and in the French press.

from before the war but not repeat the claims in the German press of ‘famine prices.’ Soldiers look forward to the future situation when they can return home. All mention in the press that the soldiers who are currently most exposed will gain materially once they become civilians again will raise their morale.

7. Miscellaneous questions. Everyone has a duty to serve the army, those in the interior as well. Just as the mines need to be filled with miners, and the fields with workers it is no less necessary that those in the High Command and the Services conduct their work to achieve the best results. Otherwise, it should be noted that the purely literary aspect found in newspapers – tales, stories about war or other subjects including history are always appreciated. They distract the soldier and his morale can only profit from them. They should be developed.
8. Conclusion. Troop morale is directly influenced by the reading of newspapers. It is important that the reading of newspapers is not a source of scepticism or of rancour but of perseverance and enthusiasm. It is important that the soldier has confidence in plain sincere articles and that the country is on his side. It is important that well documented studies show him the real difficulties that exist and the efforts made to overcome them. It is important that through straightforward orders, the press becomes less critical and more documentary and not to forget that the blanks imposed by censorship have the serious effect of exciting the imagination.

Pétain not only wanted to prevent the press from discouraging soldiers but he also wanted it to act as a positive force in maintaining troop morale. Under Joffre, there would have been no complaints by the GQG over the press’s negative handling of the Chemin des Dames because the press would not have been given such high hopes for the attack as they were under Nivelle. Joffre, rather than exercising positive control over the press, withheld information when things went wrong. Pétain, however, believed that this approach resulted in blind optimism and blanked articles, both of which damaged troop morale.

The next day, the Ministry of War issued a note ordering the end of a type of article in the press which Joffre himself had approved during his tenure.<sup>582</sup> Joffre had been less concerned with positive control over the media than Pétain and focused almost exclusively on preventative censorship. Ironically however, Pétain now sought to replace Joffre’s one attempt at positive control over the press.<sup>583</sup> In September 1916

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<sup>582</sup> SHD 5N 346, 24 Aug. 1917

<sup>583</sup> Joffre near the end of his tenure had increasingly come under criticism for his unwillingness to share information with the press and for being secretive even with his own government. It is possible that this policy was offered to the press as a response to such attacks at a moment when the General felt

Joffre had asked that the rules (found in *Circular 1000*) prohibiting the publication of names of soldiers of all ranks and their unit numbers in the press become more flexible in the case of official accounts of battles. Joffre hoped such accounts could raise public awareness of the 'grand feats' of certain units or soldiers. These articles which usually featured uninspired titles such as 'The recital of a military observation' or 'in the margins of the *communiqué*', were first examined by the *Maison de la Presse* and then distributed to regional papers via local prefects. Pétain found that these reports gave the press an almost 'complete liberty which can cause serious inconveniences.' He reasoned that in the provinces, censors were less able to verify, in the absence of *communiqués*, the authenticity or accuracy of information and that 'information of this type is only useful if the public knows exactly that it has come from an official source'. Pétain wanted to ensure that all news related to the front came directly from the GQG and that it alone was in control of editorial lines concerning the military. Pétain's official reason for prohibiting these articles was illogical. If these articles contained information which had first been produced by the GQG and then re-examined by the *Maison de la Presse* it is highly doubtful that they would contain military details that differed from those in the *communiqués*. Pétain probably saw the potential for the *Maison de la Presse* to embellish into exaggeration the already positive news given to it by the GQG. He wanted it to be the military alone which recounted military heroism to French newspapers. Finally, Pétain established a column written by him for *Le Matin* entitled 'Why we Fight'<sup>584</sup> which served this purpose perfectly. Under Pétain the GQG reaffirmed its control over censorship of military affairs and inserted itself into the country's propaganda apparatus.

The GQG gained further influence over the Press Bureau during the short lived Painlevé Ministry of 12 September to 13 November 1917. Censorship of the media hardened. On 22 September the *Direction des relations avec la presse* was scrapped and with it the main liaison between the press and the War Ministry. On 27 September

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increasingly vulnerable.

<sup>584</sup> Pedroncini, *1917. Les Mutineries de l'armée française* p.266.

a note to the War Ministry complained that pacifist propaganda had not ended and *La Vague*, an anarchist paper published by Charles Brizon, had been stopped from circulation at the front.<sup>585</sup> Finally, in October, trench papers became censored at the division level because of ‘the dangers that might be presented by a lack of supervision in the editing of trench newspapers.’ Pétain had first impressed himself upon Painlevé when the latter was War Minister, and was able to further gain influence when Painlevé became Premier and War Minister concurrently. But Painlevé’s successor, Clemenceau, was less impressionable and, being a journalist himself had his own agenda concerning press control. Although Clemenceau, like Pétain, wished to eradicate pacifism from the media, unlike Pétain he argued that the country’s leaders should not be exempt from personal attack by the press. Pétain, under the Clemenceau Ministry, lost a great deal of the influence he had gained over the media in the wake of the mutinies.<sup>586</sup>

### *C. Not All Bad News: The Americans Arrive in France.*

The United States officially entered the war against Germany on 6 April 1917. But it was not until two months later that the first troops alongside America’s military chiefs arrived in France. American entry into the conflict was lauded in the media and was immediately perceived by both the GQG and the government as a potential war winning advantage for the Allies. Though the American entrance was hardly a substitute for the collapse and subsequent loss of France’s Russian ally (by January 1918, only 150,000 American troops had arrived in France),<sup>587</sup> it is highly probable that the war would have ultimately ended under circumstances far more favorable to the Central Powers had the United States not joined the Allied cause.<sup>588</sup> The AEF’s arrival in France proved a difficult subject to censor for the Press Bureau. The press,

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<sup>585</sup> The fact that this provocatively anti-war paper was only confiscated at the front in late 1917 demonstrates how soldiers indeed had access to the full political spectrum of papers at the front.

<sup>586</sup> Pétain for example had to re-negotiate with Clemenceau the circumstances under which certain units and soldiers could be mentioned in the press and how to celebrate the military achievements of units and individuals. Pétain’s correspondence with Clemenceau was far more deferential than it had been towards Painlevé or even Poincaré. SHD 5N 551, letter from Pétain to Clemenceau, 29 Nov.1917.

<sup>587</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918* p.297.

<sup>588</sup> *ibid.*, p.312.

long starved for good news, was over-enthusiastic in its descriptions of American landings in French ports and the subject caused some early tension between the Press Bureau and the American Government. Soon, the Americans installed their own Press Bureau in Paris under the supervision of Frederick Palmer, a journalist once described by Theodore Roosevelt as ‘our best war correspondent.’<sup>589</sup> It was not until the Clemenceau Ministry that the two press *bureaux* began to work together with few disputes.

The Press Bureau closely monitored all information in the press in late April and May on the eventual transport of American troops to France and of a French mission headed by Viviani and Joffre to the United States which left France on 15 April and arrived ten days later.<sup>590</sup> On 14 and 17 April the Press Bureau ordered the media to publish only the official *communiqué* on the Viviani-Joffre Mission and specifically prohibited papers from publishing the ‘17 names of those on board the French mission to the US’.<sup>591</sup> Once the mission arrived, the press was allowed to mention its safe arrival and even to speculate as to the discussion topics between France’s representatives and America’s leaders. The high acclaim with which the mission was received in the American Midwest (the area of the United States which had most resisted America’s entry into the war) was stressed as a subject to be often repeated. The War Ministry was cautious not to offend the Americans by appearing ungrateful or overly demanding and on 3 May a telegram from the London *Daily Mail* on Joffre’s discussions with Wilson about sending troops to France was stopped in Paris. On 4 May the Press Bureau ordered that all telegrams insisting that the Americans send materiel to France be stopped.<sup>592</sup> The next day, *Le Journal* had a telegram from New York stopped which had suggested that the French mission should ask the Americans to send locomotives and railway cars.<sup>593</sup> The French Government’s attempt not to appear exploitative towards the Americans was understandable but also ironic. One of the main failures of the Viviani-Joffre Mission was that its constant

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<sup>589</sup> Farwell, *Over There* p.88.

<sup>590</sup> E. Greenhalgh, ‘The Viviani-Joffre Mission to the United States, April-May 1917: A Reassessment’, *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 35, Number 4, (2002), pp.627-659.

<sup>591</sup> BDIC. F rés 0270 CG 14 and 17 Apr.1917, SHD 5N 334. 17 Apr.1917.

<sup>592</sup> SHD 5N 438, 4 May 1917.

<sup>593</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 5 May 1917.

competition with the British mission visiting America at the same time (led by British Press baron, Lord Northcliffe)<sup>594</sup> for material sapped American confidence in the solidity of the Franco-British alliance.<sup>595</sup> News of the mission's return to France was censored in the same way as was its arrival.<sup>596</sup>

On 20 May, the Press Bureau ordered that all news mentioning the eventual installation of an American GQG in Paris be prohibited.<sup>597</sup> Eight days later Pershing sailed from New York on *The Baltic* with forty regular army officers, seventeen reserve officers and sixty-seven enlisted men. On board also were civilians, clerks, and journalists, among them Frederick Palmer. Ten days later they arrived in Liverpool, then travelled to London to visit King George V, David Lloyd George, Field Marshall Sir John French, General Jan Smuts, General Sir William Robertson and Winston Churchill among others. Then on 13 June they sailed for France and after docking at Boulogne, travelled to Paris.<sup>598</sup> Pershing's voyage was widely reported in the press though its details were kept secret. The Press Bureau had not yet begun to heavily censor the details of naval passages or the coordinates of German submarines, so this secrecy was accomplished through a series of general orders given by M. Cacqueray and by the French Naval Ministry between 5 and 12 June. No mention was to be made of American vessels in France except for the official naval *communiqué* released on 5 June which excluded names, numbers and docking locations.<sup>599</sup> An article published in *Le Matin* on 6 June, however, forced the Press Bureau to prohibit all mention of American vessels arriving in France,<sup>600</sup> and on 7 June to instruct the press to 'not give any more numbers for the American troops arriving in France regardless of what has been published in *Le Matin* already.'<sup>601</sup> The next day this order was repeated 'for the reason of possible torpedoing.'<sup>602</sup> Finally, the press was forbidden from mentioning Pershing's arrival in Europe (particularly

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<sup>594</sup> Badsey, *The British Army in Battle and its Image* p.27.

<sup>595</sup> Greenhalgh, 'The Viviani-Joffre Mission to the United States', p.659.

<sup>595</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 14 and 17 Apr. 1917, SHD 5N 334, 17 Apr. 1917.

<sup>596</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG 17 May 1917, SHD 5N 334, 17 May 1917.

<sup>597</sup> SHD 5N 334, 20 May 1917.

<sup>598</sup> Farwell, *Over There* pp.90-91.

<sup>599</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 5 Jun. 1917.

<sup>600</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 6 Jun. 1917, SHD 5N 333, 6 Jun. 1917.

<sup>601</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 7 Jun. 1917, SHD 5N 333, 7 Jun. 1917.

<sup>602</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 8 Jun. 1917.



the date), an order which *L'Oeuvre* was sharply reprimanded for disobeying on 11 June with its article 'Towards an American Victory.'<sup>603</sup> While the Press Bureau took an interest in Pershing's arrival, the media were content to print triumphal reports on how American entry would bring France to victory. Pershing's voyage was kept a better secret in France than in either the United States or Britain.

When Pershing boarded *The Baltic* on 28 May, he and his crew wore civilian clothing in order to avoid detection. But the attempt at secrecy proved futile, much to Pershing's chagrin. Thirty members of his crew had not received the order to dress in mufti and boxes marked 'General Pershing's Headquarters' had sat on Pier 60 for two days in the open. Finally, as the tugboats which transported them to *The Baltic* left the harbour, an artillery salute was fired from Governor's Island. After ten days, when the ship had reached Liverpool, a report was sent by Floyd Gibbons of the *Chicago Tribune* that Pershing had been given 'a hearty welcome by the Mayor of Liverpool.'<sup>604</sup> It is difficult to imagine such carelessness taking place in France at the same time. The GQG and the War Ministry, which were successfully keeping the mutinies a secret, would probably have taken more precautions when sending the nation's top military commander across the Atlantic. The news of Pershing's arrival in France, unlike that in Britain, was kept out of the media through strict monitoring of the press and the telegraph. That the *Chicago Tribune* was allowed to message back to the United States that Pershing had arrived in Liverpool is an example demonstrating that Britain and the United States had a more relaxed approach to media control than did France.

It was not until 13 June, the day Pershing came to France that the Press Bureau allowed his arrival to be announced in the media. The previous day it was ordered that 'nothing be allowed on Pershing's arrival'<sup>605</sup> and a radio transmission mentioning it was stopped.<sup>606</sup> Pershing on 13 June after arriving in Boulogne travelled to Paris where he was met by cheering crowds.<sup>607</sup> At 11:30 that day, the Press Bureau allowed

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<sup>603</sup> SHD 5N 498, 11 Jun. 1917.

<sup>604</sup> Farwell, *Over There* p.88.

<sup>605</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 12 Jun. 1917.

<sup>606</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 AFS, 12 Jun. 1917.

<sup>607</sup> Farwell, *Over There* p.89.

the media to begin its commentary on Pershing's arrival. The Bureau's first steps were to authorize for radio transmission the tribute to Pershing which had already been circulated in the American media, and for *Havas* and the Parisian Telegraph Agency to pass telegrams containing the information that Pershing would arrive at 18:30.<sup>608</sup> Pétain's policy of encouraging the press to report on the arrival of the Americans<sup>609</sup> was now in full effect. Papers were allowed to publish interviews with Pershing (though not his subordinates) and they were strongly encouraged to comment on his arrival in Paris (and the crowds which awaited him) because 'Parisians will be happy'.<sup>610</sup> Over the next few days, Pershing gave several interviews,<sup>611</sup> which were freely transmitted to and then published in the French media as were his daily schedules,<sup>612</sup> which included his visit to the GQG.<sup>613</sup> America's top general had arrived safely in France and both the War Ministry and the press sought to capitalize on a rare opportunity to publish an entirely positive war related story in the press.

The mood at the Bureau soon became tense after an incident on 27 June in which *Le Soir* had named the arrival port of St. Nazaire the day after the first contingent of American soldiers landed and was still in the process of disembarking. The Bureau successfully kept the details of Pershing's voyage across the Atlantic out of the French media, but was less successful in monitoring the coverage of St. Nazaire. This mistake triggered the first major complaint by the American Government against the French Press Bureau and provided a major impetus for the Americans' decisions first to install an American censor at the Parisian Press Bureau and eventually to set up a Press Bureau of their own.

The AEF had reminded the Press Bureau on 19 June not to allow the media to publish news of the St Nazaire landing.<sup>614</sup> On 22 June, the day before the American troops arrived, the Press Bureau instructed the media that 'regarding the arrival of the

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<sup>608</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 AFS, 13 Jun.1917.

<sup>609</sup> SHD 5N 346, 23 Aug.1917.

<sup>610</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 13 Jun.1917.

<sup>611</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 AFS, 15 Jun.1917.

<sup>612</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 AFS, 14 Jun.1917.

<sup>613</sup> BDIC F rés. 0270 C, 16 Jun.1917.

<sup>614</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 19 Jun.1917.

Americans in our ports, names of boats, dates of arrival, names of arrival ports and histories of confrontations with submarines are forbidden. Only the lists of the Americans arriving are allowed to be published.<sup>615</sup> The next day, an order was issued ‘not to publish on the American base at St. Nazaire.’<sup>616</sup> These messages were repeated daily for the next five days. The message though is not recorded as having reached the telegraph agency.<sup>617</sup> But it is unlikely that the telegraph agency was not informed by the newspaper section of the Press Bureau of this important order since Palmer had personally informed Captain Ribouillet, Director of the Press Bureau, of it on 26 June<sup>618</sup> and reminded the Press Bureau again the next two days.<sup>619</sup> Furthermore, all of the Press Bureau’s sections were located in the same building on Rue de Grenelle in Paris. It seems probable that Captain Ribouillet did inform the telegraph agency but that the individual to whom he gave the information neglected to note it down. The recorded explanation for the 41 orders given to censor telegrams on 28 June was that they violated the order from 26 June.<sup>620</sup> This suggests that the order not to mention the naval base at St. Nazaire was given by Captain Ribouillet to the telegraph agency and was then communicated orally rather than in writing to the telegraph censors. 28 June was a particularly busy day for the telegraph section at the Press Bureau. With so many incoming telegraphs the individual censor who neglected to stop the telegram which reached *The Times* and possibly *Le Soir* was probably overburdened. The event demonstrates the importance of the work conducted at the Press Bureau, all of whose members often often performed under pressure, and how the error of only one censor might allow the enemy to obtain important information.

In fact the danger posed to the American troops who disembarked at St. Nazaire was slight. The efficiency of the unrestricted German U-Boat campaign had reached its climax in April but by May it had become overly extended<sup>621</sup> and was to a certain

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<sup>615</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 22 Jun.1917.

<sup>616</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 23 Jun.1917.

<sup>617</sup> BDIC F rès 0270 TAC, Jun.1917.

<sup>618</sup> S. Casey, ‘Censoring the Great War’, Unfinished manuscript, Chapter 2, p.6.

<sup>619</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 27-28 Jun.1917.

<sup>620</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 28 Jun.1917.

<sup>621</sup> Stevenson, 1914-1918 p.324. Overextended but still dangerous. The *Baltic* which left New York on 22 May and which carried Pershing narrowly missed being struck twice by torpedoes, Bruce, A Fraternity of Arms pp.64-65. The *Baltic* was accompanied by a convoy of three fighting vessels. University of Missouri-Columbia, Museum of Anthropology, ‘Letters from the HMS *Baltic*, 28 May 1917,

extent hampered by British mine laying in the North Sea, the Strait of Dover and off the coast of Flanders.<sup>622</sup> Most important, St. Nazaire was at the limit of many U-boats' range. Submarines were still an infant technology and their radius of action was short.<sup>623</sup> Furthermore in May, the British had begun to use the highly effective convoy system of accompanying merchant ships as well as those containing passengers or troops with armed vessels. The Americans converted to the idea of the convoy a month after the British<sup>624</sup> but by the time of the St. Nazaire landing they were also using it. In June 71 ships using 5 convoys left from the American naval base at Hampton Roads and while one ship was torpedoed in the Channel, none were lost.<sup>625</sup> The convoy system helped to insure that not one ship carrying American troops across the Atlantic was sunk by a German U-boat for the duration of the war. At the beginning of June, Josephus Daniels, American Secretary of the Navy explained to the American Commander of American naval forces in Europe, Admiral William Sims, that 'The paramount duty of American destroyers in European waters was the protection of American troop transports and that everything is secondary to having a sufficient number of escorts to protect those troops.'<sup>626</sup> Washington wanted to protect its troops at all costs and perhaps believed that while the risk of danger was small on this occasion, the French censorship system might prove to be incapable of keeping secrets at a future time when a higher number of troops might be involved and the situation more dangerous.

The French telegraph let slip a Reuters wire to London which was then used by *The Times* as the basis for a major story. Reuters was recorded in the telegraph censor's logbook as having been censored for 'specifications regarding the American landings'.<sup>627</sup> In France, *Le Petit Bleu* had attempted to publish the number of American troops that had arrived but was successfully stopped from doing so by the

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<http://anthromuseum.missouri.edu/patrickwwi/enlistinglettermomidadbaltic.shtml>.

<sup>622</sup> P.G. Halpern, *A Naval History of World War I* (Annapolis, 1994), pp.344-346.

<sup>623</sup> Unlike in the Channel or the Irish Sea, submarines could not sit on the bottom to recharge their batteries as they would be crushed. In 1918 only a handful were able to operate outside of the British Isles. Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall* p.314.

<sup>624</sup> Halpern, *A Naval History of World War I* p.361.

<sup>625</sup> *ibid.*, p.362.

<sup>626</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>627</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 28 Jun.1917.

Press Bureau.<sup>628</sup> *Le Soir*, however, had obtained the story and published it on its front page, naming the port of arrival against orders from the Bureau.<sup>629</sup> Although the paper was seized on 28 June<sup>630</sup> and punished with a three-week suspension (later shortened to 12 days), the indiscretion damaged Franco-American relations over censorship. As a result of constant American reminders, the censorship of stories on merchant and naval vessels became a major priority for the Press Bureau until the end of the war.

On 30 June, the restrictions on the news of the US arrival were lifted. Some specifics, however, remained prohibited from publication. The press was forbidden to discuss the location of the landing, the name of the port and the types and numbers of units involved. This order was repeated on 5 July, with the additional stipulation that no future operations be mentioned. The press was then given permission to discuss the American arrival but with no details involving names, places or numbers that had not first been transmitted by official *communiqués*. Immediately papers were censored for violating these rules. Most of the violations were minor, such as that by *L'Intransigeant* which had written an article naming officers other than Pershing,<sup>631</sup> or *La Dépêche du Berry* from Bourges which was seized for giving the ranks of the American soldiers that had recently arrived in France. Ironically, the only paper that was censored for criticizing the silence imposed on the media regarding the arrival of American troops was the American *New York Herald*, censored by the Press Bureau on 1 July for writing that 'The censor for reasons known only to himself, for we hope he at least knows them, does not allow us to give the names of the ports in question. But his prohibition is not of much consequence. Everyone, especially the enemy, knows which are the ports in France where Americans have arrived, are arriving and will arrive.'<sup>632</sup> According to *Circular 1000*, papers were allowed to criticize the regime of censorship as long as they did not personally insult the censors.<sup>633</sup> But since the Press Bureau was still being reprimanded by the Americans for its failure fully to

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<sup>628</sup> SHD 5N 499, 28 Jun.1917.

<sup>629</sup> Casey, *Censoring the Great War*, Chapter 2, pg.6.

<sup>630</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 28 Jun.1917, BDIC F rés 0270 C, 28 Jun.1917, SHD 5N 499, 28 Jun.1917.

<sup>631</sup> SHD 5N 499, 30 Jun.1917.

<sup>632</sup> SHD 5N 500, 1 Jul.1917.

<sup>633</sup> SHD 346, *Circular 1000*, p. 13, 30 Sept.1915.

cancel the news of the American arrival at St. Nazaire it was in no mood for leniency.

Poincaré inspected the American troops for the first time at the 4 July Parade in Paris. That day, the American General Headquarters issued its longest letter to date regarding censorship of the press in France. The letter contained five points: '1. That no information be given on the route that the vessels take from France as this information could endanger them. 2. No mention of the point of arrival or the location of US troops or information that may allow the enemy to locate them. 3. Only General Pershing, Sibert, Admiral Cleaves and Colonel Allaire [because he was in the 4 July parade] can be named. 4. Names, numbers and places outside Paris cannot be named as the location of US troops. 5. That no mention be made of future operations, known or fictional, depictions of defence systems, techniques etc...'<sup>634</sup> Though there was little new in this message its length and timing suggested a new assertiveness by the American GHQ in the realm of press control. It was during this time that Palmer, who had been put in charge of AEF censorship by Pershing, hired Joseph C. Green to monitor at the Press Bureau in Paris all telegrams and articles written by American reporters for American audiences.<sup>635</sup> All papers, however, that were published in France, even if they were French editions of American journals such as *the New York Herald* or *the New York Times*, were ultimately subject to French censorship.<sup>636</sup> On 13 July, another set of orders was transmitted by Palmer to the Press Bureau. '1. No information to be given on American training camps. 2. Following not to be mentioned: A. Methods to be employed by airplanes. B. New types of cannons and shells. C. All references to the mechanisms of aiming. D. Types of armaments for airplanes. E. No photographs of French or American cannons.'<sup>637</sup> Including an order that had been given the day before forbidding mention of the movement of American troops within France,<sup>638</sup> the directives which oversaw French censorship concerning the Americans were now essentially all in place.

Before the Americans had dictated to the Press Bureau the conditions by which

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<sup>634</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 4 Jul.1917.

<sup>635</sup> *Le Matin* had a telegram censored from New York attempting to describe this arrangement. BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 6 Jul.1917

<sup>636</sup> Casey, *Censoring the Great War*, Chapter 2, p.8.

<sup>637</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 13 Jul.1917.

<sup>638</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 12 Jul.1917.

information related to the AEF would be censored, the War Ministry had ordered on 23 June that ‘Until further notice, American troops will be dealt with in the same way as the Russians and the Portuguese. Also, American troop movements will be dealt with in the same way as French troops movements.’<sup>639</sup> Censorship of French troop movements was strict and therefore the American directives did little to change the status quo, with one major exception. Until the Americans insisted because of the French slip up over the arrival at St. Nazaire on full prohibition not just of the naming of landing ports but also of the routes taken by naval and merchant ships, French censorship of the latter had been fairly lax, much to the chagrin of the British earlier in the war. Naval censorship became from this point onwards a significant priority at the Press Bureau. American influence forced the French to censor all news of German submarine activity in addition to descriptions of routes taken by commercial vessels, though, it should be noted, that the former was increasingly being censored by this time.<sup>640</sup> French and American censorship of information regarding the arrival of American naval transports was highly successful. The German U-boat campaign was a remarkable failure for its inability to stop the transport of American troops to Europe in 1917 and 1918 and this was primarily because of actions taken by Allied Naval forces, such as the implementation of the convoy system in May 1917.<sup>641</sup> Though it is impossible to know whether events would have changed if naval censorship had been less thorough, the vigilant containment of naval secrets by both the French and the American Press Bureaux surely played a positive role in this achievement.

In August, Palmer instructed the American press to avoid exaggerations and ‘boastful comments.’<sup>642</sup> This was a new concept for the American press, which until now had been prevented only from publishing geographical locations and military details. A censored article in *The Chicago Tribune* (reproduced in *L’Epreuve*) from

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<sup>639</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 23 Jun.1917.

<sup>640</sup> *The Daily Mail* as an example was censored on 1 July for simply mentioning that the ship which had carried the American troops to France (St. Nazaire was not mentioned) had seen three German submarines en route. SHD 5N 500, 1 Jul.1917. Two days later, an order was passed at the Press Bureau ‘not to mention battles between American vessels and German submarines.’ BDIC F rés 0270 C, 2 Jul.1917.

<sup>641</sup> Stevenson, *With Our Back to the Wall*, Chapter 5. Not all US troops arrived in convoys, many were also sent in fast liners without convoy escort.

<sup>642</sup> Casey, ‘Censoring the Great War’, Chapter 2, p.13.

11 August typified the frustration of many American journalists who had had their flexibility restricted. The author of the article, which was entitled ‘Wilson Refuses to Put a Gag on US Newspapers’, assumed that the new American rules were imposed on Americans by ‘foreigners’; ‘in some foreign countries, some hard and fast rules are censoring editorial lines which would be beneficial to the morale of the country’. ‘The American people are too intelligent to be affected by the truth.’<sup>643</sup> Whereas the Americans had just begun to censor news which could harm morale, the French had been doing so since 1914.

A postal report on 8 July named the American arrival in France as one of the eight major subjects mentioned in letters from the front.<sup>644</sup> Both the GQG and the War Ministry had agreed that to raise troop morale and spirits on the home front, journalists should be encouraged to write about the American arrival in the press and strongly discouraged from insulting the United States or appearing ungrateful for its aid. They also acknowledged the dangers of allowing the press to exaggerate the numbers of troops and materiel being sent to France and the immediacy of their impact on the battlefield. After a radio telegram from New York was censored for indicating that the number of troops being sent from the US was higher than expected,<sup>645</sup> an order was issued three days later to ‘not let papers embellish on American aid. The details which are to be for documentation and not to be commented on are 125,000 troops before winter and 300,000 by April 1918.’<sup>646</sup> Ten days later the numbers were modified to 125,000 troops for the fall and 900,000 for the spring.<sup>647</sup> Though these orders helped the censors to slash articles which contained exaggerated predictions, the fact that these numbers were far inferior to the actual number of troops which arrived (220,000 by March 1918, 139,000 of which were combat troops)<sup>648</sup> made these particular specifications somewhat counter-productive.

The Press Bureau censored news of anti-war sentiment in the United States. From

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<sup>643</sup> SHD 5N 503, 11 Aug.1917.

<sup>644</sup> SHD 16N 298, 8 Jul.1917.

<sup>645</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 10 Jun.1917.

<sup>646</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 13 Jun.1917.

<sup>647</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 23 Jun.1917.

<sup>648</sup> Stevenson, With Our Back to the Wall p.43.



late June to late July, telegrams were stopped each week containing information or statements such as ‘riots in Chicago against conscription’ (*Havas*),<sup>649</sup> ‘until now recruitment has not gone well in the United States’ (*Le Petit Parisien*),<sup>650</sup> ‘The United States’ long neutrality’ (*Havas*),<sup>651</sup> ‘Strikes and troubles in the United States’ (*Le Petit Parisien*),<sup>652</sup> ‘Strikes in St. Louis’ (*Daily Mail*),<sup>653</sup> ‘Negative comments on the opinion in the United States on the war. (*Le Petit Parisien*),<sup>654</sup> or ‘The possible political crisis in the United States’ (*Le Petit Parisien*).<sup>655</sup> Telegrams sent from the United States discussing unrest and pacifism in America rose in number in early August, when they were stopped by the Press Bureau almost daily.<sup>656</sup> The Press Bureau was highly successful in keeping negative opinions towards the United States out of the French press. Only a few French papers attempted to demonstrate antipathy or condescension towards France’s new American partners. Perhaps the most outrageous example was an article in *L’Epreuve* which not only was formally censored for mentioning Cherbourg as a port of arrival for American troops but also was instructed to revise a passage which was heavily condescending towards the American arrivals and to American culture. ‘In Paris even, those who have lived in the United States, those who remember the vagabond orgies of sailors, are those who know how loud and infantile are the soldiers of the Union, are those who cringe when thinking of the manners of these new arrivals. But many thousands of ‘sammies’<sup>657</sup> have already passed through the large towns of France and have only left agreeable memories of their infantile traits, their disingenuous joy and their fresh appetites, befitting a young race.’<sup>658</sup> Though this article may have been intended to appear hopeful about the Americans, it would be interpreted by American readers as highly condescending. Luckily the vast majority of French journalists either admired the Americans or at least were grateful or sensible enough to keep this type of

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<sup>649</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 25 Jun.1917.

<sup>650</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 26 Jun.1917.

<sup>651</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 26 Jun.1917.

<sup>652</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 30 Jun.1917.

<sup>653</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 30 Jun.1917.

<sup>654</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 18 Jul.1917.

<sup>655</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 22 Jul.1917.

<sup>656</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 1-14 Aug.1917.

<sup>657</sup> The French equivalent for ‘doughboys.’

<sup>658</sup> SHD 5N 512, 30 Oct.1917.

commentary to themselves. Pétain's advice to the media to stress the importance of the American arrival without too much exaggeration had worked. On 21 August, a report from GQG stated that the 'troops are much happier than before and much of it has to do with the arrival of the Americans.'<sup>659</sup> It is probable that the press would have stressed the significance of the American arrival in any case. But it was the Press Bureau under advice from Pétain and the GQG and then later in August from the American Press Bureau which ensured that expectations in the press concerning the timing and significance of the impact of the new arrivals remained high yet realistic.

Shortly after Pershing and Palmer arrived in France, Palmer visited the Press Bureau in Paris. Unimpressed, he found it to be autocratic and stale.<sup>660</sup> Over the next two months however, the American censorship system under pressure from the French War Ministry moved gradually towards the French model. The French had pushed the AEF to be stricter with its war correspondents in part to suppress the news of the mutinies and in part because they rightfully believed the AEF to be inexperienced in such matters.<sup>661</sup> Though the Americans wanted to base their censorship system on the British model<sup>662</sup> the one they had developed by the end of the war was far stricter. The final order given to the American Press Bureau by the American military headquarters before the armistice was delivered on 12 August 1918.<sup>663</sup> It listed nine points but mostly only added details to the existing orders. The note was specific in discussing geographical locations in France (separating the zones of American operations into the advanced zone, maritime bases and the interior) and included for the first time an official order not to exaggerate American efforts.

After the armistice the Americans became far more concerned with censoring material that could affect troop morale. Perhaps this was because AEF headquarters

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<sup>659</sup> SHD 16 N 298, 21 Aug.1917.

<sup>660</sup> Casey, 'Censoring the Great War' Chapter 2, p.3.

<sup>661</sup> *ibid.*, Chapter 2, p.12.

<sup>662</sup> 'This system is very largely that followed by the BEF and developed by their experiences of nearly four years before the United States joined the war. Their advice and assistance which is willfully and generously offered by the British authorities was a great help in establishing our system.' NACP A.E.F. General Headquarters G-2-D Censorship Folders 20-28, Box no. 6128 Record Group 120, Unknown date. This material was generously provided by Prof. Steven Casey of the International History Department at the London School of Economics.

<sup>663</sup> SHD 5N 335, 12 Aug.1918.

believed that the troops would be more influenced by negative reporting once they were no longer distracted by combat or because they believed that once the war was over, there would be pressure in the United States to return the troops home quickly. On 21 November 1918,<sup>664</sup> American censors for the first time were told that there could be ‘No articles which could lower the morale of our troops or those of the Allies.’ And ‘No articles which can embarrass the United States or its allies.’ As for the repatriation of American troops the press was told not to complain that they were staying in Europe and not to insinuate that they were coming home any earlier than the date given by the United States Government.’ Descriptions of the social and economic conditions in Europe were to be dealt with showing ‘extreme reservation.’ The final summary of the article stated that ‘We will print nothing that is capable of miring the position of the United States in the ‘Congress of Nations’ or the position of American military personnel in Europe.’ The Americans, who had been under less pressure to maintain the morale of a fresh army and a nation which was distant from and less directly affected by the war, now felt it necessary to control news which could make idle soldiers agitated and families at home demand the immediate return home of their loved ones.

In 1918 the American and the French Press *Bureaux*, now re-located from Rue de Grenelle to the top floor of the Paris Bourse, worked together more closely. Correspondence between the two, and particularly between Pershing and Clemenceau, was more amicable and cooperative than it had been previously. Rather than communicate with the Chiefs of the Press Bureau in Paris, Pershing did so directly with Clemenceau (who was both Premier and War Minister and therefore officially oversaw the functioning of press censorship) and his Cabinet Chief Georges Mandel. Clemenceau pushed the Americans to develop and expand their own Press Bureau in Paris and was more willing than his predecessors to take American advice. On 25 July 1918, at the end of a letter addressed to General Pershing on the co-operation between the two nations in media censorship, Clemenceau wrote, ‘Any suggestion that you may make to ensure a closer collaboration between the two

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<sup>664</sup> SHD 5N 335, 21 Nov.1918.

ensorships in order to obtain a better result will be accepted by us at once and in this matter as in all others you may count on my most devoted cooperation. PS. As I close my letter, my attention is called to the fact that you possibly have not the necessary personnel available to ensure the permanence of the censorship. I merely mention the suggestion.’<sup>665</sup> Clemenceau’s tone was more cordial and less dictatorial than that of his predecessors in their communications with the AEF and demonstrated his proficiency in English (he had lived in the United States and had briefly had an American wife). The American Press Bureau rapidly expanded under Clemenceau, further relieving some of the burden from its overworked French counterpart.

Even if the February Revolution in Petrograd and the Battle of the Chemin des Dames had been represented by the press and the Press Bureau as positive news stories, the AEF’s arrival in France was the first genuinely good news for France since the victory at Verdun in December 1916. Pershing’s arrival had successfully been kept a secret by the Press Bureau (if not by the Americans or the British). One mistake, however, by the telegraph section of the Press Bureau had allowed the location of St. Nazaire to be revealed in the French press before the first American troops had finished landing. Still, the War Ministry learnt from its mistakes and, in conjunction with the Americans, successfully censored the news of arriving American troops for the rest of the war.

### *Conclusion*

The crisis in French morale, which began with the failure on the Chemin des Dames, worsened in late May 1917. In mid-May, the second strike wave of the year was unleashed, especially in Paris. The female-led strikes were largely over wages and were successful in obtaining both the five-day workweek (*semaine anglaise*) and salary increases. The press portrayed the strikes in a positive fashion until the end of the month when they became larger, more political and male-dominated. As the

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<sup>665</sup> NACP A.E.F. General Headquarters G-2-D Censorship Folders 20-28, Box no. 6128 Record Group 120, 25 Jul.1918. This material was generously provided by Prof. Steven Casey of the International History Department at the London School of Economics.

movement became more dangerous, the Press Bureau had simultaneously to monitor news of the Stockholm debates and the strikes. The average censor was unaware that, in addition to these two events, a major mutiny in the French army was taking place at the front. The combination of these events – failure on the Chemin des Dames, the Stockholm proposal, the May-June strike movement in Paris and the mutinies at the front – made this the most dangerous moment for the French effort of the entire war apart from the opening phase and the Battle of the Marne. France's censorship system was simultaneously tasked with downplaying the disappointing results on the Chemin des Dames, monitoring the political debates over Stockholm, censoring the increasingly violent and politically motivated strikes in Paris and covering up the repression of the mutinies. After the mutinies ended the press was blamed by the GQG for being too liberal during this critical period and the GQG sought to strengthen its power over the media *vis-a-vis* the War Ministry.

The spring 1917 strike movement was at first encouraged by both the press and the Press Bureau because it was female-led and its demands were economic. This enthusiasm for the movement did not derive from an affinity for feminism. Rather, strikes led by women who could not be called up to the front and who were seen as politically inactive were interpreted as non-threatening. Also, the success of the movement in achieving moderate pay raises and benefits for women workers could be used in the press as a much-needed positive story. The movement, however, did not remain led by women and increasingly showed signs of pacifism and anti-war sentiment. Once the strikes moved in this direction, the Press Bureau began to censor their coverage more vigilantly.

Pétain had made the implicit accusation that all political discussions which took place amongst the troops were influenced by what they had read in the press. He told Poincaré that the troops were upset because they believed their wives were being shot by Annamites. This rumour had absolutely no foundation in the press's coverage of the *midinettes* movement. The press had encouraged the *midinettes* and then later

described in factual terms the suppression of the later male dominated movement. The press was even forbidden from discussing the arrest of women. Unfounded rumours spread rapidly at the front, and Pétain unfairly blamed the press for this phenomenon.

The feminist movement was still very small in France during the First World War. With the exception of *L'Humanité*, no major paper seems to have encouraged the *midinettes* movement specifically because it was led by females. Indeed *L'Humanité* was permitted to discuss the strikes in detail partly because it emphasized the feminine influence. The Press Bureau encouraged an emphasis on this aspect of the movement because the story of hard-working women from garment factories gaining moderate salary increases through well behaved demonstrations was thought to be potentially uplifting for the morale of husbands fighting. This approach backfired when troops at the front combined the news of the *midinettes* with the repression of the later movement and came to the conclusion that their wives were being arrested. The lesson taken by Pétain was that there was no mention to be made of female strikers in the press. Unfortunately, the consequence of the episode was a severe repression of all things politically feminine in the press for the rest of the war.

The press and the Press Bureau were unfairly blamed for influencing the soldiers to mutiny. It is difficult to imagine a more prudent course of action that the Press Bureau could have taken during the strikes. It would have been highly unwise to censor all news related to the movement. Parisians knew about the strikes because they witnessed them first-hand in downtown Paris. Condemnation of the *midinettes* would have encouraged hostility and sexist outbursts against the movement by the right-wing press and other labour workers<sup>666</sup> and would have prompted fears at the front that soldier's wives were being imprisoned or mistreated. The Press Bureau was under immense pressure during this dangerous period, but it learnt from its mistakes and evolved as the war progressed. A year later when a more dangerous strike movement erupted, the Press Bureau acted quickly and its actions were a significant factor in the movement's successful repression by the Clemenceau government.

The mutinies were kept a secret from the enemy and from the French public until

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<sup>666</sup> Several incidents in the strike movement a year later revealed a great deal of antipathy towards the women's movement by many in the top ranks of the CGT and the CDS.

after they had largely subsided. Perhaps the most important reason for this remarkable feat was the widespread practice of self-censorship. The War Ministry then imposed strict rules on the press coverage of the repression of the mutinies but again most editors chose not to risk having their papers seized or worse, and largely complied with orders. Self-censorship was significant not just in keeping the mutinies a secret but also in concealing their repression.

The only entirely positive news story during this period was the arrival of General Pershing on 13 June and then the first American contingent to France thirteen days later. The French press was universally enthusiastic about the arrival of the nation's new comrades-in-arms. This enthusiasm was encouraged by the Press Bureau and the GQG. Everything went smoothly until a mistake by one censor at the telegraph section of the Press Bureau allowed an article to surface mentioning St. Nazaire as the arrival point for the first American troops. The incident led the AEF to distrust the French censorship system. As a result the Americans insisted that the Press Bureau sharpen its focus on naval censorship, and moved quickly to set up a bureau of their own in Paris.

The Press Bureau was heavily overworked at the time of the American arrival. The War Ministry encouraged the installation of an American Press Bureau and probably welcomed the relief the American censors brought to their overworked French counterparts. Washington was encouraged by Paris, which believed the AEF to be inexperienced and naïve, into developing rules for the American censors which were similar to those in place for the French. The rules put in place for American censors immediately after the armistice were almost identical to those given to the French. As the AEF matured so too did the American Press Bureau which increasingly resembled its war-hardened French counterpart.

Revolution in Russia, strikes in Paris, domestic debates over a negotiated peace settlement and mutinies at the front all coincided. The French war effort survived this period but it had been heavily strained. After the mutinies, the Press Bureau was strongly criticized by the GQG and the implementation of press censorship in France

entered a new phase from June to November 1917, which was characterized by the implementation of a new series of orders given by Pétain. Pétain was the most important person in influencing the priorities of the Press Bureau between the end of the mutinies and the beginning of the Clemenceau Premiership.

The importance of the concealment of the mutinies from both the enemy and the French media is hard to overstate. Although the soldiers did not refuse to defend their positions if attacked, the Germans could have taken advantage of such information by assaulting a disorganized front if they had known early enough. If the news had reached the French press, it could have spread panic and unrest in a society already suffering from deteriorating morale. Self-censorship played an enormous role in an environment of secrecy where news of the mutinies was kept even from the censors at the Press Bureau. No expressions of gratitude or even acknowledgement appear to have been made by the GQG or the War Ministry after the mutinies. Instead, the lesson from the mutinies learned by Pétain and the GQG was that the press had helped cause the crisis of indiscipline because of its cynical news coverage of several events since the February Revolution. The GQG, already skeptical in its dealings with the press, now became openly hostile.

Though self-censorship played the greatest role in keeping the mutinies a secret, the Press Bureau was effective in preventing the news of their repression and of the accompanying changes to the Military Justice Code which facilitated it. The War Ministry formally ordered the press to not mention the repression or to repeat articles that did. When two papers disobeyed the order, the Bureau wisely chose to deal with the offenders leniently as they both had relatively small readerships and seizures would have resulted in added attention. This was a sensible and successful course of action by the War Ministry but did not save the Press Bureau from blame by the GQG. The job of a censor at the Press Bureau was as stressful and thankless as it was significant to the success of the French war effort.

The mutinies influenced state-media relations more than any other event of the war. As insubordination at the front continued, the GQG blamed the press for its critical coverage of every major news story since the February Revolution. The GQG's



concerns over France's censorship system were in part understandable given the emergency situation. But once the mutinies were over, the GQG used the media as a scapegoat to deflect attention away from the mistakes made by the High Command, particularly under Nivelle's leadership, which had done a great deal to cause the crisis. Between June and November, the GQG's influence over the press grew and as a result military censorship hardened. During these six months, Pétain not only had a large influence on what was censored by the Press Bureau but also dictated to the War Ministry which subjects and arguments the media should stress. For Pétain, the media in a time of 'total war'<sup>667</sup> was a tool to be used to fight the enemy rather than just a news service to inform the public.

Naval censorship, forced on the French by the Americans, was a success. But this particular pressure by the Americans was nothing more than a strong reminder to strictly ensure that a topic already on the censor's list of prohibited themes was in fact prohibited. In contrast, the French influence on the American censorship system changed the entire way in which the Americans approached wartime media control. Immediately after the Americans arrived, the French, afraid that inexperienced AEF correspondents might leak information about the mutinies, forced the AEF to tighten its rules on all articles discussing the United States which were printed in France and to first run them by the French Press Bureau. Slowly the American system began to censor stories which could harm morale in the United States and, by the end of the war, the censorship rules in place for French and American censors were very similar.

As the American fighting force matured so did its censorship system become more developed. Though Frederick Palmer and the AEF censors were unimpressed with the 'staleness' of the French system and wished to copy their own model from the British, the American system increasingly resembled the one in France. The cooperation between the two *bureaux* increased from Clemenceau's appointment as Premier until the end of the war and after. By the end of June, the greatest crisis period for French morale had largely subsided and the Press Bureau had done much to keep it from

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<sup>667</sup> A commonly used term to describe a war whereby belligerents use all available resources and weapons to engage the enemy.

derteriorating further. The Press Bureau now entered a new phase characterized by the monitoring of political attacks against those on the left.

Chapter 5: Autumn 1917-Winter: New Leadership and a Modified Approach to  
Censorship

*Introduction*

This chapter analyses the censorship policies of Georges Clemenceau, an iconic figure in the history of the French Third Republic, and their implementation by his Civil Cabinet Chief Georges Mandel. Clemenceau was appointed in November 1917 and was met with good faith at first in most of the press. Already a controversial figure, he had been ruthless in his attacks on left-leaning politicians and personal enemies in the months preceding his appointment. Yet surprisingly the left-wing press did not immediately attack him, even though Clemenceau almost taunted them to do so by officially allowing personal attacks on his character. In any event, he used this new waiver in order to continue persecuting his enemies. This chapter will examine the motives for the press's complacency and obedience, greater than at any other point during the war, during Clemenceau's tenure.

The most significant world event in late 1917 was the October Revolution. Its impact was immediate on the course of the war, yet like Wilson's 14 Points it was discussed very little in the French press, though for different reasons. The censorship system had been established to protect military secrets and to prevent sensationalism. Previous chapters have demonstrated that the press could indeed be relied upon to keep important military secrets. But between November 1917 and February 1918, the press continued to demonstrate its affinity for scandal and sensationalism. Caillaux's and Malvy's trials and tribulations were the headline news stories while one of the most significant moments in twentieth-century history unfolded in Petrograd.

*The Tiger in Power: Clemenceau Becomes Premier.*

France witnessed several scandals in the summer of 1917, all of which were played out in the media. Since the debate over the Stockholm initiative, the right-wing press had increasingly been on the attack. Between July and October it exploited cases of

espionage and of shady business dealings with Germany to conduct a witch hunt against deputies, senators and ministers who were in any way associated with the individuals implicated. The two highest profile victims were Interior Minister Louis Malvy and Senator Joseph Caillaux. The two primary benefactors were *L'Action Française* and Georges Clemenceau. In the summer of 1918 *L'Action Française* and Clemenceau, previously antagonists, were able to co-operate in attacking their mutual political enemies.

In July, Emile-Joseph Duval, the business manager for the leftist paper *Le Bonnet Rouge*, was arrested at the Swiss border with a check for 150,857 francs<sup>668</sup> signed by a German benefactor. On 12 July the paper, which with sixteen seizures since the beginning of the war<sup>669</sup> was one of the papers most censored by the Press Bureau,<sup>670</sup> was suspended indefinitely.<sup>671</sup> The check had been financed by a German agent in Switzerland and the scandal came to national attention. In early August, the editor of *Le Bonnet Rouge*, Eugène Vigo (pen name Miguel Almereyda), was arrested, and later found dead in his cell on 18 August. Duval's arrest on 3 July was allowed to be mentioned in the press five days later and only the official account given in the Chamber could be published.<sup>672</sup> Until late August no specifics were to be mentioned or names given. Any suggestion that Almereyda had died under mysterious circumstances was forbidden. But this rule was loosely enforced and the *Bonnet Rouge* affair turned into a major scandal.<sup>673</sup>

Malvy was implicated in the *Bonnet Rouge* affair because as Interior Minister in 1914 he had helped to finance the paper to keep it in the *Union Sacrée*. This subsidy lasted until 1916 when the paper began to be clandestinely financed from sources in Germany.<sup>674</sup> Although Malvy was first directly questioned about *Le Bonnet Rouge* on 5 July by Maurice Barrès in the Chamber,<sup>675</sup> what became known as 'the Malvy

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<sup>668</sup> Smith, et al, *France and the Great War* p.140.

<sup>669</sup> Forcade, 'La Censure politique en France', p.115.

<sup>670</sup> Rajsfus, *La Censure militaire et policière* p.65.

<sup>671</sup> Berger and Allard, *La Secrets de la censure* p.204.

<sup>672</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C.

<sup>673</sup> The police however were able to successfully stifle a story in the press that a police commissar had been involved in the 'Duval Affair' BDIC F rés 0270 C, 10-11 Sept.1917.

<sup>674</sup> Smith, et al, *France and the Great War* p.141.

<sup>675</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République. Tome II* p.301.

Affair' began on 22 July when Clemenceau attacked the Minister at a session of the Army Senate Committee. Clemenceau's speech lasted for over two hours<sup>676</sup> and was openly discussed in the media. He began it by stating that Malvy had maintained close relations with anti-patriotic anarchists like Almereyda. He criticized Malvy for not arresting those in the *Carnet B*<sup>677</sup> in 1914 and then for not properly fighting the rise of defeatist propaganda. When Malvy responded, 'If I have not brought you heads, I have brought you results,' Clemenceau retorted, 'I reproach you for betraying the interests of France.'<sup>678</sup> This incident marked the beginning of Malvy's downfall. On 24 July, an article by Clemenceau in *L'Homme Enchaîné* had a passage censored in which he asserted that he was 'becoming a man who is beginning to demand heads' and insisted that investigation would find a letter linking Almereyda to Malvy.<sup>679</sup> Malvy had made a powerful enemy of Clemenceau by suspending his *L'Homme Enchaîné* from 29 September to 7 October 1914, an event which was referred to at the time as *l'Affaire Clemenceau*. Two days earlier an entire article had been slashed in the far-left *Journal du Peuple*, which argued that after three years of weakness the working class needed to stand up to Clemenceau.<sup>680</sup> The comments in both papers were prophetic. Clemenceau began immediately to destroy the reputations of his opponents using little or no proof (such as the promised letter linking Malvy to Almereyda which never appeared) to justify his accusations. Just as Malvy had angered 'the Tiger'<sup>681</sup> by creating *l'Affaire Clemenceau*, now Clemenceau would be, along with Léon Daudet, the principal actor in engineering *l'Affaire Malvy*. The socialists, if not the leftist press, resisted Clemenceau until he became Premier and then refused to take part in his cabinet.

Another scandal in which the press implicated Malvy was an alleged affair with the arrested Dutch spy Mata-Hari. This accusation had been made by Léon Daudet in *L'Action Française*.<sup>682</sup> Mata-Hari was arrested in February and executed on 15 October 1917. Mata-Hari's execution itself was censored more heavily in the press

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<sup>676</sup> *ibid.*, p.303.

<sup>677</sup> A list of potential troublemakers (anarchists, revolutionaries, militant socialists etc...) drawn up by the Interior Ministry and the *Sûreté Générale* before the beginning of the war.

<sup>678</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République Tome II* p.301.

<sup>679</sup> SHD 5N 501, 24 Jul.1917.

<sup>680</sup> SHD 5N 501 22-23 Jul.1917.

<sup>681</sup> *Le Tigre* . Nickname for Georges Clemenceau.

<sup>682</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrètes de la censure* p.224.

than the executions of other spies because she was a woman.<sup>683</sup> No mention was allowed in the press of her execution for a week prior to the event.<sup>684</sup> The day of her execution, the official *communiqué* was permitted to be published but the photographs of her death and mention of her Dutch nationality (she was to be described as ‘foreign’) were forbidden.<sup>685</sup> On 10 October the Paris *Daily Mail* was censored for attempting to publish that Mata-Hari had warned the Germans of the British tank attack on the Somme.<sup>686</sup> On 15 October when Mata-Hari was executed, *Le Petit Parisien* was slashed for giving a background of her life and *L’Intransigeant* for claiming that she had ‘died instantly.’<sup>687</sup> *L’Heure* was prevented from going even farther by reporting that ‘she died with a smile on her face.’<sup>688</sup> Later that day the Press Bureau was told to instruct all newspapers that the accusations made by Léon Daudet in *L’Action Française* against Malvy were false.<sup>689</sup> The letter in question had been published in *L’Action Française* on 5 October against the orders of the censors and the paper had been suspended for eight days as a result.<sup>690</sup> *L’Action Française*’s attacks against Malvy, which began in early summer of 1917, had intensified into a full-blown witch hunt after Clemenceau’s public attack on the Interior Minister in July.

Léon Daudet’s letter to President Poincaré on 4 October directly accused Malvy of treason by claiming that he had passed on the plans of the Nivelles Offensive to the Germans.<sup>691</sup> Although *L’Action Française* was suspended for eight days as a result,<sup>692</sup> the letter was reprinted in all of the major Parisian dailies.<sup>693</sup> It had been read in the Chamber of Deputies<sup>694</sup> but because this had taken place during a secret session the defence presented for Malvy by Briand and Viviani went unreported by the media.<sup>695</sup> The government, in an effort to avoid further commentary, not only formally banned

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<sup>683</sup> News of her execution was censored in the press over ten times. Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.211.

<sup>684</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 11 Oct.1917.

<sup>685</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 15 Oct.1917.

<sup>686</sup> SHD 5N 510, 10 Oct.1917.

<sup>687</sup> SHD 5N 510, 15-16 Oct.1917.

<sup>688</sup> SHD 5N 510, 15-16 Oct.1917.

<sup>689</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 15 Oct.1917.

<sup>690</sup> SHD 5N 357, 5 Oct.1917.

<sup>691</sup> *ibid.*, pp.312-313.

<sup>692</sup> SHD 5N 334, 6 Oct.1917.

<sup>693</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République. Tome II* p.317.

<sup>694</sup> *ibid.*, pp.313-314.

<sup>695</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République. Tome II* pp.314-315.

comments on Daudet's letter but also refused to tell journalists why *L'Action Française* had been seized<sup>696</sup> making the accusations appear more legitimate. Attempts by moderate papers such as *Le Temps* to draw attention to the dangerousness of Daudet's claims by stating that he was 'pursuing excitations that could lead to civil war' were censored.<sup>697</sup>

The Press Bureau had hardly punished *L'Action Française* during the summer and autumn of 1917 as it increasingly attacked its enemies on the left, hunted 'defeatists' and created scandals through unjustified accusations. Between June and September, *L'Action Française* was given one suspension and one warning.<sup>698</sup> This was a normal number of punishments during this period for a major Parisian daily,<sup>699</sup> but *L'Action Française* was not a common paper. It did not conceal the fact that it was little more than a political mouthpiece for its two principal writers, Daudet and Maurras, who regularly slandered their enemies without evidence. The lack of punishment given to the paper encouraged it to intensify its attacks, particularly on Malvy and Caillaux. Once an offending article was published, it was likely to be reprinted in papers which had even larger circulations, causing vicious rumors to spread. *L'Action Française* was suspended again twice in October<sup>700</sup> for implying that Almereyda had been killed while in prison because he had important knowledge regarding some of France's top politicians. Malvy resigned on 31 August (the Ribot Government fell a week later) to prepare a defence and clear his name, but the opposite happened.<sup>701</sup> Malvy, who willingly gave up his parliamentary immunity from being tried for treason, was arrested by Clemenceau two days after the latter became Premier on 18 November.<sup>702</sup> By this time the centre-right press had jumped on the band-wagon. *Le Figaro*, which had previously been silent on the Malvy Affair, now called for his

<sup>696</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 5 Oct.1917.

<sup>697</sup> SHD 5N 512, 21 Oct.1917.

<sup>698</sup> The suspension was for fifteen days on 21 June for referring to the strikes in Paris as being influenced by 'German propaganda in Paris.' SHD 5N 357. The warning was for the refusal to change a title related to Louis Turmel, a Deputy who had been caught with 25,000 francs in his locker at the Chamber of Deputies. Smith, et al, *France and the Great War* p.142.

<sup>699</sup> SHD 5N 357, Parisian Military Government list of sanctions.

<sup>700</sup> SHD 5N 357, Parisian Military Government list of sanctions.

<sup>701</sup> Malvy's resignation was censored in the press for two days. BDIC F rés 0270 AFS 31.08.1917. and discussions of his potential replacement were forbidden. Also, Malvy's resignation was not allowed to be referred to as a crisis. While these rules were mostly obeyed, enforcement was lax. SHD 5N 506. 1-2 Sept.1917.

<sup>702</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République. Tome II* p.351.

immediate trial.

Malvy was later sentenced to five years in exile for ‘failing to oppose enemy propaganda’<sup>703</sup> and later wrote a memoir pleading his innocence.<sup>704</sup> The government had not done enough to prevent the slanderous attacks of the far right which unjustly led to the disgrace of one of France’s top ministers. According to Berger and Allard, censors had been told not to overly censor *L’Action Française* so as not to ‘dim the lights’,<sup>705</sup> and all of the Press Bureau’s records at the BDIC show that papers which defended Malvy and Caillaux were more heavily censored than their accusers. Ironically Malvy, who had been one of the two ministers present (along with Messimy) at the first meeting on 3 August 1914 between the government and the press,<sup>706</sup> was a major proponent of a strong censorship system attacking defeatism.<sup>707</sup> Malvy, who had told Jean Dupuy in October 1914 that ‘papers were allowed to attack politicians but not to the point where they are discredited in the public view,’<sup>708</sup> became subject to the most vicious forms of media attacks. A particularly unsavoury though not uncommon type of article was published (for which it only received a warning) on 7 August 1917 in *Le Courrier du Maine* (published in the area of Laval, near Le Mans). The article was entitled ‘*M. Malvy et l’Anarchie complice de l’ennemi*’ and argued that ‘M. Malvy is an Israelite who for only inexplicable reasons has remained a minister since the beginning of the war.’<sup>709</sup> Although the Malvy Affair led Painlevé to promise Caillaux that a new law would be passed to replace the 1881 Law and protect politicians from slander, the Council of Ministers voted against the idea.<sup>710</sup> Painlevé, in this scandal-ridden environment, was unable to save even his own supporter Louis Turmel from prosecution.<sup>711</sup> However it is also probable that the Turmel Affair was largely kept out

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<sup>703</sup> Smith, et al, *France and the Great War* p.144.

<sup>704</sup> L. Malvy, *Mon Crime* (Paris, 1921).

<sup>705</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.223.

<sup>706</sup> Forcade, ‘La Censure politique en France’, p.39.

<sup>707</sup> SHD 5N 372, Malvy had also been the minister most responsible for expelling Trotsky on 30 October 1916 and for banning his paper *Nache Slowo*. Rajsfus, *La Censure militaire et policière* p.68.

<sup>708</sup> Forcade, ‘La Censure politique en France’, p.88.

<sup>709</sup> SHD 5N 350, 7 Aug. 1917.

<sup>710</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République. Tome II* p.317.

<sup>711</sup> Smith, et al, *France and the Great War* p.142. Painlevé was, however, able to keep much of the news surrounding the Turmel Affair from reaching the press through a heavy application of censorship. *L’Action Française*, *L’Intransigeant*, *Le Figaro* and *Le Libre Parole* were all warned in advance not to report on the affair and for the most part complied with the orders. SHD 5N 334, 8-9 Sept. 1917. *Le Gaulois* was prevented from explicitly calling for Turmel to be stripped of his parliamentary immunity



of the press because of the possibility of Turmel implicating other politicians under questioning.<sup>712</sup> The War Ministry's laxity in dealing with the right-wing press, and with *L'Action Française* in particular, along with the GQG's desire to stamp out defeatism, created the framework for the selective form of political censorship which later characterized press-state relations under the Clemenceau Premiership.

Joseph Caillaux, a Senator from the centre-left, was the leading French proponent of a negotiated peace. As a result he was a target for the *jusqu'au boutistes*,<sup>713</sup> the right-wing press in general and Clemenceau in particular. Caillaux had gained public attention not only because of his often made claim that he could have prevented the war in 1914 had he been appointed by Poincaré to do so but also for his defence of the *Bonnet Rouge* and for a treason suspect named Bolo Pasha who was executed the next year.<sup>714</sup> Caillaux defended the *Bonnet Rouge* and Bolo Pasha in part because he was indirectly implicated in a minor way in both scandals. After Almereyda's death, a letter was found in his cell by Caillaux thanking him for all his services and stating that he was in debt to Almereyda for the contribution of his paper in defending his wife during her murder trial in 1914.<sup>715</sup> Bolo Pasha and Caillaux had been personal friends since 1915.<sup>716</sup>

The Bolo Pasha Affair involved a financial rescue of *Le Journal*, owned by Senator Charles Humbert, by Paul Bolo who had granted himself an Egyptian title.<sup>717</sup> It turned out the funds had come from the Deutsche Bank and were laundered through New York.<sup>718</sup> Bolo Pasha was arrested on 29 September 1917<sup>719</sup> and was executed for treason in April 1918. During his trial, Caillaux was questioned about his relationship with Bolo Pasha. Humbert was also arrested on 13 November but was acquitted on 18 February 1918. Only the official *communiqué* on Bolo's arrest was allowed to be

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and to be charged. SHD 5N 501, 17 Sept.1917.

<sup>712</sup> *Le Temps* on 11 October had an article slashed which claimed that Turmel had implicated Etienne Clémentel, the Minister of Commerce.

<sup>713</sup> Those who advocated fighting 'until the end.' He should be noted, however, that Caillaux's advocacy for negotiated peace had limits. He believed that the return to France of Alsace-Lorraine was non-negotiable. Smith, et al, *France and the Great War* p.142.

<sup>714</sup> *ibid.*, p.142.

<sup>715</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République. Tome II* p.307.

<sup>716</sup> Smith, et al, *France and the Great War* p.142.

<sup>717</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>718</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>719</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République. Tome II* p312.

mentioned and any description of his past was strictly forbidden.<sup>720</sup> In early October, articles which implicated high level personalities in the Bolo Affair were prohibited,<sup>721</sup> as were attacks launched in the press against Charles Humbert.<sup>722</sup> Most of the attacks came as a result of a letter written by M. Bonzon to Captain Bouchardon, the prosecutor at the Bolo trial which named Charles Humbert as having direct knowledge of the German source of income given to *Le Journal*. *L'Oeuvre* had published the letter on 3 October and had been suspended for eight days as a result.<sup>723</sup> Perhaps the most bizarre article published on the Bolo Pasha Affair was in *La Lanterne* on 6 October.<sup>724</sup> The article claimed that Bolo was an agent of the Pope whose allegiances were with Catholic Austria.<sup>725</sup> The paper was not punished for disobeying the Press Bureau perhaps because the claim was unlikely to be taken seriously.

In October and early November, attacks against Caillaux in the press and reports of increasing hostility to him by *L'Action Française* were strictly censored but so too were his attempts in the press to defend himself. Immediately before Clemenceau's first vote of confidence in the Chamber, he was asked by M. Barthe what he would do about Caillaux. He answered, 'I have more to do than occupy myself with the pursuit of this or that person. It is none of my business and if I did it I would not deserve to be in this position.'<sup>726</sup> Clemenceau's proclaimed indifference to Caillaux's fate was misleading. Clemenceau as Premier personally saw to it that Caillaux had his parliamentary immunity revoked on 11 December and, using a series of letters between Caillaux and both Bolo and Almereyda as evidence, had him arrested in January.<sup>727</sup> After Caillaux had his parliamentary immunity stripped, the Press Bureau on 15 and 16 December set a number of rules for the media to follow which dictated the press's coverage of the 'Caillaux Affair.' The order stated, 'All opinions on the Caillaux Affair are allowed but there are special rules concerning wires on the subject sent to other countries: 1. Press revues which are not tendentious are allowed to pass but they

<sup>720</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 29-30 Sept.1917.

<sup>721</sup> *Le Matin* was censored for violating this order.

<sup>722</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 3 Oct.1917.

<sup>723</sup> SHD 5N 508, 3 Oct.1918, SHD 5N 357 3 Oct.1917 and BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 5 Oct.1917.

<sup>724</sup> *La Lanterne* was an extremely anti-clerical newspaper.

<sup>725</sup> SHD 5N 511, 6-7 Oct.1917.

<sup>726</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République. Tome II* p.350.

<sup>727</sup> *ibid.*, p.359.

must list the papers from which the articles mentioned have come. 2. Passages that give sensationalist articles must state from where they originated. 3. All articles from Germany which are favorable to Caillaux are allowed. 4. All articles from Germany that suggest there is insufficient proof against Caillaux are to be deferred. 5. Return to Captain Nusillard<sup>728</sup> all telegrams which have been stopped and which were to be sent abroad regarding Caillaux.<sup>729</sup> These orders were clearly designed to make Caillaux appear as guilty as possible in Allied countries. The French press was forbidden from discussing the demonstrations led by *L'Action Française* against Caillaux in December<sup>730</sup> and January<sup>731</sup> and from insulting either him or his wife by discussing their new regimes in prison in January.<sup>732</sup> But by this point any further slandering of Caillaux in the press was overkill. Caillaux was arrested and spent the next two years in jail. He was finally fined in February 1920 for 'damaging the external security of the state.'<sup>733</sup> Clemenceau called for Caillaux's head and he got it.

Clemenceau was appointed Premier on 16 November 1917. He was a controversial figure. He had an uncomfortable relationship with Poincaré and had few friends among France's political elite. He was detested by the left for his role as a strike-breaker during his premiership of 1906-1909 and for his antipathy towards international socialism. Not one Socialist deputy would take part in his cabinet. Yet because of his anti-clerical beliefs and his staunch republicanism (and therefore anti-monarchism), he had few natural allies on the right. So when on 16 November it was declared at the Press Bureau that 'all commentary discussing Clemenceau is allowed to pass,'<sup>734</sup> the potential for Clemenceau's many enemies to take advantage of the situation to slander the new Premier was great. However, the opposite happened.

Clemenceau had plenty of political enemies but he was also a charismatic leader with

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<sup>728</sup> Head of the Press Bureau.

<sup>729</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.260.

<sup>730</sup> SHD 5N 334, 14 Dec.1917.

<sup>731</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 15 Jan.1918.

<sup>732</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 Cm, 14-15 Jan.1918.

<sup>733</sup> Smith, et al. *France and the Great War* p.145.

<sup>734</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 AFS, 16 Nov.1917. This order was purposely misleading. Clemenceau was allowed to be openly criticised in the press, but articles which could be interpreted as pacifist or defeatist were subject to prohibition. This severely limited the scope of what was allowed to be written regarding Clemenceau's conduct of the war and was a policy which helped to shield Clemenceau from the leftist press while maintaining the appearance that he allowed himself to be openly criticised. Although Clemenceau was allowed to be mentioned, the ministerial composition of his cabinet however was still forbidden from being published. BDIC F rés 0270 C, 16 Nov.1917.

a popular and loyal base amongst France's citizenry. The press realized, as did Poincaré, that Clemenceau was a powerful figure who could potentially repair the broken *Union Sacrée* through his staunch *jusqu'au boutisme*. Unsurprisingly the right and centre-right papers, particularly *L'Echo de Paris*, *Le Figaro* and *Le Gaulois*<sup>735</sup> gave Clemenceau the most enthusiastic support. An article in *Le Figaro*, in reference to the fact that Clemenceau had filled his cabinet with men fiercely loyal to himself, reported that 'The fate of the government is now in one man, rather than a ministry. But he has the unanimous morale of the nation behind him.'<sup>736</sup> Further to the centre, *Le Rappel* agreed that 'Clemenceau's Ministry consists of his old supporters'<sup>737</sup> and argued that it was unfortunate that the Socialists were isolated, but Clemenceau extended his hand and they did not accept<sup>738</sup> and that if 'parliamentarians oppose a man who can win the war, they are acting against the nation itself.'<sup>739</sup> Clemenceau's regular allies in the press were triumphant upon his appointment. More surprisingly however, he received almost universal, if less enthusiastic support, from the rest of the media.

*Le Temps*, which had never shown much enthusiasm for Clemenceau earlier in the war, now wrote that 'under Clemenceau, the nation will no longer be beholden to the minority'<sup>740</sup> and that rather than putting faith in Clemenceau individually, they would judge him by his actions.<sup>741</sup> The paper had turned heavily against the *SFIO* after its unanimous decision to support the Stockholm Conference and now saw potential for the left to be crippled for the remainder of the war. On the far-right, *L'Action Française*, which had only recently been allied with Clemenceau in his pursuit of pacifists (previously he had been one of their greatest enemies), wrote that it was only because of the hard work of the right that Clemenceau was in power and (like *Le Temps*) they would judge him as if he had not existed previously. Even the leftist

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<sup>735</sup> Bonnefous, *Histoire politique de la Troisième République* p.345.

<sup>736</sup> SHD 5N 425, *Le Figaro*, 17 Nov.1917.

<sup>737</sup> SHD 5N 425, *Le Rappel*, 19 Nov.1917.

<sup>738</sup> SHD 5N 425, *Le Rappel*, 17 Nov.1917.

<sup>739</sup> SHD 5N 425, *Le Rappel*, 18 Nov.1917.

<sup>740</sup> SHD 5N 425, *Le Temps*, 17 Nov.1917.

<sup>741</sup> SHD 5N 425, *Le Temps*, 19 Nov.1917.

papers *L'Oeuvre* and *Le Journal du Peuple*<sup>742</sup> showed unqualified support for the new government in the name of national unity and perhaps in an attempt to gain favour with the new leadership, which consisted of a new group of individuals and a leader known for repressing socialists. The only major paper which criticized the new government was *L'Humanité*, and it did so indirectly. Renaudel argued that although fighting the war was a matter of the highest importance 'we need a government that is capable of talking with other nations.'<sup>743</sup> Though the article did not attack Clemenceau specifically, this comment criticized Clemenceau as the archetypal *jusqu'au boutiste*. Clemenceau's reception by the media was mostly positive. A journalist himself, Clemenceau would have been impressed by the good faith shown to him even by his enemies in the press.

Upon being appointed Premier, Clemenceau made an immediate impact on state-press relations and on the focus of press censorship. During the first few weeks after his appointment, there was a great deal of optimism in the media that Clemenceau, a journalist and until now an influential critic of government policy, would abolish political censorship.<sup>744</sup> While several dailies such as *Le Petit Parisien*,<sup>745</sup> *Le Matin*<sup>746</sup> and *Le Gaulois*<sup>747</sup> stated explicitly that he would do so, only *Le Journal*, scandalized by the Bolo Affair, complained. On 18 November *Le Journal* declared that 'neither military nor political leaders are now safe from criticism.'<sup>748</sup> This statement was false for several reasons. Firstly, political leaders, particularly on the left, had not been safe from criticism in the press since at least early summer 1917. Secondly, although he paid lip service to the elimination of political censorship and himself had been one of France's most heavily censored journalists, he had no intention of allowing criticism of France's military leaders, its diplomats, his close personal allies or the President any more than did Viviani, Briand or Ribot.<sup>749</sup> During his first meeting with France's

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<sup>742</sup> SHD 5N 425, War Ministry press analyses.

<sup>743</sup> SHD 5N 425, *L'Humanité*, 19 Nov.1917.

<sup>744</sup> Clemenceau before becoming Premier was both a strident critic of political censorship and a major benefactor of politically motivated attacks in the media.

<sup>745</sup> 5N 425, *Le Petit Parisien*, 18 Nov.1917.

<sup>746</sup> 5N 425, *Le Matin*, 17 Nov. 1917.

<sup>747</sup> 5N 425, *Le Gaulois*, 17 Nov.1917.

<sup>748</sup> 5N 425, *Le Journal*, 18 Nov.1917.

<sup>749</sup> To his credit, a major difference between Clemenceau and the three previous Premiers was that he permitted personal attacks against himself in the media.

military censors as Premier, he declared ‘Suppress censorship? Never! I am not a complete idiot. You are my best gendarmes.’<sup>750</sup> In fact, because of Clemenceau’s attacks on defeatism and his insistence on the censorship of all news related to labour unrest (themselves forms of political censorship), the percentage of press censorship that was political was higher under Clemenceau’s government than during any other period of the war.<sup>751</sup> Clemenceau’s impact on censorship was profound but it was different than what was anticipated by the press.

Clemenceau placed Mandel in charge of the daily functioning of the Press Bureau and gave him *carte blanche* over media-related matters.<sup>752</sup> Mandel was efficient and was highly trusted and respected by Clemenceau,<sup>753</sup> but his direct and impersonal methods made him unpopular with many among whom he interacted, including censors at the Press Bureau. In the first three days of Clemenceau’s Premiership, Mandel made it known that the direction of press censorship was about to change and that he was in charge. The first series of orders given by the new government to the Press Bureau implemented Clemenceau’s policy of rooting out defeatism and labour unrest. On 17 and 18 November censors were ordered to be ‘very strict for pacifist articles, apply as usual all orders given by the military and give a wide berth to the publication of political news and articles.’<sup>754</sup> On 18 and 19 November new orders were given concerning the reporting of strikes. On 18 November the order was given that ‘concerning strikes, we can speak of those that are at their finishing point and of those that have little importance. For those that are in the military or are in militarized establishments (national defence) be very strict.’<sup>755</sup> This order was passed by Captain Nusillard, head of the Press Bureau, and did not differ much from the existing policies. Mandel, however, gave two new orders the next day, one of which outlawed the discussion of strikes altogether. He told the Press Bureau to ‘not allow announcements which are meant to organize strikes’ and that ‘no articles or polemics or discussions on

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<sup>750</sup> Rajsfus, *La Censure militaire et policière* p.66 and Bellanger, et al, ed., *Histoire générale de la presse française t.3 De 1871 à 1940* p.419.

<sup>751</sup> See Chapter 1, Graph 1. Collins, ‘The Development of Censorship’, p.16.

<sup>752</sup> Forcade, ‘La Censure politique pendant la Grande Guerre’, p.114.

<sup>753</sup> Sherwood, *George Mandel and the Third Republic* p.27.

<sup>754</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 17-18 Nov.1917.

<sup>755</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 18 Nov.1917.

strikes' were allowed.<sup>756</sup> Mandel also chose this opportunity to dress down Nusillard in front of his subordinates (the first time such an event occurred during the war), by complaining that *La Liberté* had not slashed its passages on syndicalist agitation and possible strikes in war factories, then by instructing all censors that 'Captain Nusillard should in the future not allow articles of this nature to be published.' The next day Mandel, either because he had received a flux of new phone calls from censors who realized where the power at the Press Bureau now rested or because he wished to communicate his orders more efficiently, instructed Nusillard to tell censors not to 'send any articles or documents directly to the PM's office or his cabinet at the Ministry of War for advice without first referring said items to Nusillard. Also, do not phone the PM.' The next day, Nusillard explained to the censors that 'Mandel only wants to know me.'<sup>757</sup> After the war Mandel was described by Berger and Allard as a 'bilious, suspicious, peremptory, vindictive secretary made vice-director of France by the caprice of an old man.'<sup>758</sup> Mandel as *de facto* head of the Press Bureau openly used threats and gave subsidies to papers which followed his orders. He also canceled the deferment from the draft which newspaper directors had been given.<sup>759</sup> From the viewpoint of Berger and Allard, it is not difficult to see how they came to have such a negative perception of Mandel's character and it was no mean feat that Mandel was able to keep all criticisms of himself from reaching the press until after the armistice.<sup>760</sup>

Clemenceau delivered his first major speech as Premier in front of the Chamber on 20 November. He declared that military censorship accompanied by a censorship regime that will 'continue to maintain public order' would remain in place.<sup>761</sup> Over the next two weeks all of the principal orders which dictated the censorship regime in France for the rest of the war were given. The first was directed at the provinces. On 22 November a letter was sent from the War Ministry to France's regional military

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<sup>756</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 19 Nov. 1917.

<sup>757</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.239. Mandel was the first member of the government during the war to answer all telephone calls related to censorship himself. Forcade, 'La Censure politique en France', p.114.

<sup>758</sup> Translation from Sherwood, *Georges Mandel and the Third Republic* p.27.

<sup>759</sup> *ibid.*, p.26.

<sup>760</sup> *ibid.* p.27.

<sup>761</sup> Forcade, 'La Censure politique en France', p.42.

commanders, to be then passed on to Prefects and regional Censorship Commissions.<sup>762</sup> The letter stated that ‘The greatest liberty and discussion is allowed in all political matters, including attacks on specific people. Concerning pacifist articles, papers will be told after publication that they are neglecting their responsibilities. All pacifist articles will be signalled out for particularly careful examination by the Press Bureau. There should be nothing which could trouble public order specifically on strikes, on union preparations for strikes or on meetings of workers preparing to strike. Polemics on strikes should be avoided. Military and diplomatic news must be vigorously censored using the rules already in place.’ The new government in this order took direct aim at the news of strikers both potential and actual, but still at least officially upheld its policy of allowing criticism of politicians and of attempting to curb political censorship. Two orders given to the Press Bureau six days later, however, made Clemenceau’s policy appear far murkier. The first order began without the preamble given to the provinces acknowledging the right to attack politicians,

Orders concerning military or diplomatic censorship are carried out as in the past. Just as important as diplomatic or military censorship is the monitoring of information or publications which could cause civil unrest (Ministerial declaration) or which touch upon pacifism, strikes or mention the President of the Republic.

**Civil Order** – All information or publications which touch upon pacifist propaganda must be slashed.

**Strikes** – It is necessary to slash all information related to strikes all news of meetings, announcements of meetings for the purpose of striking and all articles or polemics for or against a specific strike.

In addition to the formula described above, allow for revision of all articles which from a theoretical perspective concern moderate economic demands by the working class.

**President of the Republic** - Review all articles which discuss his personality or his political role.

Be generally concerned with all publications which do not fall under the above categories but are still inappropriate. They will not automatically be slashed but signal to the offending journalists that they will only be published under their personal responsibility.<sup>763</sup>

Instead of reiterating that newspapers could criticise politicians, this order re-enforced

<sup>762</sup> SHD 5N 337, Letter from the War Ministry to France’s Regional Military Commanders, ‘Directives à la censure de province’, 22 Nov.1917.

<sup>763</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, Directives pour le service des périodiques, 28 Nov.1917.



the form of political censorship which had begun after the Stockholm affair when the Press Bureau first allowed political attacks from the right but censored those from the left. Now censorship was becoming more arbitrary as it was in the period before the introduction of Circular 1000. Leftist articles could easily be labeled as defeatist, dangerous to public order, or inciting strikes. Finally, the order ended with a threat. Journalists were responsible for the inappropriate material they published. Mandel revoked the exoneration from the draft enjoyed by newspaper directors, and Clemenceau was not afraid to have ‘defeatists’ arrested.<sup>764</sup> Directors were warned that they took chances at their own risk.

Clemenceau reversed Pétain’s unsuccessful policy of encouraging the Press Bureau to ensure that as few blanks appeared in newspaper articles as possible. An order was given on 4 December which stated that ‘In all cases, when censors must decide between large suppressions, those of one paragraph, of a whole article or even if it is the suppression of one word, a number of sentences or one sentence or even if the context of a certain article could be deemed inappropriate, it is better to avoid error by erring on the side of caution even if this means the excessive implementation of a specific censorship rule as outlined in the censor’s guidelines.’<sup>765</sup> After the Chemin des Dames, Pétain had significantly tightened the use of censorship and the control over distribution of newspapers that reached the front, even to the occasional consternation of Clemenceau.<sup>766</sup> Now Clemenceau had set up a Jacobin system to monitor the interior where under the guise of allowing freedom of the press, ‘patriotic’ papers were encouraged to attack ‘internal enemies,’ and ‘defeatists’ were to be silenced.

Clemenceau’s legacy for press censorship was complex. He, along with Mandel, influenced state-media relations more than had any other individual. Not only did he make the system more draconian but he also chose to keep the system in place until 12 October 1919, after the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles. Under Clemenceau, the *Union des Grandes Associations contre la Propagande Ennemie* (UGACPE), an

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<sup>764</sup> One of his first orders as Premier was to have Hélène Brion, a socialist and labour organizer, arrested.

<sup>765</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 4 Dec.1917.

<sup>766</sup> Rajsfus. *La Censure militaire et policière* p.79.

already influential association set up in early 1917<sup>767</sup> to fight enemy propaganda at home, worked more closely with the government in expanding France's propaganda operations.<sup>768</sup> More importantly, Clemenceau's appointment and his policies were responses to the increasingly fragile state of French politics and labour relations. He censored the news of labour movements so heavily that by the end of January 1918, after a large strike wave in Germany, not even strikes in enemy countries were allowed to be discussed.<sup>769</sup> Whereas previously the press had used examples of foreign strikes to convince readers of the poor morale in the Central Powers, now Clemenceau was afraid that the growing pacifist, international socialist and *minoritaire* movements might take inspiration from events and actors abroad. This was especially the case when it came to reports on France's troubled eastern ally, which had just witnessed its second revolution and change of regime in one year.

### *The October Revolution*

On 7 and 8 November, the Bolsheviks led by Lenin conducted a mostly bloodless coup against the Provisional Government in Petrograd. Although the Bolshevik conspiracy to take power before the Soviet Congress on 7 November had been public knowledge in Russia for at least two weeks,<sup>770</sup> the event itself came as a surprise even to most Russians as the Bolshevik leadership decided to seize power only at the last minute.<sup>771</sup> Alexander Kerensky, head of the Provisional Government, had grown unpopular and weak at home and had even lost the faith of most of the Allied Governments after the Kornilov Affair in August.<sup>772</sup> As a result, few were fully committed to defending the Kerensky Government, and the significance of the Bolshevik insurrection was widely misunderstood. On 6 November the Military

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<sup>767</sup> Its first meeting was at the Sorbonne on 7 March 1917. It was chaired by Paul Deschanel and was attended by President Poincaré and Premier Alexandre Ribot, Horne, 'Remobilizing for Total War: France and Britain, 1917-1918', in *State Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* p.199. The UGACPE was not a censorship body, rather its purpose was to engage in counter-propaganda. Notably it conducted pro-war rallies across the country much like its British counterpart, the NWAC. (See Introduction).

<sup>768</sup> *ibid.*, pp.201.202.

<sup>769</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C., 30 Jan.1917.

<sup>770</sup> Figes, *A People's Tragedy* p.477.

<sup>771</sup> *ibid.*, p.481.

<sup>772</sup> *ibid.*, p.479.

Revolutionary Committee (the armed wing of the Bolshevik Party) in a response to a threat by Kerensky to send it to the front, seized the Petrograd garrison, Petrograd's railway lines, the blockades surrounding the city, the local police stations and the telegraph.<sup>773</sup> That night, Lenin ordered the Winter Palace to be taken the next day, which was accomplished with little resistance. This, in conjunction with a walk out by the Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary Parties at the Soviet Congress, placed the Bolsheviks in charge of the government in Petrograd.

The effects of the October Revolution significantly influenced the course of the war, though they were misunderstood at the time. The Bolshevik seizure of power opened the door immediately for a separate peace.<sup>774</sup> On 21 November, German radio announced that Russia had made a peace overture to the Central Powers.<sup>775</sup> On 23 November *Izvestiya* published the secret treaties between Russia and the Allies<sup>776</sup> and on 15 December an armistice was signed in the East. As a result, that winter the Germans had numerical superiority on the Western Front for the first time since 1914<sup>777</sup> and launched a major offensive the following spring.<sup>778</sup> The French Government, though it despised the Bolsheviks and was concerned over the future status of the loans given to Russia in the pre-war period,<sup>779</sup> maintained diplomatic contacts in an attempt to keep Russia in the war. The French Government's policy of interpreting events in Russia entirely based on their effect on the Allied war effort led it to abandon the Volunteer Army in Russia in February and to offer military support to the Bolsheviks, helping to keep them in power when they were at their most vulnerable.<sup>780</sup>

The news which arrived in France about the events in Petrograd through both official channels and media organs was unclear. On the morning of 6 November, the Military Revolutionary Committee took over the telegraph and supervised all news

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<sup>773</sup> *ibid.*, p.482.

<sup>774</sup> Stevenson, *French War Aims* p.94.

<sup>775</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.247.

<sup>776</sup> Stevenson, *French War Aims* p.98.

<sup>777</sup> *ibid.*, p.94.

<sup>778</sup> The Spring Offensive is discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>779</sup> France in the pre-war period had lent far more money to Russia than to any other nation. Russia owed France 12 billion by 1913. Smith, et al, *France and the Great War* p.12.

<sup>780</sup> Figes, *A People's Tragedy* p.546.

sent abroad.<sup>781</sup> The French Government was informed of this, and reports that the wires had been cut were sent by a radio telegram from Petrograd to *Reuters* on 8 November.<sup>782</sup> Cossacks under Kerensky's orders controlled the telegraph at Tsarskoïe Selo between 12 and 14 November,<sup>783</sup> but little appears to have been sent from this location. *Havas* was able to send four telegraphs to Paris on 6 and 7 December, all of which were censored.<sup>784</sup> The only detailed message sent was on 6 December, which had stated that there had been an 'appeal of the Soviets at the Petrograd garrison,'<sup>785</sup> and that the special commissars have taken over principal points of the city with a view to a possible seizure of power.<sup>786</sup> On 7 November, messages referred vaguely to 'pessimistic interpretations on the interior situation in Russia,'<sup>787</sup> 'disorganization in the army'<sup>788</sup> and 'antagonisms between soldiers and officers of the Provisional Government.'<sup>789</sup> For the next two weeks all of the information arriving through the telegraph to Paris was confusing and at times contradictory. Some news arrived concerning the opinion of the American and Japanese governments towards Lenin's revolution,<sup>790</sup> and rumors circulated of armistice negotiations between the new Russian Government and the Central Powers, mentioning the possible annexation of Lithuania and Courland from Russia and referring to the 'desire of the Poles.'<sup>791</sup> Because of the Bolshevik blockade on information leaving Petrograd, little concrete information left Russia concerning its internal political situation. On 13 November an uninformative telegram from *Le Petit Parisien* in Petrograd was censored which stated that 'opinion of Kerensky is low.'<sup>792</sup> Another telegram sent by *Havas* which was censored two days later in Stockholm clearly demonstrated the international confusion over events in Petrograd. The vague telegram was censored because it 'exaggerated Bolshevik forces

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<sup>781</sup> Figes, *A People's Tragedy* p.482.

<sup>782</sup> SHD 5N 321, 8 Nov.1917.

<sup>783</sup> SHD 5N 321.

<sup>784</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 6-7 Nov.1917.

<sup>785</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 6 Nov.1917.

<sup>786</sup> SHD 5N 321, radio telegram to the Ministry of War, 6 Nov.1917

<sup>787</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 7 Nov.1917.

<sup>788</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 7 Nov.1917.

<sup>789</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 7 Nov.1917.

<sup>790</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 10 Nov.1917.

<sup>791</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 10 Nov.1917.

<sup>792</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 13 Nov.1917.

in Petrograd.<sup>793</sup> This was eight days after the revolution had ended. Information which arrived in Paris from political channels was more accurate but still unclear.<sup>794</sup>

Information also arrived from Petrograd through Joseph Noulens, the French Ambassador to Russia. He reported on 8 November that the Winter Palace had been taken and that Kerensky's Ministry had been arrested. At the same time, however, he stated that Kerensky was ready to march on the city and the Bolsheviks were increasingly depressed and had limited support.<sup>795</sup> During the next two days radio reports contradicted Noulens by describing the position of the Bolsheviks as being much stronger.<sup>796</sup> Immediately after the Bolshevik coup, few in the French Government really knew who the Bolsheviks were or the full extent of their peace agenda. One French agent sent a particularly prudent message to Paris which suggested that events in Russia since the February Revolution gave little reason to suppose that there would be a 'satisfactory' resolution to the crisis.<sup>797</sup> On 21 November, Trotsky sent a letter to the Allied Embassies proclaiming the new government had proposed talks for an immediate armistice, and even this news was misinterpreted through the telegraph.<sup>798</sup> Clemenceau responded the next day by officially refusing to recognize the new regime.<sup>799</sup>

Because the Petrograd telegraph had been cut, the French Government's most detailed sources of news on the events in Russia were telegrams intercepted from Nauens<sup>800</sup> and messages received from French press agents in neutral cities, particularly Stockholm. On 12 November a letter from Philippe Gaiger informed the War Ministry that the news coming from Scandinavia was the most accurate in regards to the situation in Russia.<sup>801</sup> Three days later another message reached the War Ministry suggesting that there were contrasting media reports in Stockholm and Copenhagen being given by supporters of Kerensky on the one hand and supporters of the

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<sup>793</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 15 Nov.1917.

<sup>794</sup> Carley, *Revolution and Intervention* p.19.

<sup>795</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>796</sup> SHD 5N 321, 9-10 Nov.1917.

<sup>797</sup> Carley, *Revolution and Intervention* p.20.

<sup>798</sup> *Information* from London had a message censored on 21 November proclaiming that Russia had already completed a temporary peace with Germany. BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 21 Nov.1917.

<sup>799</sup> Carley, *Revolution and Intervention* p.24.

<sup>800</sup> Headquarters of the German telegraph agency.

<sup>801</sup> SHD 5N 321, 12 Nov.1917.

Bolsheviks on the other, since everyone acknowledged that the Petrograd telegraph was under military occupation.<sup>802</sup> This suggests that while there was frequent discussion in Scandinavia of Russian affairs, much of it was mired in propaganda. On 7 November, the French intercepted a message from Nauen discussing the Bolshevik plan to release information about the secret treaties.<sup>803</sup> On 10 November, *The Chicago Daily News*<sup>804</sup> had a telegraph stopped which declared that Lenin had already had peace talks with the Germans and three days later *Le Matin* had another stopped which claimed that socialist papers in Germany were advising the Germans to accept 'Lenin's peace.'<sup>805</sup> While these reports were more detailed than those which arrived in Paris through French channels, they were not always accurate. On 30 November for example, *The Daily Mail* in Paris was censored for declaring 'the fall of the Bolsheviks.'<sup>806</sup> The vagueness and confusion which characterized the news emanating from Petrograd, particularly between 7 and 21 November but also afterwards, influenced both the press's coverage of the October Revolution and the actions taken in response by the Press Bureau.

Before November 21, there were few large articles published in the Parisian press on the events in Petrograd both because there was little information available and because the media was preoccupied with the Bolo and *Bonnet Rouge* Affairs and the Battle of Caporetto. Most of the Parisian dailies mentioned on 8 November that the Kerensky Government had been deposed but gave no commentary. In the next few days, papers were vague on events in Russia but a few, most notably *Le Matin*, *Le Journal* and *L'Echo de Paris*, claimed (apparently without proof) that there was an 'energetic reaction against the Bolsheviks in the capital and that the situation would stabilize.'<sup>807</sup> In the final preoccupied days of the Painlevé Government, there were almost no rules given by the Press Bureau controlling the media's treatment of the October Revolution. Papers were allowed to discuss the insurrection in Petrograd as long as they did not

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<sup>802</sup> SHD 5N 321, 15 Nov.1917.

<sup>803</sup> SHD 5N 321, 7 Nov.1917.

<sup>804</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 10 Nov.1917.

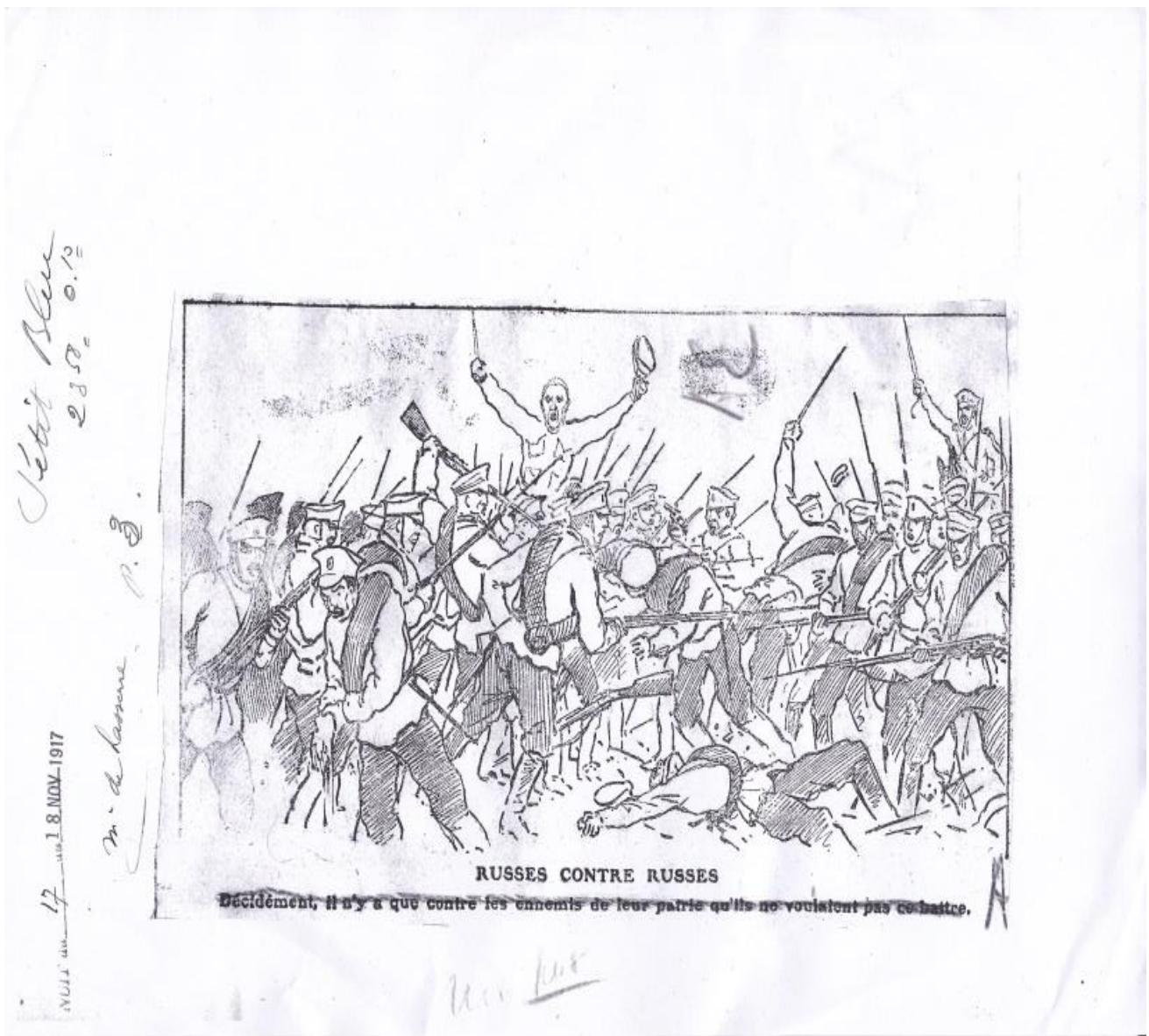
<sup>805</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 14 Nov.1917.

<sup>806</sup> SHD 5N 321, 30 Nov.1917.

<sup>807</sup> SHD 5N 425, War Ministry press analyses, 11 Nov.1917.

refer to a separate peace,<sup>808</sup> either imminent or eventual (see image 1), or discuss a recent interview given by Kerensky in which he stated that the Russians had already sacrificed too much in the war.<sup>809</sup> These rules were also arbitrarily enforced and were applied more heavily on some days than others. On 12 November for example, every major paper announced the Soviet peace proposition. *Le Petit Parisien* was permitted to write that Austria had already approved the idea, whereas *L'Eveil*, *Le Journal* and *Le Petit Journal* all declared that the Germans had made it up.<sup>810</sup> With little information available and the most obvious implications for France prohibited from being mentioned, the Parisian press chose to focus on internal French politics instead of events in Russia for the first two weeks following the October Revolution.

Image 1: Censorship of the prevailing French attitude towards the Russian Revolution.<sup>811</sup>



The provincial press, further removed from the scandals in Paris, made more of an attempt to focus on Russia. The resulting articles were ludicrously uninformed and appear to have contained some news invented by the editors. On 15 and 16 November, for example, *Le Petit Dauphinois* stated that there was a rift between the revolutionary leaders and then that both Lenin and Trotsky had been condemned to death and were fleeing Russia. Two days later the paper claimed that Russia was ‘in a state of anarchy,’ which was followed the next day by a proclamation that the Bolsheviks were triumphant.<sup>812</sup> *Le Droit du Peuple*, a socialist paper also based in the Isère, called the Bolsheviks ‘Russian Jacobins’ and guessed that Russia would stay in the war.<sup>813</sup> This paper, however, like every other media organ of the left in France, turned against the Bolsheviks by December when it seemed increasingly unlikely that Russia would remain in the war.

There were almost no attempts by the mainstream press to give unqualified support to the new government in Petrograd. Though not written specifically in the censors logbooks, the unwritten rule in dealing with Parisian papers between 7 and 21 November appears to have been to encourage caution until the situation in Petrograd and the intentions of the Bolsheviks *vis à vis* Russia’s allies became clear. After 21 November the Press Bureau’s intentions were explicit. The Soviet peace offer was allowed to be published in the French media, but only if it was communicated in the article that the information was itself a public *communiqué*.<sup>814</sup> *La Bataille* and *L’Eveil* were censored that day for mentioning a German espionage mission to Russia and were told by Mandel that they were ‘neglecting their responsibilities’<sup>815</sup> (the euphemism for a warning under the Clemenceau Premiership). The next day, a message from Clemenceau to the Press Bureau ordered that ‘No titles or sensational headlines are to be allowed on the events in Russia.’<sup>816</sup> The press was forbidden from editorializing on the October Revolution, but there is little evidence to suggest that it

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<sup>812</sup> Flood, *France 1914-1918 : Public Opinion and the War Effort* p.143.

<sup>813</sup> *ibid.*, p.144.

<sup>814</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 21 Nov.1917.

<sup>815</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 21 Nov.1917.

<sup>816</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 22 Nov.1917. This order was repeated on 4 December, 11 days before Russia signed an armistice with the Central Powers. BDIC F rés 0270 C, 4 Dec.1917.



was particularly interested in doing so.

The press decided not to focus on the situation in Russia because events at home were more scandalous and journalists, after Clemenceau ended political censorship (in theory), probably preferred to cover events about which they knew all the details. But another reason why the press chose not to concentrate on Russia was the lack of support for the Bolsheviks even amongst the French left. Unlike during the February Revolution, there was no positive spin that could be encouraged by the government or argument in favor of the movement that could be supported by a significant section of French society. French public opinion had grown increasingly exhausted with the Russians.

Since the February Revolution French opinion towards Russia had become increasingly negative, particularly after the failed Kerensky Offensive in July.<sup>817</sup> The reaction of the press to the October Revolution mirrored that of the French population, which postal reports showed was angered by the news but did not regard it as their first concern. Indeed for many, the shock of losing Russia had worn off by November and a more immediate concern was what would happen to the money which had been loaned to Russia in such large quantities.<sup>818</sup> There was a significant increase in hostility to everything Russian, and soldiers on leave in Paris (who more than anyone understood the significance of France losing its eastern ally) accused the press of trying to conceal the importance of the Russian defection.<sup>819</sup> The press, however, was not trying to conceal the significance of the defection but rather did not fully grasp it.<sup>820</sup> Like the French citizenry,<sup>821</sup> the press watched the events in Russia not with revolutionary zeal but with concern as to how they would impact on the French war effort. After 7 November, not one single remark on Russia was recorded by informers as being heard on the streets of Paris.<sup>822</sup> Not even the socialists in France, particularly the moderate ones who felt threatened by the Bolshevik insurgency,<sup>823</sup> supported the Bolsheviks and

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<sup>817</sup> Becker, *The Great War and the French People* p.241.

<sup>818</sup> *ibid.*, p.242.

<sup>819</sup> *ibid.*, p.243.

<sup>820</sup> Flood, *France 1914-1918* p.143.

<sup>821</sup> Becker, *The Great War and the French People* p.240.

<sup>822</sup> *ibid.*, p.244.

<sup>823</sup> Horne, *Labour at War* p.341.

those who did dared not say so publicly.<sup>824</sup> Censorship did not play the same significant role in France after the October Revolution as it had after the February Revolution because the press was uninformed, pre-occupied and, even on the political extremes, was unwilling to take the controversial stance of arguing in favour of the Bolsheviks.

There was never an intense period of news coverage of the Bolshevik Revolution in the French press. Articles increased in number in November after the armistice in the east and then again after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. By the beginning of 1918 any positive commentary from the left towards the Bolshevik Revolution (there was very little) had entirely evaporated.<sup>825</sup> The separate peace encapsulated what French observers considered the revolution was all about.<sup>826</sup> The more French citizens of all political affiliations learned more about the Bolsheviks, the less they liked them.<sup>827</sup> The result was that one of the most significant events in twentieth-century history was one of the most under-reported.

#### *Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points*

On 8 January 1918, American President Woodrow Wilson delivered his famous 14 Points speech to Congress. The speech was a direct response to events in Russia<sup>828</sup> and was aimed at his progressive base at home, the Bolsheviks, the opposition in Germany and the socialists and progressives in the Allied Countries.<sup>829</sup> Wilson called for an end to secret diplomacy (the Bolsheviks had published the secret agreements over the future of the Middle East, the Straits, Poland and the Adriatic in late November 1917), freedom of the seas, free trade, the reduction of national armaments, the readjustment

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<sup>824</sup> Becker, *The Great War and the French People* p.244.

<sup>825</sup> Robert, *Les Ouvriers, la patrie et la révolution* p.217.

<sup>826</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>827</sup> A similar approach to the press in the light of the Bolshevik Revolution took place in Britain. It has been argued that in Britain (like in France) propaganda campaigns criticising the Bolsheviks were 'bogus' because most of the press and citizenry already despised them. Rose, *Aspects of Political Censorship* p.68.

<sup>828</sup> On Christmas Day 1917, the Central Powers accepted the general peace conditions outlined by the Bolsheviks at Brest-Litovsk. Stevenson, *French War Aims* p.100. The Central Powers agreed to a peace without 'annexations or indemnities' if the Allied Powers agreed to proceed likewise. Stevenson, *1914-1918* p.386.

<sup>829</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918* p.390.

of colonial claims based on sovereignty and the interest of the concerned populations, the evacuation of Russian territory, the restoration of Belgium and the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine to its pre-1871 status. Wilson also declared that the re-adjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be determined by ‘recognizable lines of nationality,’ that the populations of Austria-Hungary should be allowed ‘autonomous development’ while maintaining the integrity of the Habsburg Monarchy and that Romania, Serbia and Montenegro should be freed from occupying forces and restored with Serbia given free access to the sea. The Ottoman Empire was to be dismantled with the ethnically Turkish portion remaining under Turkish rule. An independent Poland was to be established and a League of Nations would be set up after the war. The speech was met with a lukewarm response by America’s partners,<sup>830</sup> Clemenceau sarcastically declaring that ‘God needed only 10’<sup>831</sup> and was all but ignored by statesmen and soldiers in Germany.<sup>832</sup> Though its immediate results were disappointing<sup>833</sup> the speech later proved to be the basis for the conditions under which the Germans surrendered in November 1918.

Three days before Wilson’s speech, Lloyd George had delivered another at Caxton Hall in front of a group of trade union representatives. The two speeches contained some similarities. Lloyd George, like Wilson, called for the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the maintenance of the Austro-Hungarian state, and gave support to France’s claim to Alsace-Lorraine. It is important that the two speeches were not designed as immediate calls for peace, which neither country felt was opportune, but rather were intended to shore up public opinion in the Allied Countries, encourage Russia to stay in the war and encourage the opposition in the Central Powers.<sup>834</sup>

Like Lloyd George’s,<sup>835</sup> Wilson’s commitment to Alsace-Lorraine was not absolute. Whereas Wilson declared that Belgium ‘must’ be restored, the invaded territories he suggested only ‘should’ be restored to France. Furthermore, the speech was a clear

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<sup>830</sup> *ibid.*, p.391.

<sup>831</sup> Farwell, *Over There* p.253.

<sup>832</sup> H.H. Herwig, *The First World War : Germany and Austria-Hungary* (London, 1997). p.382.

<sup>833</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918* p.391.

<sup>834</sup> Stevenson, *With our Backs to the Wall* p.453.

<sup>835</sup> Lloyd George, however, offset this non-committal stance by insisting on reparations for France and French priority in the attainment of raw materials. Stevenson, *French War Aims* p.101.

repudiation of the French claim to the east bank of the Rhine, which had been called for in the right-wing press (and was featured in the Doumergue Agreement, which the Bolsheviks had published), most notably in *L'Echo de Paris* and *L'Action Française*, since 1916.<sup>836</sup> The 14 Points helped shore up French morale by appealing to the left<sup>837</sup> and began a well-publicized affinity for 'Wilsonian idealism' on the part of the progressive left in Europe. Much of the sympathy for the 14 points from the left in France, however, disappeared in the next three months because of the punitive treaty of Brest-Litovsk imposed on Russia by Germany and signed on 3 March 1918.<sup>838</sup> Although Wilson's speech indirectly challenged Clemenceau's policy of *jusqu'au boutisme*,<sup>839</sup> Clemenceau believed that France in the short run had got much of what it wanted in the speech, particularly in regard to Alsace-Lorraine, and thought it placed the onus of negotiation on the Central Powers.<sup>840</sup> He therefore chose to embrace the statement with the intention that the details would be reworked after the war.

News of the 14 Points arrived at the Press Bureau by telegram on the night of 8 January. Immediately Mandel was telephoned and read the speech twice. After being asked his opinion by the telegraph censor (either Berger or Allard), Mandel said he would ask Clemenceau immediately what to do.<sup>841</sup> Clemenceau decided to suspend the article for the first night.<sup>842</sup> What happened at the Press Bureau over the next 11 days is not entirely clear. Besides a ban on all articles published in German papers<sup>843</sup> there appear to have been no specific orders to the press on the speech<sup>844</sup> yet the press only published large stories on the 14 Points for four days after the speech was given. The censors themselves were astonished by the press's lack of interest, as most papers devoted only four to seven columns and *Le Temps* wrote only 26 lines.<sup>845</sup> It is possible that Mandel phoned in orders directly to papers not to editorialize too heavily on the 14 Points, but it is more probable that the media were distracted by the Brest-Litovsk

<sup>836</sup> N. Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London, 1997) p.317.

<sup>837</sup> Stevenson, *French War Aims* p.101.

<sup>838</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918* p.392.

<sup>839</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918* p.101.

<sup>840</sup> Stevenson, *French War Aims* p.101.

<sup>841</sup> It is curious that Mandel was contacted this way since he had ordered in November 1917 that he was to be telephoned only by Captain Nusillard. There appears to be no archival explanation for this discrepancy.

<sup>842</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.270.

<sup>843</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 8 Jan.1918.

<sup>844</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C.

<sup>845</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.271.

peace negotiations between Russia and the Central Powers which had begun on 21 December, and by Caillaux's arrest on 4 January. The latter was overwhelmingly the main story in the press at the time and also the event which took up most of the censors' time.<sup>846</sup>

The reports in the press during the four days after the speech were surprisingly uncontroversial. The speech generally achieved its purpose of shoring up the left and centre-left, which praised Wilson for trumpeting an 'internationally agreed upon peace'<sup>847</sup> and bringing 'the world a message of justice and liberty.'<sup>848</sup> *Le Radical* praised the discourses of both Wilson and Lloyd George for providing a counter-point to the deliberations at Brest-Litovsk and for 'taking the initiative away from the Germans.'<sup>849</sup> Wilson was also praised by several papers on the right which saw his speech as offering a guarantee of the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine to France. *L'Echo de Paris* declared that Wilson had added substance to what Lloyd George had said earlier because he believed that 'the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine is essential to world peace.' Also the paper argued that Wilson's speech was in direct opposition to Germany's post-war goal of *Mitteleuropa*.<sup>850</sup> *Le Gaulois* claimed that the socialists would never fully comprehend the meaning of Wilson's wonderful speech whose fundamental message was that Germany must give up its territorial conquests.<sup>851</sup>

Though the speech was overwhelmingly popular in the press, it also brought with it some criticism both of Wilson and of Clemenceau. The speech was criticized by a small section of the French press for being unrealistic. *La France* wrote that both Wilson and Lloyd George's speeches failed to 'grasp the reality of the international situation',<sup>852</sup> and *La Libre Parole* dismissed the former as 'utopian.'<sup>853</sup> *La Petite République* echoed Clemenceau's sarcastic comment about the length of Wilson's outline, stating 'we have too many war aims.'<sup>854</sup> Although these were direct criticisms

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<sup>846</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C.

<sup>847</sup> SHD 5N 425, *L'Heure*, 11 Jan.1918.

<sup>848</sup> SHD 5N 425, *La Vérité*, 11 Jan.1918.

<sup>849</sup> SHD 5N 425, *Le Radical*, 11 Jan.1918.

<sup>850</sup> *L'Echo de Paris*, 11 Jan.1918.

<sup>851</sup> 5N SHD 425, *Le Gaulois*, 11 Jan.1918.

<sup>852</sup> SHD 5N 425, *La France*, 11 Jan.1918

<sup>853</sup> SHD 5N 425, *La Libre Parole*, 11 Jan.1918.

<sup>854</sup> SHD 5N 425, *La Petite République*, 14 Jan.1918.

of the 14 Points, they were made by papers with small readerships and little influence. The decision not to punish them was typical of Mandel's tendency to allow smaller papers to get away with 'unfortunate' comments but to threaten them with large penalties if their articles might harm the French war effort. More important were the attacks which were launched at Clemenceau, including suggestions for his response. An article in *Le Pays* by M. Aulard began by asserting that the speeches by Wilson and Lloyd were 'touching' but asked why Clemenceau, 'who has been a champion of ideas and is admired for his energy,'<sup>855</sup> had said nothing. Both *L'Humanité*<sup>856</sup> and *La France*<sup>857</sup> criticized Clemenceau for refusing to send delegates to Petrograd. Whereas the former suggested that Clemenceau had missed an opportunity and asserted that 'if he thinks he can reverse time, he is wrong,' the latter argued that France should send delegates to Brest-Litovsk who 'represent French interests.' Five days after the 14 Points speech, commentary in the press had started to become less frequent and the government chose tolerance towards the press rather than to repress criticism. Clemenceau in this instance had kept his word that he would allow attacks in the media on political personalities, himself included. Luckily for him, the press was more intent on attacking Joseph Caillaux, to whom it quickly turned within a week of the 14 Points and Caxton Hall speeches.

On 11 February, Wilson delivered another address. His appeal was again designed to keep Russia in the war but because it was made in the name of the Allied coalition, it alarmed both France and Britain.<sup>858</sup> The speech gave the left-wing press a new opportunity to speak out against the war. Two days before, the government had clarified its position on articles discussing Alsace-Lorraine. Mandel on 20 January ordered that there be a clear distinction between two types of pacifist articles on the subject. 'They should be separated into: A. Those that envisage the necessity of a plebiscite<sup>859</sup> and B. Those that express the wish that the question of Alsace-Lorraine not become a cause of continuation of the war. The first of these is left up to the

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<sup>855</sup> SHD 5N 425, *Le Pays*, 11 Jan.1918.

<sup>856</sup> SHD 5N 425, *L'Humanité*, 11 Jan.1918.

<sup>857</sup> SHD 5N 425, *La France*, 14 Jan.1918.

<sup>858</sup> H.Strachan, *The First World War* p.295.

<sup>859</sup> A plebiscite had been discussed at the recent London conference of Allied Socialists.

responsibility of the journals, the second needs to be formally slashed and the prefect of police be given notice in advance.<sup>860</sup> In other words, papers which supported a plebiscite in Alsace-Lorraine would be given a warning issued probably by Mandel himself, and those which argued that Alsace-Lorraine was not worth fighting for would be seized or suspended.

The Press Bureau's records at the BDIC reveal that it did not issue any orders censoring Wilson's discourses in January 1918 because the newspapers themselves chose to discuss the story only in minor articles. The press did not engage in a vociferous debate as it had after Stockholm, even though as over Stockholm the orders given were not particularly severe or strictly enforced. The media frenzy in the United States which followed the 14 Points or the frequent comments published in Petrograd in *Izvestiya*<sup>861</sup> were not matched in France because the French press judged international affairs by how they affected the French war effort. Events in Russia trumped in importance those in the United States for most French citizens. Just as the news of the October Revolution had been sidelined by the press because its significance was misunderstood and underestimated, now Wilson's declarations of January 1918 that later heavily influenced the peace process were overshadowed by Caillaux's arrest (a juicy media scandal) and the deliberations at Brest-Litovsk which were themselves a product of the October Revolution.

### *Peace in the East: The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk*

On 3 March 1918, the Bolsheviks signed a peace treaty with the Central Powers. Russia, in one of the harshest treaties in European history, signed over Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Livonia and Courland. Both Finland and the Ukraine were ceded, and Turkey regained its pre-1878 frontiers. Russia lost a million square miles of territory, 55 million people (a third of its population, though mostly non-Russian),<sup>862</sup> a third of its agriculture, half of its industry, almost all of its coal and oil and three-

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<sup>860</sup> BDIC F r s 0270 C, 20 Jan. 1917.

<sup>861</sup> Farwell, *Over There* p.284.

<sup>862</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918* p.394.

quarters of its iron ore.<sup>863</sup> The punitive measures imposed on Russia did much to consolidate support for the war effort in France and to put an end to what was left of the debate over whether to sign a negotiated peace.

Russia first appealed to the OHL for an armistice on 13 November 1917, a move which was publicly announced on 21 November. Over the next month, Petrograd published the secret treaties on 23 November (much to the embarrassment of its allies) and stopped paying interest on its foreign debts five days later.<sup>864</sup> Russia and the Central Powers then concluded a one-month armistice on 16 December which was followed up four days later by the commencement of peace negotiation and then by a declaration by the Central Powers on Christmas Day that they would agree to a peace without annexations or indemnities if the Allied Powers would do likewise.<sup>865</sup> When the one month armistice was about to expire, on 13 January the Central Powers and the Russians re-opened peace negotiations and the Bolsheviks declared that all debts owed to 'bourgeois nations' were cancelled.

As negotiations dragged on at Brest-Litovsk, the OHL rightly assumed that the Bolsheviks were playing for time either for the military situation to improve in Western Europe (the Russian army had all but disintegrated) or for revolution to take hold in Germany, which was severely plagued by a strike wave in January. On 9 February, Germany signed a separate peace with the Ukraine, prompting Trotsky to storm out of the unfinished negotiations the next day declaring 'No war, no peace.' Trotsky's move proved to be highly unwise. On 13 February the Germans decided at Bad Homburg to resume hostilities against Russia, which began five days later. The German army met no resistance and advanced 150 miles in five days.<sup>866</sup> At Lenin's insistence<sup>867</sup> the Bolsheviks signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty on 3 March.

Russia's departure from the war directly affected France perhaps more than any other belligerent. Paris was desperate to keep Russia in the war. Though the French Government despised the Bolsheviks, it was willing to help them financially and

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<sup>863</sup> Strachan, *The First World War* p.261.

<sup>864</sup> Forcade, 'La Censure politique en France', p.252.

<sup>865</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918* p.386.

<sup>866</sup> *ibid.*, p.393-394.

<sup>867</sup> On 20 January, Lenin published his 21 Theses which argued that Russia must consolidate the revolution at home rather than risking it by waiting for Germany to revolt first.



militarily in February after the Germans resumed the offensive. But once Russia made peace with Germany, it supported the resistance by the Whites against the Bolsheviks.<sup>868</sup> Not all of the effects of the October Revolution on France were negative, however, particularly when it came to domestic politics. Russia's humiliation at Brest-Litovsk eliminated most calls for a compromise peace by France's socialists and did much to boost support for Clemenceau's policy of *jusqu'au boutisme*. On 8 March Clemenceau, in one of his most memorable moments of the war, declared 'The attempt at a democratic peace by the effect of persuasion on the German revolutionaries has now been made. Yet however hard they listened for a cry of protest in Berlin, nothing replies except silence.'<sup>869</sup>

On 21 November 1917, news of the Kirilenko Proclamation, the official announcement by Russia that it was seeking an armistice with the Central Powers, was stopped on the telegraph<sup>870</sup> but was allowed to appear in the press as an official *communiqué* on the condition that it followed the proclamation to the letter and that the paper stated that the French government was aware of a German espionage ring in Petrograd.<sup>871</sup> The next day, Clemenceau ordered that 'no sensational titles or headlines' be allowed on the events in Russia.<sup>872</sup> The press mostly obeyed the Press Bureau's orders. The government wanted newspaper readers to feel that they were fully informed, but newspapers were routinely censored for declaring that they had received their information on the Russo-German deliberations from foreign sources. On 5 December alone eight papers, including *Le Petit Parisien*, *Le Petit Journal*, *Victoire* and *L'Echo de Paris*, were censored for declaring that they had received news from Zurich or Berlin.<sup>873</sup> The news came in the middle of the Caillaux Affair and it is possible that press owners on the right believed that the implications of the proclamation were self-explanatory whereas those on the left deemed it an inopportune moment to pick a fight with the newly appointed Clemenceau Government.

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<sup>868</sup> D. Stevenson, *French War Aims* p.105.

<sup>869</sup> *ibid.*, pp.103-104.

<sup>870</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.428. *Information* had sent a telegram from London on the subject which was stopped, BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 21 Nov.1917.

<sup>871</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 21 Nov.1917.

<sup>872</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 22 Nov.1917.

<sup>873</sup> SHD 5N 516, 5 Dec.1917.

The government's handling of press coverage of Russia changed little between November and the following March. Few orders were given by the Press Bureau, but warnings were frequent, arbitrary and accompanied by loosely veiled threats. Still, the system worked. Perhaps content with Clemenceau's policy of allowing attacks on selective political figures, the media chose to obey the new government in the more sensitive realm of foreign affairs. It is also probable that Mandel's straightforward manner and his policy of contacting newspapers directly contributed to this phenomenon, though because his personal papers were destroyed in Rouen in the final days of the Second World War this is difficult to confirm. Papers under the Clemenceau government were rarely punished, because few blatantly disobeyed orders. Gone were the days when the largest dailies (*Le Petit Parisien* in particular) acted with impunity.

The main goal of the Press Bureau during this time was to encourage the media to portray the Bolsheviks in a negative light. Because of the rapidly diminishing estimation held of Russia in France, the selective publication of material related to the deliberations between the Germans and the Russians was enough to accomplish this task while keeping editorials to a minimum and political debate out of the papers. Articles which made the Bolsheviks look bad were permitted and those which were more ambiguous were prohibited. This policy was carried out with few official orders and was directed under Mandel's close supervision. On 27 November *Le Journal* was censored for an article which discussed Lenin and Trotsky's backgrounds. The censors, who believed that the article was written in a neutral fashion and simply constituted 'news,' asked Nusillard why the article had been slashed. Nusillard responded that 'we are in the process of developing an attitude towards the new masters of Russia, who have given that nation a new policy of intransigence. This attitude is that they are committing an injustice towards Europe. Mandel reads these papers and jumps straight to these Russian reports which make apologies for Lenin.'<sup>874</sup> In early December the news of Trotsky and Lenin's nomination for a Nobel Peace Prize was banned.<sup>875</sup>

Perhaps the only news story that was heavily censored at first and certain to incite

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<sup>874</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.249.

<sup>875</sup> SHD 5N 516, Report on stopped telegrams, 9-10 Dec. 1917.

hatred against Russia was the Bolshevik decision on 28 November to stop paying interest on Russia's foreign debts. This issue was eventually addressed in an official *communiqué* by Finance Minister Louis-Lucien Klotz on 7 December. 'The French Government considers that all financial engagements made before the war in Russia's name are independent of the regime change in that country and they are applicable to whoever represents Russia. We can announce that payments towards the Russian debt will be paid off in January 1918, just as they have been in the past.'<sup>876</sup> The memorandum had the desired effect on the press, which insisted that 'the debts will be paid'<sup>877</sup> and 'we must occupy ourselves with the debt owed to France.'<sup>878</sup> Klotz's message was reassuring if unrealistic. A month later the Press Bureau allowed the media to publish the news of the official cancellation of all debt owed to 'bourgeois governments' by the Russian Government. Later in January, the news of the cancellation of public debt was prohibited from publication<sup>879</sup> but the devaluation of French capital in Russia was permitted 'under the responsibility of the papers.'<sup>880</sup> Finally on 24 February, the government re-established the policy of only allowing official *communiqués* to be published on the subject of French finances in Russia.<sup>881</sup>

All stories or information favorable to the Bolsheviks was slashed as was false news. *L'Intransigeant* was censored heavily on 29 November for attempting to explain the Bolshevik position. Though much of the article was censored, the offending passage which was formally slashed stated that 'Not all Bolsheviks are German agents and the Bolsheviks actually believe the Russian people want peace.'<sup>882</sup> A similar article in *Le Temps* was heavily censored on 3 December for publishing a query by Lenin as to whether 'peoples' opinions are influenced by reactionary politics or if they wished to use the opportunity offered by the Russian Revolution to initiate an open peace.'<sup>883</sup> On 21 November a premature announcement that an armistice had been concluded was

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<sup>876</sup> *ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>877</sup> *L'Echo de Paris*, 10 Jan.1918, Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.252.

<sup>878</sup> *Le Temps*, 10 Jan.1918. Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.252.

<sup>879</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 15 Jan.1918.

<sup>880</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 18 Jan.1918.

<sup>881</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 24 Feb.1918.

<sup>882</sup> SHD 5N 515. 29 Nov.1917.

<sup>883</sup> SHD 5N 516. 3 Dec.1917.

stopped<sup>884</sup> on the telegraph as was another from *The Daily Mail* nine days later that announced the ‘fall of the Bolsheviks.’<sup>885</sup> Only a heavily abridged version of the secret treaties was allowed to be published and the papers that chose to do so were severely warned of the potential consequences by Mandel himself.<sup>886</sup> *Le Temps* appears to have been the only paper which attempted to publish the treaties in their full texts, but was prohibited from doing so.<sup>887</sup> All editorializing on the subject was strictly prohibited.<sup>888</sup>

On 2 December Pétain told the Press Bureau to inform papers that soldiers at the front were easily influenced by the events in Russia and to warn them of this fact. The next day Mandel told the censors that he wanted to be advised which papers were given warnings regarding pacifist or inopportune articles. ‘These papers will be warned at the moment of submission of their drafts that they run the risk of not being circulated at the front.’ According to Berger and Allard, this was typical of Mandel’s threatening style.<sup>889</sup> The threats, however, were not empty. Pétain had now decided, with Clemenceau’s blessing, to severely intensify censorship of press material at the front. The Military Government of Paris’s list of sanctions, found at the SHD,<sup>890</sup> reveals that from the beginning of December until the end of the war there was an enormous increase in the number of papers which were seized either en route to the front or at the front lines themselves. At the same time, however, there was a significant decrease in the number of papers that were seized in the interior, although the frequency of suspensions remained comparable to the period before the Clemenceau Premiership. Mandel’s approach used both the carrot and the stick. It allowed papers to publish more (particularly regarding internal affairs) and punished them less frequently for minor infractions. But warnings under the new system were accompanied by threats and the percentage of punishments under the new system resulting in suspensions rather than seizures was much higher.<sup>891</sup> Under the

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<sup>884</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 21 Nov.1917.

<sup>885</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 30 Nov.1917.

<sup>886</sup> *La Lanterne* for example was reminded that it was responsible for the potential consequences of its article entitled ‘Trotsky Publishes All’, SHD 5N 515, 27 Nov.1917.

<sup>887</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.248.

<sup>888</sup> Without publishing the secret treaties themselves, Henri Fabre in *Le Journal du Peuple* was censored on 4 December for calling ‘the old diplomacy’ ‘stupid.’ SHD 5N 516, 4-5 Dec.1917.

<sup>889</sup> *ibid.*, p.249.

<sup>890</sup> SHD 5N 357.

<sup>891</sup> Between April and November 1917 31 papers were seized in the interior and eight were seized at the

Clemenceau regime, censorship became more selective in the interior and less so at the front.

News about Russia was increasingly censored in December and January as the press began to attempt to write more on the subject. On 4 and 7 December the Press Bureau ordered again that ‘no major headlines be allowed on events in Russia’.<sup>892</sup> In January, the implications for a separate peace in the East for France became more apparent and Russia and Germany appeared to be moving closer towards making a deal. By this point, only *Le Journal du Peuple* still consistently praised the Bolsheviks and argued for a negotiated peace. However, the paper, according to Berger and Allard, was not considered a threat by censors at the Press Bureau because it only had a circulation of 12,000 copies and Fabre (the editor) had a congenial relationship with Nusillard.<sup>893</sup> For the government it was most important to contain alarmism. On 9 January, the Press Bureau ordered that ‘no mention be made of the sending of 70 German divisions to the French front.’<sup>894</sup> Not only did censorship have to counter the influence of Bolshevism in France (of which there was very little) but also it had to prevent the news of an imminent German offensive from creating alarm. On 15 January, two days after peace negotiations had recommenced in Brest-Litovsk, a general order was given to ‘not speak of the interior situation in Russia.’<sup>895</sup> The order was overwhelmingly obeyed and not one paper was seized or suspended in the interior for writing on Russia for the rest of the war.

During February, a month when the Bolsheviks were in frequent contact with the French Government to appeal for aid after Trotsky left the deliberations at Brest-Litovsk and Germany advanced again into Russia, the government took a hands-off approach towards the media. From this point forward fewer than 10 orders were issued to the Press Bureau’s censors each month.<sup>896</sup> The media continued to follow the Press

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front. Beginning in December 1917 until the end of October 1918 three were seized in the interior and 52 were seized at the front. The number of suspensions between the two periods was comparable (14 for the first period, 17 for the second) but in the second period, suspensions often replaced seizures as a form of punishment.

<sup>892</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 4 and 7 Dec.1917.

<sup>893</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.279.

<sup>894</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 9 Jan.1918.

<sup>895</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 15 Jan.1918.

<sup>896</sup> Forcade, ‘La Censure politique en France’, p.146.

Bureau's orders to only publish official government statements when discussing Russian affairs, and had become increasingly pre-occupied with reporting on the Gotha bomber raids over Paris, which had begun in January, and the increasingly militant declarations of the CGT regarding a new strike movement planned for May.

Negotiations between the French and Russian governments at the end of the month were entirely censored, as was the sending of French envoys to Petrograd which papers were told was false information.<sup>897</sup> Papers were told in advance that all commentary denouncing the Franco-Russian Alliance would be strictly censored and again, the press obeyed.<sup>898</sup> Particularly important for the government was that no news be mentioned of the substantial German territorial gains between 18 and 23 February.<sup>899</sup> When news finally arrived in France of the signature of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the press was shocked and the French Government allowed the full weight of French hostility towards the Bolsheviks to be voiced.

The only items that were censored regarding the signing at Brest-Litovsk were declarations by the Bolsheviks to the Russian population.<sup>900</sup> The full text of the treaty was allowed to be published on 5 March.<sup>901</sup> Not one paper even attempted to justify the settlement, and the Bolsheviks were universally criticized by the French media for two weeks after it was signed. Besides insults launched at the Bolsheviks (many papers referred to them as traitors), the two major themes reported were the shamefulness of the peace imposed on the Russian people<sup>902</sup> and the impact the treaty would have on European socialism. The first was sounded most loudly by the right but was echoed as well on the left. *L'Humanité* on 6 March, for example, naively declared that the terms of the peace were such that 'both Lenin and Trotsky should prepare to resign.'<sup>903</sup> *L'Humanité* as well as the other leftist papers were now again pushed onto the defensive. A day earlier, the paper had declared that 'Now people will blame the Socialists in France who were simply trying to purge Russia from the sins of the

<sup>897</sup> BDIC. F rés 0270 C, 25 Feb.1918.

<sup>898</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 21 Feb.1918.

<sup>899</sup> SHD 5N 521, 22 Feb.1918.

<sup>900</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 3 and 6 Mar.1918.

<sup>901</sup> SHD 5N 426.

<sup>902</sup> *L'Echo de Paris* for example declared the settlement 'The most shameful peace imaginable' and *La Liberté* that 'The peace has dishonoured the Russian people.'

<sup>903</sup> SHD 5N 426, *L'Humanité*, 6 Mar.1918.

Tsarist Regime'. *L'Humanité* was right that the Socialists were now being heavily criticized by papers not only on the right but also on the centre. Gustave Hervé in *La Victoire* declared the treaty a lesson for all European socialists.<sup>904</sup> After this intense period of denigrating the Bolsheviks and demands for an explanation from the French socialists, the issue was sidelined because of the launch of the German Spring Offensives on the Western Front which began on 21 March. The country needed to come together now more than at any other point during the war.

### *Conclusion*

Clemenceau, who had benefited much from the government's increasing lenience towards political attacks in the media, officially discontinued the practice of political censorship. However, he did not eliminate political censorship but rather institutionalized a more selective version of the practice. By censoring all articles that could be interpreted as defeatist, pacifist, or dangerous to public order and by allowing attacks on politicians, he silenced the left and gave the right *carte blanche*. Though Clemenceau allowed himself to be attacked (thereby avoiding accusations of blatant hypocrisy), he protected his unpopular Cabinet Chief Georges Mandel, army generals and Poincaré. Clemenceau was hated by the left and intended to use censorship to repress it. Nevertheless during his tenure, anti-war sentiment in France declined and the left did not even attempt to challenge France's new press regime. As the leftist press largely moved closer to the centre, and the centre moved to the right, the press largely obeyed the orders given to it during the last year of the war.

The Press Bureau was also increasingly obeyed by the media because it was now more directly supervised by the government. Mandel immediately asserted his dominance over the Press Bureau by relegating Captain Ernest Nusillard's position from chief supervisor of press censorship to messenger for the Government's orders to the censors. Not content with simply giving orders to the Press Bureau related to individual events, Mandel's style was more to threaten than to punish. When

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<sup>904</sup> SHD 5N 426, *La Victoire*, 8 Mar.1918.

punishments were enforced, however, they were severe. Mandel used intimidation at the Press Bureau to foster obedience.

News in France of the October Revolution was murky because the Bolsheviks quickly commandeered the Petrograd telegraph. The fact that both the government and the press received much of their early information regarding events in Russia from third-party sources, particularly Germany and Scandinavia, was concealed. But because the press was only allowed to publish government *communiqués*, which were vague in nature, it was not until February when it began to focus heavily on Russia. By this time almost all sympathy towards the Bolsheviks in France had disappeared and the anti-war faction of the socialist party, which favored a negotiated peace, had been largely discredited. The press toed the government line on Russia. Although Pétain stepped up censorship at the front, resulting in an increase of seizures, not one paper was given more than a warning for commenting on events in Russia during Clemenceau's premiership.

The press not only influenced interests and public opinion in France but also reflected them. French citizens interpreted events mostly in terms of how they affected France directly. The French press concentrated on events at home first, then on international affairs. In reporting on foreign affairs, events in Russia took priority over those in the United States. As a result, news of Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points speech alongside that of David Lloyd George's Caxton Hall speech was significantly underreported in the press. The media's heavy focus on internal affairs in France at the expense of international diplomatic news during the first few months of 1918 perfectly suited a censorship system that monitored and selectively permitted political attacks of France's politicians and engaged heavily in diplomatic censorship.

Finally, it was official government policy to encourage the press to be disdainful of the Bolsheviks in Russia as the chief advocates of a negotiated peace settlement. This again was accomplished through selective political censorship. Arguments in favour of the Bolsheviks were banned, papers which were neutral towards them were severely warned and threatened by Mandel, and articles arguing against them were permitted if not explicitly encouraged. Mandel's policy was to allow the officially released news of



the Russo-German peace deliberations to speak for itself. This was a prudent policy as French public opinion towards Russia dramatically hardened beginning in December 1917. By the time Brest-Litovsk was signed on 3 March, the news of the treaty merely consolidated the hostility of almost the entire French media towards Russia. The German spring offensives against France later that month completed this process.

Reactions in the media to events in Russia mirrored those held by the French populace. They steadily shifted from confusion and consternation towards anger and hostility. The issue of the Russian financial debt to France was particularly sensitive and comment on it was censored particularly severely. Had freedom of discussion been allowed on this subject earlier it is highly probable that public sympathy towards the Russians would have diminished far more rapidly. Mandel's careful control of this topic was useful in combatting alarmism.

Finally, the socialists were blamed somewhat unjustly by the media after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Though the SFIO had supported Stockholm and much of it argued for a compromise peace, enthusiasm for this position had significantly waned by the beginning of 1918 and after Caillaux was out of the picture neither the SFIO nor the socialist press argued in favor of the Bolsheviks. Those who did, like Henri Fabre, were so marginalized that they were not even taken seriously by the Press Bureau. The first three months of 1918 saw a depolarization of politics in France which was reflected in the media. Now the country united together to face perhaps its most significant military threat of the war, the German spring offensives.

## Chapter 6: Spring-Summer 1918 : The Challenge of the Ludendorff Offensives

### *Introduction*

In 1918 Germany, after defeating Russia in the east, focused its full attention on the Western Front. Beginning in January, Germany launched air raids on Paris and London<sup>905</sup> using Gotha Bombers and attempted unsuccessfully to break the resolve of the populations there. In March, Germany launched a massive series of offensives which lasted through the summer but were unable to sustain their original territorial gains. During this period France, it appears, had begun to recover from the fracturing in the *Union Sacrée* which characterized much of 1917. Germany's actions did a great deal to bring the French together against a common enemy and weaken the left anti-war movement. Censorship played a part in helping to limit alarmism and to prevent the spread of labour unrest in this period, but its job was made easier by a general upswing in French morale.

This chapter deals with a common theme throughout the study – namely how the French information management system dealt with events which played out in the open. The Gotha bombings, the Paris Gun attacks and the 1918 strike movement were all impossible to censor in their entirety, yet the Press Bureau under Mandel's direction dealt with each using a comprehensive strategy to avoid panic and to avoid the spread of rumours or potentially incendiary information.

During the Ludendorff offensives again the difficulty was raised of how to censor news regarding the Americans, who were untested and highly sensitive to negative criticism. In many ways the Ludendorff offensives were approached by the Press Bureau in a similar fashion to the Nivelle offensive the previous year. The strategy for the censorship of battles which was developed during Verdun – vagueness in reporting negative information, detailed description of the positive- was used until the end of the war. However while the strategy remained the same, the press itself had matured by becoming less prone to sensationalism.

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<sup>905</sup> Gotha raids in London started in summer 1917. Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*, pp.185-187.

This chapter offers a glimpse into provincial censorship through its discussion of the spring 1918 strike movement in the Loire. Little was known in France regarding its build up in part because of the secrecy of the more militant factions of the French labour. Once the strikes began, however, the Press Bureau helped to prevent their spread. Some comparisons are made between the censorship of the 1917 and 1918 spring movements, though the differences are much more numerous than the similarities. The objectives of the movements, the governments in Paris involved and the level of their popular support differed entirely. Clemenceau's approach to the 1918 strikes was entirely successful and a large portion of this chapter examines the reasons for this success.

*France Under Siege: Gotha Raids, the Paris Gun and the Spring Offensive.*

After victory in the east, the OHL under General Erich Ludendorff's direction decided to take an all-or-nothing gamble against the Allies on the Western Front. The Germans were able to shift 33 divisions over to the Western Front from Russia<sup>906</sup> where they now had 192 concentrated against the Allies' 178.<sup>907</sup> The goal was to penetrate deep into weak points along the Allied lines using heavy concentrations of storm-trooper units equipped with new mobile weapons and meticulously trained to use new infantry tactics. The attacks came in five waves: Operation Michael between 21 March and 5 April near St. Quentin, Georgette from 9 to 29 April near Ypres, Blücher-Yorck from 27 May to 6 June between Soissons and Reims, Gneisenau from 9 to 12 June along the Matz River, and the final German attack resulting in the Second Battle of the Marne from 15 July to 7 August. The attacks at first concentrated primarily on the BEF under the assumption that if they were soundly beaten or 'driven into the sea'<sup>908</sup> French morale would collapse. The OHL had a short window of opportunity to break through the Western Front before American troops arrived in large enough numbers to tip the scale in favour of the Allies.

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<sup>906</sup> The Germans were in March 1918 were still forced to keep 47 divisions in the east. Ibid., p.36.

<sup>907</sup> Ibid.p.135.

<sup>908</sup> Ibid. p.129.

The German Army achieved significant tactical successes in each attack and during the Second Battle of the Chemin des Dames which began on 27 May the Germans reached within 56 miles of Paris after four days of fighting.<sup>909</sup> The rapid pace of advance quickly exhausted Germany's soldiers, particularly the storm-trooper units upon which much of the success depended. By June the Germans were attacking with diminishing returns.<sup>910</sup> Ludendorff had no operational or strategic plan for what to do after puncturing the Allied lines<sup>911</sup> and after April he shifted his attention away from the British and towards the French. Indeed, Ludendorff consistently shifted the spring campaign according to circumstance and events.<sup>912</sup> This proved to be ineffective and the Germans were forced back on the defensive by late July. The Germans had missed their chance to beat the Allies before the American troops, who were arriving at the front at a rate of 250,000 per month by June,<sup>913</sup> could alter the balance against them. In May and June the Allies, under the new General-in-Chief of the Allied Armies Ferdinand Foch, were able to better co-ordinate their operations and became more adept at anticipating and reacting to German attacks. Exhausted and deprived of irreplaceable manpower, the Germans had lost their gamble and now were subjected themselves to a series of attacks which would lead to Allied victory. The first and one of the most notable of these attacks was launched on 18 July as part of the Second Battle of the Marne in which the Germans sustained 170,000 casualties.

The Germans began to launch air raids over Paris on 30 and 31 January using Gotha Bombers. By September 664 bombs had been dropped in 14 raids killing 266 people and wounding 603.<sup>914</sup> The raids peaked in the spring and the single worst episode occurred when a panic caused 70 people to be trampled to death at the Bolivar Metro station on 11 March.<sup>915</sup> Of the 483 Gothas sent to the city, only 13 actually reached their destination. More devastating to the city, if only slightly so, was the German development of a 'Paris Gun,' a modified 15-inch naval gun designed as a terror

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<sup>909</sup> *ibid.*, p.156.

<sup>910</sup> Philpott, *War of Attrition*, p.316.

<sup>911</sup> When asked to define the objective of the Spring Offensive Ludendorff that 'it is enough to punch a hole and that the rest will follow'. *ibid.*,p.312.

<sup>912</sup> *ibid.*, p.313.

<sup>913</sup> Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall* p.159.

<sup>914</sup> *ibid.*, pp.187-188.

<sup>915</sup> *ibid.*, p.187.

weapon which could hit the city from a distance of 80 miles.<sup>916</sup> The gun shelled Paris 371 times between 23 March and 8 August killing 256 people and wounding 62.<sup>917</sup> The raids and bombardment were a failed German attempt to break civilian morale in Paris and resulted in the opposite effect; they brought the city together in the face of an indiscriminate danger posed by a common enemy.

It was impossible to fully censor news of either the Gotha raids or the shelling of the city by the Paris Gun. As with the 1917 Parisian strike movement, censoring all news of events that were witnessed by many bystanders would arouse suspicion and distrust in newspaper readers. The most important censorship rules were that no mention be made of the location of where bombs or shells had landed and an order first given on 31 January also stated that no photographs of debris were permitted<sup>918</sup> and that there be no mention of the exodus of Parisians or anything that would imply panic in the city.<sup>919</sup> Also important was that no mention be made of German *communiqués* discussing bombs or the physical dimensions thereof.<sup>920</sup> Papers were allowed to mention that bombs had been dropped, they could vaguely refer to the geographical locations of their landings, and they could publish the number of resulting deaths or injuries.<sup>921</sup> The order concerning locations was strictly enforced as it was believed to be useful information for the Germans.<sup>922</sup> On 3 March, a bomb dropped directly in front of the headquarters of *Le Gaulois*, but the request by the paper's director, Arthur Meyer, to publish the news was denied by Nusillard.<sup>923</sup> Following the Bolivar incident, the director of *Paris-Midi* was forced to promise over the telephone that not one single issue would mention the name 'Bolivar.' Instead papers were permitted to mention the opening of a judicial inquiry into involuntary deaths, which was to be launched against an anonymous party.<sup>924</sup>

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<sup>916</sup> Wiest, *The Western Front 1917-1918* p.157.

<sup>917</sup> Stevenson, *With our Backs to the Wall* pp.187-188.

<sup>918</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 31 Jan.1918. Photographs showing the debris of shot down Gothas, such as that in *Le Journal* on 17 March, were permitted. BDIC F rés 0270 C, 17 Mar.1918.

<sup>919</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.295.

<sup>920</sup> SHD 5N 523, 20 Mar.1918.

<sup>921</sup> On 31 January an official *communiqué* informed the press that bombs had landed in the suburban areas of the West Bank and that there were over 50 people injured. BDIC F rés 0270 C, 31 Jan.1918.

<sup>922</sup> *L'Echo de Raincy*, a paper from the north-east of Paris, was censored for one month on 27 April for mentioning the landing point of bombs. SHD 5N 357, 27 Apr.1917.

<sup>923</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure pendant la guerre*, p.290.

<sup>924</sup> *ibid.*, p.294.

On 22 March, when shelling by the Paris Gun began, Clemenceau released a notice to the citizens of Paris to be aware and to have an ‘alert ear.’<sup>925</sup> At 8:30 that morning, *Paris-Midi* and *Le Petit Parisien* called in to demand an explanation for the explosion. The papers were told that the cause was unknown. Later that day, the Press Bureau was forced to make an order regarding the new attacks when *Le Temps* called the office and explained that there had been an explosion at Gare de L’Est and that ‘blood and pieces of brain were everywhere’. The order was immediately sent that ‘Absolutely nothing be mentioned on the bombs in Paris’.<sup>926</sup> Later that day, the Press Bureau was informed of the new gun and instructed papers to be sober and not publish messages from the German or Austrian radios.<sup>927</sup> Two days later all mention of the Paris Gun was suspended and papers which violated the order were threatened with suspension.<sup>928</sup>

As with the news of the Gotha raids, mention of the Paris Gun could not be prohibited indefinitely. Over the next few days, more news was allowed to be published on the shelling and by 2 April papers were even allowed to publish lists of victims, though not their addresses.<sup>929</sup> In late March and early April the telegraph censors were busy censoring telegrams detailing the locations of shell landings. On 11 April alone, 20 telegrams were censored to this effect.<sup>930</sup> Beginning on 25 March, the papers began to speak about the new raid on Paris, even if they were not allowed to mention the gun itself. The type of comments expressed in this early period by the right-wing press characterized those made by the Parisian media as a whole a few weeks later. *L’Action Française* commended the ‘sang froid’ of Parisians,<sup>931</sup> and *L’Echo de Paris* and *Le Petit Journal* wrote that the Parisians were taking the aerial attacks ‘with good humour.’<sup>932</sup> The German attempt to terrorize Paris and to weaken its morale had failed. The press, and it appears the citizens of Paris, responded to the air raids and shelling of Paris not with alarm but wit determination. These reactions mirrored those which developed in response to the German Spring Offensive.

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<sup>925</sup> *ibid.*, p.295.

<sup>926</sup> *ibid.*, p.299.

<sup>927</sup> Radio telegraphs were far easier to intercept than their written counterparts.

<sup>928</sup> Berger and Allard *Les Secrets de la censure*, p.299.

<sup>929</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 2 Apr.1918.

<sup>930</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 11 Apr.1918.

<sup>931</sup> SHD 5N 426, *L’Action Française*, 25 Mar.1918.

<sup>932</sup> SHD 5N 426, *L’Echo de Paris* and *Le Petit Journal*, 26 Mar.1918.

Military censorship during the spring offensives followed rules already in place. The most important of these were that officers not be named, French casualties not be given, no details be given of weaponry used and no mention be made of specific locations on the battlefield. On 22 March the Press Bureau was reminded of the importance of maintaining a strict military censorship regime. ‘The eventuality of an enemy offensive has been communicated to the government which has put in place strict rules which the press must obey particularly at the beginning of the attack. 1. The only reports that can be given regarding these events are A. Official *communiqués* coming from the GQG. B. Articles coming from official war correspondents accredited by the GQG and which have been verified by the War Ministry. 2. Articles which comment on the events must be written in a way which would not instruct the enemy. The publication of all news or of articles which have not been previously authorized exposes offending papers to the most rigorous sanctions.’<sup>933</sup> On 7 April papers were reminded of the two month ‘constant delay’ when mentioning names in particular.<sup>934</sup>

Military orders regarding French actions were closely followed by the media. Special attention was paid to the censorship of American actions during the offensives. Orders were given on 1 April that mention of American troops on the front lines was permitted.<sup>935</sup> Any details about the Americans, however, were strictly forbidden and this order was rigorously enforced. On 27 May news of the first American offensive action at Chatigny was censored and *L’Excelsior* was seized and then suspended indefinitely<sup>936</sup> for disobeying the order.<sup>937</sup> The Americans were quick learners on the battlefield but their lack of experience hampered the US contribution for the remainder of the war.<sup>938</sup> The French were cautious and the Americans were sensitive as to how their war efforts appeared in the press. Whereas most telegrams sent to the Press Bureau on French or British actions at the front were censored, those discussing the

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<sup>933</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 22 Mar.1918.

<sup>934</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 7 Apr.1918.

<sup>935</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 1 Apr.1918.

<sup>936</sup> This particularly strict punishment was meant as a warning for other papers not to disobey the Press Bureau. Having learned its lesson, the paper was allowed to begin publication again on 1 June. SHD 5N 357.

<sup>937</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 CG, 27 May.1918.

<sup>938</sup> R.H.Zieger, *America’s Great War: World War I and the American Experience* (Lanham, 2000), pp.92-97.

Americans were usually stopped outright. As a result, the press was not only restricted through official orders on what could be written about the Americans but also was less informed about their actions at the front.<sup>939</sup>

During the first days of Operation Michael, while suffering enormous losses (39,629 killed and wounded on 21 March alone)<sup>940</sup> the Germans were able to advance 20 kilometers in three days of fighting and captured 40,000 prisoners.<sup>941</sup> Later in April and May, the message remained the same: the Germans were fighting hard but were being held by the Franco-British troops who demonstrated ‘their usual valiance’<sup>942</sup> and ‘heroic resistance.’<sup>943</sup> However, there were nuances in the *communiqués* which accompanied positive remarks but permitted the careful observer to read between the lines. These included describing of the German attack as ‘determined’ and reporting that Allied troops had to face ‘an enemy with superior numbers.’<sup>944</sup> The press, which had grown more astute in interpreting *communiqués*, responded to the news of the Spring Offensive with encouraging sobriety.

The censorship regime under Mandel was obeyed far more closely by the press than under previous administrations. Furthermore, the press was becoming less prone to exaggeration and since January had been less immersed in political battles. Although during the first few days of the German attacks the press followed the *communiqués* almost to the letter by asserting that ‘all of the German attacks have failed and had not met their objectives,’<sup>945</sup> media reports soon became more perceptive. Almost immediately several papers, such as *La Victoire*, *Le Petit Journal*<sup>946</sup> and *Le Petit Parisien*, commented that that the German attacks which began on 21 March were the first of a series of offensives. Later in April several papers including *Le Temps* discussed whether the German attacks were an attempt to lure the French Army north<sup>947</sup> (not mentioned in the *communiqués*) and *Le Petit Journal* discussed the

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<sup>939</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC.

<sup>940</sup> Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall* p.55.

<sup>941</sup> *ibid.*, p.56.

<sup>942</sup> SHD 5N 417, 27 May 1918.

<sup>943</sup> SHD 5N 417, 31 May 1918.

<sup>944</sup> SHD 5N 417, 28 May 1918.

<sup>945</sup> SHD 5N 426, Ministry of War press analyses, 22 Mar.1918.

<sup>946</sup> SHD 5N 426, 23 Mar.1918.

<sup>947</sup> SHD 5N 426, 14 Apr.1918.



importance of Amiens for the Germans.<sup>948</sup> But as of 26 March the media's general message according to Mandel was, 'While the situation on the front is serious, we have reason to be confident.'<sup>949</sup> Retreats and setbacks were allowed to be reported in vague terms in the media (a major difference from the guidelines imposed during the Nivelle Offensive) but were always accompanied by phrases meant to inspire confidence. Indeed the press really was confident about the Allies' prospects of defending themselves against the increasingly costly German attacks and even in the most confusing or desperate circumstances did not falsify information, exaggerate or panic. The press had not only become more self-censored but had also evolved professionally. Over the past three and a half years the press was accustomed to working with the Press Bureau and the GQG. Editors knew what would be allowed for publication by the government and were familiar with the GQG's practices regarding the disclosure of information. The press furthermore had learned also that not only would exaggerations usually be censored but that they could be harmful to morale if they were later proven to be groundless. It was now able simultaneously to follow orders, accurately interpret *communiqués*, present accurate news and reassure France's population when it needed it most.

Although suggested by Lloyd George on 30 January, it was not until 2 May that Foch was named General-in-Chief of the Allied Armies. Rumors surrounding Foch's appointment were prohibited from publication<sup>950</sup> but references to the potential efficiency of a joint Allied command were permitted. *Le Temps* on 11 April was allowed to publish that 'the Germans have been successful since 21 March because of their unity of command.'<sup>951</sup> It was important for the press to obey orders regarding the potential nomination of a French Commander for all the Allied forces. In Britain the issue was sensitive because Lloyd George had long supported the new appointment, partially to undermine Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig and General Sir William Robertson, the latter of whom he replaced by General Sir Henry Wilson in February.

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<sup>948</sup> SHD 5N 426, 25 Apr.1918

<sup>949</sup> SHD 5N 426, 26 Mar.1918.

<sup>950</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* pp.302-303. Newspapers were first allowed to discuss Foch's nomination on 29 and 30 April and only in reference to what had already been published in Britain. *ibid.*, p.303. Clemenceau, however, would not confirm the news until 4 May. SHD 5N 426.

<sup>951</sup> SHD 5N 426, *Le Temps*, 11 Apr.1918.

Keeping the discussions surrounding Foch's potential appointment out of the media was important for Allied unity and the press responsibly followed government orders on the matter.

The Press Bureau in March 1918 was directly controlled by the Premier's office and in many ways its priorities had changed even if military censorship had in practice not been much altered. Both the Nivelle offensive and the Ludendorff offensives were moments of heightened crisis but they were reported by the press in entirely different fashions. It is true that the press was provided with optimistic forecasts in the lead-up to the Nivelle Offensive and had a vested interest in presenting the battle in a way that would prevent their predictions from appearing foolish. During that offensive, which was albeit much briefer than the Ludendorff offensives, no bad news, even if it could have been interpreted through vague *communiqués*, was reported until it became impossible to interpret the offensive positively. During the Spring Offensive, the press responded to events as they took place without a fixed agenda. It was honest about the difficulties faced by the Allied soldiers and even mentioned setbacks. The press increasingly realized its role was to re-assure France's citizens rather than to cause alarm by providing false hope.

#### *The 1918 Strike Movement in Paris and the Loire*

A series of anti-war strikes took place in France between 18 and 29 May 1918. After beginning in Paris, the movement spread into several key French industrial regions. In the department of the Loire, the strikes were particularly violent. The official policy of the Clemenceau government regarding strike activity was clear to everyone. Between December and April the mainstream press in the Loire reported consistently on local labour activities but practised a great deal of self-censorship by only vaguely describing the motivations of the strike leaders. Locals in the Loire were shocked after the strikes broke out in late May by the violence perpetrated by the strikers and did not agree with many of the strikers' demands, which were seen as being extreme and unrealistic. During most of the period between November 1917 and

May 1918 the Parisian press demonstrated little interest in covering events in the Loire. When it did report on events in the Loire, the left-wing press in particular was heavily censored. The centrist press increasingly self-censored in this period by being as vague as possible, and the right-wing press in Paris almost without exception chose to completely ignore events in the Loire. The censorship of articles discussing the CGT intensified at the end of December 1917 and during the next few months. Censorship of the press was so severe by early May, and during the less violent and more economically motivated strikes in Paris between 13 and 18 May, that the Parisian press shied away almost completely from reporting on the strikes in the Loire which began immediately afterwards. Strict censorship of the press and of the telegraph, combined with a vigilant approach to postal control, was essential in facilitating the government's swift and successful repression of the May 1918 strikes.

In the months leading up to the strikes, both the press in Paris and the censors at the Press Bureau were pre-occupied with the Gotha raids and the shelling of Paris, along with the various political scandals and trials (the Malvy and Caillaux Affairs, the trial and execution of Bolo Pasha and the *Bonnet Rouge* Affair). During this time the Parisian press paid little attention to the increasing radicalism within the French labour movement. In the provinces, where the press had a greater interest in local affairs, papers were allowed to report only superficially on labour meetings. As in Paris, they were only permitted to document speakers' lists and official meeting agendas and were forbidden from quoting pacifist or internationalist speeches. Beginning on 1 May, the Press Bureau along with the Departmental Commissions ensured that information relating to the strike movement in the Loire appeared at a minimum in both the foreign and the French civilian press, especially in Paris. They allowed no information on strike activity to enter the trench papers and made sure that no letters sent to soldiers at the front mentioned strikes or championed the revolutionary principles around which the strikes in the Loire rallied. The task was made easier by the refusal of the Loire's union leaders after 1 May to allow members of the press to attend union meetings in an attempt to combat their infiltration by undercover government agents. With few exceptions, the government was successful in keeping the strike movement in the Loire

and most information pertaining to it confined to the region. The government ensured that citizens in the rest of France and soldiers fighting at the front had little information regarding the strikes or of their forceful repression by the police.

The French strikes in spring 1918, most notably those in the Loire, have been generally overlooked by historians because they coincided with the crucial Ludendorff offensives and the Gotha raids on Paris. They have also been overlooked because, unlike during the Parisian strike movement of 1917, the Loire's labour leaders in 1918 were unsuccessful in forcing the government to negotiate. The 1918 strikes, though, are of great historical significance. They were launched during a time of emergency at the front. Whereas in 1917 labour leaders demanded little more than salary increases for workers, those who led the Loire's strike movement in 1918 made specific demands regarding the government's conduct of the war effort. The French government in spring 1918 was led by a far less conciliatory cabinet than it had been a year earlier. Clemenceau had been an ardent critic of the concessions made to the strikers in 1917 and the government had to forcefully repress the strikes not only to protect the armaments industry, but also to maintain its own prestige. Clemenceau had been appointed partly to restore morale, both in the interior and at the front after the crisis year of 1917. The 1918 strike movement was fortunately less successful in obtaining its objectives than was the movement in 1917, because its objectives more directly threatened the legitimacy of the French Government.

The *Minoritaire* faction of the CGT, which had opposed the *Union Sacrée* since 1914, grew rapidly and gained considerable influence in the months after Clemenceau's appointment as Premier. On 25 December, at a federal CGT conference in Clermont-Ferrand, a resolution passed which praised the Russian Revolution and President Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points. The resolution called for a peace without annexations, an international conference to discuss peace and for a clear statement by the Clemenceau Government declaring its war aims. This was the first time that the CGT had voted in favour of a major proposal put forward by the *Minoritaires*. The resolution also foreshadowed the demands and the aggressiveness that later characterized the spring 1918 strikes in the Loire.

The CDS was able to take advantage of the widening rift within the federal CGT. Departmental union leaders also benefited from the disarray in Paris by gaining considerable authority in France's regional labour unions. Many of these departmental union leaders and all those who led the May 1918 strike movement in the Loire were either members of or directly influenced by the CDS. The Loire's labour movement was led by the Departmental Secretary of the Metal Workers Union, Clovis Andrieu and his associate Charles Flageolet, head of the Loire's association of trade unions. Flageolet was an anarchist and Andrieu had already instigated a strike in the Loire from 27 November to 6 December 1917 and was under close surveillance for being a suspected pacifist by the *Sûreté*.<sup>952</sup> Between January and May 1918 Andrieu and Flageolet were able to outmaneuver their more moderate opponents at the bourse<sup>953</sup> in St. Etienne. Cries of 'long live the Russians' and 'long live peace' became regular features at the meetings there during this period.<sup>954</sup> The movement became too radical even for the leadership of the federal *Minoritaires* in Paris.

Alphonse Merrheim, Secretary of the federal Metal Workers Union and leader of the *minoritaires*, had argued throughout the war for a compromise peace and for a general strike in France if necessary to achieve it. But after the Ludendorff offensives began in March, he agreed with the CGT's *Majoritaire* counterpart that strikes scheduled for 1 May should be postponed until the emergency at the front had subsided. The Loire labour leaders never officially split from the CGT, but on 25 March with Péricat's encouragement,<sup>955</sup> they broke off their working relationship with Merrheim and the *Minoritaires* in Paris by declaring a departmental strike in the Loire for 1 May. The federal CGT submitted its official refusal to support the 1 May strikes on 15 April.<sup>956</sup> It later openly condemned the 18 to 29 May strikes in the Loire. The 1 May strikes lasted one day and were considered a moderate success by the Loire's union leadership.<sup>957</sup> The revolutionary fervour at the almost daily meetings held at St. Etienne's bourse grew in intensity between 1 and 18 May. At this time the Ministry of

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<sup>952</sup> AN F7 12994.

<sup>953</sup> Similar to a British trades council.

<sup>954</sup> AN F7 12994.

<sup>955</sup> ADL 10M 443, letter from the *Sous-Préfet* of Roanne to the Prefect of the Loire, 8 Mar. 1918.

<sup>956</sup> AN F7 12994.

<sup>957</sup> AN F7 12994, M. Bericard to Flageolet, 3 May 1918.

the Interior became increasingly concerned with the situation in the Loire, which contained France's second highest population of munitions workers after Paris.<sup>958</sup> The department's union leaders seemed to be preparing to launch a wave of anti-war strikes in the armaments industry and to be headed for a direct confrontation with the Clemenceau Government.

On 13 May, the CDS launched a strike movement in Paris. These strikes lasted until 18 May, the same day on which the first strikes in the Loire began in Firminy. The Parisian strikes were not characterized by the same level of violence as those in the Loire and workers' demands in Paris were more economically motivated. Ironically, Péricat, who had encouraged the union leaders in the Loire to follow their Parisian comrades by initiating strikes, became disillusioned with the Loire's labour leaders, particularly those from Firminy who consistently called for an armed rebellion against the government. Péricat began to think of the movement as a political liability. The strikers in the Loire had very little support from outside labour unions and diminishing support even from the CDS between 18 and 29 May 1918.

Andrieu instigated strikes in Vienne and Chambon-Feugerolles on 18 May. He sensed that the strikes in Paris were losing steam and wanted to encourage the rest of the Loire's union leadership to initiate strikes throughout the department before they missed their chance. His plan worked. On 19 May the congress of the *Minoritaires* in St. Etienne voted overwhelmingly in favor of a department-wide general strike.<sup>959</sup> The group's specific demands, though, remained unclear. Some of the more radical delegates argued for armed rebellion against the government, or for the establishment of a workers' council.<sup>960</sup> Péricat, who seemed to be losing control of the movement's ideological direction, insisted that the strikes had no other motives than to get the government to state its war aims clearly and to get authorization for the CGT to attend an international conference.<sup>961</sup>

By 22 May the strikes had taken a violent turn throughout the Loire. In Roanne, Firminy and Rive de Gier there were railway stoppages and several acts of industrial

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<sup>958</sup> Horne, *Labour at War* p.182.

<sup>959</sup> ADL/10M/443, Official report of the *Congress Minoritaires de St. Etienne*, 19 May 1918.

<sup>960</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>961</sup> *ibid.*

sabotage. Early in the morning on 23 May in St. Etienne the strikers attempted to prevent a group of soldiers from boarding trains headed for the front. When the police intervened, roughly 2,000 protesters, including many women, began to charge the police barricades and to throw rocks, seriously injuring one officer. Later in the day there was a shootout between protesters and the police followed by a scuffle in which one dragoon was beaten with a club and the police commissar, M.Chassing, was stabbed twice. Flaggeolet declared at a meeting that day that ‘a large step towards peace had been taken’ and that ‘the munitions transports will no longer function’.<sup>962</sup> 23 May was also a particularly violent day in Roanne. Police officers were assaulted and an elderly man was severely injured. The seriousness of the violence committed by strikers throughout the Loire and especially in St. Etienne on 23 May ensured a forceful governmental retaliation.

On 24 May the government officially announced its intention to end the strikes. Flaggeolet fled to Nîmes in the middle of the night. The next day, 43 individuals were arrested, including Andrieu and Péricat. All meetings at the St. Etienne bourse were banned. The effects were immediate. The strikes began to peter out and finally ended on 29 May in Firminy and Chambon-Feugerolles. The strikes had ended in the same two towns in which they had begun. Flaggeolet was found and arrested in Marseilles later that night. Once the movement had been deprived of its leadership, there was no one willing or capable enough to replace the arrested leaders. It was not until after the armistice that members of the federal *Minoritaires* began to once again launch strikes under the pretext of inciting revolution.

The repression of the strikes in the Loire by Clemenceau’s Government was made easier because of their unpopularity with the local citizenry, who feared the violence of the strikers and generally did not share their revolutionary principles. The CGT had openly condemned the strikes and made no attempt to save the leaders from being arrested, but the strike movement was not necessarily doomed to failure. It could have lasted longer had it not been quickly deprived of capable leadership. It is also uncertain whether the strikes would have remained isolated in the Loire had there not been strict

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<sup>962</sup> AN F7 12994, police report, 23 May 1918.

governmental control of information being sent out of the department. The neighbouring city of Vienne in the Isère where regional union secretaries shared the same revolutionary ideals, authoritarian dispositions and lack of concern for public opinion as in the Loire, experienced strikes in the same period that were influenced directly by the unions in St. Etienne. The strikes in Vienne, though, were characterized by a lesser degree of violence. The government was able to act swiftly and effectively in ending the strike movement in the Loire because the movement was isolated, locally unpopular and unknown to the rest of France. Censorship played a key role in influencing all three of these factors.

It was only after the federal CGT conference on 25 December in Clermont-Ferrand that Mandel began to use censorship to combat the growing influence of those within the CGT who advocated a compromise peace, a general strike or even a revolution. The Press Bureau's strict censorship of news related to the Clermont-Ferrand conference foreshadowed the approach later used to censor information on the Loire's more pacifist *Minoritaire* conferences in March and April. Telegrams mentioning the conference in Clermont-Ferrand were all either censored or stopped.<sup>963</sup> Some dailies, particularly *Le Temps* and *L'Humanité*, dedicated large portions of their 26 December issue to the conference. *Le Temps* vaguely referred to the split within the socialist party and the CGT, as well as to the extremism of the internationalists who proposed the resolution. This approach became increasingly typical of how the Parisian centrist press reported on union activities. *L'Humanité* had sections of its articles slashed,<sup>964</sup> though it is unclear exactly what the paper was forbidden to publish. Stripped of all analytical maneuverability, *Le Temps* and *L'Humanité* published very similar articles on the events in Clermont-Ferrand. No mention was made in either article of the support at the conference given to Wilson's 14 Points or to the Russian Revolution. Uninformed readers of the articles would have perhaps sensed little more than growing disunity within the CGT. They would have had no sense, however, of the causes for this disunity and would have been uninformed of the specific issues over which the CGT debated. *Le Temps* published more on the French labour movement in

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<sup>963</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC.

<sup>964</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 SP.



this period than did any other significant Parisian daily because it was always extremely brief when doing so. The only specific message that the Press Bureau allowed papers to convey on the subject was that extremists within the French labour movement were weak and were responsible for the infighting within the CGT.

During the next few months, Mandel showed extreme caution in ensuring that no mention was made in the press of preparations for strike activity within France. ‘*Menaces de grèves*’<sup>965</sup> became the code word censors used when they slashed information in articles or censored telegrams that even mentioned the word ‘strikes.’ The Press Bureau also began to prohibit papers from reporting on issues that Clemenceau and Mandel believed could potentially provoke strikes. Examples of themes that were considered threatening included: talk of bread shortages,<sup>966</sup> the possible increase of foreign workers in French war factories,<sup>967</sup> workers’ demands for salary increases,<sup>968</sup> the capture of spies working in France<sup>969</sup> and, increasingly, strike activity in Allied, neutral or enemy countries.<sup>970</sup> One particular episode during this period provides a good example of Mandel’s authoritarian methods. In a letter on 16 January to the Prefect of Police in Paris, Mandel mentioned that a provincial paper (it is not stated which one) had been permitted to publish a comment supporting the augmentation of salaries for workers. Mandel told the prefect that all provincial press leaders must be rounded up and lectured by the police in their areas on the dangers of such statements. The prefect was then told to report back to him once this had been done.<sup>971</sup> Before Mandel, when the censorship of domestic affairs was taken more lightly, a similar situation would have been dealt with within the Press Bureau in Paris by reprimanding the offending Provincial Censorship Commission, rather than by ordering the police to intimidate local press owners throughout the entire country.

Before Clemenceau’s Ministry, it was considered beneficial to publish reports on strike movements or labour discontent in Germany and Austria-Hungary. After

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<sup>965</sup> SHD 5N 442.

<sup>966</sup> SHD 5N 337, 9 Jan.1918

<sup>967</sup> SHD 5N 334, 15 Jan.18 Spanish anarchists later played a prominent role in the strikes in the Loire.

<sup>968</sup> APP BA 1712, Ministry of the Interior to Parisian Prefect of Police, 16 Jan.18.

<sup>969</sup> SHD 5N 337, 25 Feb.1918

<sup>970</sup> SHD 5N 333, Feb.-Mar. 1918.

<sup>971</sup> APP BA 1712, Ministry of the Interior to Parisian Prefect of Police, 16 Jan.18.

December, in contrast, the Press Bureau began to stop telegrams<sup>972</sup> and to censor articles<sup>973</sup> which reported on strike activities in enemy countries. Whereas strikes in enemy territory were previously seen as opportunities to portray weakness on the enemy home fronts, they were now seen as potentially providing ammunition to the growing internationalist movement within the CGT. Between 1 and 3 February alone there were 28 stopped telegrams discussing strikes in Germany.<sup>974</sup> As labour activities intensified in Germany and Austria, the Press Bureau became increasingly concerned with censoring them. The overall effect was that articles on German and Austrian labour activity published in major Parisian dailies became shorter and less detailed as the movements on which they were reporting intensified.

Between January and late April the Parisian press and its correspondents paid little attention to the inner politics of the CGT and even less attention to events in the Loire. The Press Bureau's registers contain almost nothing conveying eagerness on the part of the major Parisian papers to report on the increasing radicalism in the Loire.<sup>975</sup> *Havas* seems to be the only agency which attempted to send telegrams on almost every departmental union meeting in St. Etienne. All of these were stopped or strictly censored.<sup>976</sup> Both the press and the Press Bureau during this time were preoccupied with the fighting at the front, the Malvy Affair, the *Bonnet Rouge* Affair, Bolo Pacha's treason trial and the Gotha raids on Paris. In March, leftist papers, particularly *L'Humanité*, began to feature Sam Gompers' trip accompanied by a delegation of American union leaders through Britain and France. Only a few small left-wing papers such as *Le Journal du Peuple*, *La Bataille* and *Le Plèbe* attempted to report specific details on the proceedings in St. Etienne's bourse. Until April, many of these papers supported the unions in the Loire and their articles were almost always either banned outright or reduced to lists of speakers' names and meeting agendas. Their published articles appeared similar to the self-censored articles in centrist papers like *Le Temps*.

The Press Bureau suspected leftist papers of being predisposed to supporting the

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<sup>972</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>973</sup> APP BA 754.

<sup>974</sup> APP BA 762.

<sup>975</sup> APP BA 61 762.

<sup>976</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC.

Loire's labour movement unless they explicitly were critical of it. It therefore censored the leftist papers more harshly than it did centrist papers, which were already heavily self-censored on the subject. Whereas when centrist papers reported on the radical labour meetings in the Loire, they had to be vague, leftist papers reporting on the same events had to be both vague and critical. Because the mainstream Parisian press was distracted with events in Paris and at the front and the papers which did attempt to report on the pacifist tendencies in the Loire were strictly censored or self-censored, Parisians were largely unaware of the extremism of the Loire's union leaders. The little information they did receive on the region was superficial.

The only widespread Parisian press coverage given to the Loire's union leaders before late April was in late February and in early March, after accusations had been launched in the right-wing press and by Clemenceau that the St. Etienne bourse was influenced by German agents. On 25 February the departmental worker's union of the Loire published a note condemning those who had launched the accusations and denied any German influence in its organization.<sup>977</sup> The next day, *L'Humanité* mentioned the note and *Le Petit Journal* was permitted to report an edited interview with Flaggeolet. In the article, Flaggeolet was quoted as saying, 'We are called pacifists as a pejorative term. We are pacifists in the sense that we wish as soon as possible for a just and lasting peace. But we do not wish this peace to be as a result of the defeat of our country. Pacifism and defeatism are far from each other in our interpretations of things.'<sup>978</sup> Clemenceau had retracted the accusations after it had been quickly established that they were false. The Press Bureau usually blocked quotes from anarchists like Flaggeolet, but in this case jumped on an opportunity to convey even France's most militant labour leaders as willing to fight for a victorious France. *Le Journal du Peuple* was allowed to republish the same report on 6 March.<sup>979</sup> Although it stopped all telegrams related to the affair,<sup>980</sup> the Press Bureau allowed those papers that were interested to come to the defence of the Loire's labour unions. The Press Bureau was more inclined to allow papers to report on the labour movement in St.

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<sup>977</sup> SHD 5N 362.

<sup>978</sup> *Le Petit Journal*, 26 Feb.1918.

<sup>979</sup> SHD 5N 362.

<sup>980</sup> APP BA 762.

Etienne if their articles conveyed unity on the home front rather than revealing the actual extremism of the movement's leadership.

In the Loire, the censor's task was to carefully monitor and control information pertaining to revolutionary strike movements. This required more vigilance than in Paris. Papers in the Loire were more interested in local affairs and labour activity was front page news. The Loire's two highest selling papers were the Radical Socialist *La Tribune* and the *Loire Républicain*, known locally as the *Loire*,<sup>981</sup> both of which were centrist. Also important was the bi-monthly *Syndicaliste*, the official paper of the Departmental Workers Union of the Loire.<sup>982</sup> Unlike in Paris, it was impossible for papers in the Loire to ignore local union activities. As a recurring theme, *La Tribune* praised unions for helping workers acquire benefits and advocated the spread of union activity throughout the department,<sup>983</sup> but when it reported on the increasingly radical labour meetings in St. Etienne, it limited itself mostly to reporting speakers' lists and meeting agendas. The *Loire* censored itself in a different way. It reported on the meetings in St. Etienne and elsewhere in the department, but only recorded speeches or published meeting agendas that focused on salary increases.<sup>984</sup> While this had been officially forbidden by the Press Bureau in Paris, the Provincial Press Control Commission (see Chapter 1) generally allowed these articles to be published. Citizens in St. Etienne would have been aware of the meetings at the bourse and would have been curious as to their proceedings. It was preferable to have them believe that labour leaders in the Loire were mostly concerned with salary increases rather than with more political demands. The reports from the *Sûreté* on the proceedings at the bourse in St. Etienne demonstrate that violent strikes had been called for by some in the Loire's union leadership as early as late 1917.<sup>985</sup> Citizens in St. Etienne, deprived of this information, were later shocked by the violence which characterized the strikes in late May. Self-censorship of the mainstream press in the Loire greatly contributed to this lack of knowledge. Because average citizens in the Loire were appalled by the

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<sup>981</sup> SHD 16N 1561, 1 Jul.1918

<sup>982</sup> SHD 5N 362.

<sup>983</sup> SHD 5N 362.

<sup>984</sup> SHD 5N 362.

<sup>985</sup> AN F7 12994.

violence in late May, the government faced little domestic criticism when they repressed the strikes.

*La Syndicaliste* was the official paper of the worker's unions of the Loire. For the censors, dealing with this paper posed its own set of challenges. The combined circulation for the Loire's two main papers was high – roughly 130,000 (July 1<sup>st</sup> 1917),<sup>986</sup> while *La Syndicaliste* was probably read only by those directly involved with local labour activity and by some radical factory workers. Its bi-monthly issues focused almost exclusively on local union activities while also giving some mention to union activities in neighbouring departments such as the Isère and the Rhône. The drafts it presented to the Press Control Commission gave full details of the union meetings in St. Etienne and praised their increasing radicalism. Unsurprisingly, it was heavily censored. Had it been a daily paper, it is probable that many issues would have been prohibited from being published or potentially even seized. But because it was published only twice a month and had a small readership the commission chose to slash large sections of the paper instead. After the false allegations over espionage were launched in late February, many workers in the Loire were encouraged by their union leaders to believe that the Clemenceau Government had singled their department out for unfair treatment. *La Syndicaliste* often attempted to argue this point but was prohibited from doing so by the Press Control Commission.<sup>987</sup> Banning *La Syndicaliste* would have risked provoking outrage among the metal workers in the Loire, who were crucial to the French armaments industry. Still, more than half of the articles in *La Syndicaliste* were banned from publication and the prohibited articles were usually crossed out with an 'R' for revolutionary or a 'D' for defeatist written next to them.<sup>988</sup> In censoring *La Syndicaliste* the censors chose almost always either to allow articles to be published in their entirety or to completely prohibit them. As a result, *La Sydicaliste* was able to sneak in some pacifist passages into its less political articles on rare occasions. Clemenceau, told about the articles by Mandel, demanded to know the

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<sup>986</sup> 90,000 for *La Tribune* and 40,000 for the *Loire*, SHD 16N 1561 1 Jul.1917.

<sup>987</sup> SHD 5N 362.

<sup>988</sup> SHD 5N 362.

names of those who wrote an article that attacked him personally.<sup>989</sup> The Departmental Press Commission hid the pacifist trend in the Loire Labour movement's official paper by banning half of its articles.

Between January and May, soldiers at the front had little to no access to information regarding the increasing influence of pacifists within the CGT. On 28 November 1917, the GQG sent a telegram to the Press Bureau to 'stop all information relative to strikes in the Loire.'<sup>990</sup> The strikes referred to in this telegram were led by Charles Flaggeolet and were peaceful and small in scale compared to those in May. In February the GQG informed the Press Bureau which papers it believed were having the most adverse effects on troop morale.<sup>991</sup> Among the papers included in the telegram were *Le Journal du Peuple*, *La Verité*, *L'Oeuvre* and *L'Humanité*.<sup>992</sup> Two themes the GQG mentioned as having influenced troop morale were sympathy for the Russian revolutionaries and the arguments for a compromise peace.<sup>993</sup> As a result of this report, Mandel reminded censors to be vigilant on both themes. On 24 March, a report was sent from the front to the Ministry of War commenting on the state of morale amongst the French troops. It stated that there were no apparent signs of defeatism or of pacifism resulting either from propaganda or from indiscretions of the press.<sup>994</sup> During the later strikes in May, there appear to have been no telegrams sent from the front to the Press Bureau asking to censor information coming from the Loire. This suggests that Mandel and Pétain's policy of closely monitoring the information reaching the front had been successful. It must also be noted, however, that soldiers after 27 May were engaged in heavy fighting on the Aisne sector and were probably less inclined to concern themselves with events in the interior. The GQG encouraged the Press Bureau to focus on censoring the most influential and subversive papers in the first few months of 1918 and encouraged it to censor information regarding labour militancy in the Loire.

The announcement on 25 March that the Loire would strike on 1 May was almost

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<sup>989</sup> SHD 5N 333, Letter from the Ministry of War to Military Commander of the 13<sup>th</sup> District.

<sup>990</sup> SHD 16N 1561, telegram from GQG to the Press Bureau, 29 Nov.1917.

<sup>991</sup> SHD 16N 1561, telegram from GQG to the Press Bureau, 4 Feb.1918.

<sup>992</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>993</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>994</sup> SHD 16N 1546, letter from Ministry of War correspondent to the Minister of War, 24 Mar.1918.

completely ignored by the Parisian press. The next day, 30 papers in Paris were censored for providing precise numbers of those killed in a Gotha raid on Paris. Not one paper mentioned the decision taken in the St. Etienne to strike on 1 May.<sup>995</sup> However, after the CDS decision to strike caused a split within the *minoritaires* in Paris, the Parisian press became more interested in events in the Loire from mid-April onwards. By the same time they renewed their interest in the region, local union leaders decided to ban the press from their meetings. As a result, the interest was short-lived.

Between 15 April and 18 May, two major events directly influenced how the press would later cover the strikes in the Loire. The first was 1 May, the traditional day set aside to celebrate workers. The Loire was one of the few departments that had broken with the CGT's *Minoritaires* and decided to conduct a general strike for that day. This turned out to be the press's last chance to comment specifically on the increasingly violent nature of the now almost universally unpopular union leaders in the Loire. After 1 May, the press was banned from attending union meetings in St. Etienne and the Press Bureau prepared itself for the upcoming strikes in Paris by further hardening its policies on the censorship of information regarding strike activities. The second significant event was the CDS-led strike in Paris, which lasted from 13 to 18 May. Censorship of the press during this week was so severe that the Parisian press shied away completely from reporting on the events in the Loire which began immediately after those in Paris ended.

The Press Bureau's policies on censoring information remained consistent on union activities during most of the month between the CDS's split with the *minoritaires* and the beginning of the strike movements in Paris. Many papers during the last week of April commented on the factionalism within the French labour movement but the Press Bureau, as it had done in the past, only allowed articles on the subject to be published if they were extremely vague or if their comments served as useful propaganda. With a few exceptions, the centrist press in Paris and in the Loire either continued their policy of providing few details or ignored 1 May all together. Almost all of the major left-

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<sup>995</sup> APP. BA 762, 26 Mar.1918.

wing papers sided with the federal *Minoritaires* against the CDS in the debate over whether to strike on 1 May, and continued to do so until the end of the month. The left-wing press, although still under heavy surveillance, was, as in February, briefly given some latitude in reporting on events in the Loire because their articles attacked *jusqu'au boutisme ouvrier*. The right-wing media with few exceptions continued to publish nothing on the CGT or on the Loire during the entire month of May.

The only Parisian daily that attempted to publish the CGT's official refusal to support strikes for 1 May on the same day as it was issued was *La Presse*, and the article was almost completely slashed because it specifically discussed the CDS's plans to disobey the CGT rather than being about the general significance of 1 May.<sup>996</sup> The few Parisian centrist papers that did provide articles discussing 1 May used the opportunity to give their impressions of the CDS and even of the movement in St. Etienne, but were only permitted to do so by alluding to 'a particular dissident faction from the provinces.'<sup>997</sup> On 29 April, the Press Bureau reminded its censors of the ban on all articles mentioning strike activities or preparations for strikes.<sup>998</sup> That day, the centre-right *La Revue Parisienne* had an article banned from publication entitled, 'The Opposition between Soldiers Dying at the Front, and Workers who go on Strike.'<sup>999</sup> It obeyed the Bureau and the article was never published. In May it became common practice for the Press Bureau to ban or censor articles without giving official explanations.

In the week before 1 May, support for Merrheim and the *Minoritaires* against the movement in St. Etienne became a recurring theme in the left-wing press. *L'Humanité* on 23 April published a copy of the CGT resolution condemning any strikes scheduled for 1 May, and *La Bataille* published the same resolution three days later. Both commented on the importance of solidarity between workers. Whereas in February the Press Bureau had found it useful for the left-wing press to portray leaders in the Loire as patriotic, now it felt the left's condemnations of the Loire's leaders and of the CDS were useful. The condemnations became stronger during the strikes in Paris. Only *La*

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<sup>996</sup> SHD 16N 1568, 15 Apr.1918.

<sup>997</sup> SHD 16N 1568.

<sup>998</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 29 Apr.1918.

<sup>999</sup> SHD 5N 442, 29 Apr.1918.



*Plèbe*, to which Péricat was a regular contributor, attempted to praise the Loire's union leaders. Its first and seemingly last article focused specifically on St. Etienne and was published on 25 April with 12 long sections that were cut, including the entire conclusion.<sup>1000</sup> On the same day *La Verité* had an article almost entirely slashed that supported strikes in general and praised the Russian Revolution but did not attempt to give specific support to the CDS or to the movement in the Loire.<sup>1001</sup> The leftist media continued to be only allowed to comment on labour movements if the comments were in line with government policy towards the CGT.

On 1 May, the Press Bureau censored six articles, all from leading leftist papers written on the strikes in Paris and in the departments that had chosen to strike. Four of the papers (*L'Oeuvre*, *l'Humanité*, *La Bataille* and *L'Eclair*) disobeyed the censors and published the articles in their entirety.<sup>1002</sup> Also that day, *Le Petit Parisien* attempted to send a telegram regarding strikes in Firminy and Unieux, but the telegram was stopped. The Press Bureau, probably after being informed by the *Sûreté* of the radical speeches in St. Etienne on 1 May, felt it was necessary that night to order officially that the press publish 'nothing on the 1 May troubles in St. Etienne.'<sup>1003</sup> The order was given on 3 May that no mention be made of union activities in the Loire.<sup>1004</sup> The Bureau, however, never had to enforce these orders because of the decision taken by the union leaders in St. Etienne to ban the press from their meetings.

In the past, union leaders in the Loire had attempted to justify themselves in the press. Now they chose to be uncooperative and secretive. After 1 May representatives of the Parisian and local press were banned from attending meetings at St. Etienne's bourse.<sup>1005</sup> Had they been able to attend these meetings during the next two and a half weeks, they would have witnessed a clear lead up to a violent department wide strike.<sup>1006</sup> The press would have almost certainly been prohibited from publishing much of what was going on in St. Etienne but perhaps would have attempted to

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<sup>1000</sup> SHD 5N 442, 25 Apr.1918.

<sup>1001</sup> SHD 16N 1568, 25 Apr.1918.

<sup>1002</sup> SHD 16N 1568. 2 May 1918.

<sup>1003</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 1 May 1918.

<sup>1004</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 3 May 1918.

<sup>1005</sup> AN F7 12994.

<sup>1006</sup> AN F7 12994.

anyway as they had on 1 May. Because all reporters were banned from the St. Etienne bourse, the local press had to rely on vague second-hand accounts of the increasingly secretive meetings held there. The accounts were particularly difficult to obtain because the Loire's union leaders had told its members not to speak to the press.<sup>1007</sup> The Parisian papers, banned from reporting on events in the Loire and frustrated with the difficulties in obtaining even second-hand information on the region's union activities, completely stopped all coverage of events in the area and focused instead on the upcoming CDS-led strikes in Paris. A thorough examination of the Press Bureau's telegraph register suggests that all but a few Parisian press correspondents returned to Paris shortly after being banned from the union meetings in St. Etienne.<sup>1008</sup>

Mandel saw the CDS strikes in Paris coming and prepared the Press Bureau. Many papers had gone against the bureau's orders on 29 April<sup>1009</sup> not to mention any specific strikes planned for 1 May, and it seems were not punished for doing so.<sup>1010</sup> Between 1 and 13 May the Press Bureau issued several specific orders in preparation for the upcoming CDS strikes in Paris. Daily orders were given forbidding papers from publishing anything related to strike preparations, and this time the Press Bureau intended to strictly enforce its orders.<sup>1011</sup> Only minor papers disobeyed these orders and had the offending issues seized.<sup>1012</sup> The Press Bureau's vigilant efforts to censor all information on labour activity frustrated press owners. Many sent letters to Clemenceau and appealed to his past career as a journalist and as an advocate of freedom of the press.<sup>1013</sup> All of these letters appear to have gone unanswered and were perhaps in fact read by Mandel. The press's frustration further intensified during the strikes and this factored into the later decision of most Parisian dailies to avoid coverage of the more violent strikes in the Loire.

With the outbreak of the CDS led strikes in Paris on 13 May, press censorship reached a new level of intensity. On 12 May, six Parisian dailies (*Le Matin*, *Le Petit*

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<sup>1007</sup> AN F7 12994.

<sup>1008</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC and BDIC F rés 0270 TV.

<sup>1009</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 29 Apr.1918.

<sup>1010</sup> SHD 5N 337.

<sup>1011</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C.

<sup>1012</sup> SHD 16N 1568.

<sup>1013</sup> SHD 5N 379.

*Journal, La Bataille, Le Journal du Peuple, Oui* and *Pays*) were heavily censored for mentioning the announcement of strikes by the CDS for the next day.<sup>1014</sup> The next day the orders given to the papers on the reporting of the strikes in Paris and on the sending of telegrams could not have been clearer. ‘Nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing on the strikes!’<sup>1015</sup> Next to the order was an instruction written for the censors that the Press Bureau would continue to repeat this order and that its enforcement would become more important with each day.<sup>1016</sup>

As the strikes continued, the number of papers attempting to report them diminished, as did the number of telegrams sent. On 16 May the nine largest Parisian papers attempted to circumvent the Press Bureau’s orders by commenting on Clemenceau’s agreement to meet with the strike leaders without actually referring to the strikes. These articles were all banned in their entirety.<sup>1017</sup> By the end of the week only *Havas* and a few papers with very small readerships attempted to announce, unsuccessfully, that the strikes were over.<sup>1018</sup> Throughout the week the leftist press had promoted worker solidarity and had condemned those who caused splits in the labour movement without mentioning specific names. Parisians would have noticed the strikes and wondered why they were not being mentioned in the press. Many would have realized that censorship of the press and of the telegraph was preventing papers from reporting on them. Some might even have interpreted the left’s condemnation of those who fractured the CGT as also being condemnations of the strikes.

The strikes in the Loire broke out on 18 May, the same day as those in Paris ended. They then spread throughout the department over the next two days. The press had been heavily suppressed in the previous week and was never again during the war allowed to report even superficially on strike activity in France or abroad. When the strikes in the Loire broke out, the Parisian press was incapable and also unwilling to report on events in a department they had seemingly washed their hands of almost three weeks before.

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<sup>1014</sup> APP BA 763, 12 May 1918.

<sup>1015</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 13 May 1918.

<sup>1016</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1017</sup> APP BA 763, 16 May 1918.

<sup>1018</sup> APP BA 763.

Considering the Press Bureau's severe censorship of information during the strikes in Paris between 13 and 18 May, it is unsurprising that there was little mention in the national or local presses of the more violent strike movement in the Loire one week later. All attempts to report on the movement were censored as severely as were items investigating the strikes in Paris but such attempts were few and far between. Even the left-wing press ended its articles on the importance of union solidarity. Mandel and the Press Bureau's strict censorship of information on events in the interior, and particularly of the strikes in Paris, had been successful. The press was now discouraged from spending time and money investigating and reporting on events upon which they would not be able to publish. The Parisian press had not paid much attention to the Loire since being banned from the department's union meetings at the beginning of May and now focused on more economically motivated strike movements in other departments. Reports from the Ministry of the Interior<sup>1019</sup> and the Ministry of War<sup>1020</sup> demonstrate that the government and military both took events in the Loire very seriously because of their potential to impact on war production as well as inspire other industrial regions to strike. That readers of the national press would have no indication of what was going on in the Loire and that citizens in the Loire would only have first-hand knowledge of the strikes attests to the success of Mandel's plan, beginning in January, to control all information related to union activity within France.

*Havas*, the one media outlet which had never ceased to report on events in the Loire, attempted, along with *Fournier*, a smaller news agency, to send telegrams on 19 May regarding the announcement in St. Etienne of a department-wide general strike. The telegrams were stopped.<sup>1021</sup> On 23 May, the most violent day of the Loire strikes, there were three sent telegrams, all stopped, which mentioned strike activities in France. Amazingly, none of them mentioned the Loire. Two mentioned an economically motivated labour rally in Grenoble and one mentioned strikes 'near Lyon'.<sup>1022</sup> The press was more hopeful of being allowed to report on these areas than it was about the Loire. These strikes were more peaceful, their leaders were forthcoming with

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<sup>1019</sup> Reports from the Prefect of the Loire, AN F7 12994.

<sup>1020</sup> SHD 5N 267.

<sup>1021</sup> APP B 763, 23 May 1918.

<sup>1022</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC.

information and as in Paris the strikers aimed at obtaining little more than salary increases.<sup>1023</sup> Even so, the press was never able to report on strikes in these areas either. An examination of the mainstream press in Paris and in the Loire during the strikes reveals that little to no information was published on strikes anywhere in France between 18 May and 1 June. All reports from the Ministry of the Interior suggest that the violence perpetuated by the strikers as well as the radical demands of their leaders took the citizens of the Loire completely by surprise. The strikes as a result never had more than marginal popular support in the region.<sup>1024</sup> Even the small leftist papers that attempted to report on events in Paris the week before did not attempt do so about the Loire.

It is possible that *L'Humanité* attempted to report once on the violence in the Loire but had the articles seized. While there are no official records of the seizure, the paper published an article on 27 May entitled, 'Censored,'<sup>1025</sup> in which Paul Renaudel complained of having two articles seized the previous day. He wrote that *L'Humanité* 'had always agreed not to publish military or social information that could be damaging to the country but that the paper would not accept orders by Clemenceau that attempted to control all thoughts and place papers in a political servitude to the government.'<sup>1026</sup> This article is a good example of the frustration the press felt as a result of the increasingly wide range of information prohibited from publication at a time when papers could increasingly be trusted to obey the Press Bureau. When the strikes ended and the leaders were arrested, two papers attempted to report on the arrests. *L'Humanité* was allowed to publish the arrests but not recite the charges, whereas *Le Journal du Peuple* was not allowed to mention the arrests at all.<sup>1027</sup> On 27 May, the day before the strikes in the Loire ended, the German military made a major breakthrough on the on the Chemin des Dames. Because of the Ministry of War's vigilant censorship policies and coordination with the GQG, the French soldiers at the front, who now faced a state of emergency, would have known little about the events

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<sup>1023</sup> Reports from the Prefect of the Isère, AN F7 12992.

<sup>1024</sup> Reports from the Prefect of the Loire, AN F7 12994.

<sup>1025</sup> 'Censurés', *L'Humanité*, 27 May 1918.

<sup>1026</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1027</sup> SHD 5N 529, 29 May 1918.

in the Loire.

The postal control section of the War Ministry was instructed to be particularly vigilant in controlling all mail being sent to the front from the Loire and from neighbouring Vienne. The War Ministry produced a special report for the GQG on 29 May showing exactly which letters (69 in total during the strikes) had been censored and the official reasons behind these acts of censorship. Diagram 1 shows from where the censored letters originated and Diagram 2 shows the official reasons why the letters were censored.<sup>1028</sup> The report shows that proportionally few letters were sent from St. Etienne and Roanne, by far the two largest cities in the Loire, and also the two which experienced the most violent strikes. Vienne and Firminy, which experienced less violent strikes, were the cities with the highest number of civilians who supported the unions enough to mention them in their letters to the front. The other observation that can be obtained from the report is that there was a serious attempt by some to send letters to the front with the intention of informing soldiers that the citizens of the Loire were striking for peace. Unlike in November 1917, there appears in May or June 1918 to have been no reports from the military command that mentioned soldiers discussing strikes in the Loire. Postal control was effective during the Loire strikes in preventing information from leaving the department. At such a dangerous moment for the French military effort this was crucially important.

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<sup>1028</sup> Postal control, strikes in the Loire. SHD 16N 1567, 20 May 1918.

Diagram 1: Postal Control in the Loire during the Strikes. Provenance of Letters Seized.

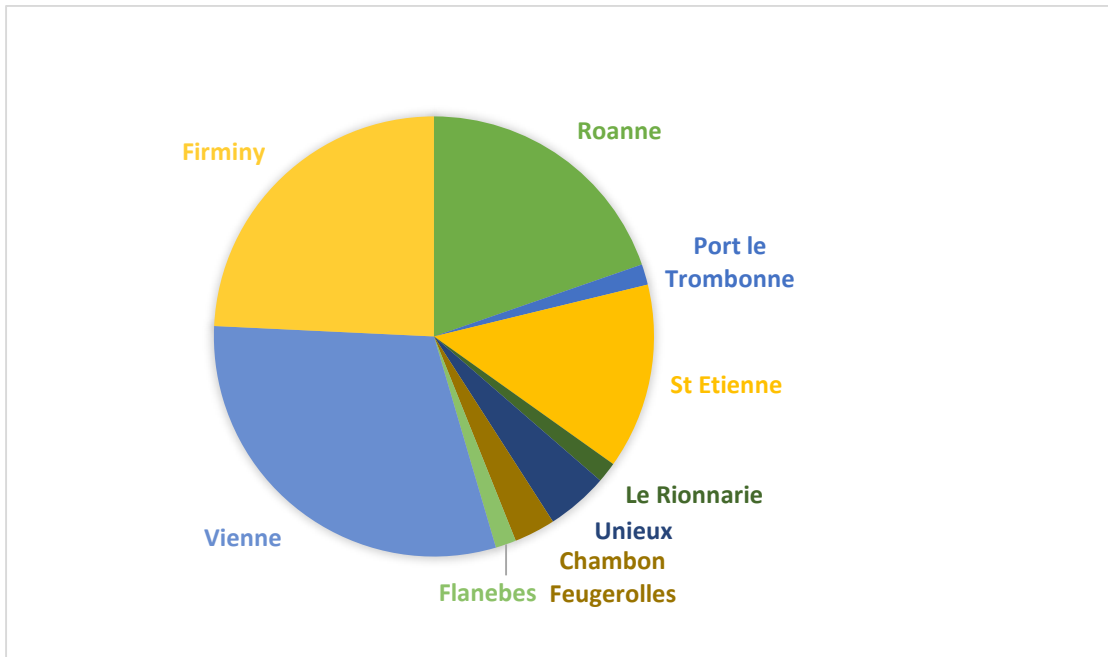
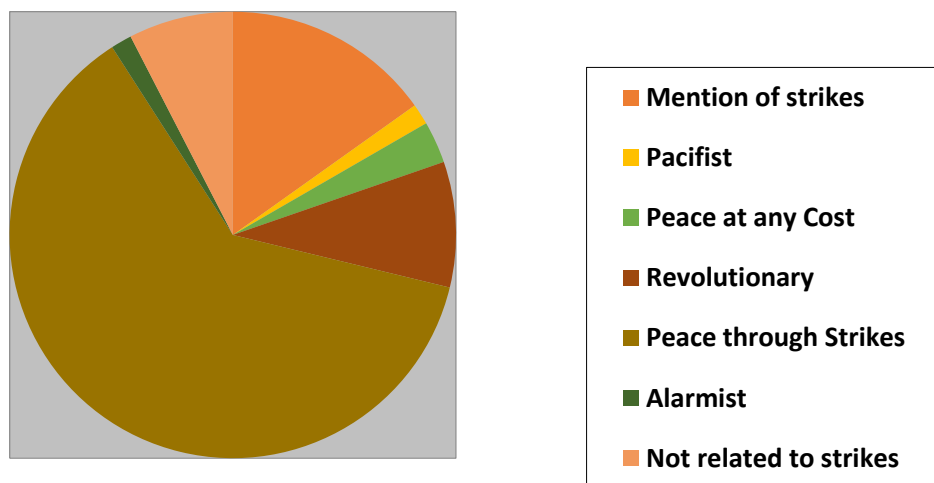


Diagram 2: Postal Control in the Loire during the Strikes. Official Reasons for Letter Seizures.



In June, a few papers attempted to mention ‘last month’s labour agitation.’ Almost all were prohibited from doing so and some were even censored for ‘alluding’ to the

strikes in May.<sup>1029</sup> The strikes in the Loire were not mentioned in the press because of both government-imposed censorship and self-censorship. The Press Bureau was successful in containing information on events in the Loire and once it moved to repress the strikes swiftly, it seems that no one noticed.

Under Clemenceau's orders, Mandel was responsible for shifting much of the Press Bureau's focus towards events in the interior. He continued to use the Press Bureau in this capacity until after the Treaty of Versailles had been ratified and the State of Emergency laws which gave the War Ministry special powers had been lifted. Not only were strikes a forbidden subject, but so were all subjects routinely discussed by the labour leaders in the Loire and elsewhere. As a result, it was almost impossible to report on the Loire labour movement's increasing radicalism in the period leading up to the spring strikes. The centrist and right-wing presses adapted by adopting a strict self-censorship when reporting on events in the interior. The left-wing media was heavily censored unless its articles could be used for propaganda purposes, particularly on the occasions when it criticized left-wing extremists. Clemenceau's policies were responsible for the press's reluctance to report on the strikes in the Loire. The press had not been permitted to report on the more peaceful strikes in Paris one week earlier and a precedent had been set as to how the Press Bureau would treat papers attempting to report on strike activities. This precedent was the logical culmination of Clemenceau's policies towards the press since his ascent to power.

Olivier Forcade has argued that the prevalence of self-censorship in the French press by the end of the war proves that the government's wartime censorship policies were effective.<sup>1030</sup> The press was indeed self-censored in not reporting on the 1918 spring strikes in the Loire, but this does not fully explain the situation. The national press never had been specifically interested in the Loire unless departmental union leaders interacted in some way with their Parisian counterparts. When they did become interested in the Loire, they, along with the local press, were rejected by the Loire's union leaders. This rejection encouraged them to go elsewhere to attempt to report on union activities. During the strikes one week earlier in Paris, the press had repeatedly

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<sup>1029</sup> APP BA 763.

<sup>1030</sup> Forcade, 'La Censure Politique en France', Conclusion.



been thwarted in its attempts to report on the events. By the end of these strikes they had given up their efforts to do so. The press had no intention of returning to a department where the leaders were uncooperative and secretive, and where attempts to mention what they did witness were in vain. Between December 1917 and late May 1918, the Press Bureau, eventually with the help of the union leaders, was able to isolate the radical labour movement in the Loire, even from the local citizenry. Citizens in the Loire were shocked when they realized the violent tendencies and extremism of their local union leaders and therefore did not oppose the government crackdown against the strikes. Soldiers and the majority of French citizens outside the Loire would not have even been aware that the strikes existed. This situation was a tribute to Clemenceau and Mandel's successful efforts.

### *Conclusion*

From March to July 1918, the Germans attempted one final all or nothing attempt to break through the Allied lines on the Western Front. Their armies achieved tactical gains everywhere but their attacks soon lost momentum and by July, after both inflicting and suffering enormous casualties, the momentum of the offensive had failed and Germany was forced back onto the defensive. Though Germany's failure to achieve a rapid victory provided the opportunity for a series of Allied counter-attacks which would later win the war, the attacks themselves proved to be a major moment of crisis for France and for Allied unity.

Neither the offensives nor the terror raids on Paris were able to shake French morale. Calls for a negotiated peace in France had become rarer in early January, and particularly after the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on 3 March. The *Union Sacrée* only strengthened by the spring offensive and the press stood behind the Government in re-assuring France's citizenry that the outcome to the war would be successful.

As the French left shifted towards the centre, the radical far-left became increasingly marginalized. Unions, that under the influence of the CDS maintained the call for a negotiated peace, went unsupported by both the SFIO and eventually even the CGT. Labour meetings were heavily censored in the press, so when in May several groups in Paris and more importantly in the Loire launched a series of violent anti-war strikes, public opinion was overwhelmingly against them partially because only a few people were aware of the extent of their radicalism. When the strikes were finally suppressed and their leaders arrested, few felt sympathy for individuals who were relatively unknown and considered dangerous.

Finally, the labour unions in the Loire had prevented their message from reaching the rest of the country by banning the press from their meetings. By insisting on secrecy, the Loire's labour leaders ensured that very few people expected the strikes to be so politically motivated. The Parisian press ended all attempts to cover the movement and even the local press in the Loire became uninterested. Without coverage in the Parisian press, the movement had no chance of gaining momentum in neighbouring departments. Effective policy by the Press Bureau, in addition to self-censorship by the Parisian press, further isolated both politically and geographically an already marginalized anti-war group within the French labour movement.

In the year before the spring offensive, both the Press Bureau and the French media network had evolved significantly. The press had become more self-censored, less prone to sensationalism and able to report bad news without causing alarm. Mandel realized during the Gotha raids and the shelling of Paris by the 'Paris Gun' that total censorship was not only impossible but also undesirable when dealing with events that were witnessed by citizens first-hand. The press was encouraged to be honest with its readers regarding the danger of the circumstances but also to appeal to Parisian '*sang froid*' in the face of attack. The exact degree to which the press helped maintain order and raise spirits in Paris during this particularly unpleasant period is unclear. What is clear though is that the city's morale did not suffer dramatically from the attacks and perhaps its citizens became more united and determined. The press encouraged this phenomenon by refusing to engage in alarmism and by re-assuring Parisians of a

successful outcome to the war.

The press's self-censorship regarding both the terror raids on Paris and the spring offensive was accompanied by a growing disinterest in anti-war arguments from segments of the left. Between January and May 1918, the *Minortaire* section of the CGT, which had previously argued in favor of a negotiated peace, split, making anti-war proponents in French politics extremely isolated. In the Loire, this isolation was magnified by the Press Bureau's successfully implemented policy of keeping citizens in the department ignorant of the intentions of the strikers until they were manifested on the streets. When the Loire labour unions conducted an anti-war movement in the middle of a French military crisis, citizens were shocked and support for the strikers was extremely low. Clemenceau had come into power promising to attack pacifism. Part of this policy was to censor all news related to pacifist labour movements. By implementing this policy early in Clemenceau's Ministry, Mandel was able to ensure that the press was unable to report on the growing militancy of the far-left section of the CGT. By the time that movement decided to strike, media opinion (a reflection of and contributor to public opinion) did not care enough about the strikers to disobey the Press Bureau and risk severe punishment in the middle of the Spring Offensives. The Press Bureau and the media together contributed to making the 1918 strikes somewhat of a forgotten movement.

## Chapter 7: Summer to Autumn 1918: Censoring the War's End<sup>1031</sup>

### *Introduction*

During the war's final phase, characterized by a string of successful Allied attacks, the dynamics of the relationship between the press and the government were much the same as they had been during the spring Offensives. Censoring the press during this period became easier, however, because events on the frontlines were going well for France and its Allies. The Press Bureau's tasks changed from monitoring and censoring defeatism and pacifism and controlling bad news, to preventing exaggerations and the release of false information. Controlling exaggeration was a difficult when the press could sense an impending Allied victory. As a result the Press Bureau was kept busy. But at no other time in the war did the press work more closely with the government. This dynamic made even a usually dour figure like Mandel behave more pleasantly towards his subordinates. As the Americans arrived in large numbers and increasingly contributed to the Allied victory, they also became highly sensitive over their portrayal in the press, both in France and America. Dealing with Pershing, the AEF and the new American censorship bureau became a delicate task though Clemenceau was the right man for it.

When the armistice was finally signed, it was a moment for elation in the French media. The press over the next few weeks routinely published tributes to the *poilus*, France's citizenry and its great political leaders for leading France to victory.

Clemenceau however foresaw the return to politics as usual after the armistice and had

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<sup>1031</sup> As mentioned by Maurice Rajsfus this period has less archival material for which to examine when researching press censorship Rajsfus. La Censure militaire et policière p.112. Seemingly there are four main reasons for this. Firstly, Mandel during this period often dealt with newspaper editors directly over the telephone and there are no records of these conversations. Secondly, Mandel's personal papers and books were seized by the Germans in 1940 and were never recovered. Probably they were destroyed during the Second World War, Sherwood, Georges Mandel and the Third Republic. p.viii. Thirdly, military censorship practices during this period of intense fighting at the front largely remained unchanged. Finally, the press was heavily self-censored during this period, thereby leaving less of a paper trail at the Press Bureau. The chapter is significantly shorter than others in this thesis because of this lack of material and because the Hundred Days can be seen as one long event during which press-state dynamics remained relatively static. Furthermore, the Armistice is included in the same section as the Hundred Days because again, there is too little archival material on the censorship of the subject for it to merit its own sub-section.

Mandel issue several orders in the two weeks after 11 November while the government was distracted. Clemenceau kept in place the wartime censorship regime under after the Treaty of Versailles had been ratified a year later and these new orders would help censor the discussions in the press over the shape of the peace.

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The Germans launched their last offensive on the Western Front, (Marneschutz-Reims), on 15 July. Between 15 and 17 July they advanced five kilometers south-west of Reims and crossed the Marne River. Prior to the offensive, which lacked the element of surprise, Pétain and Foch had prepared a massive counterattack for 18 July under a great deal of secrecy.<sup>1032</sup> During the German advance Pétain attempted to divert troops from the French 10<sup>th</sup> Army, which was to spearhead the counterattack, for defensive purposes but Foch forbade him from doing so. By 17 July the attack had stalled and the Allied counterattack proceeded according to plan the next day.<sup>1033</sup> The counterattack at Soissons achieved remarkable results. Between 15 July and 2 August, the French captured 29,000 prisoners of war and the German army suffered 110,000 casualties.<sup>1034</sup> By 3 August the Germans were cleared entirely from the Marne salient and on 5 August Clemenceau appointed Foch a Marshal of France.<sup>1035</sup> At the Second Battle of the Marne (15 July-6 August) the Germans lost the initiative on the Western Front and would remain on the defensive until the armistice. On 24 July, Foch met with Pétain, Haig and Pershing at his headquarters where his chief of staff Maxime Weygand, read a memorandum on the future conduct of the war. Its main thrust was characterized in one sentence: 'The moment has come to abandon the general defensive attitude imposed upon us by now by [our] numerical inferiority and to pass to the offensive'.<sup>1036</sup> The war was characterized thereafter by Allied attacks and German retreats.

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<sup>1032</sup> Greenhalgh, *Foch in Command* p.401.

<sup>1033</sup> Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory* pp.467-468.

<sup>1034</sup> Greenhalgh, *Foch in Command*, p.403.

<sup>1035</sup> Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p.473.

<sup>1036</sup> *ibid.*, p.474.

Foch first wanted to clear the Germans from the three remaining salients. In the middle, the Marne operation led by the French would continue forward (Foch believed that here he would have to constantly push Pétain to stay active),<sup>1037</sup> in the north the British with French assistance would attack the Montdidier –Amiens salient and American forces in the south would attack at St.Mihiel with the French waiting to exploit a rupture in the German lines. Next, the plan was to clear the mining region in northern France and to drive the Germans from Dunkirk and Calais. The operations were to be launched with only brief intervals in between them so that the enemy would be unable to effectively deploy its reserves or rebuild its depleted units.<sup>1038</sup>

By 8 August, when the Allies launched a major Allied attack on Amiens, they had already recaptured 28 miles of French soil and had eliminated the Marne Salient.<sup>1039</sup> The Battle of Amiens marked the beginning of a 100-day period characterized by repeated victories and German retreats with the British armies taking much of the lead.<sup>1040</sup> After the major Allied victory at Amiens which inflicted 27,000 casualties, and resulted in the capture of 12,000 prisoners and an advancement of four miles,<sup>1041</sup> (referred to by Ludendorff as ‘the black day of the German army’ in his memoirs), Ludendorff and Hindenburg told Austrian Commander Arz that ‘the possibility of a decisive blow or of decisive victory does not exist’<sup>1042</sup> and on 14 August the Kaiser authorized the secretary of state for foreign affairs to initiate peace feelers through diplomatic channels.<sup>1043</sup> Foch (who declared on 16 August that the Boches were ‘*dans la purée*’)<sup>1044</sup> and Haig decided to press their advantage on the back of the Second Battle of the Marne in July and the Battle of Amiens and launched a series of unrelenting attacks over the next two weeks. The Allies continued to capture large numbers of prisoners and weapons particularly at the Battle of Albert where General

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<sup>1037</sup> Greenhalgh, Foch in Command p.418.

<sup>1038</sup> Doughty, Pyrrhic Victory pp.474-475.

<sup>1039</sup> These gains were largely achieved during the Second Battle of the Marne which began on 18 July. M. Neiberg, Foch: Supreme Allied Commander in the Great War (Washington,2003), pp.75-78.

<sup>1040</sup> The often used term ‘Hundred Days’ offensive, is British in origin. It spans from 8 August to the armistice, a period marked by successive Allied victories. The British during this period advanced more rapidly than did their French, American or Italian partners.

<sup>1041</sup> Greenhalgh, Foch in Command p.423.

<sup>1042</sup> Stevenson, With Our Backs to the Wall p.125.

<sup>1043</sup> Doughty, Pyrrhic Victory p.478.

<sup>1044</sup> Greenhalgh, Foch in Command p.441.

Sir Julian Byng's forces captured 10,000 men.

In August Germany suffered 228,000 casualties with 131,000 killed or missing. Furthermore by early September all of its gains since 21 March been reversed.<sup>1045</sup> In late August and early September the Allies engaged in a series of semi-mobile attacks. On 30 August Foch met with Pershing and explained that the Allies were to push in a converging direction towards the Meuse River. On 3 September he published a directive on how the enemy was to be driven back from the Hindenburg Line. The British were to attack with support from the left of the French armies towards Cambrai and St. Quentin, the French were to continue the drive beyond the Aisne towards Laon and the Americans after reducing the St. Mihiel salient with the support of the right of the French armies were to attack in the general direction of Mézières. The exhausted French army therefore would be involved in all three prongs of the attack.<sup>1046</sup> At the beginning of September, the Allies captured Péronne and forced the Germans to retreat to the Hindenburg Line. After some disputes particularly between Foch and Pershing about how to integrate the American Army into the upcoming attacks closer to the Hindenburg Line, the Americans attacked at St. Mihiel on 12 September. St. Mihiel was the first battle of the war planned and conducted by the independent American Army which captured 13,000 prisoners.<sup>1047</sup> The Germans had already been evacuating the sector, however, when subsequently they chose to stand and fight. On 26 September the Americans attacked again at the Battle of the Meuse-Argonne but were met with much stiffer resistance and made little gain.

Further north, the BEF achieved a much greater level of success outside Cambrai on 27 September where they were able to capture 10,000 prisoners and drive a twelve - mile wide and six-mile deep wedge in the German lines.<sup>1048</sup> In the next two days the BEF seized the entire Passchendaele Ridge and at the end of September Ludendorff suffered what was perhaps a nervous breakdown. The Allies now fielded 211 divisions to the German's 125 and were able to replenish their losses with fresh American arrivals.

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<sup>1045</sup> Greenhalgh, *Foch in Command* p.427.

<sup>1046</sup> Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory* p.485.

<sup>1047</sup> Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall* pp.128-129.

<sup>1048</sup> Wiest, *The Western Front 1917-1918* p.192.

On 29 September a combined British, Australian, American and French force attacked the Hindenburg Line. By noon, the Americans had taken Bellicourt and were behind the Hindenburg Line. The British 46<sup>th</sup> Division, part of Fourth Army led by General Sir Henry Rawlinson, was able to break the Hindenburg line at the canal of St. Quentin and were able to capture 5100 prisoners.<sup>1049</sup> For Germany, the end was near and morale was flagging amongst the troops. On 29 September, Ludendorff declared to the Kaiser and the civilian administration that and that the war was lost and that Germany should request an immediate armistice.<sup>1050</sup> Unlike the British advance between Arras and Soissons, the French in late September advanced slowly between Soissons and Verdun against almost half the density of enemy divisions and often did so because of German retreats.<sup>1051</sup> The French at the end of September made the least progress. They were did little to support the British, they were slow in their advance and could do little to help the Americans whose attack had completely stalled by 29 September.

On 3 October Max von Baden became German Chancellor and within 48 hours sent a note to Woodrow Wilson asking to begin ceasefire negotiations. The note cited Wilson's 14 Points as the basis for negotiations. Wilson's answer was to ask the Germans to clarify their acceptance of the 14 Points, a reply which angered the French who feared an early American departure from the conflict. On 14 October Wilson allayed French fears by demanding that armistice conditions would be determined exclusively by Allied military advisers and that any arrangement must guarantee the supremacy of the Allied armies on the field. The note ended with the implication that the peace process would depend on German democratisation.<sup>1052</sup>

In the meantime, the Allies continued to advance. Re-invigorated, the Allies now went back on the attack. On 8 October the British and Dominion forces captured over 2700 prisoners near Cambrai and 4000 at Méricourt and Serain. On 14 October General Sir Herbert Plumer's Second Army again broke through the German lines and

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<sup>1049</sup> Wiest, The Western Front 1917-1918 p.197.

<sup>1050</sup> R.Chickering, Imperial Germany and the Great War 1914-1918 (Cambridge,2004), p.185.

<sup>1051</sup> Doughty, Pyrrhic Victory pp.488-489.

<sup>1052</sup> T.J. Knock, 'Wilsonian Concepts and International Realities', in M.F. Boemeke, et al, eds., The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment after 75 Years (Washington,1998), p.120.



was met with little resistance. On the same day, Franco-American forces captured Romagne. The Allies then continued to advance against heavy resistance in the Meuse-Argonne. Here, though the Allies were advancing Foch was disappointed by the slow progress of the Franco-American armies. On 10 October Foch acknowledged the significant gains made by the British in comparison to those by the French or Americans by stating that of the three 'converging attacks' underway (the Flanders Army Group 's drive toward Ghent, the British advance toward Maubeuge and the Franco-American drive towards Mézières), that the second was the most important to exploit.<sup>1053</sup> Originally he had believed that the drive towards Mézières would yield the most significant results. On 15 October, the French First Army under General Marie-Eugène Debeney launched a key assault between St. Quentin and Laon. On 19 October, the Allies began to move towards the Meuse River and by 26-27 October had driven the Germans back another three miles. Significantly, by 26 October the Allies had broken through the Herman and Hunding positions of the Hindenburg Line.<sup>1054</sup> Between 18 July and 31 October, the Germans had suffered over 250,000 casualties and had lost over 4000 captured guns.<sup>1055</sup>

On 23 October Wilson sent a note implying that Germany needed to become a parliamentary democracy before an armistice could be signed. Hindenburg and Ludendorff considered the note a demand for unconditional surrender, and wanted to reject it, but the Kaiser dismissed Ludendorff. In early November the Allies succeeded in another attack along the Scheldt River and were rapidly advancing. Between 1 and 7 November Franco-American forces advanced 24 miles along the Meuse. On 4 November Rawlinson's forces launched another attack which gained 10 miles and captured 10,000 prisoners.

On November 4, later referred to as 'Red Monday', a naval uprising led to a surge in revolutionary activity in many northern German cities once the sailors found common cause with munitions workers.<sup>1056</sup> Germany now faced both military defeat on the front and revolution at home. Wilhelm fled into exile in Holland on 10 November and the

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<sup>1053</sup> Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory* pp.496-497.

<sup>1054</sup> *ibid.*, p.499.

<sup>1055</sup> Greenhalgh, *Foch in Command* p.476.

<sup>1056</sup> Stevenson, *With our Backs to the Wall* p.533.

next day an armistice was signed with Foch as the Allied representative in a railway car in the forest near Compiègne. After four years of horrific fighting, the war had finally ended earlier than most had expected only months before.

Military censorship during the Hundred Days remained the same as before. Newspapers were still forbidden from naming officers, specific units, and casualty figures, and from discussing the bombardment of cities. These orders were very rarely challenged by the press and when it was told to censor items, the orders were obeyed. Orders were applied even when papers attempted to publish positive news items. *Le Temps*, for example had an article censored which discussed American operations at St. Mihiel and disclosed that ‘The attack is 50 kilometres wide and the first objective is St. Mihiel. The Americans have made attacks and have achieved favorable results. They have progressed with little or no resistance.’<sup>1057</sup> There was now little bad frontline news to censor but rigorous regulations remained in place nonetheless. Censorship during the offensives remained important not only for morale at home but also to keep potential secrets from the enemy and to maintain troop morale.

The Americans increasingly insisted on strict censorship, a trend that had begun during the spring offensives. They rightfully were sensitive as to how they were portrayed in the media. In July, telegrams criticizing the American war effort were stopped throughout the entire month<sup>1058</sup> and German *communiqués* which were routinely disdainful of America’s fighting abilities were kept out of the press.<sup>1059</sup> By August, however, even the American censors working in the Press Bureau found the censorship orders given by the American High Command to be excessive.<sup>1060</sup> Even though all mention of future operations or of Allied and American movements during ongoing battles was automatically banned, Pershing often personally called in orders to ensure that these rules were followed when dealing with American operations. From 12 to 16 August, the press was reminded daily that ‘nothing is allowed on American troops moving towards the Belgian front’ and that ‘American locations are not to be

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<sup>1057</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.338.

<sup>1058</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC.

<sup>1059</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C.

<sup>1060</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure*, p.338.

revealed.’<sup>1061</sup> On 24 September *L’Heure* was given one of the only suspensions during this period outside the front lines for ‘reporting on the Americans.’<sup>1062</sup> Pershing was sensitive to criticism of America’s fighting ability. But also this was the first time in the war that the Americans were engaged in such heavy fighting, and he had no reason to trust the Press Bureau to keep sensitive information from reaching the press. Perhaps he remembered the debacle in June 1917 when the French press had let slip the news of the American landing at St. Nazaire.

In October Wilson’s reply to the German request for armistice talks based on the 14 Points was strictly prohibited from publication, as was discussion of this highly sensitive subject. On 13 October *Havas* was prohibited from passing a telegram stating that Wilson had received a letter from Germany.<sup>1063</sup> Five days earlier the press had been instructed that ‘all mention of Wilson’s response to the German letter is forbidden’.<sup>1064</sup> On 15 October *L’Echo de Paris*, however, was allowed to violate this order first by warning Wilson that ‘it is dangerous to distinguish between the German Government and its people’ and then by publishing the accounts in the American press of Wilson’s response. According to Berger and Allard, Clemenceau upon learning of the letter sent by Germany to Wilson wished to protect the latter from criticism.<sup>1065</sup> But once Wilson had given his reply Clemenceau, irritated, ordered Mandel to allow reporting on the subject.<sup>1066</sup> This story, if true, does not explain why only *L’Echo de Paris* was allowed to publish this material. The only explanations could be that either they were told privately by Mandel that they could do so or the paper had decided to take a chance in publishing this material and submitted it on a lucky day. After the Wilson note to Germany claims in the press that the Germans would capitulate and that there was a revolution under way in Germany were more heavily censored.<sup>1067</sup>

Though Mandel was known for his ruthlessness in carrying out Clemenceau’s orders

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<sup>1061</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 12-16 Aug.1918. On 15 August Pershing personally called the Press Bureau to remind it that no articles be allowed on future operations. Berger and Allard, Les Secrets de la censure p.338.

<sup>1062</sup> SHD 5N 357, 24 Sept.1918.

<sup>1063</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 13 Oct.1918.

<sup>1064</sup> Berger and Allard, Les Secrets de la censure p.368.

<sup>1065</sup> Interestingly, Clemenceau had also subjected all articles he had written on Wilson in *L’Homme Enchaîné* before becoming Premier to examination by the Press Bureau before being reproduced. BDIC F rés 0270 C, 27 Aug.1918.

<sup>1066</sup> Berger and Allard, Les Secrets de la censure pp.369-371.

<sup>1067</sup> *ibid.*, p.359.

he also had a genuine belief that the press was supposed to keep citizens well informed. On 5 October he gave the Press Bureau the order which would keep it the most occupied for the rest of the war.<sup>1068</sup> Censors were ordered that the press should not be ‘overly enthusiastic or exaggerate.’ Not only was this order extremely vague and open to interpretation, but during a period of intense fighting and consistent Allied victories which were bringing the war to an end, enthusiasm and exaggeration took many forms. As a result newspapers had to be called daily by the Press Bureau to warn them not to publish ‘exaggerated headlines.’<sup>1069</sup>

Regarding the Americans, exaggeration of the effect of their growing numbers was censored just as was criticism of their fighting abilities.<sup>1070</sup> Although the Germans were still denounced in the media, Mandel outlawed ‘violent attacks against the Kaiser.’<sup>1071</sup> Whereas references to deteriorating morale in Germany and amongst German soldiers were allowed, those mentioning revolution in Germany were prohibited. On 13 October a telegram from *The Daily Mail* was censored for reporting that ‘declarations of German prisoners of war insist that revolution is imminent in Germany.’<sup>1072</sup> Virtually no articles were censored during this period for being pacifist or defeatist. Rather, it was exaggerations with which the Press Bureau was now most concerned.

Mandel was perhaps more diplomatic and congenial because the media and the Press Bureau worked together better than during any other period in the war. Although one censor was arrested in early October for espionage, after which all censors were required to sign every article draft which they had reviewed under the threat of indefinite suspension,<sup>1073</sup> the Press Bureau was virtually mistake-free in enforcing the Government’s directives. Furthermore the media seemed to be unanimously focused on keeping readers’ spirits high both in the interior and at the front and of informing them of the military successes. Indeed the media was so uniform in its reporting that censors at the time found it easy to forget the vicious political battles within the media

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<sup>1068</sup> *ibid.*, pp.258.259.

<sup>1069</sup> *ibid.*, p.359.

<sup>1070</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 14 Sept.1918.

<sup>1071</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.359.

<sup>1072</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 TAC, 13 Oct.1918.

<sup>1073</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 3 Oct.1918.

which had taken place only one year before over the Stockholm Conference.<sup>1074</sup>

Beginning on 20 July, the overall theme in the media was ‘the commenting on and appreciation of the Allied counter-offensive.’<sup>1075</sup> Journals followed *communiqués* more closely than during the spring offensives in part because they were more realistic than before.<sup>1076</sup> One of the first statements by a major newspaper which suggested that the string of Allied victories was perhaps leading to the war’s end (without mentioning the forbidden words ‘armistice’ or ‘peace’) was on 19 August when *Le Journal* declared ‘*La victoire est en marche*’.<sup>1077</sup> By early October the press commonly referred to the period as ‘The days of victory’.<sup>1078</sup> This was a perfect theme for newspaper editions which since August had more or less reported solely on one string of Allied victories after another, praising the ‘triple success of the British, French and Americans.’<sup>1079</sup> As long as the press continued to report good news without going into military specifics, Mandel was happy.

In early November, news of revolutionary activity in Northern Germany was banned from publication and particular stress was placed on making no mention of Bolshevism in Germany or comparisons with the Russian Revolution.<sup>1080</sup> Even references to the one year anniversary of the October Revolution were banned.<sup>1081</sup> Strict censorship of publication of news related to the Bolsheviks was instituted at this time in part to prepare for the post-war period. Olivier Forcade has in fact argued that Clemenceau kept the wartime censorship regime in place until October 1919 mostly to combat the influence of the Russian Revolution.<sup>1082</sup> A false alarm at the Press Bureau on 7 November nearly resulted in the press being permitted to publish news of an armistice with Germany four days before one was actually concluded.<sup>1083</sup> On 10 November news

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<sup>1074</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.360.

<sup>1075</sup> SHD 5N 427, 20 Jul.1918.

<sup>1076</sup> SHD 5N 417.

<sup>1077</sup> SHD 5N 427, 19 Aug.1918.

<sup>1078</sup> SHD 5N 428, 11 Oct.1918.

<sup>1079</sup> SHD 5N 427, 26 Sept.1918.

<sup>1080</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.380. In fact an order had already been in place since 17 October which stated that ‘nothing is allowed that could imply that there is Bolshevism in the German Army, *ibid.*, p.365.

<sup>1081</sup> *ibid.*, p.377.

<sup>1082</sup> Forcade, ‘Information, Censure et Propagande’, p.463.

<sup>1083</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure* p.377.

of the Kaiser's abdication was allowed to be published,<sup>1084</sup> but another false news item was prevented from reaching the press when on 11 November news of Wilhelm's assassination reached the Press Bureau.<sup>1085</sup> As the armistice drew nearer, the press was informed not to mention the subject of demobilization<sup>1086</sup>, sensitive to so many families who had been without their husbands, sons and brothers for the past four years. Demobilization and Bolshevism were incendiary topics both at the front and in the interior and continued to be heavily censored until 1919.<sup>1087</sup>

It was not until the night of 11 November that the news of the Armistice was communicated to the press.<sup>1088</sup> The next day, the press was allowed to discuss it freely.<sup>1089</sup> While Mandel on 16 November slightly loosened the restriction on exaggeration by ordering censors that 'if you do allow exaggerations, make sure the paper is aware of the potential consequences of its actions'<sup>1090</sup> he also issued new commands over the next two weeks prohibiting mention of demobilization,<sup>1091</sup> soldiers' leave times,<sup>1092</sup> the arrival of foreign leaders in Paris<sup>1093</sup> and the change of currency from the mark to the franc in Alsace-Lorraine.<sup>1094</sup> The newspapers, however, after the armistice appeared to have little interest in publishing such information anyway, and filled their pages in the days following 12 November mostly with homages and tributes to the citizens, soldiers and politicians in France and the Allied nations who had contributed to Allied victory.<sup>1095</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The French press was rightfully joyful in the weeks following the Armistice. France had proportionally suffered as much or if not more than any other belligerent, losing

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<sup>1084</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1085</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 11 Dec.1918.

<sup>1086</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C, 3 Nov.1918.

<sup>1087</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C.

<sup>1088</sup> Berger and Allard, *Les Secrets de la censure*, p.380.

<sup>1089</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C. 12.11.1918.

<sup>1090</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C. 16.11.1918.

<sup>1091</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C. 16.11.1918.

<sup>1092</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C. 17.11.1918.

<sup>1093</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C. 20.11.1918.

<sup>1094</sup> BDIC F rés 0270 C. 22.11.1918.

<sup>1095</sup> SHD 5N 428.

over 1.6 million men, sustaining substantial damage to its infrastructure and industrial complexes in the north and northeast of the country and losing the enormous financial debt owed it by the Russians. Even so, the press was so enthusiastic during the final months of the war that the Press Bureau had to prevent serious exaggerations and false rumours from reaching the public domain.

Mandel had an easy time managing information control during the final phase of the war because the nation's media had gradually come to accept their role as a tool not just to inform newspaper readers but also to sustain morale. Indeed operations at the Press Bureau by the end of the war operated like clockwork and were characterized by a low level of tension. Even Mandel was well liked by his subordinates.

Although fighting came to an end on the Western Front on 11 November, the Press Bureau's job would not be over for another year. On 11 November, a group of 93 socialist deputies proposed that the government put an end to the Siege Law that had governed free speech in France during the war.<sup>1096</sup> The motion was struck down and Clemenceau went on to keep the wartime censorship system in place by maintaining this and the Indiscretions of the Press Law of August 1914 until after the signature of the Treaty of Versailles. Even while the fighting continued, he began to implement censorship policies which were intended for the post-war period.

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<sup>1096</sup> Rajsfus. La Censure militaire et policière p.49.

### Conclusion: The Limitations of Liberty in a Republican Democracy at War

This thesis argues that censorship of the press was a useful tool in helping France to emerge victoriously from the First World War. Throughout the conflict, censorship prevented military and diplomatic secrets from reaching the enemy and helped the government to manage public opinion during times of crisis by preventing alarmism and sensationalism. Censorship played its greatest role in 1917 and 1918 because by this time serious fractures had emerged in the *Union Sacrée* and during these two years national unity was tested by a series of internal and external events that gravely threatened the French war effort. In 1914 the French wartime censorship system was established to protect military secrets and to prevent alarmism. It was largely successful in accomplishing both of these tasks.

1917 was the most important year for press censorship. By this time the press was far better informed by the government and military than it had been before General Joffre's dismissal, but it was still prone to exaggeration. During the first half of 1917, those who advocated a negotiated peace settlement short of total victory were more influential in national politics than at any other time in the war, and they were occasionally able to use the press to propagate their ideas. As a result, it is in 1917 that the press had the greatest danger to worsen the increasingly faltering morale both in the interior of the country and on the front lines. During the second half of 1917, after the debates over Stockholm, the government became increasingly draconian in its censorship of the left. Indeed, although Clemenceau is remembered as being a leader who attacked war dissenters at home he merely institutionalized existing practice.

The period between November 1917 and March 1918, however, witnessed a series of external events which galvanized French support for the war effort and made coercion less necessary. German actions rather than those by the French Government were responsible for this upturn in civil and military morale. As the press evolved it also moved further to the right. Whereas in 1917 political debates played a substantial role in press journalism, in the following year the press largely responded to external events. As the press became more united in the common goal of encouraging France's



citizens and soldiers while also keeping them accurately informed it was able to work better alongside the government in managing morale. Voluntary self-censorship of the press played as much of a role as if not more than did Mandel's usage of threats and bribes in influencing the press's reporting style in 1918.

This thesis has taken a new approach to the study of censorship in France during the First World War. The only other studies on the subject of comparable length, those by Forcade, Rajsfus, and Collins, differ entirely in their approaches to the subject but comparisons can be made between theirs and the one put forward here. This thesis agrees with Collins's findings that the introduction of Circular 1000 was critical in standardising censorship practices throughout France and that censorship in the provinces was more restricted than that in Paris.

Forcade's central argument is that the main proof that the government's censorship policies worked was that by the end of the war papers were largely self-censored. This thesis agrees by arguing that Mandel's policy of only punishing papers for major offences led them to disobey the government less frequently when serious orders were issued. Adding to Forcade's conclusion, this thesis further has argued that the press's less combative attitude towards the war effort in the last year of the conflict also resulted from the decreasing influence of those who argued for a negotiated peace and from an increasing antagonism towards Germany on the part of journalists. Finally, Rajsfus, whose conclusion is entitled 'Under the Supervision of Perverts', makes a polemical judgment rather than an evidence-based in his monograph on the subject. To him, all censorship was immoral, regardless of the results. Censorship, however, was part of a 'total war' programme that mobilized the nation's entire manpower to save it against a larger and more powerful aggressor. At the beginning of the war, the vast majority of France's political, social and religious groups agreed to the *Union Sacrée*. It was only natural for the government to expect that these vows were made for better or for worse.

The historiographical debate in France over the legitimacy of the state during the First World War between the Historial and the CRID is only partially relevant to this study. Censorship, of course, was a part of the war state which the French Government

developed at the beginning of the conflict to be able to combat dissension. But it is difficult to gauge the level of censorship's unpopularity in the interior or on the front. Whereas propaganda in the form of *bouillage de crâne* frequently appeared in postal reports particularly on the front, censorship itself did not. Some aspects of censorship would have been accepted by the vast majority of the population, particularly that which kept French soldiers safe by guarding military secrets. The degree of acceptance of political censorship on the other hand is more difficult to ascertain. Certainly while some citizens supported press censorship, others believed it to be contrary to democratic values. But France, it must be remembered, was not intended to be the democratic state in wartime that it had been in peace time, a fact of which those who adhered to the *Union Sacrée* in 1914 were aware.

Finally, some mention should be made of what can still be added to the study of press censorship in France during the First World War. This thesis is the first study to have examined the effectiveness of information management control in France during the First World War on a case by case basis. But the study only focusses on 1917-1918. A larger study covering 1914-1919, though too broad in scope for a thesis, would help contextualize censorship efficiency during these crisis years into the broader narrative of French information management control during the entire conflict. In addition, though this thesis includes a case study of the Loire, it focuses largely on the Parisian press. While Ross Collins<sup>1097</sup>, Patrick Flood<sup>1098</sup>, Olivier Forcade<sup>1099</sup> and others have contributed to media studies in Provincial France there is still much to be done in this area. Finally, comparative studies with other wartime censorship systems could provide insights into how various cultures conducted 'total war.' Comparisons between France's censorship system in the First World War and that in Britain, Germany, Italy or Imperial Russia would all provide interesting results. A novel way to approach the subject would be to compare censorships in the capital with that in the provinces. Finally, a comparison between censorship and propaganda in occupied France in the First World War with that in the Second would pose an interesting study.

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<sup>1097</sup> Collins, 'The Development of Censorship'.

<sup>1098</sup> Flood, *France 1914-1918*

<sup>1099</sup> Forcade, 'La Censure politique en France'.

The study of censorship in World War One France as well as other wartime cultures provides historians and lay readers with an insight into the values of those societies and the motives and strengths of their democracies in times of crises. For this reason it is applicable when not only studying the past but also in the evaluation of current affairs.

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- 1631 - Radiotélégrammes et revues de presse diffusés par la section d'information ou reçus du G.Q.G.
- 1645 - Contrôle parlementaire : correspondance générale, documents confidentiels 1917-1919.
- 1775-1785 - Renseignements reçus du 2<sup>e</sup> bureau du G.Q.G. 1914-1919.
- 1795-1823 - Correspondance reçue des groupes d'armées 1914-1919.
- 2542 - Espionnage, journaux interdits et censurés 1914-1917.
- 2698-2699 - Correspondance expédiée par service postal 1914-1919.
- 2701 - Historique du service postal 1914-1918.
- 2702 - Service postal. Organisation et fonctionnement : correspondance générale 1914-1919.
- 2703-2704 - Bulletins des armées. Cartes postales 1914-1918.
- 2705-2706 - Commissions de contrôle postal 1915-1917.
- 2953-2965 - Russie: documents de la mission militaire française et de l'attaché militaire, l'opinion publique.

## **18 N – Groupes d'Armées**

- 77 - Police de la circulation : séjour des étrangers, contrôle des journaux et censure 1914-1918.
- 177 - Photographie aérienne : notes sur l'exploitation et l'interprétation méthodique des photos 1916-1918.
- 189-190 - Discipline et justice militaire : vols, enquêtes, vente de l'alcool: contrôle postal-punitions, condamnations, conseil de guerre 1916-1917.
- 191-192 - Service des renseignements. Organisations : circulaires et documents de principe; état d'esprit, contrôles postal-télégraphique et téléphonique 1917-1918.
- 193-194 - Prisonniers de guerre : correspondance et rapports divers 1915-1918.
- 197 - Propagande morale 1916-1918.
- 198-199 - Justice militaire et discipline 1917-1919.
- 218 - Instructions sur le contre-espionnage, contrôle de la presse, contrôles téléphonique, télégraphique et postal 1917-1918.
- 225 - Radios étrangers reçus au G.A.C.: allemands, autrichiens, bulgares, turcs, anglais, italiens, russes et roumains 1915-1918.
- 226 - Service des écoutes; sûreté générale, saisies de journaux et brochures; rapports de la Ve armée sur le contrôle de la correspondance 1915-1917.
- 430-431- Bulletins de renseignements extraits de la presse allemande, dépêches Havas. 1918-1919.
- 438 - T.S.F. : activité radiotélégraphique ennemie Avr- Oct 1918.

## **19 N – Armées**

- 51 – Service de renseignements : traductions de communiqués allemands, renseignements d'agents 1914-1916
- 52 - Observations terrestres : comptes rendus divers, exploitations des photographies 1916.
- 58 - Section d'information : correspondance expédiée et reçue 1917-1918.
- 59 - Rapports des commissions de contrôle postal. 1914-1918.
- 364 - Affaires diverses : police de la circulation, communications télégraphiques et

- téléphoniques ; atrocités allemandes 1914-1915.
- 545 - Renseignements des postes d'écoute 1916-1918.
- 546-550 - Renseignements sur l'organisation ennemie, les objectifs de bombardements 1914-1918.
- 551 - Etat moral de l'armée 1915-1919.
- 571-572 - Résistance à l'attaque allemande Mar-Juin 1918.
- 671 - Documents relatifs aux lois de la guerre, coupures de journaux allemands 1914-1919.
- 672 - Rapports sur l'état moral de l'armée, propagande aux armées, particulièrement propagande aérienne, contrôle postal 1915-1919.
- 840 - Discipline générale et justice militaire 1914-1917.
- 868-869 - Section de renseignements de l'armée (S.R.A.) espionnage et propagande, contrôle de la circulation, censures des journaux et de la correspondance, état moral de l'armée 1914-1918.
- 870-872 - Comptes rendus des observations sur l'activité des postes de T.S.F. radiotélégrammes allemands, anglais et français 1914-1918.
- 1026 -1030 - Comptes rendus de la radiogoniométrie, du service télégraphique, de la radiotélégraphie.
- 1037-1038 - Surveillance de la presse 1914-1919.
- 1047-1048 - Messages téléphonés 1917-1918.
- 1163 - Bulletins de presse, comptes rendus de renseignements 1915-1918.
- 1164-1169 - Correspondance diverse expédiée : contrôle de la correspondance et de la presse 1914-1918.
- 1187-1190 - Rapports des postes spéciaux d'écoute 1915-1917.
- 1191 - Comptes rendus sur l'activité des postes de campagne, radios et T.S.F. ennemies 1917.
- 1197-1198 - Séjour et circulation des étrangers, surveillance de la correspondance et de la presse : journaux de tranchée, affaires civiles diverses 1915-1918.
- 1199-1203 - Police, surveillance de la correspondance, de la presse, population civile de la frontière suisse 1915-1918.
- 1204 - Propagande allemande 1915-1918.
- 1205 - Contrôle de la presse. 1914-1918.
- 1207 - Contrôle de la correspondance postale 1914-1918.
- 1436-1438 - Contrôle postal 1915-1918.
- 1562 - Interrogatoires de prisonniers de guerre, postes d'écoutes téléphoniques 1915-1918.
- 1735-1736 - Forces Françaises en Italie. Circulation, sections du chiffre: propagande, état morale des troupes, rapports des commissions de contrôle postal 1917-1919.

## **20 N Unités Diverses**

- 145-148 - Télégrammes 1916-1920.

*Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine, Nanterre (BDIC)*

## **Dossiers France. Censure 1914-1919.**

- F.rés 0270/AFS - Censure. Contrôle des informations d'agences et de fils spéciaux.
- F.rés 0270/AV - Aviation.
- F.rés 0270/AVIS - Services des périodiques. Avis donnés à la presse.



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 bI562-686 - Administration 1905-1930.  
 bI865-878 - Association de l'administration préfectorale 1907-1939.  
 bI912-918 - Personnel 1873-1940.  
 bI943-980 - Dossiers individuels de fonctionnaires 1910-1950.

## **F2 – Ministre de l'Intérieur : Administration Départementale.**

2047 - Etat civil 1806-1940.  
 2048 - Marchés, adjudications, syndicats des communes 1916-1932.  
 2056 - Affaires diverses 1892-1937.  
 2095 - 2096 - Dépenses départementales diverses 1908-1938.  
 2097 – 2098 - Circulaires 1872-1940.  
 2132 - Franchises postales 1907-1922.  
 2721-2726- Contrôle des associations et congrégations religieuses 1904-1940.  
 2748-2750- Grèves et manifestations diverses 1918-1934.

## **F7 – Police Générale**

12495-12502, 12525, 13609 - Socialistes  
 12842-12847- Dossiers de sociétés et de journaux 1895-1926.  
 12852-12869 - Royalistes et Bonapartistes 1832-1929.  
 12870-12877- Ligue des Patriotes 1898-1925.  
 12879-12881 - Catholicisme 1875-1925  
 12885-12893- Parti socialiste. CGT 1894-1923 Parti communiste.  
 12894-12896 - Révolutionnaires russes 1907-1918.  
 12897-12902 - Parti communiste en France et à l'étranger 1909-1929.  
 12904-12907 - Anarchistes en France et à l'étranger 1892-1923.  
 12908-12911 - Antimilitaristes 1905-1917.  
 12912-12920 - Grèves 1884-1925.  
 12930-12943 - Affaires internationales. Guerre de 1914-1918.  
 12970-13023 - Rapports des préfets, commissaires spéciaux et commissaires de police sur l'esprit public et la situation politique 1908-1938.  
 12992 - Rapports des préfets. L'Isère.  
 12994 - Rapports des préfets. La Loire 1917-1918  
 13043-13044 - Organisation de la police 1906-1936.  
 13053-13068 - Anarchistes français 1897-1932.  
 13069-13085 - Socialistes 1894-1932.  
 13086-13089 - Ligue des Droits de l'Homme 1916-1932.  
 13213-13228 - Mouvement catholique 1902-1927.  
 13229-13224 - Groupes et partis divers 1912-1933.  
 13266 - Assemblée nationale de Versailles. Propagande en faveur du vote des femmes 1908-1928.  
 13267-13295 - Manifestations 1906-1935.  
 13333-13349, 13370 - Antimilitarisme  
 13353-13376- Guerre de 1914-1918. Usines de guerre, propagande pacifiste 1915-1919.  
 13356-13364 - Usines de guerre 1915-1919, esp. 13364 - Puy de Dôme  
 13371-13376 - Bulletins confidentiels concernant la morale 1916-18  
 13567-13623- Mouvement syndicaliste.  
 13571 - 13574 - CGT  
 13624-13837 - Fédérations et syndicats corporatifs 1852-1936.  
 13838-13935 - Grèves 1898-1936.  
 13966-13987 - Papiers divers provenant de la Sûreté et classés chronologiquement

1871-1940.

14592-14604 - Fonctionnaires de police nés entre 1824 et 1893.

### **F9 – Affaires Militaires**

3901-4493 - Victimes de la guerre de 1914-1918

### **F12- Commerce et Industrie**

7795 - Notes et rapports au ministre Clémentel 1918.

7811-7818 - Haut-commissariat de France aux États-Unis 1917-1919.

7963-7964 - Commission militaire de contrôle postal 1916-1917.

7989 - 7992 - Bulletin économique de l'état-major de l'armée 1916-1919.

8018 - Mobilisation civile 1917-1918

8023-8024 - Agitation ouvrier 1915-1918

### **F18 – Impression, librairies, censure de la presse..**

I-156-157 - Enregistrement des déclarations de réimpression et des déclarations  
'Model C' 1827-1940.

2348-2358 - Importation de la librairie étrangère 1841-1914.

2372- Impressions pendant la Première Guerre Mondiale 1915-1918.

2373-2381- Imprimerie, librairie, presse, censure 1817-1920.

### **F22 – Travail et la sécurité sociale**

6-166 - Unions fondées 1879-1930.

164-234 - Grèves 1852-1935.

240-247 - Syndicales professionnels. 1890-1939.

590-595 - Mineurs 1915-1935.

596-600 - Divers matériaux imprimés.

### **F90 – Postes et télégraphes.**

20550-20553 - Grèves 1906 – 1939.

### **AJ 17 - Imprimerie Nationale**

222-230 - Registre des consignes données à l'Imprimerie Nationale 1916-32.

231-241 - Mémoires données à l'Imprimerie Nationale 1917-1952.

### **AJ 52 - Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts.**

16-21 - Comptes rendus de la direction sur l'enseignement 1863-1924.

39-57 - Enseignement 1821-1950.

### **AM - Cour de Cassation.**

776 - 2720 - Chambre criminelle 1847-1919.

### **AP - Archives Personnelles**

94 AP - Fonds Albert Thomas

348/3 - Usines de guerre

509 AP - Fonds Adolphe Messimy

### **AR – Archives de la presse**

1 AR (Le Matin)

5- Procès-verbaux des assemblées générales 16 Mar 1912-28 Avr 1926.

14-17- Procès-verbaux des assemblées du conseil d'administration 31 Oct 1913-26 Mar

1919.

27- Actions de la société 'Le Matin' 1910-1944.

29 - Admissions officielle des titres. 1898-1940.

30 - Dossiers des titres et créations du Matin 1898-1940.

31 - Documents administratifs 1898-1940.

32 - Documents et contractes. Administration 1910-1943.

97- Divers. 1913-1943.

99 - 'Compagnie générale de publicité Parisienne' 29 Nov 1912- 4 June 1928.

105 - Réunions extraordinaires de l'assemblée 1917-1940.

106 - Réunions de l'assemblée 1918-1922.

5 AR Agence et office français d'information.

2-426 - La correspondance de la direction d'Havas avec ses bureaux dans le monde.

429 - Contacts avec l'administration des P.T.T.

430 - Contracts avec les entreprises privées.

8 AR – Journal

136-137,139 - Circulation 1916-1920.

267 - Statut 1904-1918.

270 - Divers 1915-1919.

271 - Directions 1917-1918.

277 - Procès-verbaux des assemblées 1917-1918.

279 -Politique générale du Journal 1915-1939.

290 - Correspondances reçues et envoyées par le Journal Août 1915 - Jan 1918.

325 - Accords entre journaux parisiens : L'Echo de Paris, Le Journal, Le Matin, Le Petit Journal et le Petit Parisien. (1917-1918.)

365 - Tirages aux Suisse 1916-1918.

443 - Exposition des arts plastiques mutilée par l'ennemie 1916-25.

568-654 – Dossiers privés.

11 AR - Petit Parisien

16-19, 61-63 - Actions de la société du 'Petit Parisien' 1914-1920.

### **BB- Ministre du Justice.**

BB18 – Garde des Sceaux.

2448-2639 – Dossier du crime 1911-1920.

6601 – Dossiers Banaux

*Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Paris (APP)*

### **B/A**

697-743 - Visas des chansons et des programmes de revues des cabarets.

697-730 - Chansons Visés de A à Z.

731-736 - Chansons modifiés

754 - Censure de la presse.

755-769 - Censure, télégrammes, journaux.

770-836 - Censure des pièces de théâtre et revues par titre.

837-864 - Revues classées par années et par établissement

837 - 1914

838-843 - 1915

844-849 - 1916

850-855 - 1917

856-859 - 1918

860-862 - 1919

1588-1597 - Programmes de théâtre pendant la guerre.

1614 - L'Etat d'esprit de la population de Paris 1918 et 1919. Rapports des Commissions de Police.

1639 - Situation morale de la France pendant la guerre. Rapports des préfets.

1712 - Petites annonces de presse.

### **D/B**

365 - Dépêches du Ministre de l'Intérieur aux préfets sur les opérations de guerre.

### **D/B1**

323-324 - Brochures, publications, chansons...

324-325 - Publications divers.

326 - Ligue Française, prospectus, conférences.

329-330 - Œuvres de guerre.

338 - Manifestations, presse, rumeurs calomnieuses.

341 - Documents divers.

349-350 - Ordonnances et arrêtés.

364 - Faux tampons, Faux billets, réformes militaires, surveillance des usines de guerre. Gaz asphyxiants, courrier privé.

365 - Journaux de guerre. Dépêches du Ministre de l'Intérieur.

339 - Moratorium.



501 - Régulations concernent la circulation en 1915.

**Dossier RG – 45729 – Dossier Marcel Berger.**

*Archives Départementales de La Loire, St Etienne. (ADL)*

**10 M- Législation et organisation ouvrières. Inquiètes et statistiques concernent le travail.**

- 16- Conseil Supérieur du Travail. 1891-1930.
- 50 - Travail des femmes adultes.
- 82 - Statistiques et enquêtes sur les salaires 1838-1932.
- 115-118 - Accords collectifs.
- 126 - Main d'œuvre
- 128 - Rapports sur la situation de chômage 1857-1935
- 138 - Fermeture des usines, chômage saisonnier.
- 152 - Fonds départemental sur le chômage.
- 213-218 - Main d'œuvre départemental pendant la guerre de 1914-1918.
- 288-298 - Grèves et mouvements sociales dans l'industrie du coton.
- 317-339 - Grèves et mouvements sociales dans les mines.
- 342-348 - Grèves et mouvements sociales dans l'industrie des métaux lourds.
- 349-357 - Grèves et mouvements sociales dans l'industrie des métaux légers.
- 367 - Grèves et mouvements sociales dans l'industrie du chemin de fer 1913- 1921.
- 404 - Etude sur le Confédération General du Travail (C.G.T.) 1876-1937.
- 405- Rapports sur les syndicats professionnels 1876-1937.
- 443 - C.G.T. 1901-1939.
- 445 - Reconstruction syndicale à la fin de la Première Guerre Mondiale. 1917-1919.
- 468, 472, 474 - Surveillance de l'activité syndical des différents branches  
professionnelles.
- 487-88 - Surveillance des syndicats professionnels 1867-1939. Bourse du travail,  
Firminy 1908-1923
- 493 - Bourse du Travail, Rive-de Gier 1892-1923
- 494 - Bourse du Travail, Roanne 1891-1940
- 495 - Bourse du Travail, Saint-Chamond. 1895-1925
- 496 - Bourse du Travail, Saint-Etienne 1889-1934.

*Archives Départementales de L'Isere, Grenoble (ADI)*

**J – Archives Privées.**

35 J

- 3 - Syndicat Libre Féminin des Tisseurs 1906-1919.
- 15 - Statuts de l'Organisation Fédérale des Syndicats libres de l'Isère 1917-25.
- 17 - Syndicats libres féminins, assemblées annuelles 1910-38.
- 42 - Conditions du travail.
- 119 - Rapport sur la situation professionnelle de la femme après la guerre. 1919.
- 121 - L'Etat des salaires dans le tissage.

51 J

1- Union fédérale des syndicats libres féminins de L'Isère.

### **M - Administration générale du département.**

1M

18 - Conseilles de préfecture: dossiers individuelles 1881-1925.

52 M

76 - Journées du 1er Mai, rapports de police, défiles affiches, correspondance. 1903-1919

56 M

1 - Générale: Police. Correspondance générale. 1877-1935.

76 M

1 - Sûreté Générale: Antimilitaristes 1905-1926

82 M

1-3- Sûreté générale: suspects

166 M

11 - Grèves 1918.

### **R – Guerres et affaires militaires.**

13 R

22-23 - Correspondance générale de la préfecture concernant la guerre 1914-1918.

28-29 - Œuvres de Guerre 1916-1918.

34 - Personnel civil féminin employé dans les dépôts militaires 1916-1918.

*Archives Départementales du Puy de Dôme., Clermont Ferrand. (ADPD)*

### **M- Administration Générale**

1 M - Administration générale du département.

1950 - Activités des préfets – interventions.

4462 - Circulaires et arrêtés.

4629 - Union des grandes associations françaises contre la propagande ennemie.

5434 - Enquête sur l'état des esprits  
 5452 - Divers  
 6437 - Annonce de l'armistice

2 M - Personnel de la préfecture.

212-213, 263, 2294 - Organisation  
 4461- Affaires diverses

4 M – Police

166 - Recherches dans l'intérêt des familles. 1915-1918-  
 299 - Situations mensuelles et contrôles 1918  
 320 - Expulsions 1918  
 2088 - Travailleurs étrangers et coloniaux: instructions et correspondances.  
 3045 - Rapports des commissaires de police 1900-1917.  
 3481 - Suspects 1914-1918.  
 3622 - Pr. Driault.  
 3626 - Saisies de journaux.  
 3639 - Suspects, antimilitarisme 1914-1924.  
 3882- Carnets B pour les départements voisins.  
 3886 - Carnets B dans le département de Puy de Dôme.  
 4511 - Direction de la sûreté générale.  
 6693 - Réunions publiques 1913-1919.

10 M

34 - Grèves, coalitions et conflits 1884-1918.  
 75-76 - 1917-1918.  
 111-112 - Problèmes de chômage 1917-1918. .  
 167 - Réunions, manifestations et affichage syndicaux 1883-1921.

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