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# Communism, French Patriotism, and Soviet Legitimacy in France: Social Trajectories and Nationalism (1945-1954)<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The following contribution analyzes the specific spaces for the legitimization of the defense of the “Soviet model” in France. To do so, rather than examining the policies of the Communist Party itself (often analyzed by French historiography), the paper approaches a vast set of organizational networks that have been commonly known as “transmission belts” of communism in France. Thus, the paper presents a universe of situations, individual trajectories, and associative frameworks that are deployed in defense of the Soviet Union, from 1945 until 1954. In all these different areas and situations the paper points out instances of an intense militancy. As a result, there was a non-contradictory overlap between French patriotism, nationalism and the justification of Soviet hegemony in the context of the communization of Eastern Europe and of the Cold War.

**Keywords:** French nationalism, Stalinist legitimacy, filo-Soviet activism, trajectories

## *Introduction*

Various academic publications have highlighted the political legitimacy that the French Communist Party (FCP) enjoyed in the initial context after the Liberation (1944) and the beginning of the Fourth Republic (1946).

<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to Olivier Dard, Daniel Levine, Alain Chatriot and Chelsea Stieber for his comments. Be assured I also appreciate the suggestions and comments made by HCE evaluating team.

Self-proclaimed as a “great resistance party”, that was supposed to have lost “75,000 people to executions” during the German occupation, the FCP obtained a patriotic legitimacy that was reinforced by various intellectual and partisan implantation strategies in French society<sup>2</sup>. The Kominform’s creation in 1947 in the USSR by Andrey Zhdanov, which was intended to be used to accentuate the Sovietization of local communisms of Europe, including the Italian and French ones, did not affect the propaganda that showcased the FCP as defender of “French interests”.

With resounding electoral successes, being a part of various governments starting in 1944, until it went into an opposition that would exercise some degree of ferocity starting in late 1947, the FCP used a political and cultural repertoire which reiterated certain objectives and patriotic goals. This patriotism went through different stages (for example, the denunciation of the international politics of the United States as “American imperialism”, opposition to German rearmament, the implacable rejection of the European defense cooperation treaty, etc.) Without a doubt, it has one single defining common element: there was no French patriotism possible if the interests of the Soviet Union were not defended. In other words: defeding positions contrary to the Soviet ones meant, in the communist speech of the time, radically opposing “real” French interests.

This paper aims to understand the patriotic legitimacy claimed in the discourse of the FCP, legitimacy which reproduced topics already widely present in French nationalism<sup>3</sup>. To do so, rather than focusing on the party itself, we will move towards other enclaves of militancy linked to French communism. Such enclaves, which have been less investigated in comparison to FCP, were defined, first and foremost, by being located in non-partisan associative plans of action, seeking, from this position, to justify to the French public opinion of the mid-20th century the imperative need for cooperation between such country and the USSR. In the associative networks in question, which also

<sup>2</sup> René RÉMOND, *Notre siècle*, Paris: Fayard, 1988, p. 36; Stéphane COURTOIS, Marc LAZAR, *Histoire du Parti communiste français*, Paris: PUF, 2000 (1995), pp. 225- 226, 230, 252; Serge WOLIKOW, Antony TODOROV, “L’expansion européenne d’après-guerre”, in Michel DREYFUS, Bruno GROppo, Claudio INGERFLOM, Roland LEW, Claude PENNETIER, Bernard PUDAL, Serge WOLIKOW (eds.), *Le siècle des communismes*, Paris: Seuil, 2004 (2000), p. 327; Michel DREYFUS, Bruno GROppo, “Les Partis communistes français et italien”, in Michel DREYFUS, Bruno GROppo, Claudio INGERFLOM, Roland LEW, Claude PENNETIER, Bernard PUDAL, Serge WOLIKOW (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 429; Marie-Cécile BOUJU, *Lire en communiste. Les Maisons d’édition du Parti communiste français (1920-1968)*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010, p. 199-200.

<sup>3</sup> René REMOND, *op. cit.*, p. 411; Stéphane COURTOIS, Marc LAZAR, *op. cit.*, p. 285; Claude PENNETIER, Bernard PUDAL, “Du Parti bolchevik au Parti stalinien”, in Michel DREYFUS, Bruno GROppo, Claudio INGERFLOM, Roland LEW, Claude PENNETIER, Bernard PUDAL, Serge WOLIKOW (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 508; François FURET, *Le passé d’une illusion*, Paris: Robert Lafont/ Calmann-Lévy, 1995, pp. 444- 445.

had adherents which did not need to be affiliated to the party to express a fierce devotion towards the communist regime, the repertoires that were used were defined by a marked intellectual sensibility, which allowed the recruitment of writers, intellectuals of all kinds, and even religious figures that did not have working class and communist trajectories.

In this way, we have organized this article in three major areas. The first one will be devoted to the organizational and intellectual vectors of the aforementioned militancy, focusing on the France-USSR association and the *Action* publication. The second will focus on the *Kravchenko affaire*, a cause in the struggle of French communism of the era. Finally, we will deal with two individual trajectories which, being both Catholic in origin, actively participated in such filo-Soviet enclaves: the Jesuit priest Jean Boulrier and Catholic writer Pierre Debray.

As we see, in these pages we will explore the outer edges of concrete partisan action. We believe that this intellectual exercise is absolutely revealing, since the peripheral position of the areas addressed in relation to a dominant and central partisan structure (FCP) does not imply that the chosen associative actors have been irrelevant in intellectual and political terms within the strategy of such a structure. On the contrary, the vectors, situations and trajectories that we present here allow us to understand how the French nationalist elements which were promoters of Stalinist legitimacy were, alongside others elements, central in pro-Soviet and communist strategies in French political life at the time.

#### *Intellectual and associative vectors of the filo-communist cause*

The shifting of the focus from a political party to non-partisan associative dynamics rooted in civil society helps us understand not only the supposed divorce between party and social movements, but more importantly to notice the communication channels between them<sup>4</sup>. The case we are dealing with is, in this sense, very revealing. The associative and intellectual frameworks that we discuss below are masterful examples of the cultural extension and implantation of communism in post-war France. France-USSR, an association that did have a monthly publication with the same name, and the *Action* magazine, strictly linked to the ideals of the resistance, may be part of what has been called “the long arm” or “transmission belts” of the French communist party<sup>5</sup>. Here we

<sup>4</sup> Michel OFFERLE, *Sociologie de la vie politique française*, Paris: La Découverte, 2004; Hélène COMBES, *Faire parti. Trajectoires de gauche au Mexique*, Paris: Karthala, 2011; Frédéric SAWICKI, *Les réseaux du Parti socialiste. Sociologie d'un milieu partisan*, Paris: Belin, 1997; Julien FRETTEL, “Quand les catholiques vont au parti. De la constitution d’une illusion paradoxale et du passage chez les « militants » de l’UDF”, in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, numéro 155, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Roland BIARD, *Dictionnaire de l'extrême gauche. De 1945 à nos jours*, Paris: Belfond, 1978, p. 18.

find both leaders of the FCP and their “fellow travelers”. This last denomination is useful, because it refers to active adherents who generally had intellectual roles and were not affiliated with the party structure but shared communist ideas and contributed decisively to their dissemination.

It is precisely in these associative media that a set of representations and speeches circulated which supposed an intimate relation between Soviet justification and the defense of “French interests”. There you can see how the communist framework of action, following in the footsteps of the nation-state and its national institutions, sought to expand, quantitatively and qualitatively, adherence in civil society and public opinion<sup>6</sup>.

### *France-USSR: the Soviet model and French patriotism*

The magazine France-USSR was created after the liberation, appearing first in October 1944. Their staff drew members from various political, trade unions and cultural institutions. We can single out among the ranks of its first national committee personalities such as the writer François Mauriac, from the Académie française, Frédéric Jolliot-Curie, from the College of France, Pierre Cot, radical socialist member of parliament, Benoist Frachon from the General Labor Confederation (GLT), Jean Cassou, from the Polytechnic, Pierre Villon and Jacques Debu-Bridel, from the National Front<sup>7</sup>. As we can see, such personalities came from the ranks of the Resistance, and, in some cases, from specific resistance networks, such as the National Front, which connected to communist resistance. Its steering committee had as members, among others, Camille Pailleret and Fernand Grenier, the latter being a member of the FCP, with a leading role in this association.

Grenier had already been at the head of the Friends of the Soviet Union, which preceded France-USSR before the occupation. Between 1944 and the mid-1950s, the Stalinization of French communism was reaching an apogee. However, we could already see how the model of Stalin’s Russia was being supported in the publication *Russie d’aujourd’hui* of the 1930s. The journal is completely in consonance with Stalinist interests. At that time, it proceeded to denounce any possible anti-Sovietism<sup>8</sup>. As political situations developed

<sup>6</sup> As regard to cultural and associative paths connected to communist legacy, see: Axel BRODIEZ, *Le secours populaire français 1945- 2000. Du communisme à l’humanitaire*, Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2006; Sylvain PATTIEU, *Tourisme et travail. De l’éducation populaire au secteur marchand (1945- 1985)*, Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2009; Pierre-André TAGUIEFF, *Les contre-réactionnaires. Le progressisme entre illusion et imposture*, Paris: Denoël, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel VIRIEUX, “Le Front national et la recomposition des droites à la Libération”, in Gilles RICHARD et Jacqueline SAINCLIVIER (eds.), *La Recomposition des droites en France à la Libération 1944- 1948*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2004, pp. 85- 97.

<sup>8</sup> “De l’avènement d’Hitler aux caresses d’Herriot”, *Russie d’aujourd’hui*, organe mensuel des Amis de l’URSS, avril 1933.

both within France and in international relations, this led to the need to identify enemies to be unmasked. If in 1936 the new Soviet constitution was greeted as the triumph of democracy<sup>9</sup>, in those same years criticism was aimed furiously at Jacques Doriot, “head of the anti-Soviet crusade”<sup>10</sup>, against the members of la Cagoule, organization which was part of a transnational plot, and against Hitle-rian Trotskyists, who had wanted to dismantle the Soviet Union<sup>11</sup>.

*France-USSR* was fully in line with the defense of the Soviet Union in the world – a symbol of this was, for example, their upcoming tribute to the “glorious Red Army”<sup>12</sup>. To achieve this, the association had to move at the cultural, scientific and associative level, which promoted a substantive exchange with the Soviet Union, with the goal of achieving close cooperation between the two countries.

More specifically, France-USSR declared itself outside of political groups, and called on all the French people to maintain French-Russian friendship<sup>13</sup>. It was a stimulus for the creation of a vast association network where conferences would be held, films would be screened, artistic galas would be organized, dances and outdoor parties, trying to promote a social atmosphere favorable to the Soviet Union<sup>14</sup>. Thus, it would be turning into an interest group that would act to shape public opinion, justifying, from a non-partisan position, not only the decisions of the FCP, but especially the political line laid down by the Kremlin at the international level.

Consistently with that line, Maurice Thorez, secretary general of the FCP, stated in 1949 that, in case of an international war the French people would not declare war on the Soviet Union<sup>15</sup>, this appeal, made in terms of “French patriotism”, formed part of the associative framework we analyzed. This was an open door for all the “French patriots” interested in cooperation between the two countries<sup>16</sup>. Indeed, the possibility of a new war context would deepen the filo-Soviet activism, supporting both a strong condemnation of the “anti-Soviet” campaigns and the defense of peace. For this reason, Marc Poulton, responsible for the Paris section, argued that “France’s enemies, enemies of Peace, by orchestrating anti-Soviet campaigns, are looking to create an atmosphere of

<sup>9</sup> “La nouvelle constitution soviétique ou le triomphe de la démocratie”, *Russie d’aujourd’hui*, organe mensuel des Amis de l’URSS, avril 1936.

<sup>10</sup> Henri LE BRUN, “Menaces sur l’Europe”, *Russie d’aujourd’hui*, organe mensuel des Amis de l’URSS, août 1936.

<sup>11</sup> Bertrand GAUTHIER, “Des cagoulards au procès de Moscou”, *Russie d’aujourd’hui*, organe mensuel des Amis de l’URSS, avril 1938.

<sup>12</sup> “France-URSS”, *France-URSS*, numéro 1, octobre 1944.

<sup>13</sup> *France-URSS*, numéro 2, novembre 1944.

<sup>14</sup> Marc POULTON, “Après le IIe Congrès National”, *France-URSS*. Bulletin d’information réservé aux secrétaires et animateurs des Comités locaux et d’entreprises, numéro 3, mai 1946.

<sup>15</sup> René REMOND, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

<sup>16</sup> Fernand GRENIER, “Faisons le point”, *France-URSS*. Bulletin intérieur réservé aux animateurs des comités départementaux et locaux, numéro 4, mai 1945.

trouble, of mistrust, of anxiety between the two groups”<sup>17</sup>. According to this speech, there had to be a reaction against “anti-French clamor of an anti-Soviet orientation”<sup>18</sup>. He argued that attacking the USSR, and possibly promoting a military confrontation with it, involved a betrayal of French interests themselves.

The “non-partisan” nature of this publication did not in any way prevent the extensive use of hagiographical stories extolling Stalin, who was presented as model of a revolutionary biography for *France-USSR* and political figures beloved to the Soviet people<sup>19</sup>. For this reason, the association members were actively enlisted in the fight against “Contemptible Kravchenko”, behind whom were all the enemies of France<sup>20</sup>, also denouncing the anti-Sovietism of David Rousset and Raymond Aron<sup>21</sup>.

The militant work done in such social media would then fall in line with propaganda and recruitment patterns that would try to extend the support for the French-Soviet cause<sup>22</sup>. This also took the form of trips to the socialist bloc that would allow improved integration for new leaders<sup>23</sup>. This type of travel, which already existed in the previous decade in French communism, sought to generate a “vivid image”, real and spontaneous (therefore legitimate) of everyday Soviet life and of Stalin’s government. This was also the case, as we will see later on, with Pierre Debray.

The communist regime represented a set of ideals and models of social organization that France should imitate. The role of women in Soviet public life, family relations, and the progress in technology and production made by the country thus far were among the most ardently highlighted topics. Knowing this reality was supposed to reduce the hostility that some important parts of French public opinion held towards the Soviet Union. Most importantly, such knowledge should persuade public opinion of the advantages that French-Soviet cooperation had for France. But also, support for such cooperation and seeing the USSR as a model should also help defend the broader geopolitical policies pursued by Stalin and his government<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> “Les ennemies de la France, les ennemies de la Paix cherchent, en orchestrant les champagnes antisoviétiques, à créer entre les deux peuples une atmosphère de trouble, de méfiance, d’inquiétude”, Marc POULTON, “Après le IIe Congrès National”, *France-URSS*. Bulletin d’information réservé aux secrétaires et animateurs des Comités locaux et d’entreprises, numéro 3, mai 1946.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> Jean FREVILLE, “Pourquoi le peuple soviétique aime Staline?”, *France-URSS*, numéro 47, juillet 1949.

<sup>20</sup> “Les antisoviétiques contre la France. Le procès Kravchenko”, *France-URSS*, numéro 43, mars 1949.

<sup>21</sup> “David Rousset a la parole”, *France-URSS*, numéro 55, mars 1950; “M. Farfelu écrit au Figaro”, *France-URSS*, numéro 79, mars 1952.

<sup>22</sup> “Entente avec l’URSS pour la Paix”, *Combattre pour l’Amitié Franco-soviétique et pour la Paix*. Bulletin intérieur de l’Association France-URSS, numéro 35, mai 1951.

<sup>23</sup> Fernand GRENIER, *Au pays de Staline*, Paris: Editions Sociales, 1950.

<sup>24</sup> “Notre point de vue. Pour faire face au péril : un programme d’intérêt national”, *France-URSS*, numéro 97, octobre 1953.

His death, which was covered in a special issue in the magazine, where he was shown as a benefactor of humanity and supportive of the French people<sup>25</sup>, did nothing to take away from the Stalinist characteristics of a non-partisan organization. The militancy of France-USSR was focused on a set of symbols and interests anchored in the French nationalism of that time. A battle raged around the rejection of nascent European supranational institutions. Specifically, the project of a European Defense Community (EDC), supported by the United States in an effort to create a military circle to strengthen West Germany to counteract the influence of the socialist bloc, was attacked aggressively within the ranks of those we studied. When such a project was rejected in 1954 by the National Assembly, a statement published in the pages of the magazine remarked that France had sidestepped a great danger: the Europe that the agreement hoped to shape presupposed German rearmament<sup>26</sup>, a possibility strongly attacked by French nationalism of the time<sup>27</sup>.

The deliberate mix of national values with communist culture helped to promote public perception of Germany as continuing to be a great enemy. In these same years, the FCP also commissioned work to celebrate some of France's most notable icons, for example Joan of Arc, who was placed alongside the heroes in Communist discourse. Thus, "This morning at 9:30 (at the Pyramides metro stop), a commemoration of the two heroines who died for national independence: Joan of Arc and Danielle Casanova"<sup>28</sup>.

### *"Action": resistance and the Peace Movement*

The publication *Action*, first published in 1944, was an intellectual passageway traveled by communist figures and "fellow travelers" alike<sup>29</sup>. Born in the heat of the resistance, its beginnings were marked by the vocation of claiming a political program for France after Liberation. Some of the figures in the magazine or the writers that we can find there are Roger Vailland (director), Pierre Courtade (editor in chief), Pierre Hervé, Claude Roy, and Vercors, among others.

<sup>25</sup> "Staline est mort", *France-URSS*, numéro spécial, avril 1953.

<sup>26</sup> *France-URSS*, numéro 109, octobre 1954.

<sup>27</sup> Humberto CUCCHETTI, "Combat souverainiste et militantisme royaliste en France : un espace de recréation de trajectoires et réseaux militants d'Action française?", *Journées d'études Histoire & Science politique: L'Europe et ses opposants. Vingt ans d'engagement souverainiste et alter-européen en France (1992-2012)*, Paris: 30 mai -1 juin 2012.

<sup>28</sup> "Ce matin à 9 h 30 (rendez-vous métro Pyramides) Commémoration des deux héroïnes tombées pour l'indépendance nationale: Jeanne d'Arc et Danielle Casanova", *L'Humanité*, numéro 293, 9 mai 1954.

<sup>29</sup> See also: Frédérique MATONTI, *Intellectuels communistes. Essai sur l'obéissance politique. La Nouvelle Critique (1967-1980)*, Paris: La Découverte, 2005; Sudhir HAZAREESINGH, *Intellectuals and the French Communist Party: disillusion and decline*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.



For the historian Jeannine Verdès-Leroux, “this newspaper highlights particularly well the practices of the communist leadership in regards to the press, and the way in which its agents agreed to let themselves be take advantage of, or were used to take advantage of others, in order to “serve” it”<sup>30</sup>. Although it enjoyed a variety of sources of support, growing financial problems made *Action* depend increasingly on direct support from the FCP to survive, which led to the party deciding to shut it down in May 1952<sup>31</sup>.

The heterogeneous character of its origins did not mean that *Action* was divorced from the proclaimed public values of the FCP. Indeed, some of their writers belonged to its intellectual universe and in their writings maintained a close consistency with the objectives outlined by the party organization. Historian Olivier Dard, in his book *La synarchie*<sup>32</sup>, analyzes how communism in the mid-1940s tried to explain some of the problems France had by claiming the existence of a “synarchism plot”. One of the campaigns, following Dard’s analysis, was initiated by *Action* during 1944-45. In it, Pierre Hervé named as elements of this ‘synarchy’: “anti-Soviet Vatican diplomacy synarchism”, “intrigues of the reactionary Anglo-Saxons” and “attempts to form a Catholic-Socialist block” behind General Charles de Gaulle<sup>33</sup>. In this way, adds Dard, the denunciation of this (alleged) synarchism was back then a type of discourse common to collaborators (attacking Jews, Freemasons and Protestants) and to the members of the resistance (“unmasking” reactionaries, Fascists and Vatican partisans)<sup>34</sup>. In any case, we assume that we have a reason to believe that this is a simplistic speech, and, in addition, effective when intended to produce political action in the framework of the nation state, trying to appeal to nationalistic feelings (or their patriotic counterparts) in order to claim (alleged) internal betrayal.

In a France which was undergoing political reorganization, and in the midst of the tensions existing between the FCP and Gaullism, *Action* insisted on the need to build institutions that emanate from the ranks of the resistance<sup>35</sup>. Within the framework of the memory of resistance, it had to carry out to the very last the purge of all collaborators<sup>36</sup>, the radical rejection of *maurassianism*<sup>37</sup>, also denouncing the attitude of the members of the Catholic Church which,

<sup>30</sup> “[...] Ce journal met particulièrement bien en évidence les pratiques de la direction communiste vis-à-vis de la presse, et la manière dont ses agent acceptent de se laisser dépouiller ou servent à en dépouiller d’autres pour le « servir »”, Jeannine VERDES-LEROUX, *Au service du Paris. Le parti communiste, les intellectuels et la culture (1944- 1956)*, Paris: Fayard, 1983, p. 197.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 198.

<sup>32</sup> Olivier DARD, *La Synarchie. Le mythe du complot permanent*, Paris: Perrin, 1998, pp. 142- 145.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 144.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 147.

<sup>35</sup> « Renouveau de la démocratie », *Action*, Hebdomadaire de l’indépendance française, numéro 28, 16 mars 1945.

<sup>36</sup> « Les revenants », *Action*, numéro 33, 20 avril 1945 ; Victor LEDUC, « L’épuration trahie », *Action*, numéro 128, 14 février 1947.

<sup>37</sup> Julien BENDA, « Le maurassisme », *Action*, numéro 28, 16 mars 1945.

having supported the Vichy regime, continued to insist on an organic union with the dominant classes<sup>38</sup>.

But the discussion of national problems did not exclude an awareness of the dimensions of international politics. The communist leader Laurent Casanova could treat the conflict between Moscow and Tito from the decisive angle of the national question. For Casanova, the attack by the Yugoslav communist leaders against the other national communist parties, meant a chauvinistic attitude on their part in trying to invent a “black plot” orchestrated against Yugoslavia from the outside<sup>39</sup>. Worse still, Tito’s ‘conspirationism’ could result in itself in a possible plot, and in betraying real revolutionary policies, considering that “this shift of Yugoslavian leaders to positions of bourgeois nationalism could mean... Yugoslavia’s subservience to American imperialist designs”<sup>40</sup>.

From this perspective, the 1939-1945 period had been the ultimate expression of a “national treason”, treason repeated right at that time, in 1948, when there was an attempt to rehabilitate “the sacrilege committed by the traitor Pétain”. The working class, however, educated by Marx and Stalin, had always known that the real choice during the German occupation was to focus on the fight against the invaders<sup>41</sup>. This meant adhering to a patriotic cause propped by the interests of the proletariat. Far from bourgeois nationalism and the Yugoslav counterexample, “the French working class, taught this lesson by the Communist party, especially thanks to the tenacious effort made by Maurice Thorez, reckoned that, for its part, the time would come when it would be elevated to the rank of national ruling class, as in the Soviet Union”<sup>42</sup>.

With the argument of protecting a “fatherland in danger”<sup>43</sup>, the Peace Movement, whose activities found in *Action* a critical axis of intellectual, political and religious propaganda, was conceived between 1948-1949. After its European debut<sup>44</sup>, the launch of the movement in France took as a starting point the “National Convention on Peace and Liberty”, in November 1948. This meant the creation of networks of adherents focused on emphatic opposition

<sup>38</sup> Victor LEDUC, « Le faux évangile », *Action*, numéro 82, 29 mars 1946.

<sup>39</sup> Laurent CASANOVA, « Nationalisme bourgeois et patriotisme prolétarien », *Action*, numéro 203, du 18 au 24 août 1948.

<sup>40</sup> “[...] Ce passage des dirigeants yougoslaves sur les positions du nationalisme bourgeois peut signifier...l’asservissement de la Yougoslavie aux desseins nourris par l’impérialisme américain”, *Ibidem*.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>42</sup> “[...] La classe ouvrière de France, instruite de cette leçon par le Parti Communiste — et singulièrement, grâce à l’effort tenace de Maurice Thorez— considère pour sa part que les temps viennent qui la verront s’ériger en classe nationalement dirigeante, comme en Union Soviétique”, *Ibidem*. It must be emphasized that Casanova was to be expelled because of his dissociation from Thorez’s political line.

<sup>43</sup> Jean GUIGNEBERT, « La Patrie en danger », *Action*, numéro 216, du 17 au 23 novembre 1948.

<sup>44</sup> Stéphane COURTOIS, Marc LAZAR, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

to a conflict of war in relation to a possible war with the Soviet Union. According to the weekly magazine, there were 18,000 delegates at the first meeting. Speakers there looked to historical and patriotic consciousness to remember how, once again, the betrayal of the fatherland had led in the past to a betrayal of the Republic. The hawkishness of some actors in French political life necessarily implied, for the actors in question, a new betrayal of French interests<sup>45</sup>.

Our narrative ends in 1949, the moment when the FCP took control of the magazine, which faced problems in terms of economic survival. In those years, Yves Farge, who was on the ascent, was named director, and on the magazine's board we find "fellow travelers" such as Emmanuel d'Astier de la Viegèrie, Jean Cassou, André Mandouze, Pierre Hervé, Vercors, Martin-Chauffier. Defending pacifist positions was probably the main activity for *Action*. In that, it received the support of new adherents, including Jesuit Jean Boulter and Catholic writer Pierre Debray.

#### *A "combat" situation: The Kravchenko affaire*

Before considering these two individual trajectories, we are going to deal with a situation to which both *France-USSR* and *Action* (among other publications that contributed to the communist cause) devoted their attention. This situation, given very much importance in France at that time, found in the newspaper *Les Lettres françaises* (*The French Letters*) one of its protagonists. Actually, the protagonists were the vast French filo communist universe and the support for the Soviet cause.

In April 1944, Victor Kravchenko, engineer and Soviet official who was on an official mission in the United States, left his country's delegation, requesting political asylum. A few days later, he gave an interview in the *New York Times* where he provided the reasons for his decision and, in 1946, published *I Chose Freedom*, a novel that condemned the crimes of Stalinism, the concentration camps created during collectivization, and the absence of any freedoms in the Soviet Union. In 1947, this book was published in French under the title of *J'ai choisi la liberté* and within a few months, the communist publication *Les Lettres Françaises* reproduced an article under the signature of Sim Thomas, a possibly fictitious character, indicating that Kravchenko was not the author of the book, which left the door open for an infinite range of conjectures about the links between the "alleged" author and Menshevik personalities residing in the United States. Kravchenko decided to sue the publication in question, a trial that took place in 1949 in France<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> Yves FARGE, « Pour trahir la France ils trahissent la République », *Action*, numéro 218, du 1er au 7 décembre 1948.

<sup>46</sup> Nina BERBEROVA, *L'Affaire Kravchenko*, Arles: Actes Sud, 1990; Liora ISRAËL, "Un procès du Goulag au temps du Goulag? L'affaire Kravchenko (1949)", in *Critique internationale*,

Quickly reviewing the list of French personalities at the trial involved with *Les Lettres Françaises*, we can mention Claude Morgan and André Wurmser, (both representing the magazine in question, defendants in the lawsuit brought by Kravchenko), Joë Nordmann, defense lawyer for the magazine, to which we can add a considerable list of witness: the aforementioned Louis Martin-Chauffier, Catholic writer, Fernand Grenier, member of parliament and important leader of France-USSR, Pierre Debray, a journalist for *Témoignage chrétien*, Pierre Courtade, writer, Vercors, also writer, Emmanuel d'Astier of La Vigerie, leader of a political party close to the FCP, founder and director of the daily *Libération*, Jean Baby, history professor, Jean Pérus, Russian literature professor, Maurice Lampe, interned in a concentration camp during the war and a member of the publication which was being sued, Colonel Marquié, General Petit, both from the military, and a politician, Roger Garaudy, FCP member of parliament and intellectual, Jean Cassou, writer linked to France-USSR, as well as Yves Farge and Pierre Cot. Some common features stand out looking at this list: all these were people who had been part of various networks of the Resistance. Many of these (Grenier, Courtade, Vercors, Baby, Garaudy, among others) were members of the FCP, or even political figures holding public office. It should be pointed out that such a membership reinforced the equal sign being put between resistance and communism, claimed by the French communists themselves. But we can add a third feature, which is impossible to ignore: the way in which the above-mentioned actors operated, even when some of them acted as party representatives, was rooted in an associative militancy that appeared as non-partisan. That is to mean that it claimed a means of operation appearing as independent of the interference of the political parties, which in this case also meant freedom from interference by the FCP – a public claim which could barely hide the links and hierarchical relationship between associative networks and the FCP<sup>47</sup>.

Reviewing the features of the trial, we can see a wide range of attacks targeted at Kravchenko<sup>48</sup>, and we can specify who made this or that accusation. Indeed, the basic interpretation of the *Lettres Françaises* that gave rise to the dispute, was that Kravchenko was not the author of the final published work. But it was not only an authorship problem. There was also a broad and detailed objection to the attitudes of the supposed author: he was a traitor (Wurmser,

2007/3, no. 36, Presses de Sciences Po, pp. 85- 101; Etienne JAUDEL, *L'aveuglement. L'affaire Kravchenko*, Paris: Michel Houdiard, 2003. As to the impacts in the United States, see: John V. FLEMING, *The Anti-Communist Manifestos: Four Books That Shaped The Cold War*, New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2009.

<sup>47</sup> Joe Nordmann's records are presently available. It is also possible to refer to Pierre Daix's account, Daix being editor-in-chief in *Les Lettres française*; Pierre DAIX, *J'ai cru au matin*, Paris: Laffont, 1976; *Tout mon temps: révisions de ma mémoire*, Paris: Le grand livre du mois, 2001: *Les Lettres françaises: jalons pour l'histoire d'un journal, 1941-1972*, Paris: Tallandier, 2004.

<sup>48</sup> Liora ISRAËL, *op. cit.*, pp. 88, 92- 93.

Grenier, Morgan, Lampe, Cassou), an impostor (Baby), his opinions published in 1944 could have driven a wedge between the allies (Wurmser, D'Astier of the Vigerie), his book was in the spirit of Vichy (Vercors), reason for which his attitude could be equated to the behavior displayed before the war by eminent contributors such as Marcel Déat and Jacques Doriot (Wurmser, Grenier, Garaudy). To these views one could also add certain opinions expressed by military people, according to whom Kravchenko's fleeing the Soviet delegation made him liable to charges of desertion (General Petit), by virtue of which he should be extradited and put on trial in the Soviet Union. Getting back to the issue of authorship, some witnesses insisted that the writing in the book revealed the existence of an English-speaking and non-Russian author (Baby, Perus, North American journalist Albert Kahn). It was also suggested that the defector was also a secret service agent of the United States, or was linked to them (Nordmann), if not actively involved reactionary or even pro-Nazi circles in that country (Kahn, or the deposition made by General Roudenko of the Red Army). If more proof was required, one could also condemn the involvement of American finances in this whole affair, visible in the editorial that promoted the book (D'Astier), and in the actions of those same Anglo-Saxon economic forces that had earlier supported Hitler and lined up at that time behind *I chose freedom* (Kahn)<sup>49</sup>. These were presented as reasons why Kravchenko was heavily involved in the campaigns that sought a new international war, in this case against the Soviet Union (Courtade, Kahn).

All these political and economic connotations were finally accompanied by accusations of low moral qualities against the author. The Russian witnesses for the defense, in fact, sought to denigrate him as a bad worker, inefficient, a drunkard, and selfish with his own family; a controversy broke out in this regard before the testimony by one of his former wives, Zinaïda Gorlova<sup>50</sup>. Moral accusations were also a constant in the stories put out by the French communists, who noted the pornographic features of the book and the way women were treated (Debray, Nordmann, Baby).

All of this leads us to think that, in fact, this was less a simple judicial process than a cultural (and political) battle waged around the Soviet State and its repressive features. As the sociologist Liora Israël states, the importance of this trial lies in the early emergence of a set of controversies linked to concentration camps and the Soviet Goulag<sup>51</sup>. Also at play here, however, were a variety of events in French politics during the years of the war. Georges Izard, a socialist lawyer, former member of the Resistance, critic of communism and in charge of Kravchenko's defense, also used the event to question the either the attitude

<sup>49</sup> *Le procès Kravchenko*. Compte rendu sténographique, I-II, Paris: Albin Michel, 1949.

<sup>50</sup> *Le procès Kravchenko I*, *op. cit.*, pp. 464- 484; "J'ai aimé cet homme et je l'ai épousé. C'est la plus grande faute de ma vie". S'est écriée Zinaïda ex-Kravchenko", *Action*. Pour la paix et la liberté, no 228, 10-16 février 1949.

<sup>51</sup> Liora ISRAËL, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

of the FCP, or that of some of its leaders in the period of the occupation. There were two major objections: the first concerned the Nazi-Soviet pact and the attitudes of the French communists (in some cases negotiating, during the period of validity of the covenant, the possibility of publishing *L'Humanité* in occupied France). The second revolved around the Thorez's departure to the Soviet Union when the occupation was in full swing, which, according to Izard, raised questions about the possible deserter status of the secretary-general<sup>52</sup>.

But we would like to point out, before the end of this section, a feature that was present at the trial, and which is linked to the nationalist representations circulated therein. Izard himself remarked how the communism of that time made use of the epithet 'patriot' to the point of intent of appropriating this term to describe itself<sup>53</sup>— Kravchenko's lawyer intended to point out the inconsistencies in the *patriotism* of the French communists. During the trial, several of them made a strong appeal to such patriotic values. Morgan saw in the book involved in the trial maneuvers that were anti-France; Morgan himself, when asked about his political convictions, stated that his adherence to communism originated in the fact that he "loved France"<sup>54</sup>. On the other hand, the trial against "Kravchenko the deserter" represented, for General Petit, an indictment against the members of the Resistance in France<sup>55</sup>, against those who had liberated the country. The publication under indictment, according to Morgan once again, not only intended to defend culture and peace (the latter, with clearly filo-Soviet connotations for those years) but also the defense of national independence. That is why it was absurd, the lawyer Nordmann pointed out, that a foreigner, speaking of the accuser, would be in the courts of France to teach lessons in patriotism to French people, and ultimately dare give lessons to the French nation itself<sup>56</sup>.

This specific event showed the capacity for associative mobilization of French Communist and filo-Soviet networks. They applied the resources which they had - for example, the ability to provide Ukrainian or Russian witnesses that could discredit the author of the book in question, the role of the Soviet embassy in such efforts, the possibility of having present a high ranking officer (Roudenko). Rather than the FCP itself, the actors in the struggle were leaders and intellectuals whose relevance became more visible in associative and cultural communist spaces rather than in their own partisan structure (again, even if many of the witnesses were communist members and in some cases holding parliamentary functions).

Leaving aside the party allows us to concentrate on other political areas, focusing on the individuals involved.

<sup>52</sup> *Le procès Kravchenko I, op. cit.*, pp. 51, 112.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 52.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 65.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 633.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 59.

*Trajectories in the Communist universe between Catholicism and the defense of French interests: "fellow travelers"*

Who among the protagonists took either explicitly communist, or filo-Soviet stances? Who, even without being affiliated to the FCP, supported its decisions without question?

These "fellow travelers" were many, and played very important roles. We will focus here on two of them, who were less talked in the history of communism in France. The first had a fundamental role in the development of the Peace Movement. The second came on the scene after the Kravchenko affair and was an important element in the Catholic legitimization of the Soviet Union as seen from France.

*Jean Boulier: a priest, from belonging to the 'French Action' to communism*

In the third part of his book *Un paradoxe français*, the historian Simon Epstein discusses how old anti-Semites and nationalists joined the Resistance. Some of them never abandoned their extreme right beliefs, lending, years later, for example, their support to French Algeria to extremes. Others, having joined in the past the 'French action' (*Action française*) or having been influenced by Maurras, starting with the occupation and post-war, steered towards various filo-communist circles. Among others in this group we can mention François Mauriac, Jacques Debû-Bridel, André Rousseaux, Louis Martin-Chauffier, Claude Morgan and Claude Roy. Epstein claims, speaking of these two, that "they parted ways in 1937 (one, Morgan, became a communist, while the other, Roy, had just joined *Je suis partout*/ I Am Everywhere), but rejoined in 1943. Both would leave the Communist party in 1956, after having confirmed that former Maurrassians make good resistance fighters, but also for a time, excellent Stalinists"<sup>57</sup>. It is certain that their belonging to the Maurrasian group has biographical specificity for each of these cases (different forms of adhesion, also different chronologies in relation to the monarchist adhesion, the manner in which they broke with the group and embraced *progressivism*, etc.). We may be allowed to believe that, after all, that the nationalism of the 'French Action' could turn into postwar progressive positions.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> "[...] sont en décalé en 1937 (l'un [Morgan] devient communiste quand l'autre [Roy] entre à *Je suis partout*) mais se rejoignent en 1943. Les deux quitteront le Parti communiste en 1956, après avoir confirmé, l'un comme l'autre, que les anciens maurrassiens font de bons résistants mais aussi, pour un temps, d'excellents stalinien", Simon EPSTEIN, *op. cit.*, pp. 525- 526.

<sup>58</sup> As regard to trajectories in Vichy government after the Liberation, a case example is Maurice Bouvier-Ajam, Steven KAPLAN, "Un laboratoire de la doctrine corporatiste sous le régime de Vichy: l'Institut d'Etudes Corporatives et Sociales", In *Le Mouvement social*, La découverte, 2001/2, no 195, Presses de Sciences Po, pp. 35-77. About Vichy government corporatism and European construction, see Antonin COHEN, *De Vichy à la Communauté européenne*,

The case of Jesuit Jean Boulier is unique and, at the same time, a case study in how Catholicism, communism and nationalism can form a trilateral relationship. Born in Paris in 1894, and having a “republican childhood” in Boulogne-Sur-Mer<sup>59</sup>, Jean Boulier found in monarchism and certain counter-revolutionary readings a way to consolidate his interest in politics. He learned much from Maurras, “He was the one who taught me once again about the State and National interest (...) He vaccinated me one and for all against the Democratic-Christian fever”<sup>60</sup>. At the same time, counter-revolutionary thought prepared him intellectually in the the field of social Catholicism. In this way, he joined the royalist cause.

In his autobiography, Boulier tries to clarify his rapport with the ‘French action’ and the sections of King’s Camelots (*Camelots du Roi*) in which he himself came to participate. He continued even after the First World War under the influence of the thought of Maurras<sup>61</sup>, but even under those circumstances, Boulier realized the impossibility of founding an international right under the narrow banners of Maurrasian nationalism. Shortly before the pontifical condemnation of 1926, he turned into a fierce critic of Maurras and a Catholic who militated against the “harmful effects” of the militancy founded in the latter’s doctrine.

The center of gravity of the Catholic presence in the world was going to become social action, which had to overcome the attraction inspired by the Camelots’ violence among the ranks of the Catholic movement. Thus, while Belgium he contributed to the creation of the Christian Workers Youth, founded by father Joseph Cardijn, not without experiencing conflicts with the Church hierarchy for such participation. In the context of the German occupation, Boulier joined the Resistance (as he himself said in September 1940<sup>62</sup>). Following the liberation, and occupying a role at the Institut Catholique in Paris, he began to activate in French pacifist networks.

In 1949, Boulier publishes *Un prêtre prend position*, where he justifies his decision to adhere to spaces and positions linked with the FCP and Soviet policy. This made him a favorite target of attacks by a set of Catholic publications and the radical right. More to the point, his commitment in the late 1940s was related, according to his testimony, to combatting the dictatorship that the Maurrasian press had exercised over the church for forty years<sup>63</sup>. His

Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2012; Alain CHATRIOT, “L’idée de « communauté », ou une des sources méconnues intellectuelles de la construction européenne”, in *Cahiers Jaurès*, Société d’études jaurésiennes, (in press).

<sup>59</sup> Jean BOULIER, *J’étais un prêtre rouge*, Paris: Editions de l’Athanor, 1977.

<sup>60</sup> “[...] C’est lui qui me réapprit l’Etat et la raison d’Etat (...) Il me vaccina définitivement contre tout accès de fièvre démocratico-chrétienne”, *Ibidem*, p. 36.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 38.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 136.

<sup>63</sup> Jean BOULIER, *Un prêtre prend position*, Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 1949.



participation in various peace conferences (Rome, Warsaw, Wrocław) caused him in those years to lose his professorship at the Institut catholique.

As a part of the integrational Catholicism of the 20th century, studied by the sociologist Emile Poulat<sup>64</sup>, the Boulier case illustrates how a Catholic commitment had to be legitimized in the public space (whether politically, socially, or associatively). In his case, there was no clash between being a Christian and a modern citizen. Even if modern civilization transformed overnight into a socialist one, he committed to work on the socialist agenda<sup>65</sup>. If there was a limit, however, this was in bourgeois society: “For a Christian, the only truly authentic Godless man is he who worships money”<sup>66</sup>— a criticism of money could also be found in Maurras and in general in the reactionary literature focused on the opposition between liberalism-antiliberalism.

Its justification in the post-liberation context was founded in the fact that, in public debates at that time, if Trotskyism took root with its idea of a permanent revolution, Stalinism on the other hand offered the possibility of thinking a peaceful solution to international conflicts through the idea of communism in just one country<sup>67</sup>. For this reason, we see Boulier having an important role both in *Action* and the Peace Movement<sup>68</sup>.

Ecclesiastical pressures influenced his departure from the movement. Further, the conflicts in *Action*, as well as the communist pressure, led to this publication being shut down. According to Boulier, communism was trying to define its functioning as transmission belts around such pacifist associations. The Peace Movement was supposed to constitute a simple *élargissement*, “A kind of magma, diluted by the weakest of supporters, which would follow the party around”<sup>69</sup>. However, from his point of view, *Action* contributed a “true political formation”, going away from the “enlargement” policy which the priest in question opposed<sup>70</sup>.

His commitment to the communists did not result in his ‘losing himself’ into the FCP: the actor in question did not acquiesce to this<sup>71</sup>. But over time, he tried hard to hold on to his hope in a convergence between Marxism and Christianity, for which both had to get rid of their respective ballast<sup>72</sup>. Again, came to choose a political-religious option in which Catholicism was the center of orientation for his decisions: “I have taken, I take my place in this

<sup>64</sup> Emile POULAT, *Eglise contre la bourgeoisie, Introduction au devenir du catholicisme actuel*, Paris: Casterman, 1977.

<sup>65</sup> Jean BOULIER, *Un prêtre prend...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 66- 67.

<sup>66</sup> “Pour un chrétien le seul sans-Dieu vraiment authentique c’est l’adorateur de l’argent”, *Ibidem*.

<sup>67</sup> Jean BOULIER, *J’étais...*, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

<sup>68</sup> *Assises nationales de la paix et la liberté*, Paris, 27- 28 novembre 1948.

<sup>69</sup> “[...] une sorte of magma étendu par plus vague des adhésions et que le parti entraînerait à sa suite”, Jean BOULIER, *J’étais...*, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 180.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 221, 223.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 240-241.

battle. Far from seeing it as a betrayal, a lessening, a weakening of my faith, as they accuse me of, I engage with all the energy of my faith, my integrational Catholic faith, in this battle, in the class struggle, to call it by its name, which I hope to win”<sup>73</sup>. In this comprehensive justification, the labor question and social work were crucial for someone who believed that the greatest drama of the Church was that of having lost the masses of workers.

*Progressive* in the years 1940 and 1950, convinced of the civilizing role of communism in human history, his reading of Vatican II and its application in France was not panegyric for nothing. On the contrary, there he recognized the validity of the pastoral work of the *integrists* (Catholic fundamentalists)<sup>74</sup>; as it happened in his own case as well<sup>75</sup>, relations with the church authorities on the topic of obedience were not simple at all. This former nationalist, soon after an enemy of the violence contained within Maurras’ nationalism, did not cease to admire, however, and from his point of view, the way in which Stalin could, in the middle of the 20th century, define the steps of a real peaceful coexistence among nations. Building a socialist civilization continued to be encased by the boundaries of the nation-state.

*Pierre Debray: a tough Catholic- from communism to French Action*

Among those who traveled between communism and Maurrasianism, Pierre Debray was a unique case. Unlike the cases previously cited, among them Boulier, Debray’s case, conversely, illustrated an abrupt shift from *progressivism* to integral nationalism<sup>76</sup>. Let’s review his trajectory.

Debray was born in 1922, in family from Vendée which had renounced Christianity. Finishing his studies in philosophy at the Sorbonne, and marked by the readings of Emmanuel Mounier and Maurice Blondel, he converted to Christianity at the end of the 1930s. In contact with the then priest Jean Daniélou, he started working for the Resistance.

His political engagement ended around 1945, when he became active as a writer and literary critic, publishing novels and reviewing new publishings. Doing such work in the Catholic publication *Témoignage Chrétien*, he discovered in 1947 *J’ai choisi la liberté*. As Nina Berberova points out, Debray’s was probably the first commentary to receive such treatment in France<sup>77</sup>.

<sup>73</sup> “[...] J’ai pris, je prends ma place dans ce combat. Loin d’y voir une trahison, une atténuation, une dilution de ma foi, comme on m’en accuse, c’est de tout l’élan de ma foi, de ma foi catholique intégrale que je m’engage dans cette bataille, dans la lutte de classes, pour l’appeler par son nom, et que j’en souhaite la victoire”, *Ibidem*, p. 240.

<sup>74</sup> See Damir SKENDEROVIC, *The radical right in Switzerland. Continuity and change, 1945- 2000*, New York- Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 195- 197.

<sup>76</sup> Humberto CUCCHETTI, *Catholicisme, communisme, et nationalisme en France. Pierre Debray, un catholique engagé du communisme à l’Action française*, Mimeo, 2012.

<sup>77</sup> Nina BERBEROVA, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

The Kravchenko affair had profound biographical consequences for Debray: his option of siding with the communists, offering his testimony and trying to discredit the former Soviet official, meant he, among other things, lost his job as a journalist of *Témoignage chrétien*. Almost immediately, he became a ‘fellow traveler’ for the communists, playing active roles both at ‘France-USSR’ and at the weekly *Action*. In both cases, the young journalist, turned intellectual-militant, represented the Catholic legitimacy of the filo-Soviets causes.

He rose quickly to become a member of ‘France-USSR’'s national committee in 1951, where he stayed until 1954. Debray's standing in this universe consolidated mostly with a trip organized by this association to the Soviet Union at the end of 1949. On his return, he attempted to write his impressions of the socialist world in the work *Un catholique retour de l'URSS*<sup>78</sup>, which featured a foreword by Boulrier.

As had already been the case in the previous decade, the story of the author and his experiences is consistent with the idea of “believe, better rather than see”<sup>79</sup>. These pages offer a fully hagiographic narrative of Soviet reality in particular and of socialist reality in general. The author sought to convince the French public both of the benefits that could be seen on a daily basis in the most basic human relations as well as of the deep meanings of the Stalinist regime. With the legitimacy provided to him by having witnessed the USSR directly, he could speak on the welfare of workers, on the opportunities that they had, on the improvements in their living conditions<sup>80</sup>.

Refuting David Rousset's “anti-Soviet campaign”, which rightly gave rise to another trial in France, Debray also refuted the existence of any situation similar to Nazi Germany's concentration camps<sup>81</sup>. On the contrary, the Soviet prison system was, from his point of view, one of the most modern in the world. For the journalist, the alleged cruelty of Stalinism in solving certain political problems, showed an exemplary character that would have spared France many headaches prior to World War II:

[...] If in our country in 1936 we would have arrested, tried and shot Mr. Pétain, Laval and company, that obviously would have stirred up some controversy the world over. We could have, here and there, accused the government of having tortured equally illustrious figures in order to extract some implausible confessions from them, but we probably wouldn't have been as easily defeated in May 1940, supposing there had even been a war [...] <sup>82</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> Pierre DEBRAY, *Un catholique retour de l'URSS*, Paris: Editions du Pavillon, 1950.

<sup>79</sup> Rachel MAZUY, *Croire plutôt que voir? Voyages en Russie soviétique (1919-1939)*, Paris: Odile Jacob, 2002.

<sup>80</sup> Pierre DEBRAY, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 69.

<sup>82</sup> “[...] Si, chez nous, en 1936, on avait arrêté, jugé et fusillé MM. Pétain, Laval et consorts, cela, évidemment, aurait provoqué quelques remous de par le monde. On aurait, ici et là, accusé le gouvernement d'avoir torturé des personnages aussi illustres pour leur arracher

Here the author uses the argument of national treason which, as we have seen, was a crucial theme for French communism in that era, betrayal that would have justified a preventive purge. Again, the national motif being was at the center of Stalinist adhesion. If the book in question attempts to offer a Catholic vision of its militant commitment instead of unmasking anti-Soviet views, the patriotic perspective was as central as the religious one: "I am aware of only ever having doing Christian and patriotic work"<sup>83</sup>. "It's truly the cult of Truth that they have over there"<sup>84</sup>.

*Un catholique retour de l'URSS* was extolled in 'France-USSR', and deemed worthy of being the basis for a wide range of political propaganda and militant dissemination. In *Action*, Debray began to justify, on behalf of the memory of the Resistance, the heinous character of any possible war against the Soviet Union. In this context, and following the party line, he showed himself furiously anti-German and a staunch enemy of the supranational European cooperation - in those times at an embryonic stage.

This anti-Germanism and the anti-Europeanism coincided with the instructions issued by French Action at the time, expressed in particular in the publication *Aspects de la France*. This led them to have various letter exchanges with Pierre Boutang, main writer for French Action after the death of Maurras. During 1954, suddenly our protagonist left 'France-USSR' and *Action* to transform himself into one of the main Maurrasians writers of the second half of the 20th century.

Reviewing the public reasons he used to explain his trip to the USSR, he said that, precisely because he had militated for communism at that time, he was better able to realize the ferocious character of their struggle and the perverse objectives of Bolshevism on a planetary scale.<sup>85</sup> In other words, in "see, rather than believe"<sup>86</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Following Liberation, different enclaves of filo-communist associative activism worked to recover the political legitimacy of the FCP and to support Soviet Stalinism, deploying different symbols and values which were presented as "patriotic" within several easily identifiable French nationalist traditions.

d'in vraisemblables aveux, mais nous n'aurions probablement pas, en mai 1940, été vaincus aussi facilement, à supposer qu'il y ait eu la guerre [...]", *Ibidem*, p. 70.

<sup>83</sup> "[...] J'ai conscience de n'avoir fait œuvre que de chrétien et de patriote", *Ibidem*, p. 125.

<sup>84</sup> "[...] c'est vraiment le culte de la Vérité qu'on a là-bas", *Ibidem*, p. 136.

<sup>85</sup> Humberto CUCCHETTI, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>86</sup> Hervé GUIHENEUF, « Voir plutôt que croire. L'expérience du travail d'Yvon en Union Soviétique et les récits de ses désillusions », *Le Mouvement Social*, La Découverte, numéro 205, 2003- 2004, pp. 21- 42.

In this way, we can highlight the values used by nationalism some decades before (the anti-German sentiment is a conspicuous illustration), as well as more recent examples, such as the visceral rejection of the European construction, which was also tied to anti-German sentiment. French nationalism and the legitimacy of the Soviet Union marched hand in hand in a militant and intellectual culture which still sought to recreate the anti-fascism of the 1930s, celebrate Stalin's figure, the creation of the Resistance, and the crucial importance maintaining close relations with the Stalinist world had for the French Republic.

Thus, some of the above mentioned figures had traveled from the nationalist far right to progressivism in those years (the latter clearly dominated by communist adherence)<sup>87</sup>. Although the Debray case was not unusual as an example of breaking with communism (it was not the first, and after 1956 these cases did not cease to accrue); its uniqueness consisted, above all things, in bringing its patriotic culture from the ranks of communism to the ranks of the French Action, where he would continue its fight against supranational Europe and liberalism, granting a unique meaning to his defense of "French interests".

However, it wasn't just that such nationalism orbited around the big national issues and the large geopolitical turning points. The struggle over different representations and values, present in forms of material and cultural consumption, also formed part of this integral Communist militancy. In this way, Coca Cola could be radically rejected, while French wine was acclaimed<sup>88</sup>. These latest campaigns did reuse another great issue of French nationalism: anti-North Americanism. This is the same anti-North Americanism that Claude Morgan endeavored to emphasize during the Kravchenko trial, which became a theater for the central leitmotifs of the communist intellectual battle:

[...] A literary weekly, *Les Lettres françaises* defended literary cleanliness. It fought against literature of spinelessness, of hopelessness, of human degradation that was demoralizing the French readership. It defended French thought against the invasion of American publications such as Reader's Digest and *Confidences*, the majority of children's newspapers and almost all of the cinema magazines, all practicing an unscrupulous "dumping" in France, ruining French magazines and spreading copies by the millions, by means of a huge advertising campaign, propaganda that was much more clever than Hitler's crude propaganda, from which they nevertheless borrowed many themes [...]<sup>89</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Simon EPSTEIN, *op. cit.*

<sup>88</sup> Stéphane COURTOIS, Marc LAZAR, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-286.

<sup>89</sup> [...] Hebdomadaire littéraire, *les Lettres françaises* défendent la propreté littéraire. Elles combattent cette littérature de veulerie, de désespoir, de dégradation humaine qui démoralise le public français. Elles défendent la pensée française contre l'invasion massive de ces publications américaines qui, comme le *Reader's Digest*, *Confidences*, la plupart des journaux d'enfants et presque tous les magazines de cinéma pratiquent chez nous un « dumping » éhonté, ruinent les revues françaises et répandent par millions d'exemplaires, au moyen d'une publicité colossale,

For the players in question, for actual participants from various areas of civil society that were part of the communist strategy of the era, U.S. imperialism represented not only a problem of global security, a threat to international peace, an expression of the capitalist expansion on a global scale. It also represented the spiritual impoverishment of societies, and could specifically erase all traces of a great national intellectual culture: the French one.

une propagande beaucoup plus habile que ne l'était la grossière propagande d'Hitler dont elle n'est pas sans reprendre bien des thèmes [...], *Le procès Kravchenko I, op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.