
ARTICLE – FRENCH AND FRANCOPHONE

Paul Creyssel: The 'Forgotten' Voice of Vichy

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Paul Creyssel, Vichy's high-profile Director of Propaganda between 1 April 1942 and 3 March 1943, then Secretary-General for Propaganda until 13 January 1944, is nowadays an all-but-forgotten figure. Found guilty of undermining national morale at his trial in June 1948 after almost four years in detention awaiting judgement, he thereafter faded from public and historical scrutiny. That shift from prominence to obscurity is the focus of this article. It explores the forgotten Creyssel and argues that history's amnesia on such a major player of the Vichy regime was what he himself wanted to engineer. In particular, the article examines how, at his trial, Creyssel's defence was an attempt to reimagine his wartime identity and actions in order to downplay the profile of the man in public memory and record. To develop its line of argument, the article analyses Creyssel's trial papers — an archive that historians have generally overlooked — supplemented with reference to his radio broadcasts, which have never previously been comprehensively examined. It identifies specific points that the defence chose to emphasise or understate, or where it was selective with or distorted the truth, and signposts evidence that was disregarded or manipulated in the account given. However, the importance of the case study of Creyssel stretches beyond the individual, for it opens up another version of wartime France and illuminates broader discussions about how collaborators subsequently explained away their activity. Equally, the article sheds light on notions of memory and forgetting in the context of the French experience of the Second World War and beyond, and so connects to discussions on the writing, and 'righting', of narratives of the past. In that light, the article also reflects on how the post-Occupation environment and the shifting context of historical writing contributed to the forgetting of Creyssel. A coda discusses the central place of France's archival holdings for our continuing investigation of Vichy, and reflects on the potential damage caused by recent state-sponsored restrictions on the consultation of such materials.

'Creyssel, cet inconnu... Tout se résume à cela dans ce procès.'¹ So argued lawyer Maître Marcel Héraud during his summing-up for the defence at the post-war trial of Paul Creyssel, held at the Haute Cour de Paris on 23–24 June 1948. A trained lawyer and subsequently *député* for the right-wing, nationalist Parti social français in the final years of the Third Republic,

¹ Maître Marcel Héraud, Plaidoirie, 24 June 1948, A[rchives] N[ationales], 3W/35, pp. 121–41 (p. 137).

Creyssel had served as Vichy's Director of Propaganda for the southern zone between 1 April 1942 and 3 March 1943, and then as Secretary-General for Propaganda for both zones until 13 January 1944. Jurors perhaps knew back in 1942 and 1943 what posts Creyssel then held at Vichy, Héraud continued; after all, they were all former resisters who had followed domestic political events closely during the Occupation.² But, even so, he was certain that Creyssel's propaganda had had no impact on them, and that the majority of French people had never even registered it. Moreover, if chance had not selected those present to hear the case, he added, then Creyssel's name 'serait à jamais sorti de vos mémoires'. Challenging the jury to step into the street and ask random passers-by if they knew the name Creyssel, Héraud contended that none would, for 'il n'a pas laissé de trace dans le souvenir des hommes. [...] il a été un homme qui passe et qu'on oublie'. The jury only had to look around the empty courtroom for confirmation that his trial prompted no public interest. No-one in 1948, he insisted, remembered Creyssel.³

Positioning Creyssel as not just unknown but also eminently forgettable had been a central strand of the defence argument. Creyssel was so inconsequential, so inoffensive, it claimed, that he deserved to be forgotten and, by extension, could not be punished severely. And yet, of the 128,557 people who faced the different French courts during the *épuration légale* (the series of official post-war trials that took place mostly between late 1944 and 1949), Creyssel was one of only 108 individuals identified to appear before the Haute Cour de Justice, the body tasked with trying the high-profile men of Vichy and proof in itself of Creyssel's position at the heart of the regime.⁴ Of these 108, three were acquitted and forty were granted a *non-lieu* (case dismissal) on the grounds that there was thought to be insufficient evidence to proceed.⁵ Creyssel's own pre-trial petition for a *non-lieu* failed.⁶ Instead, at 8.30 p.m. on the second day of his trial, the court judged him guilty on the two charges laid: that, through his regular propaganda broadcasts on Radio Vichy and his lectures nationwide, he had knowingly participated in 'une entreprise de démoralisation de l'armée ou de la nation ayant eu pour objet de nuire à la défense nationale', in contravention of article 76-3 of the French penal code; and that he had occupied a post at Vichy, which automatically imposed a verdict of *indignité nationale* and was punishable according to a decree passed on 26 August 1944 by the Gouvernement provisoire de la République française, established by the Free French on 3 June 1944. Creyssel was sentenced to four years' imprisonment and ten years' *dégradation nationale* – double the minimum sentence for *indignité nationale* dictated by the penal code – which entailed the loss of his political, civil and professional rights in metropolitan France.⁷

² Created under the Third Republic, the Haute Cour de Justice was re-established in 1944 and, by spring 1948, was in its third incarnation. According to a law of 19 April 1948, subsequent sessions were composed of a president, two vice-presidents and twelve jurors, drawn from a list of seventy-two members of the Assemblée nationale, intended to represent all political groups (Noguères 205). Many of those in the post-war Assemblée nationale had been in the resistance during the Occupation. The full list of seventy-two jurors was published in the *Journal officiel* on 5 May 1948 (2484). The names of the specific jurors at Creyssel's trial are recorded in Arrêt de la Haute Cour de Justice condamnant Paul Creyssel, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35.

³ Héraud, Plaidoirie, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 137–38.

⁴ For a breakdown of the figures of those dealt with by the different courts (the Haute Cour de Justice, the Cours de Justice and the Chambres civiques), see Jean-Paul Cointet 513–14.

⁵ The verdicts of the Haute Cour de Justice in all 108 cases are published in Novick 222–24.

⁶ Pièces parvenues après clôture, Lettre de Paul Creyssel au Président et aux membres de la Commission d'instruction de la Haute Cour de Justice, AN, 3W/138. Although the letter is undated, it is clear from the content that it was written shortly after Creyssel's pre-trial hearings ended on 14 November 1947.

⁷ Arrêt de la Haute Cour de Justice condamnant Paul Creyssel, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/138. On national indignity, see Simonin.

But he was freed immediately, having already spent nearly four years in Fresnes prison, south of Paris, awaiting trial (Nabert).⁸

At the trial, Maître Héraud had been categorical: those voices which had incarnated Vichy's collaboration or dripped the occupier's words into French ears had other more memorable names, specifically Philippe Henriot and Jean Hérold-Paquis, who had broadcast on Radio Vichy and Radio Paris respectively from early 1942. Preferred by the Germans for his ultra-collaborationist rhetoric, Henriot had gone on to supersede Creyssel and become Vichy's infamous Secretary of State for Information and Propaganda in January 1944. In comparison, Héraud had predicted that 'le nom de Creyssel ne sera pas retenu, même par la petite histoire',⁹ thereby foretelling both his disappearance into obscurity in the later stages of his life and also his absence from historical study in the longer term. Indeed, little is known of Creyssel's post-trial life, except that he left France for Morocco, where he registered at the bar in Casablanca, reactivating his original profession.¹⁰ At some point after 1961 he returned to France, where he died in Bron, near Lyon, on 14 February 1975.¹¹

More significantly, little is known either of Creyssel's Vichy years. Despite his official position within the regime and his presence on Radio Vichy for almost two years, he makes only a fleeting appearance in, or is strikingly absent from, scholarly work which engages with the history of Vichy, collaboration, wartime radio or the *épuration légale*. For instance, Robert Aron's early and moderate *Histoire de Vichy* mentions Creyssel only in reference to his removal from post in 1944; Robert Paxton's ground-breaking *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order*, the foil to Aron's work in its thesis that collaboration was not imposed by Germany, simply notes Creyssel's position at Vichy in 1943; Henri Amouroux's large-scale history of France during the Occupation employs Creyssel for background purposes in just two of its eight volumes; and neither Pascal Ory's survey of France's collaborators nor Jean-Pierre Azéma's landmark study of the period from Munich to the Liberation includes him. As time has passed, Creyssel has faded further from view. There is no mention of him in more recent histories of the period, such as those by Michèle Cointet or Dominique Lormier. And while he merits a short factual entry in François Broche's dictionary of collaboration, he is absent from Broche and Jean-François Muracciole's subsequent full-length history of collaboration. Key analyses of Vichy as 'un passé qui ne passe pas', or of its so-called 'afterlives', or of the town itself as 'un non-lieu de mémoire' equally ignore Creyssel, flagging the ongoing obsession with revisiting the period while unwittingly corroborating Héraud's assessment that Creyssel was 'un homme qui passe'.¹² In studies of wartime radio, Henriot's star has eclipsed Creyssel's in the historiography of the period, not least because most work on Radio Vichy to date has centred on 1944 – after Creyssel's departure from Vichy – when radio propaganda was in its most disreputable form and Henriot and Hérold-Paquis were regarded as 'les croisés du micro'.¹³ But even in studies with a wider timeframe, more attention is paid to Henriot than Creyssel, as in the classic volume on the Francophone 'guerre des ondes' edited by Hélène Eck. Additionally, there is scant reference to Creyssel in newer assessments of Henriot, even though they were parallel propaganda players at Vichy. Indeed, for Pierre Brana and Joëlle Dusseau, Henriot was '*la voix de la collaboration*', a pithy subtitle which

⁸ See Boudriot for an insight into life in post-war Fresnes prison, based largely on the memoirs of inmates.

⁹ Héraud, *Plaidoirie*, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 137.

¹⁰ Records show that Creyssel was still on the register of practising lawyers in Morocco in 1961. See *Décision du premier président de la Cour suprême n° 587–61 du 5 octobre 1961*.

¹¹ Creyssel's dates of birth and death are recorded in the biography provided by the Assemblée nationale ([http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/2072](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/2072)).

¹² See, for example, Rouso; Conan and Rouso; Golsan, *Vichy's Afterlife*; and Mallet.

¹³ '*La Collaboration*', pp. 134–35. On Henriot's 1944 radio broadcasts, see the three publications by Chadwick given in the references list. On Hérold-Paquis, see Pourcher.

suggests the suppression of possible alternative voices.¹⁴ Furthermore, in study after study of the *épuration légale* in France, Creyssel at most merits a mention for the sentence imposed; more generally he is overlooked.¹⁵ To date, propaganda studies is the only field where Creyssel is included not just principally for contextual purposes, but where some note is taken of his wartime activity. Titles are nonetheless rare and coverage is mostly brief, as in Claude Lévy and Dominique Veillon's chapter on wartime propaganda and the modelling of minds (191–93), or in Dominique Rossignol's evaluation of propaganda types and methodologies under Vichy (34–36), in both of which Creyssel is employed in support of an analysis of Henriot rather than as a central figure in his own right. Only in Philippe Amaury's extensive and detailed history of the complex structures and systems of the Ministry of Information in France is there a fuller delineation of Creyssel's key role within Vichy's propaganda services (273–80), a portrait which makes it all the more curious that he is otherwise so conspicuously absent from historical enquiry on the Occupation in France.

This article explores the 'forgotten' Creyssel and, in so doing, brings him to the fore of historical research for the first time, addressing a serious omission and adding significantly to our knowledge on Vichy's major players. However, it also argues that history's amnesia on Creyssel is what he himself wanted to engineer, and that he operated to this end both after his departure from Vichy in early 1944 and at his trial in 1948. It examines how his defence functioned as an exercise in justification, whereby his wartime identity and actions were manipulated and reconstructed in an attempt to inscribe a different reading of the man in public memory and record than that suggested by the charges laid. As we shall see, the strategy largely involved painting a moral portrait of Creyssel which downplayed both his position and the nature and impact of his activity at Vichy, this in order to argue that his role was minor, that his intentions were beyond reproach, and that he was therefore undeserving of severe punishment. Creyssel pursued this goal throughout his trial, marshalling his oratorical skills in his own justification just as he had employed them during the Occupation in his explanation of the Vichy regime and its policies. His two defence lawyers, Héraud and his colleague Maître Jacques Fourcade, worked the court in the same way.

To develop its line of argument, the article will analyse Creyssel's trial papers – an archive that historians have generally overlooked – in order to identify points that the defence chose to emphasise or minimise, or where it was selective with or distorted the truth, and to signpost evidence that was disregarded or manipulated in the account given.¹⁶ The analysis will be supplemented with reference to Creyssel's radio broadcasts, which have never previously been comprehensively examined.¹⁷ The importance of the broadcasts to an analysis of Creyssel's activity emerges plainly from a review of his remit at Vichy, which Creyssel himself detailed at his trial.¹⁸ In relation to the internal workings of Vichy, he explained that his job had entailed the recruitment and management of a network of local and regional propaganda delegates. But he had played no part in the formulation of policy and had had no authority over specific

¹⁴ My emphasis. On Henriot, see also Delporte.

¹⁵ Creyssel's fate is noted by Novick 223, and Valode 193. But a far larger corpus fails to mention him. See, for instance (in date order of publication), Aron; Lottman; Baruch; Jean-Paul Cointet; Maudhuy; Pierrat; Rouquet and Virgili; and Jean.

¹⁶ Creyssel's trial papers are held at the Archives Nationales, reference 3W/35 and reference 3W/138. The 3W series – the archives of the Haute Cour de Justice – was made freely consultable by governmental decree on 24 December 2015 (<http://www.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/archives-de-la-seconde-guerre-mondiale>).

¹⁷ Sixty-four of Creyssel's seventy broadcasts delivered in 1942 and 1943 were published by Vichy's Ministère de l'Information in 1944 under the title *Passion et mission de la France*, held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Texts of the remaining six broadcasts are held at the AN, references 3W/138 and F/41/306.

¹⁸ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/138, p. 35.

domains of propaganda, such as those centred on farmers, families or youth groups. Beyond this, Creyssel's duties had clearly incorporated a considerable public-focused dimension, since, as he further detailed, his role had been to unite opinion behind the regime; to explain and defend its laws and acts in order to facilitate negotiations between Vichy and the occupier; and to respond to counter-propaganda. Rather than just direct his delegates to these ends from the sidelines, Creyssel fronted the operation himself through his radio broadcasts. The medium was well chosen, for spiralling wireless ownership in the pre-war period meant that it was by then arguably the best contemporary channel of communication for the direct dissemination of information and messages to potential audiences.¹⁹ In fact, Creyssel's broadcasts formed the major part of his public-facing activity, since his open lectures (of which he delivered forty-three during his time at Vichy) tended to reprise points previously made in his broadcasts – which were more immediately reactive to events and issues – rather than cover new ground. This means that his broadcasts lay at the heart of the principal charge against Creyssel, namely that he had operated with the goal of the demoralisation of the nation, thereby justifying our focus in this article on this sphere of his activity.

The defence's aim at the trial was undoubtedly to lessen Creyssel's sentence, for he and his team must have known that acquittal was an unlikely outcome. However, the importance of this case study stretches beyond the individual. Indeed, justification of wartime behaviour was part of a pattern of post-war self-defence, and Creyssel's case thereby illuminates broader discussions about how collaborators subsequently explained away their activity. It equally sheds light on notions of memory and forgetting in the context of the French experience of the Second World War and beyond, and so connects to discussions on the writing, and 'righting', of narratives of the past (in this instance, the Occupation period) and on the duty to remember, itself connected to the duty of justice. In the historiography of the Occupation years, the work of Henry Rousso has been central to thinking on memory and forgetting, notably in his influential work *Le Syndrome de Vichy*. Here, Rousso amply demonstrates the difficulties inherent in the processing of the war years in France, discussing how, since 1944, memories of resistance and collaboration have been repressed, manipulated or forced, to use the terms employed by Paul Ricœur and Tzvetan Todorov in their respective studies on memory. Ricœur (107, 536) contends in particular that forgetting is a problem and that memory is an effort against forgetting, but notes that both memory and forgetting are subject to abuses. In that light, it can be argued that what Creyssel and his defence team sought to achieve at his trial represents an abuse of memory, in that they attempted to fashion a certain identity, a certain memory of the man as an exercise in what we might term 'constructed forgetting', itself based on the obscuring of the past. Historians, we might think, know more about the past than individuals remember. But, in Creyssel's case, historians thus far know very little and there are few, if any, individuals left who might remember. Hence it is all the more important to attempt to deconstruct the claims made at Creyssel's trial by way of exposing the disparities between his line of defence and his actual role during the Occupation.

What, then, were the premises on which Creyssel and his team constructed his profile at the trial? Nine identifiable lines of argument combined to form the defence plea. These revolved around Creyssel's claims that he had had no actual authority; that he had acted out of sincerity, good faith and patriotism; that he had operated in the interests of maintaining French morale; that he had been obliged to tailor his words according to circumstances; that he had

¹⁹ In France, 1.9 million wireless sets were in use in 1935 by a population of 41.5 million. By 1939, around five million licensed sets (and an estimated further one million unlicensed sets) were in use by a population of broadly the same size (Lévy 60). So, whereas one set was in use for every twenty-two people in 1935, by 1939, there was one set for every eight people, or seven if unlicensed sets are included.

not been in good standing with either the Germans or the Milice, Vichy's vicious paramilitary force created on 30 January 1943 with German aid; that he had supported the resistance; and, finally, that he had sought to restrain more strident ultra-collaborationist voices, such as Henriot. These lines of argument indicate that Creyssel's strategy coincided in part with that of others before the purge courts, and, as we shall see, it is possible that earlier trials (of which there were many, given that Creyssel was not tried until June 1948) may have informed some of the justifications he and his lawyers marshalled.

A first component of Creyssel's defence relates to his official position at Vichy and the level of responsibility this entailed. In an article on the trials of French writers during the *épuration légale*, Gisèle Sapiro suggests that, in such cases, a defence would often try to transfer responsibility upwards, to 'a leader, a superior, a mentor' (91), citing, for example, the novelist Henri Béraud's plea in December 1944 that he was but a 'simple citizen' who had accepted Philippe Pétain's authority (97).²⁰ A variant of this mechanism had featured heavily at the Nuremberg trials (1945–46), where accused after accused denied culpability for war crimes and crimes against humanity on the basis that they were just following orders. This is powerfully communicated in the archival footage from Nuremberg included at the end of Alain Resnais's haunting film *Nuit et brouillard* (1956), where all those shown in the dock claim that 'je ne suis pas responsable'.²¹ Creyssel argued similarly, twice highlighting to jurors that he had had no part to play in the formulation of policy at Vichy, stressing on the first day of his trial that he was but a 'simple Secrétaire Général, ne participant pas aux délibérations gouvernementales' and reinforcing this the next day when he referred to Vichyites 'qui étaient très au-dessus de moi' and insisted that 'je n'ai jamais été qu'un petit directeur, d'abord, et ensuite un secrétaire général absent des délibérations gouvernementales'. He further underlined that everything he did was dictated by Laval, Vichy's president, in close proximity to whom Creyssel lived and worked, and from whom he received 'ses confidences en même temps que ses consignes'. It was most certainly not his place, he said, to hamper Laval's efforts or embarrass him in the eyes of the occupier.²² The fact that Creyssel had a daily, direct line to Laval was evidence that he held a certain high-profile status at Vichy. Nonetheless, he contended that his broadcasts were 'discours que j'étais obligé de prononcer' and that he was permanently 'en fonctions officielles et chargé de jouer un rôle', adding that on occasions he would have expressed himself differently 'si j'avais été libre de le faire'.²³ This was an unproblematic assertion to make in 1948 when its veracity could not be tested. Of course, Creyssel's emphasis on his subordinate position in relation to Laval does not mislead; rather, it coincides with the wartime view that Creyssel was one of 'Laval's puppets [...] entrusted with the complex task of explaining Laval's policy to the country'.²⁴ But Laval was equally an easy superior to incriminate before the same post-war court which had found him guilty almost three years earlier.²⁵

Jurors clearly picked up on Creyssel's careful self-positioning, since they turned to delve into his reasons for seeking a post at Vichy and to question why he did not resign after 11 November 1942, once Germany had occupied all of France and collaboration escalated.

²⁰ In December 1944, Béraud was found guilty of intelligence with the enemy and condemned to death, a sentence which was commuted to hard labour and imprisonment.

²¹ Such was the frequency of its use at Nuremberg that the 'superior orders' plea has often since been termed the 'Nuremberg defence'.

²² Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 56; Interrogatoire, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 13.

²³ Interrogatoire, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 15; Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 163.

²⁴ 'How Vichy misrules France', *The Times*, 24 June 1942, p. 5.

²⁵ Laval's somewhat hostile showcase trial took place between 4 and 9 October 1945. He was found guilty of intelligence with the enemy and executed on 15 October 1945. For further on Laval's trial, see Brody.

Historians of the period have argued that any claims that Vichy was playing a so-called 'double game', whereby it would switch sides to the Allies at the right moment, faded into non-existence at this point (Fishman et al.). Creyssel himself sidestepped the allusion, responding that his ongoing commitment to Vichy rested in his belief that Pétain's government was serving the best interests of France. Furthermore, he did not resign in late 1942 because the government itself did not stand down, remaining in place to shield the French people in the harsher phase of the Occupation then beginning. His own belief in Vichy remained steadfast, and he concluded that 'c'est pour continuer mes services à ce gouvernement dont l'activité et dont l'utilité continuaient à m'apparaître, encore que le rôle en fût plus dur et moins brillant, que je suis resté à mon poste'.²⁶ Interestingly, Creyssel never sought to deny what he had done at Vichy, although, in the face of the evidence, that would have been somewhat pointless as a strategy. Rather, he cloaked himself in sincerity and good faith – a second strand of his defence – seeking to divert attention from his actions onto his intentions and resulting in a sustained effort at virtue-signalling. Moreover, a third intertwined line of his defence rested on the claim that he was a patriot whose sole goal was to serve France, and who had thought that what he was doing was for the good of the country. Consequently, his motivation was not to be doubted and he was no traitor acting out of venality. Indeed, Creyssel reacted strongly to the charges against him, judging it 'profondément injuste et outrageant' that anyone could think that he had intended to support any enterprise against French interests when in practice what he had been engaged in was precisely 'la défense de la nation'.²⁷

The defence that 'collaboration had been undertaken to make the best of a bad situation', as Novick (170) puts it, was a common strategy used by many before the post-war courts – not least Laval himself – keen to insist that their aim had been to protect France. Creyssel was no exception. When questioned about his promotion of collaboration with Germany, and notably his repeated representation in his broadcasts of Montoire (where, on 24 October 1940, Pétain accepted the idea of collaboration) as the pivotal point of all Vichy policy,²⁸ Creyssel replied that he had acted in earnest, trusting both Pétain and Laval, and believing in the strategy he had understood them to be adopting in their relations with Germany. He emphasised his 'confiance absolue' in Pétain, for whom he felt 'une déférence presque dévotieuse', rooted in the Marshal's war record and love of France; and he noted simply that 'je croyais ce que Laval me disait'.²⁹ Montoire, Creyssel said, had established 'la collaboration bouclier'.³⁰ He had believed it to be a diplomatic ruse used by Vichy to shield France from 'dûretés allemandes' while awaiting the moment when events would turn in the country's favour. He elaborated that the political mentality he witnessed at Vichy was one of 'Prusse après Iéna': Pétain was a modern-day Metternich, negotiating with Hitler at Montoire so that France might survive the conditions imposed by the Armistice in June 1940, just as Metternich, Austria's foreign minister, had negotiated with Napoleon in the early nineteenth century to bring about détente with France and protect Austria until Napoleon could be defeated. Laval, for his part, was a contemporary Talleyrand, Napoleon's foreign minister whose name has come to represent shrewd diplomacy, a quality frequently attached to Laval during the war by sympathetic

²⁶ Interrogatoire, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 23, p. 24.

²⁷ Interrogatoire, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 12.

²⁸ Sample broadcasts include 'Confiance!', 23 April 1942, in Paul Creyssel, *Passion et mission de la France* (Paris: n.p., [1944]) [hereafter PMF], pp. 11–12; 'De quoi s'agit-il?', 22 October 1942, PMF, pp. 81–83; 'N'imitons pas Gribouille!', 4 March 1943, PMF, pp. 137–39; 'Montoire continue', 16 March 1943, PMF, pp. 140–42.

²⁹ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 28; Interrogatoire, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 18.

³⁰ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 69.

media outlets.³¹ Saying no to collaboration at Montoire would have exposed France to all sorts of terrible demands. Saying yes brought its own risks, not least for 'l'âme et la sensibilité françaises', as Creyssel avowed he now recognised, but at least 'ouvrirait sur un certain avenir, [...] la résistance future, la préparation de la phase finale des opérations'.³² In suggesting that collaboration was a form of delaying tactic which opened the way for future resistance, Creyssel subscribed to the self-serving 'sword and shield' theory concocted by Pétain and sustained by a certain strand of post-war historical thinking, which held that occupied France had needed both Charles de Gaulle and Pétain, that there were different but equally valid ways to serve France, and that 'honourable, courageous men could have chosen either' (Novick 153).³³ His lawyers argued that Creyssel was just such a man, whose sense of duty tied him to Vichy, whereas that of his friend and former army comrade Antoine de Saint-Exupéry saw him leave France for the United States, and resistance, in late 1940. 'Que ne l'ai-je alors suivi!...', professed Creyssel. But, he continued, 'j'ai des regrets, je n'ai pas de remords', reactivating his claim to good faith.³⁴ In his closing statement, Héraud emphasised this further, conceding to the jury that '[Creyssel] a suivi la mauvaise voie, c'est mon sentiment comme le vôtre' before qualifying 'mais il l'a suivie sans bassesse'.³⁵

Creyssel further employed the shield theory to justify his wartime representation of other interrelated key moments of the Occupation. These notably included Laval's infamous declaration on 22 June 1942 that he desired Germany's victory to prevent the spread of Bolshevism, coupled with his exhortation that the French people participate in the voluntary *relève* programme, in which workers would be swapped for prisoners-of-war;³⁶ and the subsequent *service du travail obligatoire* (STO), enacted from 16 February 1943, which saw those born in 1920, 1921 and 1922 subjected to compulsory work in Germany.³⁷ On all of these topics, Creyssel's broadcasts had indulged in scaremongering and warnings likely to foster anxiety and defeatism rather than boost morale. Britain and the United States would not be able to restrain the Soviet Union, he predicted, which was equipping itself for commercial and military supremacy in post-war Europe; there would be more Katyn massacres if the Soviets were not stopped (a reference to the mass killings of Polish military and intellectuals in spring 1940); and he cautioned about the post-war ambitions of well-known militant French communists, such as André Marty.³⁸ He sang the praises of the *relève*, reading on air a highly positive letter he claimed to have received from someone on the programme, but the authenticity of which could not be verified. People should be thankful that the *relève* was not compulsory, he advised, but realise that Laval would not be able to protect them from Germany if they did not participate.³⁹ Moreover, while the STO was compulsory, young people would eventually

³¹ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 29. On Metternich and Talleyrand, see Seward and Lawday.

³² Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 31–32.

³³ The 'sword and shield' theory is upheld in, for example, Aron's sympathetic *Histoire de Vichy*.

³⁴ Maître Jacques Fourcade, Plaidoirie, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 97–120 (pp. 103–04).

³⁵ Héraud, Plaidoirie, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 122.

³⁶ For a collaborationist take on Laval's June declaration, see 'M. Pierre Laval demande aux ouvriers d'assurer la relève des prisonniers', *Le Petit Parisien*, 23 June 1942, p. 1, p. 3; for a British view, see 'Laval's bargain with Hitler', *The Times*, 23 June 1942, p. 3.

³⁷ See 'Le service obligatoire du travail est créé pour les jeunes gens', *Le Petit Parisien*, 16 February 1943, p. 1. On the STO more generally, see Spina.

³⁸ 'Ton gouvernement a choisi', 24 December 1942, PMF, pp. 111–13; 'L'autre danger', 25 February 1943, PMF, pp. 134–36; 'Les massacres de Katyn', 13 May 1943, AN, 3W/138, pièce 52, Allocutions prononcées par Creyssel à la radio; 'Vérités sur la Russie', 29 July 1943, PMF, pp. 185–88; 'Prophétie', 15 April 1943, PMF, pp. 150–53; 'En attendant Marty', 7 October 1943, PMF, pp. 209–13; 'Marty l'Africain', 2 December 1943, PMF, pp. 222–26.

³⁹ 'Lettre d'un jeune Français', 10 September 1942, AN, F41/306; 'Le complot contre nos ouvriers', 15 October 1942, PMF, pp. 78–80; 'De quoi s'agit-il?', 22 October 1942, PMF, pp. 81–83.

regain their freedom unless the worst happened and the Soviet Union won the war.⁴⁰ For all of these reasons, Creyssel had proclaimed to listeners that Laval's desire for a German victory was 'un cri de lucidité et de patriotisme'.⁴¹

Challenged by prosecutor Maurice Jodelet to explain himself further, Creyssel stated that he had not initially understood what had prompted Laval to declare his desire for a German victory, and had feared that it would undermine French morale. But, he contended surprisingly, it had actually had an excellent result, for it had prompted good numbers to join the resistance.⁴² Furthermore, he had been convinced by Laval's own explanation, namely that his declaration was 'worth' 300,000 French workers who would otherwise have been demanded by the occupier. Creyssel therefore claimed that Laval's apparent commitment to a German victory was part of a ruse by Vichy to allay German suspicions of the regime. This, in turn, was intended to afford Laval sufficient credit with the occupier to enable him to broker good terms for France and so, 'avec un cœur honnête et attaché à ses compatriotes', protect good numbers of French people from forced labour in Germany.⁴³ Taking this further, Creyssel made the tendentious assertion that, in shielding 'le corps de la France', Vichy had in fact safeguarded 'le futur corps de la résistance française'; for, had more been deported, they would not have been available to fight for France as they subsequently did.⁴⁴ Collaboration was thus not only a shield which spared French people from sufferings they would otherwise have endured, but also a cover which facilitated the emergence of the resistance. It was a highly dubious claim given Creyssel's negative representation of the resistance in his broadcasts, as we shall explore further shortly. The shield theory would, of course, be later decisively discredited in Paxton's *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order* (1972), and historians have allowed it little credence since. But, at the time, it fed a core part of Creyssel's defence, namely that his propaganda was just a cover for Vichy's feigned stance and that he did not believe a word of what he said: 'La collaboration "bouclier", j'y croyais. La feinte de collaboration pour servir de bouclier à la France, j'y croyais, mais je ne croyais pas à ce que je disais'.⁴⁵ Rather, he was 'une machine à feindre, un bouclier sonore, l'instrument d'une feinte verbale du gouvernement'.⁴⁶

While it is impossible to prove whether or not Creyssel believed in what he said in his broadcasts, there may well be some truth in his claim that he was sincere and thought he was acting in the best interests of France. Novick (170) indicates that such assertions were common before the purge courts and were 'almost always at least partially true', hinting thereby at the complexities the courts had to juggle in reaching a judgement and deciding on the appropriate punishment. Creyssel's exhaustive repetition of this claim at his trial reinforces our earlier point that he made a deliberate and concerted effort to divert attention from his actions onto his motivation, perhaps considering that this would persuade the jury that he had simply made a mistake and that his sincerity and good faith were attenuating features, a defence of 'personal conviction' recognised by Sapiro (91). Arguing that an 'honest' mistake constitutes a defence touches on legal questions outside the remit of this article. However, Creyssel's counsel certainly thought it was an approach worth adopting, no doubt in order to insulate him when it came to decisions on his punishment. In his closing plea, for instance, Fourcade characterised Creyssel as 'un patriote dans l'erreur, un patriote qui, indiscutablement, intellectuellement s'est trompé'. At the same time, he insisted to the jury that 'ce n'est

⁴⁰ 'N'imitons pas Gribouille!', 4 March 1943, PMF, pp. 137–39.

⁴¹ 'Montoire continue', 16 March 1943, PMF, pp. 140–42.

⁴² Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 79–80.

⁴³ Interrogatoire, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 19–20; Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 56.

⁴⁴ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 76.

⁴⁵ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 69.

⁴⁶ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 86.

pas un traître qui est devant vous, ce n'est pas un criminel d'intention. C'est un patriote, un instant égaré'.⁴⁷ But, minimising Creyssel's appointment at Vichy to 'un instant' when it in fact lasted almost twenty-two months misleadingly downplayed his input to the regime.

When the trial turned to focus on Creyssel's propaganda work at Vichy, he again played the good faith card, contending that the primary question the jury had to address was whether it was possible that a well-intentioned individual (such as himself) could have believed that Vichy's policy served France and her people. This clearly diverted from the charge of undermining French morale, which the court president Louis Noguères immediately reactivated with a sharply focused alternative question: 'Est-ce que votre action à vous, personnellement, était de nature, portant sur un public qui était dans la guerre, qui faisait la guerre, car il organisait sa résistance armée contre l'ennemi, est-ce que les propos que vous teniez à ce pays étaient de nature à le durcir dans sa conviction qu'il fallait tenir tête à l'ennemi, ou, au contraire, étaient de nature à lui faire poser les armes?'⁴⁸ In response, Creyssel marshalled a fourth line of his defence, insisting that he had always tried to maintain French morale in all of his broadcasts, and all the measures he took to this end were 'la justification même de ma bonne foi, de mes bonnes intentions, de ma position, en un mot'.⁴⁹ Maître Héraud went further in his closing statement for the defence, claiming that '[Creyssel] n'a été ni violent, ni passionné [...]. Creyssel a été l'informateur neutre d'une période trouble. S'il a commis une faute, il n'a pas empoisonné l'esprit public, et sa faute est pour ainsi dire sans conséquence'.⁵⁰

The claim to neutrality simply does not match the evidence of the broadcasts, which are loaded with pro-Vichy and pro-collaboration themes, paired with a keen condemnation of the Allies and the resistance. We saw above how Creyssel's broadcasts on Bolshevism, the *relève* and the STO sought alternately to alarm or threaten listeners, with the intention of fostering compliance with Vichy's policy of collaboration rather than nurturing resistance. Other broadcasts were frequently gloomy and defeatist, peppered with such phrases as 'nous avons été vaincus car nous étions les plus faibles' or 'nous avons mérité le sort qui nous accable'.⁵¹ Or else he employed atrocity propaganda, labouring gruesome descriptions of dead French citizens killed at the hands of the Allies – and especially the British RAF – which earned him the label of 'pleureur' from the BBC in London.⁵² Creyssel frequently sought to stifle hope in the Allies, and especially in the British, whom he presented as France's longstanding enemy.⁵³ Warnings of Allied designs on France's Empire featured often: he bemoaned the 'loss' of Madagascar in May 1942 and North Africa in November 1942, claiming that France could not trust Allied promises that its territories would be returned in the post-war world.⁵⁴ He also strove to scotch any belief in an eventual Allied landing, mocking the failure of the exercise at Dieppe in August 1942 and emphasising Allied 'delays'.⁵⁵ Moreover, those broadcasts

⁴⁷ Fourcade, Plaidoirie, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 117.

⁴⁸ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 75–76.

⁴⁹ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 77–78.

⁵⁰ Héraud, Plaidoirie, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 138.

⁵¹ 'Ils n'ont pas fui', 25 June 1942, PMF, pp. 28–30; 'Ô Carthage, lamentable ville', 31 December 1942, PMF, pp. 114–16.

⁵² 'Prière pour les morts de quarante', 18 June 1942, PMF, pp. 25–27; 'Massacreurs', 23 September 1943, PMF, pp. 205–08; 'Le temps de la colère', 16 December 1943, PMF, pp. 227–30; BBC Written Archives Centre, Félix Gouin, 'Réponse à Creyssel', 15 February 1943.

⁵³ 'Histoire de deux peuples', 27 August 1942, PMF, pp. 58–61.

⁵⁴ 'Madagascar', 7 May 1942, AN, F41/306; 'Il n'y a pas de quoi illuminer!', 12 November 1942, PMF, pp. 91–95; 'Ton gouvernement a choisi', 24 December 1942, PMF, pp. 111–13.

⁵⁵ 'Débarquement', 2 July 1942, PMF, pp. 31–34; 'Dieppe', 20 August 1942, PMF, pp. 55–57.

which referred to resistance or the resisters themselves could hardly have been understood by listeners as even mildly sympathetic to the cause. In his closing statement, Héraud insisted that whenever Creyssel had taken issue with resisters he had never doubted their patriotism or called for their condemnation, but had demonstrated sympathy and moderation in his comments; hence his words were no attempt at demoralisation.⁵⁶ But Creyssel in fact relentlessly presented resisters' patriotism as the 'wrong' kind: they were 'patriotes égarés', under 'terrorist', that is, communist and foreign control,⁵⁷ and his broadcasts offered them no encouragement whatsoever. Rather, under the guise of calling for French unity, he depicted them as mistaken or misled, wasting their blood on a hopeless cause.⁵⁸ Elsewhere he criticised resisters for rebelling against the legitimate authority of Vichy and for taking the lives and property of fellow citizens on the pretext of liberating France; and he sought to dishearten resisters by contending that while the machine guns supplied by the Allies might suit to kill defenceless civilians, they would be no match for the heavy artillery the Germans would use to crush the resistance.⁵⁹ In contrast, Creyssel praised the Milice, distorting their brutal reality by representing them as 'des chevaliers', men of faith, courage and honour operating with lucidity and wisdom in determinedly rooting out 'treacherous' resistance cells across France.⁶⁰

Creyssel simultaneously maintained a campaign which attacked the 'anti-France' reviled by Vichy and which sought to dampen hope in the Free French outside France. In his broadcasts, he sustained a bitter attack on the Popular Front and blamed Third Republic men such as Édouard Daladier and Léon Blum for leading France into war.⁶¹ He labelled those Vichyites who 'abandoned' the regime to switch to the Allies at the time of the landing in North Africa in November 1942 – high-ranking personalities such as François Darlan, Commander-in-Chief of the French Navy, and Pierre Boisson, Governor-General of French North Africa – as 'félons', 'misérables' and 'transfuges à étoiles'.⁶² He presented Communists and Gaullists as 'des forces occultes, des forces ennemies' working hand in hand to sabotage France's best interests. They had abandoned France, he alleged, and were safe and sound 'dans les confortables retraites de l'émigration', unlike the people of France.⁶³ He branded Charles de Gaulle, the embodiment of resistance, as 'le rebelle qui est à Londres'.⁶⁴ Then, at the time of the creation of the Comité français de la libération nationale (CFLN) on 3 June 1943, Creyssel dismissed both de Gaulle and Henri Giraud, its co-presidents, as mere puppets, 'dominés par les Anglo-Saxons, entraînés et manœuvrés par les émigrés du Front populaire' and committed to 'la restauration de l'ancien régime', namely the Third Republic.⁶⁵ He argued that, in working with the Allies, de Gaulle was dining with the devil while simultaneously labouring to destroy French people's confidence in Pétain. But France would be reunited in spite of de Gaulle; and peace would be signed, albeit not by de Gaulle.⁶⁶ Once de Gaulle held sole power, Creyssel indulged in a blistering attack, taunting him as 'le chef nominal d'un gouvernement non reconnu' – a reference to the Allies' then failure officially to recognise the CFLN as France's legitimate

⁵⁶ Héraud, *Plaidoirie*, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 133.

⁵⁷ 'Le temps de la colère', 16 December 1943, PMF, pp. 227–30.

⁵⁸ 'Sur les hommes d'Alger', 10 June 1943, PMF, pp. 168–72.

⁵⁹ 'Staline au maquis', 21 October 1943, PMF, pp. 214–18.

⁶⁰ 'Une chevalerie politique', 20 March 1943, PMF, pp. 143–45.

⁶¹ 'Déjà Laval avait raison', 6 August 1942, PMF, pp. 47–50; 'Réponse à deux ci-devant', 8 October 1942, PMF, pp. 75–77; 'Conseils pour un prisonnier libéré', 5 November 1942, PMF, pp. 88–90; 'Tous nos maux viennent de l'ancien régime', 21 January 1943, PMF, pp. 120–23.

⁶² 'Boisson, Darlan et C^{ie}', 26 November 1942, PMF, pp. 99–101.

⁶³ 'Le complot contre nos ouvriers', 15 October 1942, PMF, pp. 78–80; 'Vérité, sévérité, sollicitude', 14 January 1943, PMF, pp. 117–19.

⁶⁴ 'Balance des forces', 13 August 1942, PMF, pp. 51–54.

⁶⁵ 'Sur les hommes d'Alger', 10 June 1943, PMF, pp. 168–72.

⁶⁶ 'De Gaulle déçu', 16 September 1943, PMF, pp. 201–04.

provisional representative body – and concluding that ‘vous ne pouvez plus rien contre le Maréchal et vous ne pouvez plus rien pour la France’.⁶⁷ His last broadcast, delivered on 23 December 1943, pressed these same buttons one final time.⁶⁸ These were not the arguments of someone showing moderation towards either the domestic resistance or the Free French abroad.

The likely negative effect on listeners of broadcasts such as these could hardly be misunderstood. But Creyssel’s fifth line of defence at his trial was to contend that his words had had to be consistently tailored to suit the circumstances and so to satisfy German ears. He illustrated this by claiming that Germany and Vichy had viewed collaboration differently: ‘le jeu allemand’ had been to get France to provide Germany with as many supplies and as much manpower as possible, and ultimately to join in the war at its side; in contrast, ‘le jeu français’ had been to resist the occupier and to reduce its demands through negotiation and cunning, as far as this was possible given that Germany held the stronger position. Creyssel argued that he could not have explained Vichy’s game to his audience or else he would have exposed it to the Germans; conversely, while revealing Germany’s intentions might have served France’s interests, it would also have risked alienating listeners from Vichy and their duty. Hence he had vocalised ‘juste ce qu’il faut, du moins, j’essa[yais], pour les oreilles allemandes’ while at the same time attempting not to lead French people to believe that Germany and Vichy’s interests were the same. He had done what he could, at least for ‘les oreilles françaises capables de comprendre’, thus perversely implying that if the French people had failed properly to understand him it was their own fault. The court must understand, he continued, that he had had to ‘compromise’: ‘Je cherche, entre les deux, la position d’utilité qui soit la moins nocive possible pour le moral. C’est ce que j’ai constamment essayé de faire’. He doubted that he had succeeded in what was in reality an impossible situation. But all of his broadcasts and all of his other activities demonstrated that he had tried: ‘J’ai dépensé tout ce que j’avais d’attention et [...] tout ce que j’avais de subtilité, j’ai fait de mon mieux’.⁶⁹

Creyssel’s professed concern not to signal Vichy’s ‘real’ thinking to the Germans bears some comparison with the claim made by Jean Luchaire, director of the collaborationist press during the Occupation, who had asserted at his own trial in February 1946 that he had become a resister in early 1942 after listening to the BBC. However, he could not have let his readers know this since it would also have alerted the Germans, and he had therefore continued to advocate collaboration. Unsurprisingly, the court had found this argument implausible, given the high-profile nature of Luchaire’s pro-collaboration activities, and he had been found guilty as charged (Novick 170).⁷⁰ Creyssel’s explanation of his own practice was potentially more believable, for he insisted at his trial that his broadcasts had contained a separate hidden or coded message for French ears, impenetrable to the occupier, suggesting that he considered his words to be a form of doublespeak. To reinforce his claim, he indulged in long explanations of Vichy’s attitude towards Germany, talking of policies of negotiation, compromise and ruse, and repeatedly referring to the diplomatic strategies employed by Metternich and Talleyrand, as we noted above. His broadcasts, he observed, should not have been taken literally.⁷¹ But there are no clear or indeed obscure references to either Metternich

⁶⁷ ‘Lettre ouverte au Président de Gaulle’, 18 November 1943, PMF, pp. 219–21. The Allies finally recognised the Gouvernement provisoire de la République française, established on 3 June 1944, in September 1944.

⁶⁸ ‘Il n’est pire sourd’, 23 December 1943, AN, 3W/138, pièce 52.

⁶⁹ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 120–21.

⁷⁰ On Luchaire, who was executed on 22 February 1946, see Meletta.

⁷¹ M. l’Avocat général Jodelet, Réquisitoire, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 79–96 (pp. 81–82).

or Talleyrand in Creyssel's broadcasts, and there is no hint for ordinary listeners on how they should interpret his words. This raises once more the question of the impact of Creyssel's broadcasts on his audience. How could those who heard his broadcasts in 1942 and 1943 have known that he was being subtle (if indeed he was)? How could they have done anything other than take his words at face value and so believe what Creyssel, the authorised voice of Vichy, told them? Prosecutor Jodelet made much of this in his closing statement, questioning how audiences would have known that they had to decode Creyssel's words and how they would have understood that his talk of total collaboration was intended just for the Germans. When Creyssel called de Gaulle a traitor, foretold that the Allies would never land in France or return its colonies, when he labelled the Maquis (the domestic resistance) as brigands, or defined collaboration as the only possible pathway for France, how could ordinary French people think anything other than that what he said was perhaps true? And what effect could such broadcasts have had at the time other than to demoralise and weaken resistance?⁷² Jodelet's conclusion was stark: 'Pendant plus de deux ans, Creyssel a soutenu, par sa propagande, la politique de Vichy, d'une façon habile et dangereuse. Il est un de ceux dont on a pu dire qu'ils ont empoisonné l'opinion publique'.⁷³

Jodelet's return to the precise charge against Creyssel at the end of his closing statement reminds us that, unlike many others before the Haute Cour de Justice, Creyssel had not been charged with intelligence with the enemy. Nonetheless, a sixth element of his defence addressed his relations with the occupier, for, returning to the theme that he was no traitor bought by the enemy, Creyssel attempted to persuade the court that he had not been in good standing with the Germans during the Occupation. Throughout both the pre-trial hearings and the trial itself, Creyssel called attention to the fact that he had been removed from his post at Vichy on the insistence of the Germans, and held that this was because they considered him 'comme un homme qui ne voulait pas faire leur propagande et comme un adversaire secret de l'Allemagne'.⁷⁴ The evidence he marshalled to support his claim was that he had specifically displeased the occupier on two occasions. The first was a broadcast he had delivered on 4 March 1943 which addressed those affected by the recent STO call-up, to whom Creyssel had promised 'à Vichy, je vous le jure, vous avez été défendus'.⁷⁵ This, he said, had been considered by the Germans to undermine STO negotiations between Laval and Fritz Sauckel (Germany's architect of labour deployment), and the occupier had protested to Laval over what Creyssel described as 'ma façon de m'adresser aux jeunes gens que l'on voulait contraindre à partir en Allemagne qui n'était peut-être pas de nature à les encourager à partir'.⁷⁶ As a result, he had been summoned by Laval and chastised.⁷⁷ The second incident had arisen a few months later. On 16 July 1943, Rudolf Schleier (the Reich's Consul-General in Paris) telegraphed Roland Krug (Germany's Ambassador to Vichy) to complain that Creyssel had 'blundered' during a speech he gave to an audience of six hundred people in Rouen on 9 July 1943, by hypothesising on a German defeat, positing that France could play the role of intermediary between the Allies and Germany, and failing to make any reference to the occupier's 'sacrifices' for the European cause. Schleier had considered Creyssel's words 'doublement fâcheux à une époque où une grande partie de la population attend d'être délivrée par les Anglo-Américains', and told Krug to communicate Germany's displeasure to Laval.

⁷² Jodelet, Réquisitoire, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 82–88.

⁷³ Jodelet, Réquisitoire, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 94.

⁷⁴ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 41.

⁷⁵ 'N'imitons pas Gribouille!', 4 March 1943, PMF, pp. 137–39.

⁷⁶ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 41.

⁷⁷ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 56–57.

This he had done the same day, insisting that Creyssel's 'maladresse incompréhensible' had made a poor impression.⁷⁸

At his trial, Creyssel claimed these incidents at least partly explained why the Germans wanted him removed from his post in late 1943.⁷⁹ In his closing statement for the defence, Fourcade then reminded jurors of these episodes. He also pointed to defence witnesses who had sworn that Creyssel did not privately indulge in pro-German statements and that no German had ever visited Creyssel's office in Vichy, where he was said to have displayed a portrait of Pétain before a group of defeated German soldiers at the time of the First World War; and he flagged that Creyssel's choice of office manager, Guy Maquennehen, was an anti-German who had gone on to lead a Breton resistance unit in August 1944. Had he not died in combat, he would surely have testified in Creyssel's favour. Fourcade concluded that, in the light of such actions and associations, 'il est indiscutable que Creyssel était anti-allemand; il est indiscutable qu'il souhaitait la défaite de l'Allemagne'.⁸⁰ However, if this were true, it did not translate into his broadcasts intended for public consumption, and his 'coded' words were consequently so subtle as to be meaningless. And, if such a line of defence were valid, rather more than two instances of German objection to his words might have been expected. In fact, the occupier never censored Creyssel, as he had proudly declared in a broadcast on 10 June 1943.⁸¹ On the contrary – and this the defence team failed to mention – there was also evidence that the Germans appreciated Creyssel's words, as when Marseille's German consul evaluated a lecture Creyssel gave in the city on 5 June 1943 as 'une conférence magnifique', in which he spoke of 'la sincérité d'Hitler' and depicted collaboration as 'absolument nécessaire'.⁸² It is true, of course, that Creyssel was finally named on a list of Vichy men the Germans wished to see removed from post, produced on 9 December 1943. But his inclusion does not substantiate the defence's claim that he was anti-German, since the list also targeted proven collaborators such as Jacques Guérard, Georges Dayras and Louis Darquier de Pellepoix, all of whom, by the time of Creyssel's trial, had already been condemned to death by the Haute Cour de Justice for intelligence with the enemy.⁸³ Getting to the heart of why the Germans wanted Creyssel out of post is thus problematic. But, given Philippe Henriot's subsequent rise to power at their behest, the occupier's then preference for ultra-collaborationist voices most probably motivated its actions rather than any clear-cut antipathy towards Creyssel.

Creyssel simultaneously claimed that he had been in poor odour not only with the occupier but also with the Milice, an argument which represented a seventh component of his defence. His pro-Milice broadcast of 20 March 1943 and his pro-collaboration article published on 10 July 1943 in *Combats*, the organisation's magazine, represented awkward evidence in this respect.⁸⁴ But Creyssel dismissed this broadcast, explaining that it had been delivered at Laval's request only a month after the creation of the Milice, so before its repressive nature

⁷⁸ Archives dites de Berlin, AN, 3W/357, bordereau 4581.

⁷⁹ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 58.

⁸⁰ Fourcade, Plaidoirie, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 108–15.

⁸¹ 'Sur les hommes d'Alger', 10 June 1943, PMF, pp. 168–72. Creyssel repeated the claim in his introduction to *Passion et mission de la France*, p. 3.

⁸² Jodelet, Réquisitoire, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 94.

⁸³ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 38–39. At Vichy, Guérard was Laval's choice to be Secretary-General of the Government from 18 April 1942, while Dayras was Secretary-General of the Ministry of Justice from 16 July 1940. Despite their presence on the occupier's list, both men remained at Vichy until the regime collapsed on 20 August 1944. Darquier de Pellepoix was Vichy's Commissioner-General for Jewish Affairs from 8 May 1942 until he was sacked on 26 February 1944 for the misappropriation of confiscated property.

⁸⁴ 'Une chevalerie politique', 20 March 1943, PMF, pp. 143–45; 'Collaboration: un mot qui divise les Français', *Combats*, 10 July 1943, p. 1, p. 2.

had become entirely clear. Defence lawyer Héraud went further, and attempted to spin a moral superiority for Creyssel over the Milice by arguing that had it truly been a 'chevalerie', as Creyssel's 'programme' in his broadcast had outlined, then Creyssel would have achieved something great and would probably not now be before the court. Unfortunately, however, the Milice had not followed Creyssel's advice. But this was too much for Noguères, the court president, who accused Héraud of having a short memory since everyone was aware of the vicious nature of the Milice from day one of its existence.⁸⁵ Creyssel was on firmer ground when he argued that 'la Milice me considérait avec hostilité et j'étais fort mal avec elle'. He reminded jurors of the witness statement given by Henri Charbonneau, former director of *Combats*, who had testified that Creyssel was known as 'un des fonctionnaires de Vichy les moins favorables à la Milice'; that his article in *Combats* (which Charbonneau had considered indifferent) had only been published when the magazine was temporarily short of copy; and that Charbonneau had declared that, when Creyssel had resigned and Henriot had become Vichy's propaganda chief, 'nos militants comme moi-même ont été très satisfaits'.⁸⁶ To reinforce this image, Creyssel suggested that he had been as hostile to the Milice as it had been to him. To that end, he cited an incident dating from his period as Vichy's consul in Monaco, a post he held between March and September 1944, flagging that 'quand j'avais la liberté de ma plume et quand je n'étais pas en fonction officielle' he had protested to Laval about the Milice's unwarranted arrest of civil servant Léon Boussard, earning the latter's release.⁸⁷ Ultimately, the evidence offered by these encounters with the Milice is ambiguous, and its value to Creyssel's defence thus somewhat limited. But, finding himself in a corner, Creyssel and his team perhaps thought it best to mobilise as many different arguments as possible to try to present him in a favourable light.

An eighth line of Creyssel's defence rested on his argument that his deeds and words, both at Vichy and in Monaco, were of direct benefit to the resistance or should be interpreted specifically as acts of resistance. We saw earlier that Creyssel presented Vichy's collaboration as a shield which facilitated the emergence of the resistance, and disingenuously suggested that credit lay with Vichy when the creation of the STO swelled resistance ranks. But he also went a stage further by contending that Vichy had actively protected the Maquis at a time when its still small numbers meant that it could not have defended itself against the Germans; and he cited René Bousquet, the regime's Secretary-General for the Police, who had told him, Creyssel claimed, that Vichy's objective was 'que les Allemands, SS et armée, ne se précipitent pas sur les maquis'. To that end, Creyssel explained that Bousquet had informed the Germans that anything to do with French internal order (such as the domestic resistance) was his domain and that, even with insufficient numbers and weapons, his men were succeeding against the Maquis, so indicating that the occupier need not get involved. Then, on learning in October 1943 that two SS divisions were marching on Maquis in the Centre region, Bousquet had deployed his men in such a way nearby that the Maquis had swiftly got wind of the threat and disappeared before the Germans arrived. Creyssel argued that Bousquet had thus served French interests, and it was not for nothing that he had subsequently been arrested and deported by the occupier. Creyssel went on to align himself with this effort, explaining that his role had been to back Bousquet through his broadcasts, reassuring German ears that Vichy was active in combatting the Maquis, while advising the Maquis in veiled terms that Vichy

⁸⁵ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 163, p. 165, p. 166.

⁸⁶ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 163, p. 164, p. 165.

⁸⁷ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 163.

was working continually to delay the moment when German troops would be unleashed upon it.⁸⁸ Prosecutor Jodelet posed just one question, no doubt with some astonishment, which neatly summarised Creyssel's lengthy exposé on this topic: 'En somme, tout ce qu'a fait l'accusé, c'était dans l'intérêt du maquis?'. Creyssel responded firmly: 'Certainement, certainement, je l'affirme, j'en ai la conviction profonde'.⁸⁹ But, as we have seen, his broadcasts tell a quite different story of his attitude towards the resistance.

Creyssel's appraisal at his own trial of Bousquet's merits foretold the latter's fortunes when he in turn faced the Haute Cour de Justice on 23 June 1949. Here Bousquet was acquitted of compromising national defence but automatically condemned to *indignité nationale* for his participation in the Vichy government, where he had played a major role in the round-up of French and foreign Jews, including the notorious *rafle du Vél' d'Hiv'* on 16–17 July 1942, when some thirteen thousand Jews were arrested by the French police.⁹⁰ However, his five-year sentence of *dégradation nationale* (the minimum that could be imposed) was immediately lifted on the grounds that he had 'participé de façon active et soutenue à la résistance contre l'occupant'.⁹¹ Bousquet's case illustrates the compromises both the wartime resistance and post-war justice had to entertain when they dealt with the men of Vichy who had been in a position to acquire a resistance identity and to play a double game which they would later marshal in court as part of their defence. Resisters must have been aware that any engagement with Vichyites in effect offered the latter a post-war lifeline to offset against their wartime behaviour and activity. Moreover, the question of whether such men had undertaken acts of resistance sincerely or whether they had hedged their bets, thinking ahead and considering that a resistance profile would be useful, must clearly have exercised juries. Some efforts to play a double game were manifestly ludicrous, as we saw in the case of Jean Luchaire. Other claims were likewise dismissed by the court, such as that made by Henri Dentz, Vichy's Commander-in-Chief of the army of the Levant, who was sentenced to death on 20 April 1945 for intelligence with the enemy.⁹² In contrast, Bousquet's claim to a resistance identity was accepted and worked to his advantage at his trial, where his actions against Jews barely featured. The lenient judgement he received as a result would undoubtedly have been welcomed by Creyssel in his own case.⁹³ Here, similarly, anti-Semitism and Vichy's policies towards Jews were bypassed, playing no part in either the prosecution or the defence despite Creyssel's negative representation of Jews in his broadcasts. This may seem odd from a distant post-war perspective, given the later prominence accorded in scholarship to Vichy's anti-Semitism,⁹⁴ alongside the events of subsequent phases of Vichy's afterlife, not the least of which were the high-profile cases of crimes against humanity which marked the 1990s, commented on further below. However, the regime's anti-Jewish policies and actions were simply not key features of the early post-war phase of enquiry into Vichy, accounting for their absence from the agenda at Creyssel's trial.

Perhaps Bousquet was more adroit than Creyssel in his self-representation, or perhaps he had simply better laid the groundwork. But, without doubt, resistance credentials were crucial to Bousquet's immediate post-war fate, much as, at the Liberation, a 'certificate of resistance' would serve the interests of Maurice Papon, an administrator in Vichy's Ministry of

⁸⁸ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 116–19.

⁸⁹ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 121.

⁹⁰ For a recent study of Vichy's anti-Semitic policy and actions, see Joly.

⁹¹ Haute Cour de Justice: René Bousquet, Arrêt de la Haute Cour de Justice, 23 June 1949, AN, 3W/88–95.

⁹² Haute Cour de Justice: Général Henri Dentz, Arrêt de la Haute Cour de Justice, 20 April 1945, AN, 3W/165–66. Dentz's sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment.

⁹³ For a detailed exploration of Bousquet's case, see Golsan, *Memory, the Holocaust and French Justice*.

⁹⁴ A huge body of work has been published on this topic, framed by Marrus and Paxton (1981), and Joly (2018).

the Interior in Bordeaux, who had processed the deportation of some sixteen hundred Jews from the region.⁹⁵ Creyssel possessed no such document, but instead highlighted instances when he had offered assistance to French people in need who approached him both during his time at Vichy and as consul in Monaco. Many of these gave written or oral evidence in his favour at the trial. For example, Pascal Stephani, a former resister, testified that Creyssel had intervened on his behalf when he had been arrested by the Germans in June 1942, and that he had escaped further pursuit as a result. Gabriel Blum-Brisac, a Jewish former school-friend and colleague of Creyssel, affirmed that Creyssel had warned him to take care in summer 1942 as actions against Jews increased. Henriette Barberis, Creyssel's cleaner in Monaco, attested that Creyssel had facilitated her spouse's return from the STO in Munich, after which he had joined the resistance. Monsieur Boisdon affirmed that, as a refugee from France, he had been sheltered by Creyssel in his home in Monaco. Mademoiselle Baufumé, who worked with the French resistance in Monaco, stated that Creyssel gave her money and food for a young man on the run from the Gestapo. Messieurs Rossotti and Colgo declared that Creyssel had supplied them with certificates of residency for Monaco, which enabled them to evade the STO. Former resister Louis Bergasse, who had also known Creyssel at the bar, testified that he should not be confused 'avec les traîtres qu'on a l'habitude d'y juger'; Creyssel, he said, had always wanted to spare France from German reprisals and had made no financial gain from his position, or ever sought to do so. And Johannes Ambre, a lawyer in Lyon, submitted an 'attestation de moralité' signed by fifty-six members of the Lyon bar, of various political persuasions, which proclaimed their belief that Creyssel had only ever acted in the interests of France. Speaking personally, Ambre also confirmed that, following his own departure to join the resistance in London, Creyssel had told his family to contact him directly for help should they ever be in difficulty.⁹⁶ Such testimonies, among others, constituted the equivalent of a 'certificate of resistance' for Creyssel. Whether the actions described by witnesses were calculated moves on his part, carried out with an eye to his future, or evidence of small acts of assistance genuinely meant cannot be definitively determined. But, during the Occupation, Creyssel seems to have been aware that helpful evidence of pro-national behaviour would prove important in the post-war period. For, in conversation on 22 November 1943 with one of his later witnesses, Roger Hontebeyrie, who became France's representative in post-war Berlin, Creyssel told him that Vichy men would be hounded out of the political arena after the war. Tellingly and lucidly, he concluded: 'Pourvu que tous ceux qui m'ont sollicité et auxquels j'ai rendu service aient le courage de ne pas l'oublier'.⁹⁷

A looming presence at Creyssel's trial was Philippe Henriot, the arch-collaborator who had taken centre stage at Vichy's propaganda services in January 1944 after Creyssel's removal from post, and who had been assassinated by the resistance on 28 June 1944. He had been replaced at Radio Vichy by the notorious anti-Semite Xavier Vallat. Contrasting Creyssel to his successors, especially Henriot, constituted the ninth and final component of his defence. It was a strategy which strove to give a lower profile to Creyssel's activity, to differentiate the nature of their respective endeavours, and to credit Creyssel with attempting to restrain the

⁹⁵ Papon's certificate was dated 25 October 1944 and indicated he had been part of a resistance network since 1 January 1943 (Beigbeder 222). On the later challenges to Papon's certificate and on his subsequent trial, see *The Papon Affair*, edited by Golsan, and Sebrien and B.

⁹⁶ The written witness statements for the defence are reproduced in *Interrogatoire*, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 25–53. Transcripts of the oral statements of defence witnesses present in court are reproduced on pp. 54–78 of the same document.

⁹⁷ Fourcade, *Plaidoirie*, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 109–10.

extreme and disquieting Henriot in particular. Creyssel initiated the strategy on the first day of his trial, telling the jury that, while the documentary evidence before them might seem considerable, thirty-four broadcasts in one year (meaning 1943) was negligible given that his successors had delivered sixty in a month – a reference to Henriot's intensive schedule of twice-daily broadcasts between 20 December 1943 and 27 June 1944.⁹⁸ This contrast misleads, at least in part, since Creyssel was not comparing equivalent timeframes. In reality, in 1942, Creyssel and Henriot had maintained a similarly rigorous schedule, each speaking twice weekly and delivering thirty-six and forty-nine broadcasts respectively, a discrepancy which is explained by the fact that Creyssel had begun to broadcast nine weeks after Henriot. It was only as 1943 had progressed that Creyssel had spoken less frequently, delivering thirty-four broadcasts in total to Henriot's sixty-five.⁹⁹ Although the variance is clear, sixty-five broadcasts in a year is far from sixty a month, the figure Creyssel chose to highlight at his trial, but the point was not picked up by prosecutor, judge or jury. Indeed, Fourcade reinforced the same quantitative point in his closing statement for the defence, before arguing qualitatively that Creyssel's propaganda was 'bien anodine, à côté des propagandes qui l'ont suivie'. Furthermore, he planted the idea in jurors' minds that Creyssel's incumbency of the propaganda post at Vichy had been a constructive delaying tactic, since his 'propagande allusive, réticente, en nuances et sous-entendus' had postponed by a year, or perhaps two, the advent of those 'qui ont déclenché le vrai grand drame de la France, en 1944, les Doriot, les Déat, et, dans le secteur qui nous intéresse, les Philippe Henriot'.¹⁰⁰ In parallel, Héraud highlighted that the tone of Vichy's propaganda had hardened after Creyssel's departure, insisting that 'il faut qu'Henriot vienne et que Vallat lui succède pour que la propagande commence'. In an attempt to employ the result of Vallat's own trial, which had taken place on 10 December 1947, to Creyssel's advantage, Héraud contended that Vallat had been far worse than Creyssel because he had called for blood revenge on resisters, whereas Creyssel had never doubted their patriotism (a claim we disputed above). Logic dictated, therefore, that Creyssel merited a less severe sanction than Vallat, who had been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment.¹⁰¹ For his part, Fourcade chose to conclude by forcefully distinguishing Creyssel from Henriot, maintaining that Henriot had committed an actual crime, whereas Creyssel had simply committed an error: 'L'espace qui sépare l'erreur du crime est infini: c'est un abîme sans fond. Eh bien ! aussi grand est l'espace qui sépare l'erreur d'un Creyssel du crime d'un Philippe Henriot'.¹⁰²

When questioned about his interactions with Henriot, Creyssel explained that their relationship had initially been good and that, when they first shared the airwaves, Henriot's propaganda had none of its later virulence and violence.¹⁰³ But, as time had passed, Creyssel had become increasingly concerned about Henriot's evolution. He had thus tried to oppose any intensification of Henriot's broadcasts and lectures, which he considered 'dangereuses pour la tranquillité des esprits et surtout pour l'union des Français', and, where he could, had refrained from placing Vichy's propaganda machinery at Henriot's disposal.¹⁰⁴ He also claimed to recall a private conversation with Henriot in November 1943, in which Creyssel

⁹⁸ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 129–30.

⁹⁹ The figures have been established based on analysis of wartime broadcasting schedules and on the corpus of broadcasts by Creyssel and Henriot held across the Archives Nationales, the Institut national de l'audiovisuel (Paris) and the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Paris).

¹⁰⁰ Fourcade, Plaidoirie, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 106–07.

¹⁰¹ Héraud, Plaidoirie, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 138, pp. 136–37.

¹⁰² Fourcade, Plaidoirie, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 118.

¹⁰³ Interrogatoire, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 115.

had told him: 'J'ai l'impression que vous vous égarez, vous ne vous rendez plus compte de ce que vous êtes en train de commencer à faire'. Henriot, Creyssel declared, had not listened, nor was he equipped to do so. He was, Creyssel continued, 'un homme très plein de sa propre pensée et du retentissement de sa propre parole, un homme entier, ardent, porté à la violence, doué d'un talent extraordinaire, et qui était le premier auditeur de sa propre éloquence, qui y était sensible tout le premier'.¹⁰⁵ The appraisal is sharp. Creyssel further pleaded that the presence of pro-Henriot men in Laval's cabinet, alongside the hardening political climate in later 1943, meant that he could not safely tell propaganda delegates what he really thought, namely that 'Henriot est trop collaborationniste, Henriot fait un jeu qui n'est pas celui exigé par la politique gouvernementale, Henriot divise les gens et les excite', or state that he did not want Henriot to speak. In his view, that would have been far too dangerous.¹⁰⁶ But he was keen to insist at his trial that 'je n'étais pas d'accord avec lui.' Moreover, professing that 'il ne m'appartient pas de juger un homme', Creyssel nonetheless labelled Henriot a militant fanatic and insisted that he would never have accepted to work under him. From Monaco, he had listened to Henriot's then twice-daily broadcasts, which displayed 'un ton, une violence, un caractère qui me choquaient d'autant plus que [...], peu à peu, j'éprouvais, vis-à-vis de la propagande de Vichy, des sentiments, une manière de ressentir plus comparable à celle du peuple français dans son ensemble'.¹⁰⁷ Of course, Creyssel's interest at his trial was to exonerate himself by every means available, and his evaluation of Henriot not only clearly differentiated the latter's position from his own but also strove to associate himself with wider negative public opinion on endgame Vichy's propaganda. However, while Henriot's elevation is certainly evidence that the Germans preferred his more robust interventions, neither Creyssel's judgement that Henriot was by this stage 'trop collaborationniste' nor his own forced resignation is proof that he himself had not been in favour of collaboration or had not worked to persuade French people to support that pathway, just that the occupier did not consider him to be sufficiently pro-collaboration.

The courtroom is quintessentially a locus of competing narratives, where an official version of an incident is arrived at through the dissection and evaluation of conflicting accounts. As we hope this article has demonstrated, Creyssel (himself a former lawyer) and his legal team had a clear line of argument which they wanted to present. His defence was an exercise in manipulation intended to explain away his wartime activity, to persuade that he was a minor, forgettable figure who merited the indulgence of the court, and so to engineer an outcome which would permit and even foster his disappearance from the public arena into historical oblivion. But Creyssel's reconstruction of his wartime persona flew in the face of the evidence of his own words as documented in his radio broadcasts, disparities which we have explored here in some detail. Moreover, all the sophistry mobilised by the accused and his legal team failed, for the jury rejected the argument that Creyssel had been far less harmful than Henriot or Vallat, or that his presence at Vichy had delayed Henriot's move to centre stage; and they were equally unconvinced of his professed attitudes to the Germans and the Milice, or of his defence of personal conviction rooted in his claim to sincerity and to having acted in France's best interests. Rather, a guilty verdict was returned, based on the facts of Creyssel's position at Vichy, alongside the jury's view that his broadcasts had undermined national morale. However, in delivering its judgement, the court accepted that Creyssel's previous military

¹⁰⁵ Interrogatoire, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, p. 10.

¹⁰⁶ Interrogatoire, 23 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 115–16.

¹⁰⁷ Interrogatoire, 24 June 1948, AN, 3W/35, pp. 8–10.

service was evidence of a commitment to France and took into account the assistance he had offered to French people who had found themselves the victims of Vichy policy. These attenuating circumstances, considered alongside the time he had already spent in jail awaiting trial, meant that he was released with immediate effect, albeit, unlike Bousquet, with the stain of national indignity to his name. Creyssel thereafter lived a quiet life out of the public eye and his death in 1975 went unremarked.

It is conceivable that the post-Occupation national context contributed to the forgetting of Creyssel. This privileged the idea of a united and victorious 'Resistance France', a notion established by Charles de Gaulle in newly liberated Paris on 25 August 1944, when he spoke powerfully but questionably of a city 'libéré par lui-même, libéré par son peuple avec le concours des armées de la France, avec l'appui et le concours de la France toute entière, de la France qui se bat, de la seule France, de la vraie France, de la France éternelle'.¹⁰⁸ De Gaulle would no doubt have numbered Creyssel among the implied minority of 'false' French, alongside his fellow Vichyites. The idea of Resistance France would quickly become the dominant memory of the so-called 'dark years'.¹⁰⁹ It functioned as a form of beneficial forgetting which liberated the population from the shame and confusion of the war. While this may have been significant for and instrumental in the reconstruction of France's self-esteem, and thus in the country's immediate post-war psychological recovery, it left no real place for consideration of the reality of collaboration. This was instead compartmentalised within the different *épuration* courts, where the wheels of justice ground out verdicts on the 128,557 French people (prominent Vichy personalities, such as Creyssel, and 'ordinary' French alike) summonsed to answer for their wartime activity.

As the post-war trials proceeded to their end in 1951, French justice meted out progressively less severe punishments to those found guilty.¹¹⁰ But the relatively lenient judgements passed on Creyssel and on Bousquet, which are discussed above, may also have resulted from the fact that both had exited the Vichy government before it entered its most disreputable phase in the months prior to the Liberation. Those circumstances, too, may therefore have contributed to the process of forgetting Creyssel, as public attention at the time would have more naturally focused on those present at Vichy until the bitter end. What the courts addressed in later decades may also have proved significant, for France's high-profile (re-)pursuit of former collaborators – which culminated in the assassination of Bousquet in 1993 before his case could come to court, and in the trials and sentencing of Paul Touvier (the former leader of the Milice in Lyon) and Papon in 1994 and 1998 respectively – occurred in the specific context of the then national obsession with the question of crimes against humanity.¹¹¹ By this time, Creyssel was no longer alive to face fresh judgement. But it is also unlikely that his case would have been reopened at this point because his collaboration was essentially ideological and 'hands-off', in the sense that his broadcasts did not result in actual deportations. As a result, he continued to remain in the historical shadows and out of public memory.

The shifting context of historical writing has arguably also played a part in the forgetting of Creyssel. Post-war work focused on the resistance while the topic of collaboration was barely broached until the early 1970s, when proper investigation was kick-started by the publication of Paxton's influential study *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order*. By this time, the writing of the history of the collaboration was significantly behind study of the resistance. Logically, the bigger picture and the better-known figures were the initial focus.

¹⁰⁸ Discours du Général de Gaulle, 25 August 1944.

¹⁰⁹ In *Le Syndrome de Vichy*, Rousso discusses at length the genesis and entrenchment of the notion of Resistance France.

¹¹⁰ See Jean-Paul Cointet; Rouquet and Virgili.

¹¹¹ See Conan and Rousso; and all titles by Golsan.

Creyssel rarely featured, except to play a bit part as a character on the sidelines, as we noted earlier in our review of the literature. Of course, the more research that is undertaken into collaboration, the more the bigger picture develops and advances, and the more we can move on to explore the more diverse components, those different histories that make up the 'big' history. But as time passes, and the further removed we get from Vichy, then the risk is that some subjects fade from view to the point where they may easily be passed over by historical scrutiny. Surprisingly, it took some six decades for Henriot, Creyssel's fellow propagandist, to be the subject of sustained historical enquiry, even though he was a hugely significant figure at Vichy. But Creyssel has remained still longer out of view, masked at least in part by Henriot. One collaborator can in fact hide another, and historians need to remain alert to this possibility.

The aim of this article has been to give visibility to a case illustrating a wider amnesia which still limits our knowledge and understanding of the Vichy period, and to refocus attention on Creyssel, and on the true nature of his role and activity at Vichy, in order not to permit his disappearance from public and historical view. Studying Creyssel opens up another version of wartime France and shines an alternative light on other central figures at Vichy, such as Henriot and Bousquet, whom we see through Creyssel's lens. It equally adds to the multiplicity of available histories (both competing and parallel), which together project a more rounded picture of the Occupation than was possible in the immediate post-war period. To that end, Creyssel's own words are crucial witnesses, and it is telling that the prosecution called no live witnesses at the trial but chose instead to let the documents speak for themselves. The exploration of Creyssel's broadcasts and of the trial papers themselves has proved central to the task undertaken here of exposing his determined efforts to erase himself from the front line of Vichy history and to rebrand himself after the war. In the process, it has also demonstrated the importance of a return to primary sources in such cases and has underlined the enormous value of France's archival holdings for our continuing investigation of Vichy. For in the end these determine that, although Creyssel reimagined his own past, he was ultimately unable to escape it.

Coda

Exploring Vichy through deep excavation of the archives – access to which is crucial to historians – is a complex and painstaking enterprise. France has long since broken the mirror of its past, to use Rousseau's concept, and is well beyond the stage of 'repression' discussed in his *Le Syndrome de Vichy*.¹¹² Rather, Vichy and its ignominies have been integrated into national memory and the importance of ongoing research into the place of the regime in France's national consciousness is widely recognised. 2008 saw the introduction of a law which, among other things, shortened timescales for access to national archives.¹¹³ A further welcome development came in December 2015, when the French government made all national archives on the Second World War freely consultable, an act which facilitated academic research into the period (including the work which underpins this article), alongside the enquiries of the general public.¹¹⁴ So, it was concerning to note the ruling published unexpectedly on 1 January 2020 by the French Secrétariat général de la Défense et de la Sécurité nationale and the ministère des Armées, which stated that, henceforward, all documents over fifty years old held at the Service historique de la Défense (SHD) in Vincennes and labelled 'confidentiel' or 'très secret' must undergo a formal vetting and declassification

¹¹² Chapter 4 of Rousseau's *Le Syndrome de Vichy* is entitled 'Le miroir brisé (1971–1974)'.

¹¹³ Loi n° 2008–696 du 15 juillet 2008 relative aux archives.

¹¹⁴ Arrêté du 24 décembre 2015 portant ouverture d'archives relatives à la Seconde Guerre mondiale.

process before they could be communicated to the public.¹¹⁵ The official rationale for the imposition of this procedure was that it was required to comply with regulations dating from 2011 on the confidentiality of matters relating to national defence in the context of the communication of documents which bear a classification mark and which are more than fifty years old.¹¹⁶ The title of those regulations has prompted the shorthand label IGI1300, now widely used to refer to this matter.

The SHD acknowledged that the laborious procedures envisaged in order to comply with IGI1300 would significantly slow the rate at which documents from the period 1940–1969 (hence relating to France's post-war colonial conflicts as well as the Vichy years) could be released to readers. It thus announced that the communication of such materials would, for the foreseeable future, be by advance reservation only.¹¹⁷ Without warning, scholars who had been actively working in the archive, viewing cartons of documents without restriction, found themselves turned away, while those with research trips organised saw their plans in disarray. Very real fears for the advancement or completion of their projects led many to vent their frustration on Twitter in late January and early February 2020.¹¹⁸ Then, on 7 February, the SHD published an update on its website indicating that it would verify whether or not a document required declassification within ten working days of a submitted request. Those which did not would be immediately released for consultation and a reservation date offered. But for those which did, readers were warned that the procedures could take several weeks. This clarification, along with a vague promise on 11 February of 'moyens supplémentaires' to undertake the necessary work,¹¹⁹ did little to calm academic disquiet. Rather, on 13 February, eighteen international scholarly associations wrote directly to President Macron, the three members of his government responsible for culture, defence, and the armed forces, as well as the director of the SHD, formally calling on the French state to reconsider the decision.¹²⁰ On the same day, *Le Monde* published an editorial signed by twelve French academic historians, in which they deplored that the new ruling had been put in place without public consultation or without first setting procedures in place which would guarantee continuity of access to archives with holdings in the period 1940–1969. In their considered view, IGI1300 compromised the writing of the history of the nation.¹²¹

Since that date, historians worldwide but especially in France (see, for example, the Twitter-based collective @ArchiCaDebloque) have continued to mobilise to maintain pressure on the authorities to cancel IGI1300. However, it remained in place at the date of completion of this article in July 2020. The ruling is widely regarded as nonsensical, not least because the files affected have more recently been freely accessible, rendering the case for declassification meaningless. Significantly, memory and memorialisation are also under threat from IGI1300. On 8 July 2020, for instance, the anniversary of the death of resister and national hero Jean Moulin, the Archives Nationales Twitter account (@ArchivesnatFr) posted an image of his last

¹¹⁵ Communication des fonds d'archives contenant des documents portant d'anciennes mentions de classification (accessed 2 January 2020).

¹¹⁶ Instruction générale interministérielle n° 1300 sur la protection du secret et de la défense nationale, 30 Novembre 2011.

¹¹⁷ Communication des fonds d'archives contenant des documents portant d'anciennes mentions de classification (accessed 2 January 2020).

¹¹⁸ For examples, search Twitter for January and February 2020, using the phrase 'service historique de la defense [sic] Vincennes'.

¹¹⁹ Communication des fonds d'archives contenant des documents portant d'anciennes mentions de classification (accessed 7 and 11 February 2020).

¹²⁰ Letter regarding French archives sent to President Emmanuel Macron, 13 February 2020.

¹²¹ 'Nous dénonçons une restriction sans précédent de l'accès aux archives contemporaines de la nation', *Le Monde*, 13 February 2020, p. 2.

letter to André Philip (a member of the CFLN in London), dated 4 June 1943 and labelled 'très secret'. This prompted a tongue-in-cheek posting from @ArchiCaDebloque proclaiming that this act compromised national defence and that the Archives Nationales should be pursued for its 'serious' contravention of the new rules. The image was swiftly removed and with it a haunting commemoration of Moulin was lost.

For scholars working in the field of Vichy studies, there are echoes here of the days of firmer state-sponsored control of the archives, when access to wartime files generally required a *dérogation* (a waiver permitting consultation of classified material) to be granted. Seventy-five years from the end of the war, what has happened in France seems like an unhelpful and curious backward step. Re-burying wartime files under layers of bureaucracy has obvious negative consequences for transparent archival access; it threatens the momentum of research underway and will probably delay the unearthing and exploration of hitherto unnoticed individuals, men such as Paul Creyssel. Repression (to use Rousso's term) this may not be, but it suggests that France's wartime archives are still a zone of tension, a battleground with open access as the prize.

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