



Papon: confronting his accusers in a cold rage



Bousquet: a bargain the Nazis did not honor

Cogs in the Wheel of Genocide?

The prosecution of former Vichy officials reopens historic wounds in France

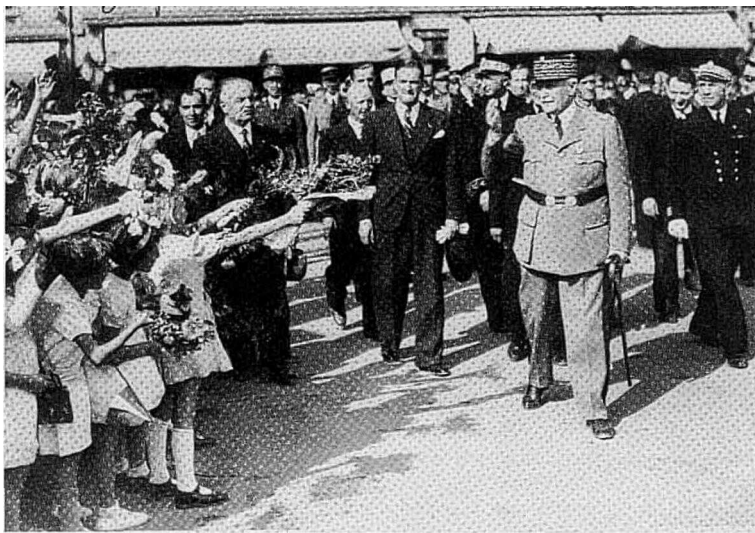
By MARGOT HORNBLOWER PARIS

White-haired, straight-backed, the Legion of Honor rosette in his lapel. Maurice Papon stood in a Paris court last week demanding justice and a halt to "calumnies" and "moral terrorism." Nearly eight years had passed since the distinguished *haut fonctionnaire*, a former Budget Minister, was first indicted for crimes against humanity, specifically French Jews to Nazi death camps. Now, at 80, he was publicly confronting his accusers in a cold rage. Their goal, he charged, was "to smear France by associating it with Nazi Germany as co-author of the genocide. Through me," he went on, "the honor of France is at stake."

The criminal case against Papon is in legal limbo—as are the indictments of two other former officials of France's Vichy government, the wartime regime that collaborated with the Nazis. But weary of waiting any longer for a verdict—and fearful, he said, of dying under a cloud—Papon has embarked on a new, high-profile defense strategy: a libel suit against *Le Nouvel*

Observateur. In a cover story last June titled "These French Accomplices of Genocide," the magazine examined Papon's tenure as secretary-general of the Gironde prefecture between 1942 and 1944, when 1,690 Bordeaux Jews were shipped to death camps. Asserting that Papon was in charge of the prefecture's "Jewish Affairs Bureau"—a statement Papon denies—the magazine asked, "Should the old ghosts of collaborationist France be awakened?" •

A half-century after the Nazi occupation.



Bousquet, carrying hat and gloves, with Vichy's Marshal Henri Petain, circa 1942
For decades, the extent of collaboration was suppressed for the sake of unity.

that question is plaguing France. In July 1987 a Lyons court condemned Lyons Gestapo chief Klaus Barbie, a German, to life in prison. Now the country is struggling with a more sensitive issue: whether to prosecute the French officials who helped deport 75,721 Jews during the Holocaust. Those functionaries were servants of the regime based in Vichy that administered France following the Germans' 1940 victory. "Vichy could easily have said no to the Final Solution," says attorney Serge Klarsfeld. The renowned Nazi hunter. "The Germans didn't have the manpower to do it alone." In the end, 4 out of 5 of France's deported Jews were arrested not by Germans but by French police and were held in French concentration camps before deportation.

The extent of collaboration was deliberately suppressed for decades in the interest of unifying a divided nation. In 1956 officials censored a scene showing a French policeman guarding Jews in the Alain Resnais documentary *Night and Fog*. It was not until 1983 that French textbooks acknowledged the Vichy role in the deportations. Even now, ambivalence persists. In October the Justice Ministry, apparently acting on orders from President Francois Mitterrand, tried to derail a court case against a former secretary-general of the Vichy police, Rene Bousquet, 81. "There are other means besides a trial to denounce the cowardice of the Vichy regime," argued Deputy Justice Minister Georges Kiejman. "Beyond the necessary fight against forgetting, it could be important to preserve civil peace."

Mitterrand, 74, served in the Vichy government, albeit as a minor functionary, and later joined the Resistance. Other French politicians have relatives who were collaborators. Many simply share the desire not to rattle old skeletons. In 1971 President Georges Pompidou pardoned Paul Touvier, the Lyons militia's intelligence chief, who had been sentenced to death for war crimes. When a public outcry ensued, Pompidou countered, "Hasn't the time come for us to draw the curtain, to forget the time when the French were killing each other?" The relatives of Jews whom