

## The tradition of exile: *la colonie Française*

I recall an astonishing description of the sounds and smell of a Parisian working day, the first faint rumblings of the Métro, and the unique odour of that surrealist underground railway, in the monthly review *La France Libre*.  
(Richard Cobb, *Promenades*)<sup>1</sup>

In a three-volume conspectus of London life, published in 1901, several chapters were devoted to those immigrant communities, Greeks, Germans and Italians among others, that had made London their home. In the pages devoted to the French, the following observation was drawn:

The French in London form a sober, well-behaved, industrious and law-abiding community. They give very little trouble to the police and law courts, and it is seldom that the name of a French resident obtains an unbelievable notoriety in the newspapers. There are about 21,000 French sojourners in England, and about 11,000 of them in the metropolis.<sup>2</sup>

Clearly, what appealed to the Victorian values of the English authors was that the French community largely kept itself to itself yet, at the same time, integrated well into London life. Colonists were ‘not to be found loafing in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus’, it was observed, ‘They are to be found in City offices and warehouses, in workshops and studios, in West End establishments and shops, in schools and in private families.’<sup>3</sup> Another comforting aspect was their lack of political activity, testimony to the fact that most Communards had retreated to their homeland after the Amnesty of 1878.

What is remarkable is that this piece could have been written shortly after the colonial dispute of Fashoda in 1898 when Britain and France nearly went to war, and when the French in Britain were under intense

suspicion. What is even more remarkable is that the French are described as 'passive' precisely when their country was engulfed in the Dreyfus Affair. We know that Zola, in exile in Weybridge, was able to follow developments in the *Standard* and the *Daily Telegraph*, with an English grammar by his side, as well as a set of Nelson's *Royal Readers* for children, to assist with his English.<sup>4</sup> London press headlines had featured little other than the goings-on of the Paris courts, and inveighed against the miscarriage of justice, just as French newspapers had earlier attacked Britain over Fashoda.<sup>5</sup> It is inevitable, then, that Dreyfus was discussed among French exiles but the overriding impression is that this remained a private quarrel that never spilled out into the public arena, maybe because such men and women had no wish to draw attention to themselves. Perhaps the only tangible way in which the British public was aware of the ways in which this scandal had split French opinion was the arrival of religious orders – for instance the Benedictines of the Abbey of Solesmes, who resettled on the Isle of Wight until 1922,<sup>6</sup> and the Jesuits who made a temporary home in Jersey. These had been expelled after the formation of Radical anti-clerical Cabinets, which were determined to protect the Republic from the perceived clerico-military threat, incidentally the same governments that sealed the Anglo-French entente of 1904, which soothed recent colonial resentments.

Remarkably much the same observations about the anonymity of the French *colons* could be made on the eve of war in 1939. They remained a silent and unassuming community, doing little to attract outside publicity, even though they had witnessed yet another dramatic phase in their country's history. In the same way that the Dreyfus Affair split families, so too the election of the Popular Front had polarised opinion. Yet these divisions were once again kept out of the public view, an internal matter; it was only during the war years that they came fleetingly to the surface, prosperous elements of the community blaming defeat on Blum and being suspicious of de Gaulle lest he harboured left-wing elements.

This silence might explain why so little has been written about French expatriates. It is astonishing that the volume of 1901 cited above was one of the few studies published in the entire twentieth century that focuses specifically on the French, this despite the fact that, in 1931, they comprised 9.2 per cent of all foreign nationals living in England and Wales.<sup>7</sup> After the Polish and Russian communities, the French constituted the third largest European group of émigrés, their

numbers even greater than those from Italy, a land whose overcrowded southern territories had witnessed a steady drip of European emigration.<sup>8</sup> For the first half of the twentieth century, the French continued to number around 30,000 inhabitants, yet the outbreak of war in 1939 reduced this figure to just over 10,000.<sup>9</sup> The irony was that, at this moment of contraction, it became increasingly difficult for them to retain their anonymity. Not only did the new arrivals from France seek out their countrymen and women as a point of reference in a foreign land, but Gaullists and others were eager to recruit among their ranks while, in the background, the British government kept a close watch on their activities, ensuring that any pro-Vichy sympathies did not get out of hand. Wartime was thus an uncomfortable experience for those who had long settled in Britain for whatever reason: economic, political, religious or otherwise. No longer would they be able to play out their quarrels in private.

### The pre-war French community: a statistical overview

It was, of course, Britain's proximity to France, together with its tradition as a haven, that attracted French exiles over the centuries. In this sense, de Gaulle's flight on 17 June was little different to that of earlier émigrés, although it might be objected that the scale of the violence and repression that Hitler and Vichy were to visit upon France was much greater than that inflicted on the Huguenots, *ancien régime* nobility and Communards, however barbaric their own particular experiences of persecution. De Gaulle was also similar to other exiles in that his stay in Britain was intended to be temporary; in 1943, he left for Algiers in the belief that the North African capital was closer to his homeland than was London. With the exception of the seventeenth-century Huguenots and those regular orders expelled in the early 1900s, significantly both the subject of religious discrimination, other groups of predominantly political refugees, most notably the Communards, had returned to their homeland as soon as it was thought safe to do so.

In the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it appears that most of the French who came to British shores did so for commercial interests, or in search of employment, an indicator of London's pulling power as a hub of enterprise, and maybe a sign of the slowdown in the French economy during the 1880s. It is telling that the French Chamber of Commerce in Britain, a lively supporter of free trade, was founded in 1883;<sup>10</sup> *La Chronique de Londres*, a gazette

devoted to French businesses and social gatherings, was established at more or less the same time. Traditionally, French businesses in Britain had been ‘merchants, wholesalers or retailers dealing in predominantly fresh food and luxury goods, such as wine, champagne, chocolate, silk, lace, glassware and clothing’.<sup>11</sup> As Fraser Reavell has demonstrated, during the *belle époque* these were joined by several others. Four major commercial banks – Comptoir National d’Escompte de Paris, Crédit Lyonnais, Société Générale du Crédit Industriel et Commercial and Société Générale de Paris – established themselves in London. These were accompanied, adds Reavell, by key industrial concerns such as Saint-Gobain, Duchesne, Michelin and Peugeot, firms that would receive a boost during the First World War. Advertising (Agence Havas), travel accessories (Louis Vuitton), fashion houses (Worth) and news agencies (Pathé) were not far behind, an example of the way in which commercial life was expanding at this time.

It is against this background that the French lived and worked, and thanks to the 1931 census we know a good deal about their social profile, although it must be remembered that such statistical material is open to question: human error; an unwillingness to register; and the fact that the census is only a snapshot taken every ten years. It is fortunate that the trends perceived in 1931 reflect those of the pre-1914 period; the 1921 figures are distorted by the First World War.

This continuity is immediately seen in the numbers of French men and women in England and Wales for 1931: 29,175 in total, of whom 2,062 were classed as ‘visitors’, for instance sailors in port, travelling salesmen and other itinerant workers.<sup>12</sup> This overall figure was roughly the same as in 1911 and 1901 and, as already noted, ensured that the French were the third largest European group after the Poles (43,912) and the Russians (36,133), both displaced by the tumultuous events in Eastern Europe. Incidentally, the Germans (28,048), counted a group whose size was to increase as Jews and others fled Nazi persecution. Of the French total, there was a clear gender divide: 9,979 men and 19,196 women. Significantly, for a people proud of their national traditions, only 13,547, some 46.4 per cent, possessed British citizenship: 2,889 men and 3,852 women were British subjects by birth; 1,020 men and 5,786 women were British by naturalisation, the latter figure suggesting that many females had found British husbands.

In terms of occupation, five key categories stand out among males. The largest proportion were employed in ‘personal services’ (classified as ‘domestic servants, restaurant keepers, lodging/boarding house

keepers, publicans, waiters, hall/hotel porters, laundry workers, and hairdressers/manicurists and chiropodists): 1,377 in total, 22.7 per cent of all those 6,070 Frenchmen working in England and Wales.<sup>13</sup> The second category comprised those involved in 'commercial, finance and insurance occupations' (proprietors and managers of retail/wholesale businesses, brokers/agents, commercial travellers, salesmen, costermongers/hawkers, bankers and officials): 588 (9.7 per cent). The third group belonged to 'professional occupations' (clergymen, doctors, dentists, teachers, music tutors, engineers, articulated pupils, authors and painters): 456 (7.5 per cent). The fourth section were 'in transport and communication' (haulage contractors, drivers, ship owners, ship officers, pursers, stevedores, dock labourers, managers and porters): 333 (5.5 per cent). A final contingent were 'clerks/draughtsmen': 314 (5.2 per cent). After these categories, the remainder were scattered among a variety of trades, notably metal workers 170, 2.8 per cent), textiles (182, 3.0 per cent), wood and furniture businesses (94, 1.5 per cent) and entertainment and sport (62, 1.02 per cent), to name but a few.

Figures for female labour largely reflect those of men, and again point to the underlying economic factors determining French emigration to England and Wales. Strikingly, the same five categories stand out, although it was those involved in 'professional occupations' (nuns, mission workers, nurses, schoolteachers, teachers of music, articulated pupils, authors and painters) that dominated: 1,866, 19.5 per cent of the 9,558 total French female workforce (all ages).<sup>14</sup> Those in 'personal services' (domestic servants, waitresses etc.), were the next largest group: 1,428 (14.9 per cent). Third came 'Makers of textile goods/articles of dress': 647 (6.8 per cent). 'Commercial, finance and insurance' constituted the fourth group: 214 (2.2 per cent). As with men, the final principal grouping was 'clerks/draughtsmen' although, in a reflection of the gendered nature of working conditions, typists were also included: 232 (2.4 per cent). The remainder were engaged in a wide variety of occupations, while a sizeable figure, 3,711, were classified as 'unoccupied or retired'. No doubt a good proportion of this latter figure were married women who no longer actively pursued a career. Prostitutes might also have been among their number, especially as Soho retained its reputation as a red-light district. As the writer Thomas Burke remarked in 1915, 'Soho – magic syllables! For when the respectable Londoner wants to feel devilish he goes to Soho, where every street is a song. He walks through Old Compton Street, and,

instinctively, he swaggers; he is abroad; he is a dog.<sup>15</sup>

If the occupational profile of the French could have been anticipated, given the underlying economic nature of their immigration, their geographical concentration also holds few surprises. In 1931, the overwhelming proportion were located in London and the surrounding districts. In itself, the South-East region, including the capital and the Home Counties, counted 7,219 men and 14,165 women, 73.3 per cent of the entire French population in England and Wales.<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere, the Northern Region contained 1,023 men, 1,828 women (9.8 per cent of the total French population); the Midlands, 684 men, 1,466 women (7.4 per cent); the East Region, 193 men, 404 women (2.05 per cent); the South-West Region, 448 men, 904 women (4.6 per cent); and Wales, 413 men, 429 women (2.9 per cent). Within the London Administrative County alone, there were 3,795 men and 6,730 women. Among those metropolitan boroughs making up this unit, the majority were located in fashionable districts, notably in the west of the city, and areas of cheap housing, both south of the river and around the great railway termini of Paddington and King's Cross-Saint Pancras: Chelsea (86 men, 192 females); Hampstead (162 men, 365 females); Kensington, a traditional French heartland, being the home of both the embassy and the cultural centre, the Institut Français (320 men, 769 females); Lambeth (359 men, 432 females); Paddington (220 men, 590 females); Saint Marylebone (191 men, 487 females); Saint Pancras (383 men, 555 females); Wandsworth (283 men, 589 females); and Westminster (543 men, 745 females), comprising Soho still known as the 'French quarter'.<sup>17</sup> Although Soho had traditionally been a favourite residence for exiles of all nationalities thanks to its plentiful supply of cheap hotels, and although by the interwar years it had come to be dominated by Italians, in the 1930s it was said that Old Compton Street, with its array of butchers, greengrocers and patisseries was 'as French as the rue St Honoré'.<sup>18</sup> Away from central London, figures for Middlesex Administrative County contained 958 men and 1,769 women, the highest proportion concentrated in suburban Hendon (131 men, 283 women). At the end of the Underground's Central Line, Essex was the home to 297 men and 616 females. Among the commuter belts of Surrey, and its associated boroughs, dwelled 638 men and 1,196 females. Croydon had always housed a small colony of French City workers,<sup>19</sup> while in Kent, only a short steamboat ride from Calais, lived 405 men and 1,122 women.<sup>20</sup>

Most of the figures for individual boroughs in London, Middlesex and

the Home Counties outweighed those of entire towns, cities and administrative districts elsewhere.<sup>21</sup> Here, the biggest groups tended to live in densely populated and built-up areas, no doubt again because of employment opportunities: Lancaster Administrative County with Associated Boroughs, including Manchester and Liverpool (403 men, 722 females); Southampton Administrative County (315 males, 729 females); Stafford Administrative County (112 men, 224 females); Warwick Administrative County with Associated Boroughs, notably Birmingham (171 men, 246 females); York/West Riding Administrative County and Associated County Boroughs (277 men, 438 females); Glamorgan Administrative County with Associated County Boroughs (294 men, 163 females); and Devon Administrative County with Associated County Boroughs (154 men, 300 females). In far-flung parts of the country, French residents were negligible: Carlisle (2 males, 13 females), Cumberland (7 males, 17 females), Barrow-in-Furness (7 males, 11 females), to cite but three examples. As will be seen, in 1941 police forces in such districts reacted with some bemusement when asked to comment on the political attitudes of their local French communities, which often numbered no more than a dozen people.

Although the disruption of the war prevented a census from being conducted in 1941, internal Home Office statistics reveal that the onset of fighting involved change and continuity in the lives of French men and women in Britain: change in that their numbers contracted sharply, and continuity in that those who remained were concentrated in London and the Home Counties. On 25 May 1940, French aliens in the United Kingdom registered with the police amounted to 4,910 men and 6,825 women, making a total of 11,735, 5.1 per cent of the 228,072 total of all registered aliens. The French were now the fourth largest European group overtaken, not surprisingly, by Germans (55,023), Italians (18,374) and Russians (44,704).<sup>22</sup> Given the future problems with facilitating repatriation, nor is it any surprise that this figure remained more or less constant for the duration of the war: 12,794 in 1941,<sup>23</sup> 13,639 in 1942;<sup>24</sup> and 13,348 in 1943.<sup>25</sup> It should be stressed, however, that these figures were not foolproof. The Home Office readily acknowledged that the *Central Register of Aliens* did not include children below the age of 16, British-born wives who might have taken French citizenship, temporary visitors and those recently granted certificates of naturalisation.<sup>26</sup> Whereas in the past naturalisations had been officially announced in the *London Gazette*, this practice was stopped on security grounds.

Explaining the sudden drop in the French population is not difficult. It was well known that London would be a target for the *Luftwaffe*, prompting both better-off British and foreign residents to find alternative accommodation in the countryside or overseas. The call-up of reservists for Gamelin's army also cut a swathe among French exiles; all male children born to French couples in Britain were still 'registered in Paris for military service'.<sup>27</sup> Such was the case of Monsieur Vila, whom we encountered in an earlier chapter with his regiment in Montreuil in June 1940, having worked previously at the French Railways Office in Piccadilly.<sup>28</sup> Small wonder, that the number of males in England and Wales dropped from 9,979 in 1931 to 4,910 in 1940. That the number of women also plummeted from a total of 19,126 to 6,825 is perhaps to be explained by the fact that many were engaged in temporary employment, for instance nursing, teaching and waitressing, and may well have been eager to rejoin their families in France.

As already observed, those that did stay remained concentrated in London and surrounding areas. In 1941, 6,476 French (3,252 men and 3,224 women) resided in the Metropolitan Police District; 4,784 (1,697 men and 3,087 women) in provinces of England and Wales; 273 (113 men and 160 women) in Scotland; and 43 (17 men and 26 women) in Northern Ireland.<sup>29</sup> As in the early 1930s, outside London, the French gathered in heavily populated areas, such as Manchester and Birmingham, and the Home Counties: 154 in Berkshire; 141 in Buckinghamshire; 143 in Hertfordshire; 127 in Kent; and 183 for Surrey.<sup>30</sup> Within London itself, the French continued to huddle together in such obvious districts as Soho and Kensington.

Who stayed in Britain? Almost inevitably, we know most about the wealthy and articulate, men and women who had extensive interests in Britain and who were to play a leading role in organising the French community in London.<sup>31</sup> Businessmen feature prominently: Monsieur Petit, ex-president of the French Chamber of Commerce; the elderly Monsieur Guéritte, formerly head of the Society of Engineers, and a leading advocate of a Channel Tunnel;<sup>32</sup> Monsieur de Malglaive, managing director of the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique*; Monsieur Boucher, another eminent light of the Chamber of Commerce; Monsieur Espinasse, a member of the United Associations of Great Britain and France; Etienne Bellanger, head of Cartier jewellers, who famously offered his Bentley and services as a chauffeur to de Gaulle; Comte de Sibour, a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, who had established himself in the City of London; and

Captain Métadier, director of a large pharmaceutical company, who lent de Gaulle a sum of a thousand pounds to cover initial expenses.<sup>33</sup> Lawyers were another prominent community, including Monsieur Picarda, a member of the Middle Temple, as were journalists: Paul-Louis Bret, an English-based reporter for the Havas agency;<sup>34</sup> Monsieur Massip, the London correspondent of *Le Petit Parisien*; Emile Delavenay, a correspondent for the BBC;<sup>35</sup> Paul Gordeaux, writer for *Paris-Soir*;<sup>36</sup> Pierre Maillaud who, in 1942, authored an elegy to the France he had known before it was distorted by Vichy;<sup>37</sup> and Elie J. Bois, the former editor of Massip's paper who published a scathing account of the defeatism of Laval and those other parliamentary *Munichois*, having spent time observing the goings-on at Bordeaux in June 1940, and who later wrote weekly columns for the *Sunday Times*.<sup>38</sup> Then there were prominent figures in charge of long-established French organisations, notably Mme de Lapanousse, head of the French Red Cross, who commuted from her home in Belgrave Square to Windsor where her husband was in hospital and her son at school.<sup>39</sup> On her death in 1942, her place at the head of the Red Cross was taken up by her daughter, the Comtesse de Salis.<sup>40</sup>

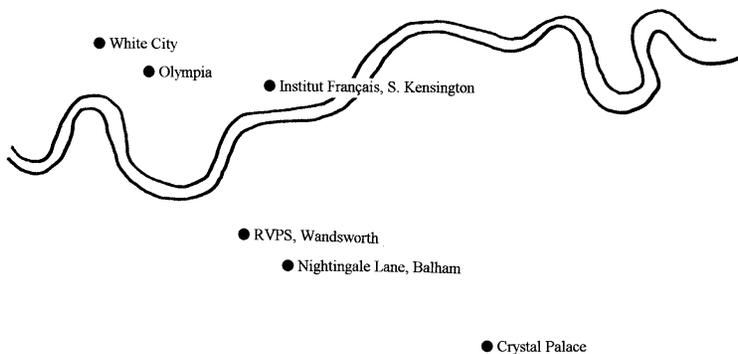
Aside from such prominent figures, three other groups made up the French community. First, there were the less prosperous: governesses, schoolteachers, au pairs, waiters and waitresses, and those the Census would have classified as being involved in 'personal services'. It is likely that several of these people were working in Britain on short-term contracts, only to be cut off in June 1940. This appears to have been the case of Mlle Touchard, whose family was in Le Mans, and who was teaching conversational French at the University of Glasgow.<sup>41</sup> A friend of the Personalist philosopher Emmanuel Mounier, she was so angered by Vichy's foreign policy that she opted to stay in Scotland where she married and raised a family. Second, figures indicate that women still dominated the colony, even though their numbers had dropped sharply, leading to the plausible supposition that many of those who remained were married to British men. Such women frequently offered their services to those French charitable organisations operating in England and Wales, and were commonly pointed by government in the direction of the Corps Féminin. Typical of such volunteers was Marie Antoinette Thompson, from West London, who had been married for twenty-six years to an English doctor. Her son having been killed with the RAF, she was now keen to do welfare work among her compatriots.<sup>42</sup> And, finally, there were a significant number of children,

although exactly how many remains unknown as those under sixteen years of age were excluded from government statistics on aliens. Within London, several of these children had attended the Lycée Français in Kensington, which had operated under the aegis of the Institut Français. It will be recalled that to escape the bombing, this prestigious school had been transferred, via either Cambridge or Reading Universities, to the Waterfoot Hotel, near Penrith in Cumberland, where it was assisted by the British Council, and had opened a kindergarten and elementary school.<sup>43</sup> Other boys, as we have seen, went to Rake Manor. It is further known that some 75 boys, aged between 14 and 18, had been pursuing their studies in Britain on an exchange programme, only for their stay to prove longer than anticipated; their education continued in camps on the Welsh hillside.<sup>44</sup> Astonishingly, educational authorities in both England and France were still organising such exchanges as late as June 1940,<sup>45</sup> just as they were encouraging schools to designate parts of their classrooms a 'coin de la France', full of French maps and things French, an initiative that foundered because of the defeat.<sup>46</sup>

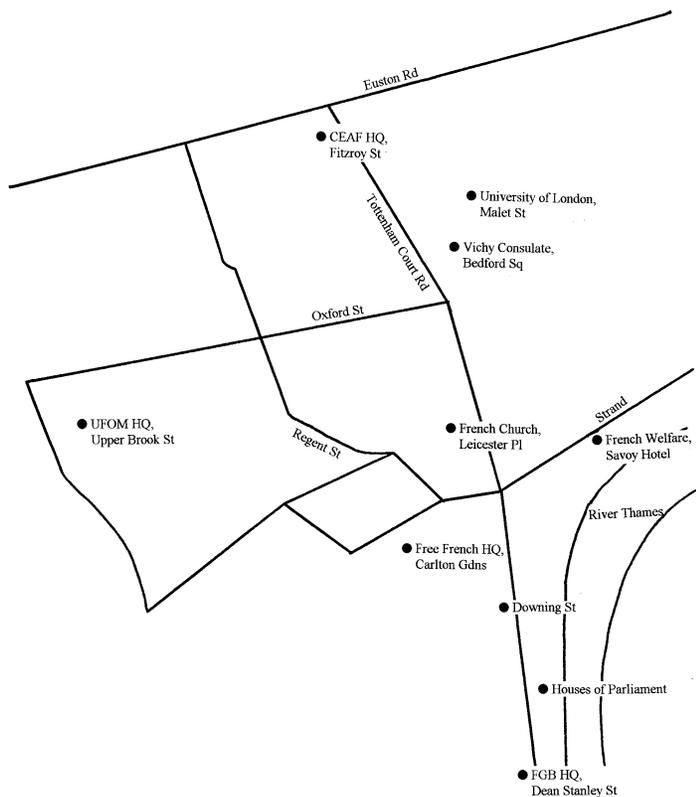
Although the British government would not have admitted it, Whitehall, or at any rate MI5, would probably have preferred the whole of the French community to have been based in Wales, diligently working for the war effort, distant from security-sensitive areas in London, and hidden from public view. As it was, the attitudes of the French *colons* were a key concern for the first two years of the war; after that point, when it became apparent that Vichy was little more than a malleable tool of Hitler's empire, such anxieties largely disappeared. How, then, did the French colony respond to the events of June-July 1940? And how did the government react to the presence of some 11,000 *colons* on British soil?

### **The colonist response to defeat: organising, rallying and integrating**

On 10 July 1940, the very same day that the deputies were convening in Vichy's Casino to vote full powers to Marshal Pétain, the War Cabinet gathered at Downing Street to consider what action, if any, should be taken against French men and women present in Britain.<sup>47</sup> It was a many-sided question. To whom would these colonists owe their loyalty? Could they still be counted as allies in view of the Armistice and Vichy's early forays into collaboration? Would the marshal's personal charisma and magnetism extend beyond the Channel? Would



Map 4 The London of the forgotten French: outer areas



Map 5 The London of the forgotten French: inner areas

the colonists follow the lead of the London consulate, as they were known to have done in the past?<sup>48</sup> Could the colonists be relied upon instead to rally to de Gaulle, a man whom the British themselves did not even trust? What would happen if France declared war on Britain, not such an unlikely prospect after the sinking of the fleet at Mers-el-Kébir and with the presence of such well known Anglophobes as Paul Baudouin, Admiral Darlan, Doctor Ménétrel and Raphaël Alibert in the marshal's personal entourage? Would a general internment of all the French thus become a necessity?

Reading government files, especially surviving Home Office and MI5 reports, it is clear that government anxieties stemmed from the fact that it did not have a clear picture of the colonist response to events across the Channel, only occasional snapshots that did not convey the whole picture. This was hardly surprising. The present study has repeatedly stressed that the French were a self-contained and well integrated community who kept themselves to themselves, doing little to antagonise their British hosts. This ability to keep their heads down was much in evidence in 1940. Indeed, during the widespread fifth-columnist scare of May 1940, when anyone with a foreign accent was distrusted, the French were not singled out in the same fashion as were the Belgians and Dutch. Thereafter, it appears to have been newcomers from abroad, especially Jews, that most agitated commentators, especially within right-wing circles. As late as May 1941, the Tory MP Major Sir Ralph Glyn, in the language of *Private Eye's* Sir Hufton Tufton, was complaining to government about the large numbers of aliens, 'especially the Jews', who had targeted property and British jobs in Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Surrey and parts of Oxfordshire, anywhere within 'an easy train journey of London'.<sup>49</sup> It would be better, he concluded, if these people were 'further afield' where they could no longer come down 'by motor car or other hired conveyances'. As Herbert Morrison replied, in the eleven counties surrounding London such foreigners counted less than one-ninth of the entire alien population of the UK.<sup>50</sup>

That the French colonists were largely able to escape such intemperate outbursts is further evidenced in the fact that they are invisible in the English press at the time. Instead, newspapers concentrated their attentions on those exiled communities of soldiers and sailors, people who could immediately assist with the war effort. For much of the summer/early autumn, *The Times* ran a series of 'Will they?' or 'Won't they?' articles about whether these reluctant exiles would rally to de

Gaulle, in retrospect hardly the type of journalism to bolster public morale.<sup>51</sup> No doubt colonists also benefited from the growing tendency of both the press and public opinion to identify all the French, outside those renegade servicemen, with the general's movement, a trend also picked up in Mass-Observation surveys.<sup>52</sup> Nor did the community possess its own newspaper to make clear its views, *La Gazette de Londres*, the successor of *La Chronique de Londres*, being little more than a diary of social activities, although it is hard to believe that the censors would have permitted the publication of pro-Pétainist opinions. When French journals did begin to appear, notably *France* and *La France Libre*, they were either government-run, or led by exiles of 1940 implacably opposed to the marshal's regime. The same is true of those French broadcasts on the BBC, which, in any case, were directed at metropolitan France, not the French colony.

So it is, that the colony's response to the defeat remains obscure and impressionistic. MI5 agents took to dressing up as refugees and going among French circles in Soho where they eavesdropped on conversations. From such evidence, however piecemeal, one overriding characteristic nonetheless stands out. While there was general dismay at the rapid collapse of their homeland, there was little initial enthusiasm for de Gaulle who was looked upon with either scorn or indifference. As Lady Astor's son David explained in an interview with Jean Lacouture, one of the general's most famous biographers:

The English people admired de Gaulle, their companion of the darkest days, and they respected his courage. In political circles it was neither his ideas nor his character that was criticized but rather the want of sympathy that he showed for Great Britain . . .

Yet the most surprising aspect of the relations between de Gaulle and other people was the attitude of the French. We were constantly being surprised by the ill-will of those who could have been called intellectuals, of almost all the politicians and of many soldiers. This distrust that he aroused among the most outstanding members of the French community in London could not fail to strike us. In our country it was not with the British but chiefly with the French that he had trouble. And the reason these quarrels did not become more public is the pressure brought to bear by the British to restore calm.<sup>53</sup>

Whether the British were really successful in keeping these squabbles from public view is open to doubt. The many organisations that quickly sprang up among the French community could only give the impression of a people uncomfortable with one another. In her study

of wartime London, Susan Briggs relates how Londoners considered that the French had brought France (including its quarrels) across the Channel with them.<sup>54</sup>

How do we explain this attitude to de Gaulle? The answer is that the *colons* shared the same concerns as many of those other groups making up the 'forgotten French'. To begin with, he was 'an unknown'. What the French community knew about de Gaulle was much the same as what the British public knew, information gleaned from the sporadic newspaper coverage of his early days in London. As much of this publicity was controlled by Whitehall, and given that the general depended largely on Churchill's goodwill, a feeling quickly spread that this soldier was not his own agent. Even to untrained eyes, it was clear that Carlton Gardens did not equate a government-in-exile, something recognised by the prime minister himself when, on 28 June, he acknowledged de Gaulle merely as the head of the Free French, and not the head of the French state. So it was that during his early months, de Gaulle was often slightly referred to in colonist circles as a 'puppet',<sup>55</sup> an impression strengthened by the abortive Dakar mission, which was severely criticised in the press.

It further appears that de Gaulle's pre-war career, when eventually revealed to the public, had little to distinguish it, particularly when placed alongside the military accomplishments of Marshal Pétain, whose curriculum vitae hardly needed publicising. In this respect, it seems that British and French colonist perceptions of his past were determined by their own particular circumstances. The British, aware that they were on their own and facing imminent invasion, were anxious to nurture any flicker of resistance, however small. So it was that de Gaulle's pre-war views on tank warfare were widely circulated, his victory at Abbeville extensively publicised, and his famous 1934 volume *The Army of the Future* printed in translation.<sup>56</sup> As one feature in the *Listener* of August 1940 declared, 'this is something of a man, this de Gaulle, believe me. He was wounded three times in the last war, the last time at the inferno of Douaumont, where he was captured by the Germans.'<sup>57</sup> Even his misfortunes at Dakar only momentarily dented this enthusiasm.

For the French colonists, however, these factors counted for little. Having already seen their nation fall and their army routed, they believed that de Gaulle had few things to offer. One prominent Frenchwoman, who was actively involved in charitable work for refugees, caught this mood accurately when she described de Gaulle as

a 'chocolate soldier'.<sup>58</sup> According to another source, who frequented a French circle within London, 'the general and his staff are referred to in tones of condescension, amounting almost to scorn. A visitor could not fail to get the impression that the movement is of little account.'<sup>59</sup>

Rumours also grew up that de Gaulle had surrounded himself with some dubious personalities whose politics reflected his own. The accusations that de Gaulle was a Bonapartist or Boulanger figure are, of course, well known, and stemmed from those exiled intellectuals such as the Gombault brothers, André Labarthe and Raymond Aron. The paradox is that, at the time of his arrival, colonists, especially business elements who had deeply resented the Popular Front,<sup>60</sup> often perceived him as a man of the left; it was reported, in particular, that Pierre Cot, the former minister of air in the Popular Front Cabinet of 1936, was among his entourage. This might have been because Cot was one of the few politicians of note to have fled France in 1940, thus avoiding the farcical Riom trials in which Vichy attempted to lay blame for defeat on the politicians and soldiers of the Third Republic. For this very reason, de Gaulle kept his distance from Cot. The general might also have been conscious of British suspicions. There was a good deal of sniping at Cot on the part of British politicians, principally Conservative MPs, something that Eden and Noel Baker came to deplore.<sup>61</sup> Such sniping was also apparent among British-based French circles reflecting the socially conservative nature of the chief representatives of the French colony in London who, as we have seen, did not look back on the Blum experiment with any nostalgia. Although de Gaulle's early supporters usually came from right-wing officer circles, and although Cot himself quickly left for the USA, the stigma remained. The Comte de Sibour, for example, described as 'entirely pro-British and anti-Vichy', only joined the Free French when he reassured himself about the general's supporters.<sup>62</sup>

De Gaulle might have helped his cause if he had made a greater effort to broaden his appeal. Yet his aversion to publicity was profound, ironical given the way that he would later play the media in the Fifth Republic. Not only did he want to protect his handicapped daughter Anne from unwanted attention, he had no wish to be manipulated by the British. Yet this reluctance also stemmed from his belief that, in taking his stand, he had adopted the only position possible, and thus commanded the moral high ground. Because of this, he needed to do little further to explain his actions. As Crémieux-Brilhac relates, this was why he behaved as though Rome was no longer in Rome; it was in

London instead.<sup>63</sup> As Julian Jackson adds, de Gaulle's notorious rudeness might further have originated from the belief that he had to show that his movement, however small, possessed teeth.<sup>64</sup> Certainly colonists were witnesses to this sharp behaviour. One recalled to Churchill his experiences of Carlton Gardens, where he discovered that 'many Frenchmen who have offered themselves to the general were received and interviewed in such a way that they came out with their confidence shattered'.<sup>65</sup> After one distinguished gentleman, a veteran of the First World War, emerged from his interview, he quipped, 'I understand now why we have been beaten.'<sup>66</sup> Emile Delavenay relates the story of Jean-Jacques Mayoux, a naval officer attached to the Admiralty, who was so put off by his reception by de Courcel that he rejoined his family in France, eventually becoming a prominent figure in *Ceux de la Résistance*.<sup>67</sup> All this was ultimately of little concern to Carlton Gardens. If de Gaulle was convinced he was right in his decisions and was indeed the embodiment of France, he was certainly not going to moderate his demeanour for the sake of men who had forsworn their country for long-term exile, a concept he himself could not comprehend.

Above all, de Gaulle appears to have alienated colonist support because he was a 'rebel'. Many colonists, used to obeying the injunction of the consulate, no doubt feared that retaliation might be meted out against their families in France, as did those servicemen stranded after the Armistice, and indeed members of the Free French themselves who adopted pseudonyms. Delavenay cites the case of Pierre Isoré, employed as an interpreter in the navy, who was unfortunate enough to be interned in one of the sailors' camps, and who chose to return to his home in the *Corrèze*.<sup>68</sup> Fear, however, was not the only factor that led many to see de Gaulle as a rebel. This notion originated from the widely held view that Vichy was the legitimate government of France, whatever the general himself might say. This viewpoint was most vividly expressed in a letter of July 1940, intercepted and read by the British, from a prominent leather merchant to Semet, a leading light of the FGB:

I consider, and I still consider that it is quite possible for Frenchmen to be devoted to the English cause, obedient to the laws of England, and at the same time loyal to the French government and its representatives. I do not know any French government other than that called the Government of Vichy.<sup>69</sup>

In early 1941, MI5 could report that this view was still prevalent among well placed colonist circles, notably in the CEAF: 'Vichy remains the true government.'<sup>70</sup>

It was appreciated, however, that such opinions did not make such men necessarily 'anti-British or pro-German',<sup>71</sup> although it was likely that they were Pétainist. Delavenay despaired at such *maréchaliste* sympathies among fellow expatriates who were only too glad the Third Republic was gone and that the hated figures of Daladier and Blum would stand accused of its failings.<sup>72</sup> Sensibly, they kept these opinions to themselves; and, to be fair, their Pétainism was generally of a 'passive' kind. Apart from those Vichy consular figures and senior officers we encountered in earlier chapters, few French men and women were what could be best described as 'active' Pétainists, in that they were committed wholeheartedly to the reactionary values of the marshal and his National Revolution.<sup>73</sup> The exception was those *catholiques avant tout*, whom we will meet later, and whose influence was quickly curbed. As in metropolitan France, the admiration that existed for Pétain was of a 'passive' nature, a belief that he constituted a symbol of enduring France, a protector of his people, a bulwark against the decadence that had led to the collapse of the nation. The notion that the marshal was playing a double game with the Germans also did the rounds, and in early 1941 there were rumours that de Gaulle himself was in contact with Vichy, although this gossip might also have been an attempt on the part of the general's many enemies to slur his name.<sup>74</sup> Whether an underlying sympathy for Pétain endured much beyond 1941 is hard to know, testimony again to the ability of French colonists to keep their views to themselves, yet it seems likely; it is not difficult to believe that expatriates convinced themselves that de Gaulle was the sword of France while the marshal acted as its shield.

### *Organising*

If French exiles had carried one national characteristic across the Channel with them, it was an ability to organise, combined with an extraordinary inability to settle mutual concerns. Before 1940, there existed a myriad of such groupings, often representing business interests, which were often at loggerheads with one another. In 1939, in an attempt to patch up outstanding differences, they were assembled together under the aegis of the Comité Central Permanent de la Colonie Française,<sup>75</sup> a committee comprising delegates from sixteen different societies, who worked together in the prosecution of the war

effort, the exiles' own attempt to emulate the Union Sacrée of 1914 when competing political and religious factions within metropolitan France had agreed to bury the hatchet for the duration of hostilities with Germany.<sup>76</sup> Among the sixteen were the following: the Association Culinaire Française,<sup>77</sup> the Chambre de Commerce, the Société des Anciens Combattants (founded 1927), the Société de Bienfaisance, the Alliance Française (1907), the British Section of the French Red Cross, the Assistance aux Familles des Soldats Français, and the Hôpital Français (1867). The unity provided by the Comité Permanent proved fragile, however, and in the immediate aftermath of the defeat, a series of new organisations began to emerge, much to the dismay of Bessbrough's French Welfare, which had, of course, been set up to keep the peace.

The most prominent of these new bodies were: the Union des Français d'Outre Mer (UFOM), anti-Vichy but not pro-de Gaulle; the CEAF, which we have encountered already and which retained Pétainist ties; the FGB, the so-called civil wing of the Free French; and the Amis des Volontaires Français, an Anglo-French inspiration, which assisted de Gaulle's troops.

The UFOM was the first new organisation to emerge, having been founded sometime during the phoney war. The brains behind it were Métadier, who had earlier helped de Gaulle, Dr Pierre Picarda, and de Bellaing. The last of these, in the words of French Welfare, was of 'French parentage, but educated in England' and spoke 'perfect English'.<sup>78</sup> More is known about his fellow countryman, Picarda.<sup>79</sup> Born on 7 August 1897, he was the son of a French barrister and was himself a member of the Paris Bar. He also possessed a distinguished service record. He had fought in the First World War with the 25th Battalion of Chasseurs, and had volunteered for the *Corps Francs*. Wounded in 1918, he had been awarded both the Croix de Guerre and the Légion d'honneur. In 1926, he had married an Englishwoman, Winifred Laura Kemp, by whom he had four children, all born and raised in England. In 1937, he had been called to the Middle Temple and established a practice in London; on the eve of war, he was the legal adviser to the French consulate. Interestingly, he had also worked as a lawyer in Germany where he had witnessed first-hand the rise of the Nazi party.

Enjoying the patronage of Sir Thomas Moore, the new head of Hatchard's bookshop in Piccadilly,<sup>80</sup> and the Duke of Westminster, the UFOM had been granted the use of 33 Upper Brook Street at a nominal

rent of £2 per annum. It was there that the organisation developed its statutes, which made manifest the organisation's opposition to Pétain and Vichy, but also its distance from de Gaulle, who was already viewed as a Boulanger-in-waiting.<sup>81</sup> With the motto 'Loyauté nous lie', the UFOM's purpose was to coordinate 'on civil lines the efforts of all free Frenchmen in Great Britain as well as the rest of the world'. It thus welcomed all Frenchmen into its ranks so long as they acknowledged 'their attachment to France and their desire to see her freed', 'their continued friendship with Great Britain whose allies they remain', and 'their will to pursue, by all possible means, the struggle against the German and Italian aggression and their confidence in the final victory of the Allies'. The UFOM further set up a fellow movement, Amis de France, to collect together British supporters who were dedicated to the preservation of French culture and the liberation of Europe.<sup>82</sup> This never got off the ground, merely attracting the curiosity of a handful of intellectuals.

Warming to its task, the UFOM established a French club in London with a reading room, a French mutual aid society, a canteen, a legal advice centre and a series of leisure activities (film shows, lending library and lectures). It also formed an Information Department to keep the French people, wherever they might be, up to date with the progress of the war. Detailing its support of the Allied war effort, the UFOM promised to cooperate with the British official services by providing propaganda, especially for the BBC. It even aspired to the use, via the British authorities, 'of a broadcasting station for several hours daily which on a wave-length of our own, would permit us to speak directly to our compatriots as independent Frenchmen and to convince a whole section of French opinion which is at present on guard against all exclusively British information but which is, however, far from accepting enemy propaganda'.

This remained a pipe dream, as did plans to set up a newspaper, a scheme endorsed by Sir Thomas Moore.<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, the UFOM was active in producing its own propaganda under the direction of Bret, for many years the London correspondent of the Havas agency, who, on the eve of war, was press attaché to the French embassy. Elie J. Bois, formerly of the *Petit Parisien*, also contributed to this propaganda drive. Thanks to the involvement of Bois, the UFOM initially enjoyed a good relationship with Massip, the London correspondent of *Le Petit Parisien*, who had recently become press director under de Gaulle.<sup>84</sup>

Whether this camaraderie survived is open to doubt. It was in the

basement of Upper Brook Street that the Ministry of Information newspaper *France*, the successor to the *Journal du Camp*, was edited by the Gombault brothers, Charles and Georges, two socialist exiles from France who became prominent in their denunciations of de Gaulle's dictatorial tendencies, reflecting the left's traditional mistrust of military figures. When Georges Gombault was introduced to de Gaulle on 4 July 1940, he later quipped that he had never expected to meet General Boulanger himself.<sup>85</sup> Although the Gombaults gravitated to the left-wing Groupe Jean-Jaurès, founded in August 1940 by Louis Lévy, himself a severe critic of the general, they still devoted a considerable column space to the Free French in the pages of *France*, and did not openly attack the movement.<sup>86</sup> It was this evenhandedness that contributed to the paper's success, ensuring a circulation of 25,000 per copy, many of its readers being congregated among the colonist community.<sup>87</sup> This success also owed much to the Ministry of Information, which insisted on a high measure of editorial impartiality, pointing out that the initial intention had never been for the newspaper to be edited in UFOM's headquarters. This had become necessary merely because the original building had 'been partially wrecked'.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, on reading the many articles about the conduct of the war and events within occupied Europe, the untrained eye might have difficulty in spotting the left-wing bias of *France*, and the implied criticism of de Gaulle. This is to underestimate the extreme sensitivity of Carlton Gardens, and its allies, to reproach, real or imagined, and their fear of the left. It did not go unnoticed that the Gombaults employed other socialist sympathisers, for instance Gustave Moutet, the son of the Popular Front Minister for Colonies.<sup>89</sup> In November 1940, the Spears Mission denounced the alleged left-wing leanings of *France*, questioning in particular a recent review of the defeat of France, which had been attributed to a misguided sense of 'militarism', something interpreted as a veiled attack on de Gaulle.<sup>90</sup> In the words of Lady Spears, *France* 'speaks with the voice of Blum and the Front Populaire'. Taking heart from these criticisms and upset at recent coverage of King Leopold of the Belgians,<sup>91</sup> the FGB also had its twopenn'orth, Massip making known that he was personally prepared to put up money to expand the newsheet to eight pages so long as the Free French had a hand in editorial policy.<sup>92</sup> Maybe more offensive was an article crafted by Robert Mengin, entitled 'Les Priviligiés' of October 1940, in which he accused French exiles of living it up in high-class restaurants in Soho,<sup>93</sup> a claim vehemently denied by de Gaulle's

supporters, and maybe an explanation why so many exiles mention their eating habits in their memoirs,<sup>94</sup> either that or they simply could not get over their first experience of British food.<sup>95</sup>

When none of these grumblings was taken seriously, one Foreign Office official remarking that 'both the French and Belgians should be treated like the schoolboys most of them are',<sup>96</sup> in 1941 Carlton Gardens made a direct approach to the Ministry of Information offering to share in editorial responsibilities, but only on the condition that the Gombaults, Lévy and Pierre Comert were removed.<sup>97</sup> This gesture was declined on the grounds that the paper would then become nothing more than an expression of 'right-wing' opinions fashionable in Free French circles.<sup>98</sup> The quarrel thus rumbled on, even when, in 1942, the Free French were given the go-ahead to print their own paper, *La Marseillaise*, which quickly alienated the Foreign Office because of its 'extreme de Gaullist line'.<sup>99</sup>

Meanwhile, without its own newspaper, in early September 1940 the UFOM, through the intermediaries de Bellaing and a Mlle van de Berg, approached the British Council for an annual grant of 3,200 francs.<sup>100</sup> When French Welfare was subsequently told of the request, its response was lukewarm: 'We should certainly not give our blessing to any proposal to grant a large sum of money to the suggested French centre at 33 Upper Brook Street.'<sup>101</sup> Although Bessborough's organisation did promise to look further into the matter, requesting a 'line' from the French Division of the Ministry of Information, it is clear that its hesitation arose from the problems of already having to deal with the FGB and the CEAF.<sup>102</sup> After all, French Welfare had been set up specifically to promote unity among French exiles, and there was little desire to work with a third organisation that contained members from the FGB and the CEAF. As to a 'line' on the UFOM, the Ministry of Information gave the same response as it did to a telegram from a British diplomatic official in Tokyo where, presumably, Picarda's agents had also been active:

Union referred to is small organisation which, while not owing allegiance to General de Gaulle, is in favour of resistance. At present, our only criticism of it is that it pretends to be something more than it is.<sup>103</sup>

Internally, however, the Ministry was especially critical of Picarda, who was regarded as 'an ambitious politician'.<sup>104</sup> Suspicion also centred on some of the UFOM's supporters, in particular a certain American businessman who, it was believed, had involved himself in the movement

simply to recover investments in France at the end of the war.<sup>105</sup> Without friends in either French Welfare or the Ministry of Information, UFOM was also held in doubt by the Foreign Office, which harboured a particular dislike of Métadier who was described by one official as 'a little mad . . . and [someone who] from a kind of megalomania produces schemes' that were impractical.<sup>106</sup> The fact that the UFOM was also opposed to the FGB further irritated the Foreign Office, which, like French Welfare, despaired of the rivalries and factionalism that characterised the French communities in exile.

The Gaullists also did their bit to sabotage their rivals. When a French resident in Putney Hill, probably put up to the task by a UFOM supporter, deluged the Foreign Office with letters asking whether His Majesty's Government supported the movement and whether there was official approval of its aims,<sup>107</sup> the full extent and nature of Free French hostility became apparent. In an internal note, the Foreign Office observed that 'de Gaulle's people regard it with extreme disfavour; it has no connexion with them . . . and they disapprove of the people who organise it, not so much because they are not perfectly loyal to the cause of free France, but because they will not join up definitely on the side of de Gaulle'.<sup>108</sup>

The reluctance of the British to lend support, the internal rivalries, the growing magnetism of de Gaulle and the superior organising abilities of the FGB, ensured that, at the close of 1940, the UFOM was on its last legs.<sup>109</sup> As early as September that year, Foreign Office officials noted that it did not enjoy any 'wide support among Frenchmen in this country'.<sup>110</sup> It subsequently became the Union des Français under the direction of André Labarthe, the leading physicist, who, together with the philosopher Raymond Aron, had arrived in London in the summer of 1940. Initially, Labarthe had helped de Gaulle, working at Carlton Gardens, organising supply, but personality differences led him to leave in August. He had further felt alienated in that he was the sole civilian at the headquarters and was 'treated with scant respect' by the military.<sup>111</sup> For their part, de Gaulle's men had seen Labarthe as a hindrance as his presence lent credence to claims that the general was a man of the Popular Front, Labarthe having earlier acted as an adviser to Cot when he was minister in the Popular Front.<sup>112</sup>

A free agent, Labarthe approached the Ministry of Information for support of a publication, described as being of 'a somewhat highbrow and scientific nature', Labarthe himself being characterised as 'a sincere patriot' but 'somewhat of a fanatic, very intolerant and therefore prob-

ably intolerable'.<sup>113</sup> Aware that he had been an associate of Cot, the Ministry asked the Foreign Office whether anything was known against Labarthe as it did not wish to be associated with anyone who might be 'shot in the Tower!'<sup>114</sup> Certainly MI5 reports, based on Gaullist black propaganda, were not favourable: Labarthe was accused of surrounding himself with Communists, notably his secretary, a Pole who was alleged to be a Soviet spy, and was held responsible for the leaking of the Dakar mission, a somewhat wild charge given that de Gaulle's men had openly kitted themselves out in colonial outfits at Simpson's in the Strand and had been spotted at Liverpool Street station with maps of West Africa.<sup>115</sup> Wisely, the Ministry of Information recognised that Labarthe was victim of 'an Anglo-French Blimp offensive';<sup>116</sup> and, on 15 November 1940, he founded the journal *La France Libre*.

This soon became the leading intellectual journal of the French community in Britain, the *New Statesman and Nation* describing the editorial skills of Labarthe as nothing short of 'genius'.<sup>117</sup> Devoted to culture as much as to politics and propaganda, it regularly published articles by a wide range of contributors, among them Raymond Mortimer, Alexander Werth, Eve Curie, Camille Husmans and Charles Morgan, and in its first edition drew the support of such heavyweights as G. M. Trevelyan and Somerset Maugham.<sup>118</sup> Thanks to the high quality of its journalism, it was this journal, rather than the rump of the UFOM, that became the more important. Ten thousand copies of the first edition of *La France Libre* quickly sold out, and a further 8,000 had to be published. It proved popular with all sections of the exiled community, and regularly published articles about English customs, yet whether it truly reflected the concerns of the London-based *colons* remains open to doubt. Labarthe, who edited articles by Robert Marjolin on economic planning, bemoaned the fact that he regularly received pieces from French hairdressers, chefs and waiters, about their experiences of London life.<sup>119</sup> The experiences of *la vie quotidienne* were left in the capable hands and artistry of Jean Oberlé.<sup>120</sup>

Whether *La France Libre* met with the approval of de Gaulle's supporters, given their earlier doubts about Labarthe, also remains questionable, although Carlton Gardens was initially an enthusiastic subscriber. By 1942, however, Labarthe had completely lost patience with de Gaulle, and championed the cause of Admiral Muselier who had been dismissed by the general that year.<sup>121</sup> Labarthe later took up the case of Maurice Dufour, training his journalistic sights on the alleged Cagoulard connections of Colonel Passy. For his part, Aron was

more restrained in his anti-Gaullism and, on only one occasion, wrote on the subject, an article of August 1943 entitled, 'The Shadow of Bonaparte'.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, spotting the anti-Gaullist stance of *La France Libre* requires a trained eye, and an awareness of the hair-trigger sensibilities of Carlton Gardens. In 1942, an editorial crafted by Labarthe, introducing an article by Camille Rougeron on tank warfare, was seen as a criticism of de Gaulle's military views; the result was that Carlton Gardens refused to take that particular issue, lodging a protest with the Foreign Office for good measure.<sup>123</sup>

While *La France Libre* became an irritant to de Gaulle, it did not incur the same wrath as did the CEAF. We have come across this organisation on several occasions already, and it will be remembered that its function was primarily to assist 'refugees and all necessitous French nationals'.<sup>124</sup> What grated with Carlton Gardens was that this organisation, under the patronage of Lady Warwick, had particular links with the Vichy consulate; indeed, its first president was Bardot, an official of Bedford Square. Its other principal representatives were prominent businessmen who had shown a deep mistrust of de Gaulle, and an early admiration for Pétain: the then president of the Chambre de Commerce; the leather merchant whom we met earlier; and H—, a 'distinguished chef'. It should be stressed, however, that there were limits to their Vichyite sympathies and that, in many ways, they reflected the right-wing tendencies that could be identified among Resistance movements in metropolitan France, especially La Défense de la France, founded in the cellars of the Sorbonne. As French Welfare made clear to the CFR in February 1941, these individuals were not pro-Nazi but 'belong to that category of right-wing Frenchmen, whose hatred of the Germans has been watered down by the perpetual fear that the only alternative to good relations with the Nazis is a Communist revolution in France'.<sup>125</sup> All that mattered to them was that Blum was out and that Pétain was in; and it was in these circles that the rumours of de Gaulle's left-wing leanings freely circled. Moreover, they considered that the marshal had legally attained power, whatever the Free French said to the contrary. Yet, as already noted, this suspicion towards the Free French did not necessarily equate outright hostility. E— had a nephew living with him who was a member of the Free French Air Force, and the CEAF regularly assisted Free French troops. Nor was there any evidence, concluded Bessborough's Committee, that 'these non-supporters of de Gaulle have ever attempted openly to disrupt the movement'.<sup>126</sup> Their quarrel was not

with those who wished to continue the struggle but with their compatriots who adopted a 'rebel' attitude to Pétain.

As well as incurring the wrath of the Free French, the CEAF also earned the disapproval of the FGB. Overlooked in virtually every book on the French in London, this had begun life in June 1940, and was not inspired by the general's *appel* of that month. With the decision of the Bordeaux government to cease fighting and request an armistice, prominent members of the French colony in London were frightened that Franco-British relations would deteriorate in such a way that there would be no organisation left to represent their future interests.<sup>127</sup> In a letter of 15 July, Semet, the FGB vice-president, explained to Sir Alexander Maxwell of the Home Office, how 'the catastrophic events' in the first fortnight in July had confirmed these fears leaving the community 'bewildered'. The closure of the embassy had further compounded the issue, and had meant the *colons* were 'in need of a lead'.<sup>128</sup> Thus, on 5 July, Semet and his associates had decided to marshal the French colony in Great Britain into an organisation, the Association des Français de Grande Bretagne (FGB). The chairman was the engineer, M. Guéritte, and, in the words of Semet, 'one of the best known and respected Frenchmen in England'. Its vice-presidents included de Malglaive, managing director of the Cie Générale Transatlantique and A. Boucher, formerly head of the French Chamber of Commerce. Two meetings had already been conducted; and, at the second of these, held on 9 July, a letter was sent to Churchill, assuring him of 'the complete devotion of the French Colony in England to all war efforts until victory and placing our services unreservedly at the disposal of the British authorities'. Thanked by Bevin on behalf of the prime minister, the FGB had also drawn praise from de Gaulle who, related Semet, took 'complete satisfaction' that the FGB should deal with civilian affairs, although, as we shall see, whether this approval was wholehearted remains doubtful. Promising to work in 'complete cooperation with the British authorities', Semet concluded that the FGB would include practically all Frenchmen who were permanent residents in Britain, and requested that it be recognised by the Home Office as the 'liaison' between the British government and those French residing in this country.

Alongside this request, Semet enclosed the statutes of his new organisation.<sup>129</sup> These reiterated the following aims: the desire to act as a liaison between the British government and the French colony; the support for a British victory; and the desire for the liberation of France.

The second statute expressed the FGB's intention to become an association of individual members, not merely a federation of existing French societies and organisations, an early sign of the movement's ambitions. After subsequent articles listed its twenty-seven founding members and the responsibilities of executive posts, there followed a rousing appeal to the French colony:

Nous ne nous soumettons pas, parce que nous avons partagé avec l'Angleterre, les mauvais et terribles jours de la guerre, parce que, unis à elle, nous avons échangé nos secrets les plus intimes, parce que sur les champs de bataille nous avons combattu et souffert à côté de nos frères anglais et parce que nous sommes engagés, sur l'honneur, à continuer ensemble la lutte jusqu'au bout.<sup>130</sup>

While sympathetic to the aims of the FGB, the Home Office was already on its guard, fearful to entrust any sensitive intelligence to this embryonic movement, which had yet to prove its bona fides. When, on 15 July, leading lights of the FGB, Guéritte, de Malglaive and Boucher, visited Newsam at the Home Office, they were reminded 'that any scheme or proposal for obtaining and placing at the disposal of the British government the names of French citizens in this country who were prepared to assist actively in the prosecution of the war would be a matter for Departments other than the Home Office to consider'.<sup>131</sup> The function of the Home Office in respect to aliens, continued Newsam, was 'primarily the preservation of the security of the country'. The ways in which the FGB could help the Home Office would be to supply the names of French citizens 'who were engaging in anti-British propaganda or other activity likely to impede the prosecution of the war'. Although they agreed energetically to this request, the French visitors were no doubt disappointed that Whitehall had not readily volunteered information of its own, especially in regard to the names and addresses of the *colons* in Britain. As would later become clear, this was the information they treasured above all else.

For the moment, the FGB developed an impetus of its own. On 27 July 1940, over six hundred people assembled for a general meeting held at the YMCA in Tottenham Court Road.<sup>132</sup> Here, Guéritte quoted a declaration of support from Churchill, before hinting at the developing relationship with Carlton Gardens:

Notre Association ne dépend d'aucun gouvernement; elle ne dépend pas, non plus, du Général de Gaulle. Mais indépendance n'empêche pas collaboration avec ceux qui ont en vue le même but que nous: la victoire

britannique qui amènera la libération de la France. L'Association a donc pris contact avec le Général de Gaulle, pour voir de quelle façon nos deux actions parallèles peuvent se coordonner en ce qui concerne l'élément civil, tout en maintenant notre indépendance.<sup>133</sup>

Not long after, the FGB claimed to have become the civil wing of the Free French. The movement was especially excited when de Gaulle instructed the Technical Department at Carlton Gardens to contact the FGB with a view to launching a recruitment drive, targeting technicians and engineers in particular.<sup>134</sup> After further contact between Passy and Guéritte,<sup>135</sup> on 14 September 1940 Pierre Fontaine of the FFL apparently explained that de Gaulle had studied with care the statutes of the FGB, and was pleased to recognise the organisation as the 'partie civile' of La France Libre.<sup>136</sup> It was further claimed that the general had urged his compatriots in Britain to join the FGB, and had appealed to all existing French organisations to fuse with Guéritte's body. On 26 October 1940, René Cassin delivered a speech at Westminster House in which he described the organisation's mission as 'particulièrement belle'.<sup>137</sup> On 21 February 1941, de Gaulle personally addressed a letter to Semet in which he reiterated his hope that the FGB would recruit for his cause.<sup>138</sup> The FGB took special pride when in November 1941 it helped organise a public meeting for de Gaulle in the Albert Hall, where it was able to display its 4,000 members.<sup>139</sup>

Whether the FGB ever officially became the civil wing of the Free French is debatable. Carlton Gardens never made any public statement to such effect; rather these claims always emanated from inside the FGB itself, maybe explaining why the organisation is usually invisible in histories of the Free French. It is further significant that the Spears Mission, an organisation very much in tune with the Free French, insisted in October 1940 that the FGB change its statutes so as to make its support for de Gaulle unequivocal.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, it will be remembered that the general had little time for the wider question of the colonists, other than to win recruits. Their allegiance he expected as a matter of course, and it is significant that de Gaulle never made approaches to the FGB other than to help him uncover technicians and engineers among the exiled community. The Gaullist line on the FGB was best put in January 1942 by Tissier who, like British officials, clearly saw it as a jumped-up organisation. In conversation with Foreign Office representatives, he alluded to it as essentially 'opportunist and commercial' in nature, and was disconcerted that it took

under its wing movements that accepted Vichy money such as the Comité d'Assistance aux Familles des Soldats Français.<sup>141</sup>

While the FGB might never have officially become the civil wing of the Free French, it nonetheless became the most prominent organisation among French colonists, muscling in on the activities of others. On 12 December 1940, the Comité Central Permanent de la Colonie Française voted itself out of existence handing over its functions to the FGB; the Société de Bienfaisance also agreed to affiliate with the FGB,<sup>142</sup> probably because it realised that this was the surest way of guaranteeing its financial survival, having been refused a British grant and with all of its French assets, mainly invested in the railways, rendered worthless by the war.<sup>143</sup> Another long-standing organisation of the French community in Britain shortly followed suit: the Vichy-funded Comité d'Assistance aux Familles des Soldats Français. In January 1941, Lady Warwick complained that the FGB was attempting to take over the French Chamber of Commerce, putting up new *conseillers* for election.<sup>144</sup> These new people were a 'dangerous lot', she added, and might attempt to oust our own people in important trading centres abroad.

Whether the FGB was successful in this *démarche* remains unclear, but it certainly had aspirations overseas. Having assembled prominent businessmen into a colonial committee, the FGB dispatched a series of letters to those governors in the empire who had rallied to de Gaulle.<sup>145</sup> The FGB scored a particular hit when the Fédération Britannique de l'Alliance Française (FBAF), the British branch of the French overseas cultural body, decided that Vichy was a government operating under duress, and so gave its support to de Gaulle, and by proxy to the FGB.<sup>146</sup> This was much to the disgust of E— of the CEAF who declined an invitation to become part of the Council of the Alliance as it meant sitting alongside such prominent Gaullists as Guéritte. Requests quickly followed that the FBAF should receive British government subsidies, requests that were sympathetically received in the knowledge that most other branches of this worldwide organisation, especially in South America, were sympathetic to Vichy.<sup>147</sup>

One cultural outpost remained outside of the growing tentacles of the FGB: the Institut Français in South Kensington, originally founded in 1910.<sup>148</sup> In July 1940, the future of this distinguished body was in doubt as its source of funds from the University of Lille had been severed, and its chairman, Lord Askwith, in the words of a British Council representative, suffered from the 'twin infirmities of old age

and deafness', and was thus unable to exercise 'those qualities of active and skilful leadership'.<sup>149</sup> Tellingly, it was the Free French, rather than the FGB, that made the first initiatives, another indication that the two bodies were not necessarily hand in glove. In his capacity as *Commissaire National à l'Instruction Publique*, René Cassin explained to the British Council that the Institut, 'could be of the highest usefulness to the Free French movement', both in producing propaganda and in awarding degrees, 'subject to eventual ratification by appropriate universities', especially to engineers and those who had passed their exams in France and were keen to fight alongside de Gaulle.<sup>150</sup> As to the creation of a Maison Française in Trafalgar Square, he continued, this was an FGB proposal, and was intended principally as a social club, not as a rival to the Maison Française that was associated with the Institut Français. For its part, the Foreign Office, increasingly pro-de Gaulle by late 1941, was sympathetic to Cassin's request, but the plans faltered on two rocks of opposition. The first was Professor Saurat, the director, and professor of French Literature at the University of London since 1926. Not only had he fallen out with Cassin and other Free French personalities, he was determined that the Institut should continue its specialised cultural work, and disliked the notion that it should be deployed as a propaganda tool. No doubt his later likening of de Gaulle to Napoleon stemmed from the general's intention to turn his foundation into a finishing school for technicians, a project that smacked of the utilitarianism of Bonapartist educational policy. It is also likely that Saurat garnered support from several residents at the Maison of the Institut: Mengin, Labarthe, Aron and Etienne Dennery.<sup>151</sup> Yet whether Saurat would have been able to stand his ground, given the Foreign Office's desire to see him transferred to Bristol, which acted as the University of London's wartime home,<sup>152</sup> remains doubtful. The latter was fortunate that there emerged a second, far more formidable, rock of opposition, in the shape of Lord Bessborough. He was alarmed to hear that the Free French had interested themselves in the affairs of the Institut. The establishment, he argued, belonged properly to the French government, and was only temporarily in British hands. No doubt in the back of his mind was the fear that if it was entrusted to the Free French, de Gaulle would be able to make yet stronger claims to be the legitimate government of France.

Quite how the arguments played out remains unclear as the archival trail goes cold. In any case, it is likely that the Institut became less of a prize catch for either the FGB or the Free French as, in 1942, the

Maison was the victim of a severe bombing raid. Tellingly, however, Saurat remained the director, and in 1943 was prominent in agitating against the 'Cagoulard' Passy.<sup>153</sup>

Having colonised many of the existing French societies and cultural outposts in London, the FGB sought to boost membership. This was to be achieved by fair means or foul. Among the business community in London, it was learned that Guéritte had spread 'threats that if they do not join de Gaulle the British authorities will throw them into concentration camps',<sup>154</sup> maybe an exaggerated rumour as Guéritte was profoundly deaf. What caused the Foreign Office greater anxiety was the news that the FGB intended to organise a 'manifestation of Allied civilians in Great Britain, and that this manifestation should pass a resolution of gratitude to Great Britain and faith in the future'.<sup>155</sup> Bessborough immediately recognised that this was a 'self-advertising stunt', but in an interview with de Malglaive chose more diplomatic language, pointing out that such an event would do little good and much harm as inter-Allied affairs 'were rather tricky and delicate'. De Malglaive agreed, but claimed he was being strongly pressed by members of the FGB who had been heartened by an earlier meeting of Inter-Allied representatives at St James's Palace and by the fact that the royal family had recently received Allied heads of state. The Foreign Office remained unimpressed and sided with French Welfare. It was understood that such a manifestation would create resentment on the part of other Allied citizens many of whom might refuse to partake in the event. The example of the Norwegians was cited. They were so angered by the self-aggrandising instincts of the FGB that they refused to have anything to do with the organisation. Accordingly, Bessborough thanked the FGB for its endeavours but declined the request, pointing out that 'in the present circumstances' it would 'serve no useful purpose'. Further alarm bells rang in autumn 1941 when it was learned that FGB representatives had been speaking to TUC officials over the possibility of creating a British association, drawn from trade union members.<sup>156</sup> Given the conservative nature of the FGB's leadership, this was truly a remarkable move, yet it does not seem to have originated from any Pauline conversion to collectivism. Rather, the FGB was looking to replace the ailing UAGBF and, 'puffed up' by the success of organising de Gaulle's speech at the Albert Hall in November 1941, approached the unions probably because they had a lengthy membership list that could be easily contacted. Membership lists were everything to the FGB, as we shall see.

Increasingly agitated by the behaviour of the FGB, in autumn 1941 the Foreign Office hoped that it would be able to control the direction of the movement, and contain its many initiatives. With the AGM close at hand, it was naturally expected that Guéritte would stand down as president as he was 'practically stone deaf'.<sup>157</sup> Semet, the vice-president, was thought an unlikely contender as replacement as he was widely perceived to be, in the distinctly non-Gallic phrase, 'not much of a chap'.<sup>158</sup> This, then, was the ideal moment to put forward Roger Cambon, the living embodiment of the *entente cordiale*, as the new leader. At a recent lunch, Cambon had been heard to utter some favourable remarks about de Gaulle, and it was said his dining companion the Vicomtesse de la Panousse, who in December 1940 had backed General Catroux against de Gaulle, now kept photographs of Free French soldiers in her *oeuvreiroir* [*sic*]. Cambon's appointment would not only make the FGB easier to control, it would also lend prestige to the movement, encouraging the remaining two thousand or so London colonists to sign up. Needless to say, neither Cambon nor the FGB were susceptible to these intrigues, and Guéritte, deaf as a post, remained in post.

Unable to influence the FGB, Whitehall had to field several of its requests. The first of these, presented immediately after the meeting of 27 July 1940, was that its members should enjoy the privileges of allies that they had been enjoying up to 17 June; since the Armistice, they had become the subject of Aliens Restrictions Orders, limiting their freedom of movement and compelling their registration with the police.<sup>159</sup> In July, it was thought far too early to concede this kind of privilege. Later, in October, while the CFR acknowledged that there could be no relaxation of this restrictive provision, it was recommended that FGB members should receive 'lenient treatment'.<sup>160</sup> How far this operated in practice remains uncertain, although it is known that it was not until the closing months of the war that overall restrictions were lifted.

Next, the FGB sought from the Home Office 'a complete list of French residents', something it had been too shy to request explicitly when its representatives met Newsam in July,<sup>161</sup> so that it could mount a recruitment drive. 'We will leave it to the British authorities', remarked the FGB, 'to decide what is best to be done with those of our compatriots who, for whatever reasons, have decided or will decide not to join our Association of Free Frenchmen [*sic*].' Such a move would enable the association to issue a membership card, stamped by both the

Home Office and police, which would then confer on its holder the privileges of an ally, another move designed to get round the Aliens Restrictions Act. The FGB even suggested that MI5 should assist them in the vetting of members, something that was rejected out of hand as a government security agency could not be placed at the disposal of a private organisation.

This quest for the names of French residents never ceased, yet government was naturally cautious about handing over such material as it ran counter to the general policy of not disclosing 'to any third party names of aliens in this country without their consent'.<sup>162</sup> In practice, the Home Office was prepared for police forces to disclose 'for the benefit of the Belgian, Czech, Dutch and Norwegian authorities information regarding respectability of persons offering hospitality to soldiers of these foreign countries'.<sup>163</sup> Such information was not for the French. The government was disturbed that the CEAF had also requested a full list of French residents,<sup>164</sup> and there remained the perennial fear of Vichy reprisals. When, in February 1941, MI5's regional officer in Reading reported that he was certain that police forces were in fact giving information to the Free French, chief constables were warned once again of the dangers of this action.<sup>165</sup>

The final request of the FGB was to receive a similar type of blessing to that that had been granted to de Gaulle's movement on 28 June. This received a sympathetic hearing, especially after Bessborough outlined the situation of the French colony in London. In his view, this comprised two communities, the first in complete support of de Gaulle, the second consisting 'of persons who have been here for years and who proclaimed themselves to be just as loyal to our cause as the first group'. Bessborough further added both groups frequently 'abused one another'. It was thus agreed that there was an urgent need to clear up the existing situation and so encourage all those sitting on the fence to come out openly in support of the Allied cause. If there was a single society that could facilitate this union, then it was deserving of support, suggested Bessborough. Whether he would have made the same recommendation knowing the troubles the FGB would bring him in 1941 is doubtful. In any case, the Foreign and Home Office both held that 'HMG could not give official recognition to a private body'.<sup>166</sup> In this situation, all government was prepared to do was to endorse de Gaulle's support of the movement and inform other departments, notably the Treasury, which could provide financial aid, that the FGB constituted the only grouping 'deserving of our support'.<sup>167</sup>

There remained one organisation that the FGB was less eager to colonise, partly because it was an Anglo-French creation, partly because it was already Gaullist in orientation, partly because it included FGB members on its committee, and partly because its intentions were very different from its own. This was the Amis des Volontaires Français (AVF) which held its first meeting on 6 September 1940. Here, an executive was formed comprising the following: Earl de la Warr (president); de Malglaive (vice-chairman); Lord Ivor Spencer Churchill and Captain Hesse (honorary secretaries); Bellenger (honorary treasurer); and committee members the Marchioness of Crewe, Lady Peel, the Hon. Crawshay and M. Morhange.<sup>168</sup> The objectives of the organisation were laid out thus:

The Association, exclusively authorised by General de Gaulle, has been set up in London to coordinate all offers of help and to centralise all gifts emanating from Great Britain and abroad sent to him for the welfare of the volunteers. The aim of the Association is to establish a link between organisations and individuals, whatever their nationality, who wish to extend moral and material help to the French volunteers.<sup>169</sup>

As a later AVF letter to *The Times* of 7 October 1943 pointed out, in its three years of existence, the organisation had managed to establish 57 branch committees throughout the British Isles 'grouping over 30,000 associate members of whom the great majority are British'.<sup>170</sup> As well as raising the impressive sum of £53,542 15s 0d in 1943 compared to £19,239 4s 7d in 1941,<sup>171</sup> the AVF had set up canteens, clubs and foyers for the use of de Gaulle's troops, including a Maison des Ailes at Ditchley Park for personnel of the Armée de l'Air.<sup>172</sup> Enjoying the patronage of the British Council and French Welfare, with which it enjoyed cordial relations,<sup>173</sup> the AVF in 1943, was prompted by the creation of the Committee of National Liberation in Algiers, to assist all French forces fighting for the Allied cause 'irrespective of their past affiliations'.<sup>174</sup> At the close of August 1944, membership of the AVF had swelled to 40,000, but it aimed for 100,000 by the close of the year.<sup>175</sup> Paradoxically, as Allied troops swept across France and, as many French in Britain prepared to return to their homeland, the AVF busily promoted its film *Born in Britain* portraying the lives of those babies that had been delivered in exile.<sup>176</sup> A further paradox was that it was only at the Liberation that squabbling over the AVF became open, although it is apparent that Carlton Gardens had assiduously monitored the attitudes of its committee, alleging in March 1941 that Ivor Churchill had let drop pro-Vichy remarks.<sup>177</sup> In 1944, arguments

largely revolved around what honours should be distributed to its leading acolytes, and what should be done with its remaining monies, some £30,000 in total, together with a considerable amount of goods.<sup>178</sup> Exasperated by the continuing struggles within the French community, Bessborough offered simple advice: wind the organisation up.<sup>179</sup>

#### Les catholiques avant tout

There remained one group of French colonists, bolstered by new arrivals from their homeland, who generally remained outside any organisation but who nevertheless retained a distinct identity in that they were united in their faith and were eager to see the institutionalised secularism of the French state vanquished once and for all: *les catholiques avant tout*.

Religious intolerance had, of course, always been a spur to French emigration to Britain: the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew and Louis XIV's Revocation of the Edict of Nantes had displaced thousands of Huguenots who had since settled in England, especially in London's East End. Over the centuries, however, they had largely assimilated English culture and were no longer *the* prominent religious force among French colonists. This distinction had passed to those religious orders that had been expelled at the start of twentieth century when, in the fall-out of the Dreyfus Affair, the state had denied such men and women the right of association (law of 1901) and had subsequently banned them from teaching altogether (law of 1904). Although many religious defied this legislation, several had settled elsewhere: in Belgium, where de Gaulle himself had attended the school of an exiled order, travelling across the border each day to school, and in Britain. The 1931 Census recorded 133 French priests and monks, along with 765 nuns and Sisters of Charity.

In June 1940, these men and women were joined by several of their co-religionaries. It will be recalled that, among the refugee population, there came some fifty priests and novices, together with nuns displaced from the coastal towns of Dunkirk and Calais. It was further recognised that many of the servicemen trapped in England were extremely devout. This was especially true of the officer class. It was noted that officers held in Blackpool, deliberately segregated from their men, were 'intensely Catholic', and believed Pétain was the only means of restoring 'the spiritual greatness of France'.<sup>180</sup> The same observation could be made about several of the naval ratings, despite the fact that Admiral

Darlan, a non-believer, was at their head. French Welfare officers frequently commented that a majority of the sailors held in the camps of north-west England were 'intensely religious' Bretons.<sup>181</sup> Furthermore, it is well documented that Action Française supporters, their hatred of the *Boche* greater than their admiration of Pétainist principles, were among early recruits for de Gaulle. As one early volunteer complained to Morton, such men were already attempting to resurrect 'la vieille France' within the general's movement, even though this was responsible for the defeat.<sup>182</sup> Tereska Torrès, a Jewish convert to Catholicism, met some of these Action Française adherents on her voyage to Britain, the first time she had ever encountered this political group face to face.<sup>183</sup> Appreciative of their courage, patriotism and enthusiasm, she was nonetheless alienated by their anti-Semitism, snobbish attitude and pretentious airs.

In 1940, fears about these *catholiques avant tout* were essentially threefold. First, how would they respond to the overtly pro-clerical policies that Pétain was pursuing?<sup>184</sup> Within the first six months of his regime, he abolished freemasonry, the scourge of clericals; sacked allegedly secularist schoolteachers; provided minor financial palliatives to Catholic schools; removed the ban stopping religious orders from teaching; and, for a brief moment in January 1941, restored the catechism into the timetable of the state primary school, an institution hitherto strictly neutral in religious matters. Such measures had, in turn, given great delight both to the Vatican, whose newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* called the creation of Vichy 'the dawn of a new radiant day',<sup>185</sup> and to members of the French episcopacy who fell over themselves to praise Pétain, the 'man of the moment'. It is now known that the French Church was deeply divided in its attitude to Vichy, and that the rank-and-file clergy, youth movements and laity quickly lost their initial enthusiasm for the regime, especially when it began its merciless persecution of Jews and other minorities. Nonetheless, this early enthusiasm gave rise to a second fear. Would the presence of *catholiques avant tout* in Britain disturb other members of the French colony, turning them into fifth columnists? In this regard, the government had at hand regular reports of the High Commissioner in Canada who had spoken of how French Canadians openly admired the marshal whom they cheered whenever he appeared on newsreels. While they did not like Laval, whom they viewed as a traitor, they applauded him as a good Catholic, something he clearly was not, whenever Protestants in the audience hissed him.<sup>186</sup>

From such reports emerged a third fear, reminiscent of the anxieties of British governments in the 1790s when there had been another great influx of devout Catholics.<sup>187</sup> Might *catholiques avant tout* pollute the loyalties of their British co-religionaries? Not only were such men and women traditionally viewed as ‘outsiders’, in the 1930s it had not gone unremarked that leading Catholic intellectuals, men such as Douglas Jerrold, John Strachey Barnes, Michael de la Bedoyère and Robert Sencourt, had displayed an unhealthy interest in fascism.<sup>188</sup> In the six months immediately after the French defeat, the leading Catholic journal the *Tablet* devoted no fewer than twelve major articles to France, which were bitterly critical of the Third Republic, and even uncovered a connection between the French Revolution of 1789 and the Nazi takeover of 1933.<sup>189</sup> There was also talk of a Latin bloc, comprising France, Italy and Spain, which would act as a deterrent to Bolshevism. As Horsfall Carter bemoaned in the pages of *New Statesman and Nation*, ‘A careful scrutiny of the Catholic press in this country since the downfall of France is highly instructive. The “line” may be summed up as a pathetic attempt to reconcile an attitude of faith, hope and charity with regard to the new France – which has broken with the pernicious liberal, rationalist and secularist tenets of the Third Republic – with the patent fact that Marshal Pétain and co are entirely under Nazi domination.’<sup>190</sup> This provocative article sparked off a running correspondence between Catholic and non-Catholic intellectuals in the *New Statesman and Nation* that continued until the end of the year.

The reasons why British Catholics ultimately remained loyal to the Allied cause have since been amply explored.<sup>191</sup> Apart from the influence of the Ministry of Information and BBC, which were keen to rein in any overly pro-Pétain sentiment, historians have stressed the ability of British Catholics to put their own house in order. Particular credit has been attached to Cardinal Hinsley who deftly handled the media, both Catholic and otherwise, and the success of the *Sword of the Spirit*, a Catholic movement inspired by, among others, Christopher Dawson, A. C. F. Beales and Manya Harari, which campaigned tirelessly for the victory of the Allies. It is also questionable whether the presence of a small number of French *catholiques avant tout* would have had any impact on British Catholics who had their own structures and hierarchies. In this respect, it was perhaps fortunate that their number did not include any significant intellectual figure such as Emmanuel Mounier, the Personalist philosopher, whose early sympathy for the

values of the National Revolution led him to establish the leadership school at Uriage. Other leading voices, such as Jacques Maritain and Georges Bernanos, chose exile in the USA and South America respectively, where they quickly made known their distaste for Vichy's authoritarian leanings and compliance with Nazi Germany.<sup>192</sup>

The absence of a domineering intellectual presence also goes some way in explaining why *catholiques avant tout* were not to influence French Catholics in Britain, yet several other reasons also present themselves. To begin with, the Ministry of Information once again had an impact. Having warned such leading publications as the *Catholic Herald* against adopting an overly sympathetic line on Pétain,<sup>193</sup> it also ensured that its own publication *France* included plenty of anti-Vichy ammunition directed by prominent Catholic writers and politicians.<sup>194</sup> This included Cardinal Villeneuve's speech at Quebec in which he praised the Free French, a broadcast from Bernanos, an article by Thierry d'Argenlieu, and Cardinal Hinsley's speech at the Foyles luncheon in honour of de Gaulle. Bernanos himself volunteered to publish propaganda in Britain, approaching the British ambassador in Brazil as early as July 1940, an offer that was taken very seriously.<sup>195</sup> The Ministry also helped with the publication of the monthly Catholic newspaper *La Volontaire pour une Cité Chrétienne*, which in 1943 achieved an annual circulation of 15,500.<sup>196</sup> Edited by the prominent émigré Francis-Louis Closon, ably assisted by Guy Hattu, a commando, René de Nauvois, a priest and another commando, and Andrée Desloyers, a doctor, this publication was largely distributed in the Middle East and African colonies, rather than the London community, but stressed the anti-totalitarian tendencies of the Free French and helped counter the impression that the French Catholic press was entirely pro-Vichy. Closon was especially pleased by the paper's title, which was designed to be a deliberate snub to Vichy which portrayed all overseas resisters as adventurers without faith nor a sense of law.<sup>197</sup> Outside the Ministry's publications, *La France Libre* also did its bit, printing the 'message' from Jacques Maritain,<sup>198</sup> and publishing an extremely perceptive article by Jacques Rochelle highlighting the splintered opinions within the French Church, especially the resistance shown by Mgr Saliège, archbishop of Toulouse.<sup>199</sup>

Hinsley himself was just as significant in containing the Pétanist sympathies of the French community as he was in controlling British Catholics. In August 1940, following the pronouncements of *L'Osservatore Romano* on Vichy, he announced that these had been

‘quoted in this country to create a wrong impression’.<sup>200</sup> ‘We must make it clear’, he stressed, ‘that Catholics are and will remain loyal to their country’s cause while they are also trustfully devoted to the Holy See.’ Hinsley also took practical measures, interviewing priests destined to tend to the men at White City to ensure that they were suitable.<sup>201</sup> He also reined in the Marist priest at the French Church in Leicester Place, near Leicester Square, recognising the importance of this institution to the expatriate community. Founded in 1865, it had become just as central to expatriate life as was the consulate in Bedford Square,<sup>202</sup> and was often the first port of call for many new arrivals in 1940, including Tereska Torrès.<sup>203</sup> All the more disturbing, then, that in July the priest delivered a series of ambiguous sermons on the fall of France. He was severely rebuked by his superior. In a letter of apology to Hinsley of 28 August, he admitted that he had used the pulpit to make ‘veiled’ references to politics, and claimed that these must have been ‘misunderstood’ by the congregation.<sup>204</sup> It is not known exactly what was contained in his addresses, but it appears to have been criticism of the Third Republic. Nonetheless, he promised that there would be no further cause for complaint and agreed with the cardinal’s ruling that ‘the pulpit should be used only for purely religious matters’. Shortly afterwards, his church was destroyed by a German bomb, and the Ministry of Works and Buildings questioned whether it should be rebuilt, despite its status as ‘the official and only church of the French colony in London’, as reconstruction meant ‘the use of scarce materials and of still scarcer labour’.<sup>205</sup> Both the Foreign Office and Ministry of Information backed the application,<sup>206</sup> despite the fact that the priest remained Vichy in instinct.<sup>207</sup> In the words of one government report, he was a fifth columnist of the ‘worst sort’.<sup>208</sup> Yet, like many other French institutions in London, because his church was colonised by a whole range of French – FGB and the Free French members as well as Vichy consular officials – something of the priest’s Vichy sympathies were diluted.<sup>209</sup> After the war, the Church became a meeting place for Free French veterans, especially on Armistice Day when they commemorated fallen colleagues.<sup>210</sup>

Apart from Hinsley, other leading members of the Catholic hierarchy did their bit to contain any Vichyite sympathies, both at home and abroad. In September 1940, Postal Censorship intercepted a letter from the Catholic writer Robert Speaight, then in New York distributing pro-British propaganda, to Bishop Mathew at Westminster Cathedral.<sup>211</sup> There in America he had met with Maritain, and together

they had agreed that a Pontifical High Mass, attended at Westminster by de Gaulle, members of the British government and the French community, would go some way in countering Pétainist propaganda both in Britain and the USA, particularly the unfounded claims that de Gaulle was anti-clerical; as in the case of his supposed left-wing leanings, it appears that the lack of information about the general gave rise to some wild rumours about his religious position. The scheme for a mass had, however, been frowned upon by a Spanish priest in their company, a representative of the papacy, who remarked that, 'Le Vatican n'entend que des menaces.' While acknowledging Churchill's support for Italian and German missions, the same priest had also denounced the 'indolent and aristocratic manner of the British government'. For its part, the Foreign Office thought such a mass was a good idea, bringing out the 'best in Catholic France',<sup>212</sup> although on approaching Desmond Morton, himself a Catholic, it was learned that Carlton Gardens was more or less empty thanks to the Dakar mission; those who remained were 'super atheists'.<sup>213</sup> Nonetheless, such masses would become a common feature in the life of Westminster Cathedral during the remainder of the war.

Elsewhere within Britain, the Catholic archbishop of Liverpool, Mgr Downey, warned the government from employing, in the sailors' camps, leading officials of the French colony from the city, many of whom were members of the Catholic Women's League, as these ladies were 'suspect' in their political outlook.<sup>214</sup> Such warnings were especially apposite as it was among stranded soldiers and sailors that *catholiques avant tout* were most active. In July 1940, Castellane, the French chargé d'affaires, urged that Abbé P—, attached to the consulate and the French Church in Leicester Square, should be allowed to visit wounded troops at White City where he would 'abstain from any politics'.<sup>215</sup> His earlier failure to hold his tongue had led to his exclusion, and the request was turned down.

'Troublesome priests' were, though, active elsewhere, especially in the North-West. Particular suspicion was levelled at a Father N—M—, an Irish priest, an Italian rather than French-speaker and a member of the Benedictines, who was attached to the camp at Trentham Park, and who was well known to Georges Blond, the right-wing naval engineer whom we met earlier.<sup>216</sup> In a lengthy letter to Lady Peel, he vigorously refuted allegations that he was pro-Pétain.<sup>217</sup> 'Vichy I detest', he declared. 'Pétain and Weygand I disapprove of in the strongest terms. That they are Catholics is none of my business: my

disapproval of them is based not on religious grounds, but rather on the fact that they represent a government and country which has broken faith and treaty with ours.' He further condemned their association with Laval, and was deeply troubled by Pétain's private morality: 'I learn on good authority, long before I came here, that Pétain married a divorcee, so I have no great opinion of his Catholicity, though I believe the matter of his marriage has been rectified.' The letter went on to say that he approved of de Gaulle's actions, having listened to him on the radio, something to which his fellow fathers could attest. Condemning those who wanted to return to France, he cited the many occasions on which he had recruited for de Gaulle, and spoke of how he had reported one French officer for helping sailors to escape in civilian clothes to Liverpool, from where they arranged a safe passage home. Concluding this lengthy rebuttal, he suggested that his reputation for being anti-Gaullist stemmed from an early reluctance to distribute pro-British propaganda and an association with a certain Père B— D— from the Doddington camp who had earlier visited Trentham Park. When the two men had called in at the de Gaulle recruiting office in Stoke, a political argument broke out and it had soon become clear where D—'s loyalties lay even though 'he was soundly whacked by all the others on every point under discussion'. The letter certainly did the trick. Rear-Admiral Watkins was said to have considered the continued presence of Father M— at the camp 'a matter of "national importance", as he has had an extremely favourable good influence on the men'.<sup>218</sup>

Ultimately, *les catholiques avant tout* represented a minority grouping within the colony. Despite many of them being members of the clergy, both secular and regular, they lacked organisation and were easily isolated by Hinsley, French Welfare and others. The fact that, in 1941, de Gaulle's own spiritual loyalties became apparent might also have contained their anguish. He might have bemoaned the fact that 'the synagogue sends me more than the cathedral', but several prominent Catholics emerged in his entourage, among them Maurice Schumann, a former editor of *L'Aube*, René Pleven, the jurist and former head of the Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Française, and Thierry d'Argenlieu, who along with Muselier is credited with devising the Cross of Lorraine.<sup>219</sup> So it was that *catholiques avant tout* amounted to little more than a nuisance.

### The British government and the *colons*: internment and restrictions

In preparation for war, 'the Government had decided that there should be no general internment of aliens in Britain at the outbreak of hostilities'.<sup>220</sup> Nonetheless, restrictions were placed on freedom of movement and, as early as April 1939, it was agreed that general internment would, at some point, be necessary. Preparations were thus put into place and lists of foreigners drawn up. Three categories of enemy aliens (A, B and C), principally Italians, Germans and Austrians, were distinguished: the first group were the most dangerous and were earmarked for internment immediately on the outbreak of hostilities. During the fifth-column scare of May 1940 Category B aliens, initially subject to restrictions on movement, particularly in coastal and other security-sensitive areas, were likewise interned. The final C group, who had not been targeted for either internment or curtailment of their liberties, men and women about whom the British government had no real grounds for suspicion, were rounded up the next month.

Being allies, the French of course had not figured in any of these discussions, but the dramatic events across the Channel quickly focused government attention. In several regards, Whitehall's approach mirrored the general policy it had adopted towards enemy aliens, and it was a close-run thing that the French colony was not eventually subject to the same fate that had befallen Italians, Germans and Austrians.

#### *Early internees*

It will be recalled that the question of interning French men and women figured in Cabinet discussions soon after the Armistice. On 10 July ministers gathered at Downing Street to consider what action should be taken against French nationals in the event of France declaring war on Britain, seemingly a real prospect after Mers-el-Kébir and the Vichy retaliatory bombing of Gibraltar.<sup>221</sup> Here, a report of the Aliens Advisory Committee, which recommended no general or immediate internment of Frenchmen, was endorsed. Nonetheless, lists were to be made of those special cases who would need rounding up should the occasion arise. While it was admitted that the numbers were not likely to be large, confusion arose as to who should be included. The Home Office believed it should comprise those who would have to be detained 'on account of their knowledge of British plans and preparations or in view of their technical skill'.<sup>222</sup> Inevitably, this would include members of the French missions, who were returned in

September 1940, leading to discussions as to whether they should be joined by the remainder of cases filed by the government.<sup>223</sup> To clarify matters, the Home Office acknowledged that should Vichy now declare war, 'the whole of the French colony would have to be considered each on his own merits', especially as it was rumoured that 'a fair proportion of the French Colony is by no means pro-British'.<sup>224</sup> It was concluded, however, that there was nothing 'to do before the event, but if Vichy declares war we shall want a Tribunal for the French'.<sup>225</sup>

Who, then, were interned during these early months? We know their numbers were not large. In a letter of February 1941, the Foreign Office explained to Chartier that 64 Frenchmen had been held since July the previous year.<sup>226</sup> Of this figure, 39 had been repatriated; 18 had been released; only 7 remained in detention.

Surviving evidence suggests that the majority of internees were not colonists but awkward members of the missions, such as Captain de Rivoire who will be remembered from the preceding chapter, and servicemen, guilty not so much of fifth-columnist activities but of a defeatism that threatened to poison their colleagues. Such was the case of F— G— K—, an officer evacuated from Dunkirk and subsequently held at Winchester gaol for having said that troops should not join de Gaulle and that England was on the verge of revolution.<sup>227</sup> Another case was that of commander R—. Before the Armistice, he had been attached to Bomber Command.<sup>228</sup> Because of his strong Pétainist sentiments, Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal had requested he be confined. The conditions of his internment were not hard. Under house arrest at Selsdon Park Hotel, Surrey, he was still at liberty to wander round the surrounding area. MI5 kept a close watch on these movements, but did not uncover any evidence to prove that he was distributing anti-British or anti-Gaullist propaganda, as the Spears Mission alleged. It was known, however, that he was in receipt of funds from Chartier at the Vichy consulate. In view of his predicament, this charity was not unreasonable. In the eyes of the Spears Mission and Carlton Gardens it was a sure sign R— was guilty. René Pleven of the Free French expressed astonishment that he was permitted such license to roam and urged that he be placed under closer surveillance, for instance at the hotel in York, the home of other suspect French officers.<sup>229</sup> There, in the provinces, he would not get up to any mischief, and would not be in contact with the Vichy consulates. In the event, such draconian action appears to have been scuppered by the Air Ministry, which thought it improper to treat one of its former staff in such a manner.<sup>230</sup>

R—'s fate remains uncertain as does that of P— H— C—. On 3 March 1941, Chartier wrote to the Foreign Office requesting that this man be freed from the camp at Lingfield and allowed to go to Brazil; at the very least, he should be placed in 'forced residence' at a hotel.<sup>231</sup> On investigation, it was discovered that C— had been interned on account of 'professional misconduct', most likely defeatism rather than spying, while working as a technician in certain 'war processes' at Hull. He had subsequently been placed in a camp to prevent him coming into contact with others. For this reason, the Foreign Office saw no reason why he should be allowed to go to Brazil or be given 'more comfortable accommodation'.<sup>232</sup> Nevertheless, his case came before the Lindley Committee, dealing with troublesome aliens, where it was recommended that he be released so long as the Free French accepted him for service.<sup>233</sup> C— was subsequently interviewed by de Gaulle's men but was found wanting. The result was that he was moved to Mooragh Camp on the Isle of Man.<sup>234</sup>

Other cases, for instance that of a man held since August 1940, because of his knowledge of technical matters and association with a German agent, and that of a refugee who had spread defeatist views in the factory in which he worked, also came up for periodic review, but they appear to have been among the seven unfortunates held for the duration of the war.<sup>235</sup>

It was not just suspected Pétainists and defeatists who fell foul of the British authorities. In early 1941, the British embassy in Washington forwarded to London a letter that it had received from James Cannon, National Secretary of the Socialist Workers Party in New York. This alleged that Robert Frank, 'a well known French revolutionist' had been sentenced by a London police tribunal at Marylebone to six months hard labour for not having registered properly with the police.<sup>236</sup> At his trial, the defendant protested that this lapse was through fear that he might be turned over to Vichy who had condemned him to an unknown penalty *in absentia*. As we have seen, this was not an uncommon anxiety among French exiles who fretted that reprisals might be taken against their relatives back in France. On hearing the explanation, the judge was unimpressed and denounced Frank as 'a subversive person'; copies of *The Tragic Situation of the Workers and Peasants of France* and *The Imperialist War and the World* had been found among his possessions in College Crescent Hampstead.<sup>237</sup> Cannon was shocked. Having been hounded out of France by 'democrats who preferred Hitler to a resurgence of the

French people', Frank now found himself in the paradoxical position of being imprisoned by a country that was opposed to Vichy. 'Elementary justice', concluded Cannon, demanded that Frank be freed. When the Foreign Office looked into the case, however, it was discovered that Frank had also been engaged in anti-British activities, and was deemed 'a danger to the community'.<sup>238</sup> The prison term had since been extended on account of this, although it was determined that Frank should not be returned to France where he was likely to receive even less favourable treatment. Instead, he was transferred to the internment camp on the Isle of Man where, fittingly for a former secretary of Trotsky, he was quickly mobilising the anti-fascists against others in the compound, organising a hunger strike and popularising his anti-Gaullist views.<sup>239</sup>

How much of a danger Frank truly was remains in doubt. At least he had done something to attract the attention of the authorities, unlike the unfortunate J— B—, an engineer who had lived for some time in the UK dealing in patents for oil-refining machinery.<sup>240</sup> He had been arrested on 16 August 1940 and subsequently held at Pentonville. Despite both he and his family having close contacts with de Gaulle, and despite his plight being championed by the MP Dr Leslie Burgin, B— had been expelled and repatriated in Marseille. The case caused some embarrassment within Whitehall where no one would take responsibility and where it was admitted nothing untoward was known against him. 'Looks like another MI6 muddle', scribbled one Foreign Office official on the file; 'no doubt MI5 are the niggers in the wood pile', wrote another in less diplomatic language.

Justice at least seems to have been served in the case of Mlle Nicole. On 28 July 1941, the Rabat newspaper *La Vigie Marocaine* recorded her story under the headline 'L'odieux traitement infligé par les Britanniques à une infirmière française'.<sup>241</sup> A member of the automobile section of the French Red Cross, Nicole had served in the First World War and, in 1940, had again transported the wounded. With the Armistice, she did not consider her role ended; instead, she travelled to Britain on 17 September to assist those refugees and soldiers stranded across the Channel. Having been furnished with the necessary papers by the British, she was astonished to be arrested eight days after her arrival. No explanation was given as to her internment, and she subsequently spent 279 days in prison, thirteen of which were spent in a 'cachot'. She was eventually released on 11 June 1941, yet still no reason was given for her incarceration, which clearly distressed the nurse. In

early July, British censors intercepted a letter she sent from Portugal, where she had been deported, to a Mr Griggs of the American Red Cross in London.<sup>242</sup> In this, she recounted her 279 days in jail and the 'cruel treatment' she had suffered. She was furious that the British Red Cross had taken so long to vouch for her, despite the fact Anthony Eden's sister had been a member of her motor corps and that de Gaulle's own nurses had come to see her. 'A victim of wilful cruelty', she had been sent third class to Liverpool, accompanied by detectives, and then dumped on a cargo vessel for the 20-days' voyage to Lisbon, although 'anything was better than Holloway'.

Perturbed by the story, the British consulate at Tangier requested from the Foreign Office the full facts of this 'exaggerated case' so it could put these to the French authorities and quash the propaganda of the two local French newspapers, which were becoming 'ever more virulent'.<sup>243</sup> Worryingly, the German press was also publicising the case, the *Völkischer Beobachter* claiming that 1,200 women were being tortured in London.<sup>244</sup> So it was that the Foreign Office looked into the matter. As a note of 13 January 1941 revealed, Nicole had come to Britain, alongside a colleague, Mlle Terré, whom we met earlier. Both had been arrested on the suspicion of spying, the distribution of anti-British propaganda and the engineering of a 'clandestine loophole in the blockade'.<sup>245</sup> Her colleague was quickly released when it became apparent that she had travelled across the Channel in good faith; meanwhile, further worrying discoveries were made about Nicole. In a letter of March 1941, the Foreign Office revealed that Nicole, laden with 'defeatism even before the Armistice', had been sent over, with German connivance, to spy on de Gaulle's organisation and to execute a plan whereby supplies would be sent to France, ostensibly for refugees but in truth to break the blockade.<sup>246</sup> It was because of the seriousness of her crimes that the British government remained unmoved in the face of protests from both Chartier and the American Red Cross.<sup>247</sup> As one official later reflected, she was 'an unpleasant personage' and 'far from being an injured innocent',<sup>248</sup> although it was agreed by all that Holloway had not been the place to keep her, especially at the time of the Blitz.<sup>249</sup> Whether this treatment or her latent Anglophobia inspired her later actions can only be guessed at. In August 1941, back in France, she was reported to be in charge of the Section Sanitaire Automobile where she was conducting anti-British propaganda which she proposed to export to West Africa.<sup>250</sup>

With only a few French men and women interned in the first six

months after the Armistice, it may have seemed that colonists had little to fear for the future. Even if some retained an admiration for Pétain, they could still point to their anti-German credentials. Yet the issue of internment did not go away, especially given the turn for the worse in British-Vichy relations at the start of 1941.

#### *General internment?*

With the dismissal of Laval on 13 December 1940, and his eventual replacement by the Anglophobe Darlan as chief minister and dauphin to Pétain, the Foreign Office braced itself for the worst. There seemed to be a real possibility of war breaking out between Britain and France, thus forcing government to return to those questions that had figured in the War Cabinet discussions of July 1940. Where would the loyalty of Frenchmen in Britain lie, and what policy should be adopted in their regard?

It is testimony to the seriousness of these questions that they regularly figured in government discussions for the first six months of 1941. Strikingly, the minutes of the CFR reveal that the agency keenest on some general internment was Carlton Gardens. Even though the Free French did not have a seat on the CFR, it is significant that the Spears Mission, still very much the *porte-parole* of de Gaulle, spoke most emphatically about 'doubtful' French elements in this country. At the meeting of 28 January 1941, Spears himself presented a memorandum, which relayed the awful choices that had confronted Frenchmen in Britain since the Armistice.<sup>251</sup> While he acknowledged the Free French were not entirely reliable, much praise was lavished on de Gaulle's men, who had at least chosen sides. 'As long as there are any doubtful Frenchmen in this country', he continued, 'there is bound to be a great danger of this information percolating through to pro-Vichy individuals, who may pass it on to Vichy itself, and that is equivalent to its falling into enemy hands.' That there were 'a great many Vichyites in this country', was not in doubt, and Spears berated MI5 for not doing enough about them. The policy of the security services, he surmised, was to do as little as possible to antagonise the French community, hoping this would 'prevent them from becoming violently hostile'. This policy was flawed as no neutrally-minded person would turn into a 'dangerous pro-Vichyite' simply because MI5 was watching him or her. The inevitable conclusion was that 'every Frenchman, who is not enrolled with the Free French (and even these require very careful watching) or who cannot be vouched for by English friends of long

standing should ... be requested to leave the country'. 'There can be only one consideration', concluded Spears, 'and that is security.' If there was an invasion, it was not inconceivable that the enemy would attempt to get in touch with Frenchmen on British soil. Thus whenever a French ship was intercepted in the future it should immediately be put to work repatriating unreliable French nationals.

Calculating that these elements numbered only 'a few hundred', Spears anticipated little opposition to his scheme. Yet the CFR was not ready to rush into any hasty action and commissioned French Welfare to prepare a report on the French community in the UK. This was produced for the meeting of 5 February 1941 and focused principally on the *colons* in London.<sup>252</sup> Little effort, the authors acknowledged, had been made to contact French residents in the provinces, as their numbers were few and it was assumed that those living in Bristol, Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool, that is areas where there were active Anglo-French societies, shared similar sentiments to their compatriots in London. Within the capital, the report stated, the key question was the attitude to adopt towards the Free French movement. It was recognised, however, that those who were not for de Gaulle were not necessarily for Vichy or anti-British, or that this attitude towards the Free French 'takes any active form beyond refusal to cooperate'.

The above paper, together with that of Spears, was discussed by the CFR Sub-Committee on Welfare and Security at its meeting of 7 February 1941, and at subsequent meetings that month.<sup>253</sup> Here, the participants reiterated their positions. For its part, MI5 declared that it had insufficient evidence to justify taking action against any Frenchman in respect of anti-de Gaulle activities, a position supported by both the Home and Foreign Offices. Against, Captain Knox of the Spears Mission argued that those hostile to the Free French represented a real danger in the event of an invasion. Knox was, however, in a minority. The overwhelming opinion of the meeting was that the French community was not a threat to national security. The most dangerous elements were deemed not to be colonists, but the handful of sailors who had deserted from British camps before repatriation and who were now wandering about the countryside without proper papers. Nonetheless, there was a strong feeling that more should be done to enlist the French community in support of the war effort. There remained particular concern about men of military age who had failed to join either the British armed services or de Gaulle, as we shall see.

That the above conclusions amounted to a fudge was recognised by the War Cabinet, which was becoming ever more jittery given the belligerent noises coming from Darlan. In a furious letter of 25 February 1941, Downing Street made known to the Foreign Office that the Home Office was 'failing altogether' to get a grip on the issue of Frenchmen in the UK.<sup>254</sup> 'They (ie the Home Office) give me the impression', it was declared, 'of proceeding in a governess-cart at a leisurely pace along a quiet Victorian by-road whilst the Germans are minute by minute gaining upon them in a Mercedes, rushing along a motor road.' It was now eight months since the French collapse, yet no machinery was in place to keep track of French servicemen discharged from Ministry of Health hospitals, or for the police to monitor the opinions of the colony. This was even more vital given the changing circumstances of the war. It was not unlikely, suggested the War Cabinet representative, that three French authorities could soon emerge: de Gaulle in London; a Laval regime in Paris; and a Weygand or Pétain government in North Africa, which might well be tempted to re-enter the war on the Allied side. What, then, would be the position of those French nationals in the UK? In this situation, they would have to be confronted with the following statement: 'Either you will support one or other of the French leaders who stand for what we consider to be true France, or if you persist in supporting the traitor Laval and his crew, we shall treat you as an enemy alien and intern you forthwith.'

It is now known that Weygand, High Commissioner in North Africa since September 1940, was doing little more than reorganising French forces there. Despite his hatred of Nazism in general and Laval in particular, whom he compared to a dog 'rolling in the shit' of a German victory, he had no intention of siding with the Allies.<sup>255</sup> Yet there is little doubt that Laval, nursing his wounds in Paris, was talking with Abetz and Déat about the possibility of creating an alternative government to that of Pétain.

To be fair to the CFR, this scenario had already been discussed on 12 February 1941.<sup>256</sup> Outwardly the issue seemed fairly straightforward. The Laval government would duly be deemed hostile and its supporters in Britain interned as enemy aliens. The matter was confused by a series of hypotheses raised by both the Home and Foreign Office. Would the North African government immediately side with the Allies? Would it be recognised by HMG? Would the Germans even bother with a Laval government? Would they not merely place Vichy more directly under their control, and leave the unoccupied zone in place? In

any case, by this point would not Frenchmen have already been drafted into labour or military service in Britain?<sup>257</sup> Inevitably, such questions made the phrasing of any legislation to intern Frenchmen nigh impossible. When the Home Office put forward a draft clause providing for the arrest of anyone who ‘adhered openly to the Vichy Government’, French Welfare queried exactly whom it had in mind. The response was anybody ‘who, in the event of France being occupied by the enemy, adhered openly to the French authorities in enemy-occupied territory’.<sup>258</sup> Should this have ever become law, it is not difficult to believe that it would have been the source of endless wrangling.

It took events in Syria in summer 1941 for the Home Office to overcome its scruples. With British forces fighting the troops of General Dentz and Darlan promising air bases to Berlin, the possibility of war with Vichy seemed imminent, bringing the question of security into even greater relief. To meet this situation, a convoluted circular was hurriedly drafted for police authorities throughout the British isles.<sup>259</sup> Should HMG and Vichy find themselves at war, it explained, all French citizens would technically become enemy aliens, at least until a belligerent authority emerged in North Africa and was recognised as such by London. It was understood, however, that a great many French citizens in the UK would not adhere to a Vichy government in these circumstances, so no general internment was being proposed. Rather police authorities were requested to compile information on any French national who was ‘unreliable’ and likely to pose a security threat.

The replies to this circular, at least those that have survived, suggest that there were few fifth columnists at large among the French community. It is only a pity the London reports have not been preserved. Crudely speaking, the responses fall into three categories.<sup>260</sup> To begin with, there were those areas such as Dewsbury, Walsall, Kilmarnock, Inverness-shire and, maybe not surprisingly, the Orkney islands, where there were no French residents in the first place. Second, there were areas such as East Lothian, Reigate, South Shields, Middlesbrough, Belfast, Southampton and Worcester where there was only a sprinkling of French men and women, none of whom was regarded with suspicion. Typical was the reply of the senior officer at Eastbourne: ‘9 French residents in district: four males and 5 females. All are elderly and have resided here for many years. I have no reason to regard any of these persons with suspicion.’ The final category are cryptic in their reply, acknowledging that the circular had been

received and its contents noted. Significantly, these came from potentially sensitive areas where there was a relatively large French community, for instance Manchester and Staffordshire, close to where some of the sailors' camps had been based. Even then, such cryptic responses do not necessarily mean that colonists were fifth columnists, merely that the police were being prudent.

In the event, the fighting in the Middle East did not lead to a splintering of French authority, as Vichy experienced cold feet in supporting the German war effort and only provided half-hearted military assistance to Rommel; ultimately, Syria was conceded to the British. While the armistice Dentz signed with the British deeply angered the Free French, and destroyed the relationship between Spears and de Gaulle, it did not beg any further questions about the loyalty of *colons* in Britain. Berlin quickly abandoned any further collaborationist dealings with Vichy to concentrate on prosecuting the invasion of the USSR. When Hitler resumed his interest in France in April the following year, bringing Laval back to power, it was obvious to everyone the extent to which the marshal's government was now subject to German domination. The round-up of Jews and the deportation of French labour to Germany only confirmed France's status as a milch cow in the Nazi empire. As such, neither Vichy nor Pétain held any particular appeal to the *colons*, and the issue of internment faded from the picture.

### *Conscription*

While the question of internment might have faded, there remained that of conscription. This had been discussed in July 1940, but had been put to one side, partially because of the position of the Admiralty and the War Office, which had quickly put a ceiling on the number of French recruits they were prepared to accept, largely because these men were difficult to train and integrate into the ranks.<sup>261</sup> It was further appreciated that the Free French, not being a sovereign government, could not be given the authority to conscript in the same way that the Belgian, Norwegian, and Dutch authorities were doing. This would only play into de Gaulle's campaign to have himself recognised as a head of state. In any case, as the Home Office pointed out, it was not a crime for a Frenchman merely to adopt an indifferent attitude towards de Gaulle, or for that matter, towards the British. How then could such men be conscripted?

Despite these scruples, the issue dragged on. Those young men who had not enlisted for de Gaulle were seen as a drain on morale, and it

was asked why they should enjoy 'a more favoured position than either British or Allied subjects of similar age and health'.<sup>262</sup> While it was recognised that deportation was unfeasible in their respect, and there was an awareness that neither the War Office nor the Admiralty wanted any more French recruits, and that de Gaulle was not empowered to conscript, it was still felt that more effort could be made to enlist these men, possibly in the Transport and Supply Services or the Pioneer Corps.<sup>263</sup> It was further recommended that the Minister of Labour should 'make an order under his existing powers requiring the compulsory registration of all male Frenchmen between the ages of 18 and 65 in the same way as it is intended to require the compulsory registration of all Allied nationals in that age group',<sup>264</sup> so that they could be conscripted into employment. Any Frenchman who subsequently refused such employment or service with de Gaulle or the British would be liable to deportation, or at the very least, to internment should he be engaged in subversive activities.

This might have sounded a severe sanction, but was yet again a fudge. Not only did repatriation remain a virtual impossibility in 1941 (witness the problems with the French consular staff later that year), but few Frenchmen were likely to be caught engaging in subversive behaviour, especially given the way in which the colony remained a community apart. Nor was there government consensus over the issue. The Ministry of Labour feared Germany would exploit any gesture towards conscription for propaganda purposes.<sup>265</sup> After all, it was not until 1942 that Germany itself requisitioned French labour. It was also feared that conscription might provoke retaliation against British subjects in France.<sup>266</sup> Taking recourse in international law, the Foreign Office further objected that to conscript French labour forcibly was contrary to Article 11 of the Anglo-French Commercial Treaty of 1882.<sup>267</sup> Finally, doubts were raised about the exact numbers of Frenchmen who were at large, who were not registered and who were not employed in war work; in retrospect, it might be thought the absence of information was even more of a reason to press ahead with registration.<sup>268</sup>

It did not assist government deliberations that the FGB, and Carlton Gardens, thought the occasion of registration an excellent opportunity to press French Welfare and the Home Office yet again for a full list of the names, addresses and occupations of all Frenchmen in the UK.<sup>269</sup> These registrations, wrote Semet, 'sont une source d'informations précieuses'.<sup>270</sup>

Naturally enough, no such material was handed over,<sup>271</sup> yet the order for compulsory registration was eventually issued in May, with an amendment insisted upon by the Free French that stated that the preamble should make clear that the war effort was not purely a 'national' affair, but a 'common' and 'Allied' one. Thanks to the British government's intense desire to keep the registration files secret, or at least hidden from Carlton Gardens, it remains unknown how many Frenchmen were subsequently caught in the registration net; the impression is very few. Even fewer appear to have been drafted into war work.

*Postscript: nationality and restrictions*

Although the questions of internment and conscription pointed to a hard line on the part of Whitehall, it is known that Churchill had favoured granting British citizenship to those men and women who served either among de Gaulle's army or the British forces, in many ways a natural corollary to his earlier plans for an Anglo-French Union in June 1940.<sup>272</sup> To this end, various drafts of the necessary bill were discussed, but these encountered numerous hold-ups, several engineered by the Free French officials who feared they might lose their identity should they adopt citizenship. They further pointed out that the gesture was of little practical use as Vichy had not withdrawn the nationality of their recruits, only in the cases of prominent individuals such as Bois. Moreover, British nationality might well prove to be a danger to those Free French taken as prisoners of war. Given that the Dominions Office also had its reservations, fearing such moves would have to be extended to Commonwealth and imperial troops, it is perhaps no surprise that the matter came to naught. In any case, what was more important to French residents in Britain was not so much the possibility of a British passport, but the chance to be free of the Aliens Restrictions Order. It was this issue over which the FGB and Carlton Gardens would tirelessly campaign throughout 1941.

It was not until July 1942, when matters had quietened down on the French security front, that the Home Office, after some prompting from the Free French, agreed to the relaxation of the restrictions imposed on aliens.<sup>273</sup> These had led to some embarrassing incidents when first implemented in the summer of 1940, for instance a convent of French nuns was forcibly moved out of Norwich, the city being in a 'restricted zone', and had only been allowed back after Cardinal Hinsley vouched for their political impartiality.<sup>274</sup> In another case, a

French family had been removed from St Leonards-on-Sea to Bromley, despite having lived in England for thirty-three years.<sup>275</sup> In 1942, such obvious supporters of the Allied cause no longer had reason to fear such dislocation. Those individual French men and women who were deemed 'trustworthy and loyal supporters of the allied cause' could in future apply to their local police authority for the freedom of movement permitted to Allied nationals. Nevertheless, French residents were still classed in an inferior position to other nationals at war with Germany and could not visit certain coastal areas, especially in southern England, points which irked Carlton Gardens although, to the astonishment of the Foreign Office, they were never raised in negotiations.<sup>276</sup> It was not until after the D-Day landings in June 1944 that the government moved to end this anomaly.<sup>277</sup> Now that France was being liberated and Vichy was in a state of disintegration, there seemed no reason not to allow the French into what had previously been aliens-protected areas.<sup>278</sup> Additionally, the French were exempted from the curfew although, like other foreigners, they still had to record their movements and whereabouts with the police.

### Conclusions

The fact that the *colons* largely escaped the punitive restrictions that befell enemy aliens may be put down to a series of factors. While they had retained much of their indigenous culture, they were well integrated into British life and knew how to keep their heads down. As such, they did not become targets for public hostility, even during the fifth columnist scare of May-June 1940, and they no doubt benefited from the growing tendency of the British to associate all French men and women with de Gaulle. That the community was initially suspicious of the general can hardly be disputed. He was a rebel, an unknown, a seemingly dangerous element, who did not even enjoy the wholehearted support of the British. Given the way in which Vichy consular officials still operated in London, there were very genuine fears about relatives in France. Yet antagonism to de Gaulle did not necessarily equate with trust in Vichy. While many business elements in the London-based community initially registered some sympathy with Pétain, they still made plain their loyalty to Britain, and the overriding impression of the colony, despite internal quarrels, is that it was as law-abiding as in the past. The most potentially disloyal group, *les catholiques avant tout*, remained on the fringes, easily controlled both

by the British authorities and by Cardinal Hinsley. In any case, it was difficult to maintain much enthusiasm for Vichy after 1941. Just as in France itself, the *colons* began to dismantle Pétain mythology, and saw through Vichy's hypocrisy. Accordingly, they were not to be feared, and were treated leniently by government. While they might have grumbled about restrictions placed on their freedom of movement, unlike their compatriots on metropolitan soil they had no reason to fear a knock on the door in the middle of the night and were never subject to swingeing draconian legislation requiring them to work in a foreign country. While they might also have grumbled at the ways in which the Free French, and its supporters in the FGB, came to colonise London life, taking over independent French institutions in the process, they still retained an abiding faith in the Allied war effort, and gradually overcame their mistrust of the general himself. Anti-Gaullism would find its most articulate spokesmen in the ranks of political exiles and their British sympathisers. These prejudices would be transported back across the Channel in 1944; within London, the community reverted to its normal way of life.

### Notes

- 1 R. Cobb, *Promenades* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 58.
- 2 P. Villars, 'The French', in G. R. Sims (ed.), *Living London* (London, Cassell, 1901), vol. 2, p. 133.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 134.
- 4 A. Schom, *Emile Zola* (London, Queen Anne Press, 1987), p. 202.
- 5 M. Cornick, 'Distorting Mirrors. Problems of Anglo-French Perceptions in the *fin de siècle*', in C. Crossley and M. Cornick (eds), *Problems in French History. Essays in Honour of Douglas Johnson* (London, Palgrave, 2000), pp. 125–48.
- 6 See R. Graves, *Goodbye to all that* (London, Penguin, 1960 edn), pp. 26–62, for a commentary on their life.
- 7 *Census of England and Wales, 1931*, vol. 1, *Preliminary Report Including Tables of Population* (London, HMSO, 1931), p. 222. Also see H. Goiran, *Les Français à Londres. Etude Historique, 1544–1933* (Pornic, Edition de la Vague, 1933).
- 8 *Census of England and Wales, 1931*, vol. 1, p. 222.
- 9 These figures may be found principally in PRO HO 213 314, 828–30 and 2046–7.
- 10 Information supplied by Fraser Reavell who is in the process of writing a University of Reading Ph.D. thesis on 'French Exiles in Britain, 1870–1914'.

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- 12 *Census of England and Wales, 1931*, vol. 1, p. 179.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 222–8.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 158.
- 15 Quoted in J. White, *London in the Twentieth Century. A City and its People* (London, Viking, 2001), p. 105.
- 16 *Census of England and Wales, 1931*, vol. 1, pp. 179–221.
- 17 See K. Carpenter, 'London. Capital of the Emigration', in K. Carpenter and P. Mansel (eds), *The French Emigrés in Europe and the Struggle against Revolution, 1789–1814* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999), pp. 43–67, and her *Refugees of the French Revolution. Emigrés in London, 1789–1802* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999), pp. 49–61.
- 18 Cited in White, *London*, pp. 104–5. See, too, M. Henery, *An Exile in Soho* (London, Dent, 1952).
- 19 White, *London*, p. 105.
- 20 Goiran, *Les Français à Londres*, p. 221, stresses the importance of railways and steamboats in facilitating French emigration to south-east England.
- 21 *Census of England and Wales, 1931*, vol. 1, pp. 179–221.
- 22 PRO HO 213 314 42/1/58, 'Number of Aliens Registered with the Police on 25 May 1940.'
- 23 PRO HO 213 314 42/1/58, 'Number of Aliens Registered in UK on 31 March 1941'. Figures exclude refugees.
- 24 PRO HO 213 2046 300/70/3, 'Census of Aliens in the United Kingdom on 31 March 1942'. Figures exclude refugees.
- 25 PRO HO 213 2046 300/70/5, 'Census of Aliens Registered in the United Kingdom on 31st March 1943'. Refugees again excluded.
- 26 PRO HO 213 315 42/1/61, 'Tabular Statement for Period 1932–1941'.
- 27 White, *London*, p. 105.
- 28 IWM 97/7/1, Diary of Monsieur Vila.
- 29 PRO FO 371 28365 Z1753/123/17, 'Census of French Subjects over the Age of 16 Registered in the UK and NI on 6th February 1941'.
- 30 PRO FO 371 28365 Z1753/123/17, 'Detailed Figures of French Residents in Districts having 50 or more Residents'.
- 31 PRO HO 213 474 204/15/21, letter from Semet to Alexander Maxwell, Home Office, 15 July 1940, gives some background information on these figures.
- 32 CCC SPRS 1/154, letter of Guéritte to Spears, 10 April 1940.
- 33 PRO FO 371 24340 C8235/7328/17, Minute by F. A. Gwatkin, Ministry of Economic Warfare, 2 August 1940, and J.-L. Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France Libre de l'appel du 18 juin à la libération* (Paris, Flammarion, 1995), p. 77.
- 34 See P.-L. Bret, *Au feu des événements. Mémoires d'un journaliste Londres-Alger, 1929–1944* (Paris, Plon, 1959).

- 35 E. Delavenay, *Témoignage d'un village savoyard au village mondial, 1905–1991* (Aix-en-Provence, Diffusion Edisud, 1992).
- 36 G. Gombault, *Un journal, une aventure* (Paris, Gallimard, 1982).
- 37 P. Maillaud, *France* (London, Oxford University Press, 1942).
- 38 E. J. Bois, *Truth on the Tragedy of France* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1941).
- 39 PRO FO 371 28366 Z3263/123/17, letter of Roger Cambon to Strang, 31 March 1941.
- 40 PRO FO 1055 8, French Welfare, 'Report for 1942'.
- 41 IWM Touchard 63/34/1.
- 42 PRO FO 1055 11, note by Captain Williams, 10 January 1942.
- 43 PRO FO 1055 8, French Welfare, 'Report for 1941'.
- 44 PRO FO 1055 8, 'Paper A', 29 August 1940 prepared for the Welfare and Security Sub-Committee of French Welfare.
- 45 *Times Educational Supplement*, 15 June 1940.
- 46 CCC SPRS 1/140.
- 47 PRO HO 213 1724 200/271/1, letter of Newsam, HO, to W. R. D. Robertson, WO, 1 August 1940 gives details of this meeting.
- 48 Bret, *Au feu*, p. 172.
- 49 PRO HO 213 314 42/1/58, letter of Major Sir Ralph Glyn MP to Herbert Morrison, 20 May 1941.
- 50 PRO HO 213 314 42/1/58, letter of Herbert Morrison to Major Sir Ralph Glyn, 20 June 1941.
- 51 *The Times*, various editions of July/August 1940.
- 52 M-O FR Reports 523B, 541, 566, 1669Q and 2023.
- 53 Quoted in J. Lacouture, *The Rebel* (London, Harper Collins, 1986), p. 253.
- 54 S. Briggs, *The Home Front. War Years in Britain, 1939–1945* (London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975), p. 130.
- 55 PRO FO 371 28460 Z792/792/17, Memorandum of MI5 presented to CFR, 29 January 1941.
- 56 C. de Gaulle, *The Army of the Future* (London, Hutchinson, 1940).
- 57 *Listener*, 15 August, no. 605, p. 237.
- 58 PRO FO 371 28460 Z792/792/17, Memorandum of MI5 presented to CFR, 29 January 1941.
- 59 *Ibid.*
- 60 Delavenay, *Témoignage*, p. 181.
- 61 CCC NBKR 4/261, letter of Eden to Noel Baker, 1 October 1943.
- 62 PRO FO 371 24340 C8235/7328/17, Minute by F. A. Gwatkin, Ministry of Economic Warfare, 2 August 1940, accompanied by letter of the Spears Mission to Foreign Office, 17 August 1940, giving details of Sibour's enlistment.
- 63 Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France Libre*, p. 47. Léon Wilson remarks that de Gaulle was 'too French'. Interview with the author, London, 22 March 2002.

- 64 J. Jackson, *Charles de Gaulle* (London, Cardinal, 1990), p. 13.
- 65 CCC SPRS 1/134, letter of A. Oswald Hotz to Churchill, late July 1940.
- 66 *Ibid.*
- 67 Delavenay, *Témoignage*, p. 183.
- 68 *Ibid.*
- 69 PRO FO 371 28365, Report of French Welfare, 'The French Community in the United Kingdom', to the CFR, 5 February 1941.
- 70 PRO FO 371 28460 Z792/792/17, Memorandum of MI5 presented to CFR, 29 January 1941.
- 71 *Ibid.*
- 72 Delavenay, *Témoignage*, p. 181.
- 73 Y. Durand, *Vichy 1940–44* (Paris, Bordas Poche, 1972).
- 74 PRO FO 371 28460 Z792/792/17, Memorandum of MI5 presented to CFR, 29 January 1941.
- 75 Goiran, *Les Français à Londres*, p. 240, observes that this committee was originally set up on 4 December 1913 to bring some order to the many French societies in London.
- 76 PRO FO 371 28365, CFR, 'The French Community in the United Kingdom', 5 February 1941.
- 77 Formed out of the Club Culinair Français and the Société Culinair in 1932 to demonstrate the 'superiority' of French cooking. Goiran, *Les Français à Londres*, p. 229.
- 78 PRO FO 1055 2, 'Note of an interview with M de Bellaing, 15 August 1940, by Brennan'.
- 79 PRO FO 1055 2, 'Note of an interview with Dr Picarda on the 9th October 1940'.
- 80 PRO FO 371 24340 C8236/7328/17, note of French Department, Foreign Office, 5 August 1940.
- 81 PRO FO 1055 2, 'Note of an interview with Dr Picarda on the 9th October 1940'.
- 82 PRO FO 371 24340 C8236/7328/17, note of French Department, Foreign Office, 5 August 1940.
- 83 PRO FO 371 24341 C8756/7328/17, internal minute of Mack to Harvey, Foreign Office, 6 August 1940.
- 84 See the obituary of Bois in *FL*, vol. 2, no. 7, 24 May 1941, p. 85.
- 85 Quoted in A. Gillois, *Histoire secrète des français à Londres de 1940 à 1944* (Paris, Hachette, 1972), p. 52. See too Gombault, *Un journal, passim*.
- 86 Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France Libre*, pp. 192–5.
- 87 Gombault, *Un journal*, p. 37, who recalls that some families wrote to the editorial offices on a daily basis.
- 88 PRO FO 1055 2, Sandford, Ministry of Information, to Brennan, 17 October 1940.
- 89 LSE DALTON 7/3, Memorandum of 28 January 1942.

- 90 PRO FO 371 24345, 'The Daily Newspaper *France*, 13 November 1940'.
- 91 PRO FO 371 24345 C12846/7328/17, letter of Baron Albert de Dorlodot, Belgium Embassy, to Lt. Manuel, Carlton Gardens, 15 November 1940.
- 92 PRO FO 371 24345 C12846/7328/17, letter of Law to Morton, 10 December 1940.
- 93 R. Mengin, *No Laurels for de Gaulle* (London, Michael Joseph, 1967), p. 144.
- 94 See Delevaney, *Témoignage* p. 195, and R. Cassin, *Les Hommes partis de rien* (Paris, Plon, 1975).
- 95 It was in the aeroplane to Britain on 18 June 1940 that de Gaulle himself was introduced to English food when he tasted that liquid 'the British call both tea and coffee'. E. Spears, *Assignment to Catastrophe* (London, William Heinemann, 1954), vol. 2, p. 323.
- 96 PRO FO 371 24345 C12846/7328/17, Minute of 9 December 1940.
- 97 According to Charles Gombault, de Gaulle was keen that André Rabache, *Le Matin's* Rome correspondent, should join the editorial staff. See Gombault, *Un journal*, p. 31.
- 98 PRO FO 371 31924 Z34/34/17, note by Nigel Law, Ministry of Information, 31 December 1941.
- 99 PRO FO 371 36056 Z4476/371/17, Memorandum of 6 April 1943.
- 100 PRO FO 1055 2, letter from Miss Parkinson, Secretary to the Resident Foreigners Committee, British Council, to Brennan, French Welfare, 2 September 1940.
- 101 PRO FO 1055 2, letter of Brennan to Parkinson, 3 September 1940.
- 102 PRO 1055 2, letter of Brennan to Nigel Law, French Division, Ministry of Information, 17 October 1940.
- 103 PRO FO 1055 2, Sandford, Ministry of Information, to Brennan, 17 October 1940.
- 104 PRO FO 1055 2, 'Note of an interview with Dr Picarda on the 9th October 1940'.
- 105 PRO FO 371 24340 C8236/7328/17, note by Hankey, 9 October 1940.
- 106 PRO FO 371 24340 C8236/7328/17, Minute of Mack to Harvey, Foreign Office, 6 August 1940.
- 107 PRO FO 371 24341 C8867/7328/17, letter of D. F—, to Foreign Office, 20 August 1940, one letter among many.
- 108 PRO FO 371 24341 C8867/7328/17, note by Hankey, 9 October 1940.
- 109 PRO FO 28365, Report of French Welfare, 'The French Community in the United Kingdom', to the CFR, 5 February 1941.
- 110 PRO FO 371 24341 C8756/7328/17, letter of R. A. Butler, Foreign Office, to Sir Thomas Moore, 5 September 1940.
- 111 CCC SPRS 1/136, Memorandum, 15 August 1940.
- 112 CCC SPRS 1/136, Memorandum, 21 July 1940.
- 113 PRO FO 371 24343 C10514/7328/17, letter of Nigel Law, Ministry of Information, to W. H. B. Mack, Foreign Office, 3 October 1940.

- 114 *Ibid.*
- 115 PRO FO 371 24343 C10514/7328/17, note of Mack, 29 September 1940.
- 116 PRO FO 371 24343 C10514/7328/17, letter of Law to Mack, 3 October 1940.
- 117 *NS & N*, 26 July 1941, no. 544, p. 94.
- 118 Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France Libre*, p. 191, and *FL*, vol. 1, no. 1, 15 November 1940, pp. 93–5.
- 119 IWM Touchard 63/34/1.
- 120 Many are collected together as J. Oberlé, *Images anglaises ou 'L'Angleterre occupée'* (London, Hachette, 1943). See, too, *FL*, vol. 2, no. 10, 15 August 1941, pp. 355–8.
- 121 J. Jackson, 'General de Gaulle and his Enemies. Anti-Gaullism in France since 1940', in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, vol. IX, 1999, p. 47.
- 122 All of Aron's contributions are reprinted in R. Aron, *Chroniques de guerre. La France Libre, 1940–1945* (Paris, Gallimard, 1990).
- 123 PRO FO 371 32001 Z2971/2971/17, contains the copy, plus relevant correspondence.
- 124 PRO FO 371 28365, Report of French Welfare, 'The French Community in the United Kingdom', to the CFR, 5 February 1941.
- 125 *Ibid.*
- 126 *Ibid.*
- 127 PRO HO 213 1744 204/15/6, Les Français de Grande Bretagne, 'Historique de l'Association, 19 September 1940'.
- 128 PRO HO 213 474 204/15/1, letter of Semet to Sir Alexander Maxwell, 15 July 1940.
- 129 PRO HO 213 474 204/15/1, *Projet des statuts*.
- 130 *Ibid.*
- 131 PRO HO 213 474 204/15/1, note of 15 July 1940 on Association.
- 132 PRO HO 213 1744 204/15/6, recruitment letter for the FGB, no date (July/August 1940?).
- 133 *Ibid.*
- 134 PRO HO 213 1744 204/15/6, Les Français de Grande Bretagne, 'Historique de l'Association, 19 September 1940'.
- 135 PRO HO 213 1744 204/15/6, letter of Passy to Guéritte, 11 September 1940.
- 136 PRO HO 213 1744 204/15/6, letter of Pierre Fontaine to Guéritte, 14 September 1940.
- 137 CCC NBKR 4/261, FGB pamphlet, 'Pour la Resurrection de la France'.
- 138 Copy of the letter supplied to the author by Professor Martin Alexander.
- 139 PRO FO 371 28459 Z8173/709/17, letter of Bessborough to Mack, 16 October 1941.
- 140 PRO HO 213 1744 204/15/6, Sullivan, Spears Mission, to Williamson, HO, 21 October 1940.

- 141 PRO FO 371 31990 Z897/231/17, note of 27 January 1942.
- 142 PRO FO 371 28365, Report of French Welfare, 'The French Community in the United Kingdom', to the CFR, 5 February 1941.
- 143 PRO FO 371 24359 C9172/7736/17, letter of Maurice Vignon, vice president of the Société de Bienfaisance, to Brennan, French Welfare, 23 August 1940.
- 144 PRO FO 371 28459 Z709/17, note of 14 January 1941. On the history of the Chamber, see Goiran, *Les Français à Londres*, pp. 232–6.
- 145 PRO HO 213 1744 204/15/6, *Les Français de Grande Bretagne*, 'Historique de l'Association, 19 September 1940'.
- 146 PRO FO 371 28365, Report of French Welfare, 'The French Community in the United Kingdom', to the CFR, 5 February 1941.
- 147 PRO FO 371 28443 Z3055/411/17, 'Alliance Française in England and Free French Cultural Propaganda', 19 April 1941.
- 148 Goiran, *Les Français à Londres*, pp. 238–9 for a history of the Institut.
- 149 PRO FO 371 28472, Memorandum on the Institut Français, 18 December 1941.
- 150 *Ibid.*
- 151 Mengin, *No Laurels, passim*.
- 152 PRO FO 371 28472, Minute by Speaight, 20 December 1941.
- 153 RUL The Astor Papers.
- 154 PRO FO 371 24345 C12621/7328/17, letter of Law to Morton, 10 December 1940.
- 155 PRO FO 371 28367 Z6153/123/17, Minute by W. H. B. Mack, 17 July 1941.
- 156 PRO FO 371 28459 Z8173/709/17, letter of Bessborough to Mack, 16 October 1941.
- 157 PRO FO 371 28459 Z7482/709/17, note by Mack, 26 August 1941.
- 158 *Ibid.*
- 159 PRO HO 213 1744 204/15/6, *Les Français de Grande Bretagne*, 'Historique de l'Association, 19 September 1940'.
- 160 PRO HO 213 1744 204/15/6, War Cabinet Committee on Foreign (Allied) Resistance, Corrigenda to Record of the Fifty-Ninth Meeting, Wednesday, 2 October 1940.
- 161 PRO HO 213 1744 204/15/6, letter of P. O. Lapie, Chef du Service des Relations Extérieures et Coloniales, FFF, to Colonel S. A. Hibbert, 1 October 1940.
- 162 PRO FO 371 28365 Z1205/123/17, Extract from the Minutes of a Meeting of the CFR, 27 January 1941.
- 163 PRO FO 1055 8, letter of Miss Davies, Home Office, 15 March 1941.
- 164 PRO FO 371 28365 Z1205/123/17, letter of Cooper, Home Office, to Secretary of the Committee on Foreign (Allied) Resistance, 25 January 1941.

- 165 PRO FO 1055 8, letter of E. M. Cooper, Home Office, 24 February 1941.
- 166 PRO HO 213 1744 204/15/6, letter of Morton to Newsam, Home Office, 4 October 1940.
- 167 PRO HO 213 1744 204/15/6, War Cabinet Committee on Foreign (Allied) Resistance, Corrigenda to Record of the Fifty-Ninth Meeting, Wednesday, 2 October 1940.
- 168 PRO FO 1055 5, Newsletter of the AVF, 15 February 1941.
- 169 *Ibid.*
- 170 PRO FO 1055 5, 'Report of the General Committee for the Year Ended September 30th 1943 (AVF)'.
- 171 *Ibid.*, and PRO FO 1055 5, *They Fight On*, AVF brochure of 30 October 1941, p. 4.
- 172 PRO FO 1055 5, letter of Ivor Spencer Churchill to Vere, 4 September 1941.
- 173 PRO FO 1055 5, letter of H. Randall Lane, legal officer, British Council, to Captain Williams, French Welfare, 29 February 1944.
- 174 PRO FO 1055 5, 'Report of the General Committee for the Year Ended September 30th 1943 (AVF)'.
- 175 PRO FO 1055 5, AVF Newsletter, August 1944.
- 176 PRO FO 1055 5, AVF Newsletter, January 1945.
- 177 CCC SPRS 1/134, contains the relevant correspondence.
- 178 PRO FO 371 41912 Z6969/129/17, 'Memorandum on AVF by Lord Bessborough, 17th October 1944'.
- 179 *Ibid.*
- 180 CCC SPRS 1/135, 'Report on Senior French Naval Personnel at Blackpool', no date.
- 181 PRO FO 1055 1, 'Memorandum of visits paid to French camps in the Neighbourhood of Liverpool, 5 September 1940'.
- 182 CCC SPRS 1/134, letter of Morton to Spears, 24 July 1940.
- 183 T. Torrès, *Une française libre. Journal, 1939–45* (Paris, Phébus, 2000), p. 80.
- 184 On this legislation, see W. D. Halls, *Politics, Society and Christianity in Vichy France* (Oxford, Berg, 1995).
- 185 *L'Osservatore Romano*, 8 July 1940.
- 186 PRO FO 371 24344 C11619/7328/17, telegram of High Commissioner to Canada, 4 November 1940.
- 187 Carpenter, *Refugees*, p. 157.
- 188 See R. Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981).
- 189 G. White, 'The Fall of France', in *Studies in Church History*, 20, 1983, p. 438.
- 190 *NS & N*, 5 October 1940, p. 326.
- 191 See especially T. Moloney, *Westminster, Whitehall and the Vatican. The*

- Role of Cardinal Hinsley, 1935–1943* (Tunbridge Wells, Burns & Oates, 1983); O. Chadwick, *Britain and the Vatican during the Second World War* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982); White, 'Fall of France'; S. Mews, 'The Sword of the Spirit: A Catholic Cultural Crusade of 1940', *Studies in Church History*, 20, 1983, pp. 409–30; J. Keating, 'British Catholics and the Fall of France', in F. Tallett and N. Atkin (eds), *Catholicism in Britain and France since 1789* (London, Hambledon, 1996), pp. 27–42; and her 'Roman Catholics, Christian Democracy and the British Labour Movement, 1910–1960', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Manchester, 1992.
- 192 On Maritain, see especially B. Williams Smith, *Jacques Maritain. Anti Modern or Ultra Modern?* (New York/Oxford, Elsevier, 1986).
- 193 Moloney, *Westminster, Whitehall and the Vatican*, p. 176.
- 194 PRO FO 371 28358 Z2200/95/17, letter of Oliver Harvey, Ministry of Information, to Strang, Foreign Office, 20 March 1941, and letter of John Pollock to Major Hamilton, 14 March 1941.
- 195 PRO FO 371 24341 C8949/7328/17, letter of Bernanos to Sir George Knox, 11 July 1940.
- 196 PRO FO 371 36056 Z7063/371/17, 'Notes of a Meeting in the Minister's Room, 16 June, 1943, to Discuss Question of the French Press'.
- 197 F.-L. Closon, *Le Temps des passions* (Paris, Presses de la Cité, 1974), p. 29.
- 198 *FL*, vol. 2, no. 11, 15 September 1941, pp. 400–6.
- 199 J. Rochelle, 'Epreuve du catholicisme français', *FL*, vol. 3, no. 18, 17 April 1942, pp. 490–7.
- 200 *Westminster Cathedral Chronicle and Diocesan Gazette*, vol. XXXIV, August 1940, no. 8, p. 153.
- 201 PRO FO 371 24360 C13565/7736/17, Minutes of the CFR, 23 August 1940.
- 202 Goiran, *Les français à Londres*, p. 224, in which he remarks that the Church was 'gardienne de nos traditions et un centre de ralliement et de cohésion national'.
- 203 Torrès, *Une française libre*, p. 84.
- 204 WDA Bo 1/92, letter of Father L— to Cardinal Hinsley, 28 August 1940.
- 205 PRO FO 371 28470 Z1159/17, letter from Edward Muir, Ministry of Works and Buildings, to French Department, Foreign Office, 17 February 1941.
- 206 PRO FO 371 28470 Z1159/17, letter of Speaight to Muir, 28 February 1941.
- 207 Torrès, *Une française libre*, p. 165.
- 208 CCC NBKR 4/259, 'Memorandum on the Activities of Undesirables Still at Large in England', no date.
- 209 PRO FO 371 28470 Z1159/17, Minute by Hankey, 27 February 1941.

- 210 Interview with Léon Wilson, 22 March 2002, London.
- 211 PRO FO 371 24344 C11414/7328/17, letter intercepted on 10 September 1940.
- 212 PRO FO 371 24344 C11414/7328/17, note of 23 October 1940.
- 213 PRO FO 371 24344 C11414/7328/17, letter of Morton to Speaight, 24 October 1940.
- 214 PRO FO 1055 1, letter of Grace Peel to Oliver Harvey, Ministry of Information, 9 August 1940.
- 215 PRO FO 371 24360 C7763/17, letter of Castellane to Makins, FO, 10 July 1940.
- 216 G. Blond, *L'Angleterre en guerre. Récit d'un marin* (Paris, Grasset, 1941), p. 166.
- 217 PRO FO 1055 1, letter of Father M— to Lady Peel, September 1940.
- 218 PRO FO 1055 1, letter of Grace Peel to Aidan Baillie, 20 September 1940.
- 219 M. Larkin, *Religion, Politics and Preferment in France since 1890. La Belle Epoque and its Legacy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 176.
- 220 B. Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939–1945* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 83, and for much that follows in this paragraph, as well as M. Kochan, *Britain's Internees in the Second World War* (London, Macmillan, 1983), p. 18.
- 221 PRO HO 213 1724 200/271/1, letter of Newsam, HO, to W. R. D. Robertson, WO, 1 August 1940.
- 222 PRO HO 213 1724 200/271/1, letter of Newsam, HO, to Major Morton, 22 September 1940.
- 223 PRO HO 213 1724 200/271/1, letter of Morton to Newsam, HO, 24 September 1940.
- 224 *Ibid.*
- 225 PRO HO 213 1724 200/271/1, handwritten note from Clayton to Newsam, HO, 4 October 1940.
- 226 PRO FO 371 28365 Z508/123/17, letter of Speaight, 1 February 1941.
- 227 MO TC25 Box 1 25/1/E, letter of Strong & Co Solicitors to Home Office, 27 July 1940.
- 228 PRO FO 371 28365 Z774/123/17, CFR, 18 January 1941.
- 229 PRO FO 371 28365 Z862/123/17, letter of Spears to Mack, 8 February 1941.
- 230 PRO FO 371 28365 Z862/123/17, Minute of 8 February 1941.
- 231 PRO FO 371 28365 Z1621/121/17, letter of Chartier to the Foreign Office, 3 March 1941.
- 232 PRO FO 371 28365 Z1621/121/17, letter of Speaight to Cooper, 15 March 1941.
- 233 PRO FO 371 28366 Z2541/123/17, letter from H. R. Hotchkiss, Home Office, to Speaight, 31 March 1941.

- 234 PRO FO 371 28367 Z6740/123/17, recommendation of the Lindley Committee.
- 235 Cases in PRO FO 371 31990 Z3342/231/17.
- 236 PRO FO 371 28365 Z1003/123/17, letter of 7 January 1941.
- 237 PRO HO 214 39, Case of Robert Frank, 19 November 1941.
- 238 PRO FO 371 28366 Z2549/123/17, letter of Cooper to Hankey, 3 April 1941.
- 239 PRO HO 214 39, Case of Pierre Henri Frank, 19 November 1941.
- 240 PRO FO 371 24346 C12952/7328/17, contains all the correspondence.
- 241 PRO FO 371 28367 Z6766/123/17, press cutting.
- 242 PRO FO 371 28367 Z6481/123/17, letter of Nicole to Griggs, 3 July 1941.
- 243 PRO FO 371 28367 Z6766/123/17, letter from British consulate, Tangier, 29 July 1941.
- 244 PRO FO 371 28368, press cutting.
- 245 PRO FO 371 28365 Z346/123/17, note of 13 January 1941.
- 246 PRO FO 371 28365 Z1501/123/17, draft letter to Miss Warner, British Red Cross, March 1941.
- 247 PRO FO 371 28366 Z2038/123/17, various correspondence, March 1941.
- 248 PRO FO 371 28367 Z6766/123/17, note, 15 August 1941.
- 249 PRO FO 371 28367 Z5014/123/17, note, 11 June 1941.
- 250 PRO FO 371 28368 Z7320/123/17, telegram from Sir Samuel Hoare, Madrid, 22 August 1941.
- 251 PRO FO 371 28365 Z822/123/17, CFR, Memorandum by Major-General Spears, 28 January 1941.
- 252 PRO FO 371 28365, Report of French Welfare, 'The French Community in the United Kingdom', to the CFR, 5 February 1941.
- 253 PRO FO 371 28365 Z1205/123/7, CFR Sub-Committee on Welfare and Security, 7 February 1941.
- 254 PRO FO 1055 8, letter of Major le Mesurier to Brennan, Foreign Office, 25 February 1941.
- 255 There remains no satisfactory biography of Weygand; the best guide to his policy remains R. O. Paxton, *Parades and Politics at Vichy. The French Officer Corps under Marshal Pétain* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966) and P. C. F. Bankwitz, *Maxime Weygand and Civil-Military Relations in Modern France* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1967).
- 256 PRO FO 371 28365 Z1205/123/17, CFR Sub-Committee on Welfare and Security, 12 February 1941.
- 257 PRO FO 1055 8, various correspondence rehearses these possibilities.
- 258 PRO FO 1055 8, letter of French Welfare to Davies, HO, 3 March 1941.
- 259 PRO HO 213 1724 200/271/5, Newsam to Chief Constables, 5 June 1941.
- 260 PRO HO 213 1724 200/271/5, contains the many replies.
- 261 PRO FO 371 28365 Z1205/123/17, Minutes of the CFR Sub-Committee on Welfare and Security, 12 February 1941.

- 262 PRO FO 371 28365 Z822/123/17, Report of the Sub-Committee on Welfare and Security to the CFR, 13 February 1941.
- 263 PRO FO 371 28365 Z1726/123/17, 'Frenchmen in the UK', report by the Chairman of the CFR Sub-Committee on Welfare and Security, 26 February 1941.
- 264 PRO FO 371 28365 Z822/123/17, 'The French Community in the United Kingdom', report to the CFR, 18 February 1941.
- 265 PRO FO 371 28365 Z1726/123/17, letter of Butler, Foreign Office, to Viscount Swinton, 11 March 1941.
- 266 PRO FO 371 28365 Z1988/123/17, extracts from minutes of the 29th meeting of HD(S) Executive held 12 March 1941, 'Frenchmen in the UK'.
- 267 PRO FO 371 28365 Z1726/123/17, Minutes, 11 March 1941.
- 268 PRO FO 371 28366 Z4298/123/17, Minutes of the 36th meeting of the HD(S) Executive, 21 May 1941.
- 269 PRO FO 371 28366 Z3780/123/17, letter of Cassin to Major Watson, Spears Mission, 7 May 1941.
- 270 PRO FO 371 28367 Z5020/123/17, letter from Semet to Captain Williams, French Welfare, 10 June 1941.
- 271 PRO FO 371 28367 Z5020/123/17, draft letter of Hankey, FO, to Captain Williams, FO, '20 June 1941 – job of not giving over names given over to the Ministry of Labour'.
- 272 PRO FO 371 24339 C7903/7328/17, contains correspondence on this matter.
- 273 PRO HO 213 2097, 'Exemption of French and Danish Nationals from certain of the restrictions upon aliens', 14 July 1942.
- 274 CCC SPRS 1/134, letter to Newsam of 17 July 1940, in which the Cardinal's office made known that the Free French had offered to help the nuns so long as they adhered to the general.
- 275 CCC SPRS 1/137, letter of 8 July 1940.
- 276 PRO HO 213 2098 411/3/16, letter of Mack, Foreign Office, to Newsam, HO, 11 August 1944.
- 277 PRO HO 213 2098 411/3/16, 'Aliens Restriction on Allied nationals: The French', 22 August 1944.
- 278 PRO HO 213 2098 411/3/16, press cuttings from *The Times*, *Western Mail*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mirror*, *Evening News*, *Manchester Guardian*, all of 24 August 1944.