

## 6 Paving the road for refugees' return

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Marie Limousin must have been exhausted! She was twenty-two years old, six months pregnant, and traveling alone with her two-year-old daughter. On June 12, 1940 she had joined one of the last evacuation groups leaving Bar-le-Duc (Meuse) in Lorraine and made the trip south to the department of Lozère where she joined 70,000 other refugees.<sup>1</sup> By mid-August, Marie must have wanted to return to Bar-le-Duc and the Germans had agreed to allow the French to begin refugee repatriation. Marie received a *laissez-passer* (travel permit) to cross the Line of Demarcation. Initially all seemed well. By September 1, Marie and her daughter had traveled 704 km from Mende (Lozère) to Reims (Marne) in the Occupied Zone. However, German authorities stopped her and informed her that she could not return to Bar-le-Duc. Perhaps Marie did not *qualify* as *eligible* to repatriate to Lorraine, since only Lorrainers who would have qualified for German citizenship prior to 1919 could return to the newly annexed territory. Possibly, she refused to sign an oath of loyalty to the Reich, required of all returning Alsations and Lorrainers. Perhaps she was Jewish, and hence also prohibited from reintegration. Whatever the reason, the German border patrols forced Marie to return to the refugee staging center in Reims, which was overcrowded with refugees similarly refused re-entry permission to restricted zones in Ardennes, Aisne, Pas-de-Calais, and Nord. But shortly after Marie's return to Reims, on September 11, Marnais officials placed the pregnant mother and her daughter on yet another train destined for Nantes, 516 km to the west. Nantes, located near the Atlantic coast of France, fell within a newly designated restricted zone. Two days later, authorities expelled Marie from Nantes and sent her on a 381-km train trip to Paris. By some miracle, after completing this two-week tour de France, Marie and her daughter found their way to the office of the prefect of the

<sup>1</sup> AN F/60/1507, Report, Service of Refugees, July 1940.

department of the Seine. Hungry and at the limit of her strength, Marie Limousin nearly collapsed.<sup>2</sup>

Moved by frustration and pity, the prefect of the Seine recorded the specifics of Limousin's odyssey in an unusually long and detailed report. It went to General Léon Fornel de la Laurencie, a French Armistice official who held the title, "General of the French Army Corps and Delegate of the French Government in the Occupied Territories." La Laurencie was the top military official empowered to negotiate problems arising from Occupation policy within the Occupied Zone.<sup>3</sup> Interzonal problems did not technically fall under la Laurencie's umbrella. Still, the prefect wanted to press upon the general the gravity of Limousin's case, and gain permission for her to remain in Paris. The prefect also wanted to communicate another urgent point: since August 31, 1940, prefects in the Free Zone had stopped distributing refugee relief payments, forcing floods of refugees into the Occupied Zone. Not knowing whether the withholding of payments was a legitimate policy (it was not), the Seine prefect insisted that the measure had resulted in a large number of refugees attempting to return to occupied areas where the Germans had restricted or prohibited refugee re-entry. Distressed refugees were thus congregating in Paris, turned back by the Germans from checkpoints all along the borders of the newly designated "Forbidden Zones."<sup>4</sup>

Miscommunication between branches of the French government regarding civilian security and refugee relief and return was now exacerbated by the presence of French administration operating in two zones, and the addition of a German administrative authority. Civilian refugees' security, health, and well-being were being compromised by new forms of bureaucratic miscommunication, the proliferation of subpartitioned zones of exclusion, and whimsical starts and stops to refugee repatriation. Rather than being a solution to the displacement crisis, repatriation introduced a new chapter in the enduring humanitarian disaster. As the challenges shifted back from the south to the north, German occupying authorities projected an image of mastery and charged the French with responsibility for the glitches in refugee return. Through the fall of 1940, German officials and Vichy representatives sparred in negotiations, continually redefining the terms of refugee repatriation,

<sup>2</sup> AN F/1a/3660. prefect of the Seine to the General of the Corps of the French Army. September 13, 1940.

<sup>3</sup> La Laurencie was an outspoken opponent of communism, and worked behind the scenes to weaken efforts to create a strong Franco-Soviet military alliance. See Crémieux-Brilhac, *Les français de l'an 40 II*, 510–512.

<sup>4</sup> Crémieux-Brilhac, *Les français de l'an 40 II*, 510–512.

passage across the Line of Demarcation and spheres of German and French authority. Led by General Otto von Stülpnagel, the Germans organized to continue the war against Great Britain, which required harnessing French industry, and thus French labor, to German wartime needs. In on-going talks between Vichy representatives and the German Armistice Commission, French leaders attempted to exploit German interests, such as having an industrial labor force return to the Forbidden Zone, and win to their advantage policies connected to areas of ambiguity created by the Armistice agreement.

Between July and September 1940, Franco-German negotiations, an unequal exchange between the occupier and the occupied, progressed with both sides seeking to shape the new conditions of cohabitation and establish rules and structures that would meet their needs. To resolve the worsening refugee and repatriation crisis, the Vichy government turned to the Service of Refugees. Rather than rely on its former Director, Robert Schuman, Vichy appointed a seasoned career man to claim the title, *Préfet honoraire, Délégué spécial pour les Réfugiés* (Honorary Prefect and Special Representative for Refugees). Louis Marlier thus became the chief diplomat, invested with full powers to negotiate terms with the German Armistice Commission in Paris for the repatriation of the approximately 7 million stranded French and foreign refugees. The operational issues of the service fell under the responsibility of a series of directors, beginning with Director Andrieux, and then to a weakly empowered successor, Director Lassalle-Séré. Meanwhile, Marlier crafted policy and communicated directives to the Minister of the Interior and to the prefects in both zones.<sup>5</sup> His efforts greatly influenced refugee reintegration and the policies and practices enforcing the partition of France. Marlier's career and his ambiguous wartime achievements have thus far escaped historical discussion and analysis despite their enormous impact upon the restructuring of the French population and management of foreign refugees.

### **Out of retirement: Louis Florentin Marlier answers a call to serve**

Marlier became the man charged with returning the shattered and dispersed men and women of France to their homes. His emergence early in the Occupation as a new, but important functionary can be wrongly interpreted as an indication that he was a devotee of Pétain's ideas for

<sup>5</sup> AN F/1a/3660, M. Lassalle-Séré, Note from the Director of the Service of Refugees, Paris, December 10, 1940.

National Revolution. However, further investigation reveals a more complex and engaging man of state whose experience guided France through some of its most difficult times. Most historians today would agree that to have followed de Gaulle into British exile required extraordinary foresight and defiance that the majority of the French people lacked in June 1940. The historical reaction to the Gaullist resistance myth has effectively obscured a more common reality: the battle of France consumed the lives of 92,000 French soldiers and German troops captured and imprisoned 1,800,000 more.<sup>6</sup> These battle-experienced men did not enjoy the luxury of choosing exile. They stood defeated, as did their country. Marlier does not quite fit Robert Paxton's characterization of leaders of "occupation fascism," which called forth in the context of defeat and collaboration, "all the losers of the previous governing system."<sup>7</sup>

Marlier does not possess a headline profile in the annals of contemporary French history. Yet his career under the Third Republic and his service during the Occupation merit attention and reveal complexities about some of the men who served under Pétain.<sup>8</sup> In summer 1940, Marlier, then aged sixty-three, agreed to leave his retirement that had come after years of service to the French state, but with an insufficient accumulation of years as a prefect to guarantee him full draw on his pension. Part of his decision to leave retirement might have been financial. But why did Vichy call on Marlier, a "prefect of the Left," and endow him with full powers to negotiate the particulars of the Armistice agreement regarding the passage of the Line of Demarcation? What credentials made Marlier the man to choose for the enormous task of repatriating 7 million displaced persons and to negotiate, on a day-to-day basis, the fate of expulsees and permanent refugees?

Born on September 21, 1877, Marlier's life ran parallel to that of the Third Republic. His generation grew up during the Belle Époque and lived with an assurance of the republican victory, but many felt torn by the lingering problem of how to reconcile church–state relations and mitigate class strife under the new, more democratic system. A native of the northern border department of Aisne, Marlier descended from a

<sup>6</sup> Fishman, *We Will Wait*, 27. Martin Alexander reports slightly different figures: losses, 123,000 French troops killed (370,000 casualties); 1.6 million French PoW, but 84 percent after the Armistice of June 25. Martin S. Alexander, "The Republic at War: The French Army and the Fight for France, 1939–1940," Lecture, University of Birmingham, June 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Vintage Press, 2005), 114.

<sup>8</sup> Burrin, *France under the Germans*. For discussions about wartime moral relativism and the Holocaust see Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992).

Catholic family of modest means. Still, Marlier earned an undergraduate degree in letters and a postgraduate degree in law. It would be hard to imagine that for Marlier, the Third Republic meant anything less than an assurance of equal opportunity.

Marlier's family life determined his public career at many junctures. In 1902, he married Jeanne Amelie Stephanie Mailliet, who also came from a modest background. The union was always marked by financial strain, producing riches only in the form of a child, Madeleine Céline Marlier. Madeleine grew up moving around the French empire. In her adult life, she married two prefects, evidencing the completion of her family's climb from humble obscurity and the social connections attached to interwar bureaucratic service.

Having first served in the military from 1897 to 1901, Marlier re-entered military service during World War I like most men of his generation. He was wounded in combat, and his service and courage gained the attention of military and government superiors. On the recommendation of General Henri-Victor Buat, Marlier received a letter of recognition from the Minister of the Interior, Théodore Steeg, and his star began to rise. On July 14, 1919 he received the citation of the Order of the Nation in recognition of his wartime achievements. The French government daily bulletin, *The Official Journal*, described Marlier as: "A model of courage, of modesty, and of useful actions. During the enemy advance, and throughout the entire campaign, he volunteered himself to scout the most exposed positions, proving his absolute disregard for danger."<sup>9</sup>

In the aftermath of World War I, Marlier developed his credentials as an architect of reconstruction; the expertise that Vichy would later tap. His family's home, as well as his entire department, Aisne, suffered complete devastation during the war. In April 1918 the prefect of Aisne named Marlier General Secretary of his department. A year later, he added the oversight of the reconstruction of the department of Pas-de-Calais to his list of responsibilities. This post-World War I training period prepared Marlier for his role in overseeing the evacuation of Pas-de-Calais.

In Pas-de-Calais, Marlier impressed the prefect, Robert Leullier, who wrote a strong letter of support in 1920 to promote Marlier into the prefectural core. Leullier commended: "Marlier had always chosen public service against many lucrative private offers despite his difficult financial circumstances and heavy family obligations to his wife,

<sup>9</sup> AN F/1bis/807.

daughter, mother and grandmother.”<sup>10</sup> Noting the seventeen-hour days Marlier worked, and underscoring the human qualities Marlier brought to his expanded responsibilities as “Overseer of the Reconstruction of the Formerly Occupied Territories” (of World War I), Leullier further praised: “He brings to his work with distressed communities an energy despite the demanding and difficult circumstances these people face given their losses and their reduced means.”<sup>11</sup>

At the age of forty-one, Marlier had risen to the position of General Secretary for the Reconstruction of the Regions Stricken by the Events of the War, which put him in charge of reconstruction in the east; an enormous assignment involving the rebuilding of railways, waterways, bridges, roads, and neighborhoods. He also oversaw the restitution process, investigating and approving claims made by residents whose farms and businesses had suffered damage between 1914 and 1918. Perhaps it was during this period that he perfected his German language skills, skills that would later serve him in his assignment under Vichy.

He later served as prefect in Orne (Algeria) and Corsica. In 1927 he was sent to ease local tensions in Ajaccio. His transfer papers held the signature of Raimond Poincaré, President of the Republic. In Corsica, Marlier met with virulent opposition, especially from local journalists writing for the *Bastia-Journal*. The journalist Jehan, accused Marlier of sinning against a prefect’s obligation to “administer” rather than “make” policy.<sup>12</sup> He charged that Marlier mishandled fire relief funds and, more seriously, that Marlier manipulated the local votes for the 1928 elections to the National Assembly in favor of the Party of Democrats and Social Republicans.

The files give no indication as to whether Marlier’s move a year later to the prefecture of Oran in Algeria came as a result of his success or failure to stare down local opposition in Corsica. Regardless, he served in the colonial climate in Algeria from 1929 to 1934, where certainly he would have encountered the administrative problems and frameworks for dealing with individuals and groups claiming a variety of rights and exercising civil exclusions, an issue he would confront during his tenure at the Service of Refugees.

Marlier returned to the European continent in 1934, where he became the prefect in the department of Lot-et-Garonne. Correspondence reveals that, between 1934 and 1937, bitterness and a sense of personal desperation began to envelop Marlier. Also, by 1937 his administration

<sup>10</sup> AN F/1bis/807, Robert Leullier to Minister of the Interior, Arras, March 17, 1920.

<sup>11</sup> AN F/1bis/807, Robert Leullier to Minister of the Interior.

<sup>12</sup> Jehan, “Des maintenant, il sera a bon de fouiller dans les archives, de mettre le nez dans les comptes des Travaux Publics; de verifier la distribution de secours aux sinistres de derniers incendies,” *Bastia Journal*, May 2, 1928.

began to feel the tremors from the Spanish Civil War. Marlier had to respond to problems regarding the provision of asylum to Spanish refugees, a tense and difficult problem in the departments of the south-west that left an imprint on regional attitudes and policies toward the exodus.

In September 1936, the new government of Léon Blum threatened to dismiss prefects earning more than 125,000 francs a year, which Marlier's salary slightly surpassed. The Deputy wrote that:

Marlier should not be included in the list of prefects to be forced into early retirement because he is a prefect of the Left and the former Director of Security who has had strong disputes with Action Française [a French fascist paramilitary group of the 1930s]. I promised him that I would call his case to your attention and ask you to examine the possibility of another solution, because he is without a personal fortune.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, in 1937, Marlier received word that he would be given recognition of a full career as prefect by adding one year of colonial service to draw a sum of 39,000 francs. In fact, the sum fell below a desired full payout, but Marlier settled for the offer and retired.

After his retirement, Marlier's supporters continued to look after him. On November 11, 1937 the government conferred the distinction "Honorary Prefect." While the Party of Democratic and Social Republicans had ceased to be a major force in 1940, it is clear that Marlier had close ties with Radical Party members who chose to follow Pétain. Although the archives provide no clear evidence, one might assume that Chautemps, Vice President of the Council under Reynaud, and an advocate for the Armistice, recruited Marlier from retirement. Chautemps' signature appears throughout Marlier's career file, suggesting that he would have known of Marlier's reconstruction expertise. Rather than thinking he took a turn to the right, it seems more probable that Marlier, the prefect of the Left, was more of an administrative expert than an ideologue. At a moment of devastation for France, Marlier returned to service on July 5, 1940.<sup>14</sup>

### **Destiny designed by bureaucracy: the Service of Refugees under Occupation**

The Service of Refugees began an administrative reorganization as Marlier assumed his duties early in July. Maurice Lagrange, honorary

<sup>13</sup> AN F/1bis/807, Chamber of Deputies, National Assembly of France to M. Verlomme, September 22, 1936.

<sup>14</sup> AN F/1bis/807. Marlier died at age 81 on November 14, 1958; Jeanne Amelie, aged 79, died on December 4, 1959.

Conseiller d'État, explained in his postwar testimony that the new government, felt that "It was imperative to create a centralized authority ... with all necessary powers to resolve the traffic jam of refugees persisting in the non-occupied zone. This had been the failure of the Central Service of Refugees during the Phoney War."<sup>15</sup> Hence, the government created twenty-one general secretary posts, one of which was the General Secretary of Refugees that fell under the Minister of the Interior. Initially, Andrieux occupied that position, which facilitated the return of the administrative arm of the Service of Refugees to Paris from Pau (Pyrénées-Atlantiques).<sup>16</sup> On July 12, 1940, Andrieux sent a note to Léon Noël, the Ambassador of the French Government to the Administration of the Occupied Territories. Andrieux requested that Noël assist in securing the return of the Service of Refugee's administration to Paris, noting, a bit prematurely, that Marlier had already obtained assurances from the Germans that the return of state functionaries to the Occupied Zone would meet with their approval. Andrieux tasked Pierre Caron, the President of the National Archives of France, with the mission of repatriating the voluminous papers of the Service of Refugees to Paris.<sup>17</sup>

During July, the Service attempted to reassemble its prewar team under Marlier's new leadership. The Service of Refugees formed another link in the transmission of Vichy policy. Marlier communicated, often directly, but sometimes through the Minister of the Interior, with prefects in the Occupied and Free zones. The reconstituted Service emulated Schuman's effort to centralize policies and directives regarding housing, clothing, food, and cash benefits, but with much more authority. Marlier constructed a centralized decision-making process in which a uniformity of policy issued from Paris, filtered first through Vichy, then through the Armistice Commission and, if approved, down to the prefects in each zone. Of course, application of those policies happened less neatly and frequently differed from department to department and town to town. The location of the Service in Paris allowed Marlier to cultivate a strong, independent status in relation to the Ministry of the Interior, located in Vichy. This geographic and administrative space allowed for policy adaptation and, in many cases, defiance.

Paris-based operations, charged with overseeing a colossal humanitarian emergency, had a single second-class office manager and a small

<sup>15</sup> AN AJ/72/2004, Dossier 5, Maurice Lagrange, Honorary Minister of State, "Le rapatriement des Réfugiés après l'Exode: Juillet–Septembre 1940," 8.

<sup>16</sup> AN AJ/72/2004, Maurice Lagrange, "Le rapatriement des Réfugiés."

<sup>17</sup> AN F/1a/3660, Lassalle-Séré, "December 10, 1940 Note."

staff. One person received and delivered mail; a Herculean task since refugees within the Occupied Zone sent daily inquiries to the Service regarding lost family members. Another agent worked with the general media. One staffer liaised with the Minister of the Interior, while another liaised with the other ministries and the Armistice Commission; a job that was too big for one person. One staffer took charge of the relations between Paris and Marlier's Special Delegation. A separate office collected statistics such as the weekly counts of refugee populations in each department. There was one deputy prefect, a writer, three clerks, one typist, two office boys, and one errand boy. Marlier had a personal staff that included two writers and three clerks.

The Service's housing division responded to housing matters from the Paris office, dealing with a wide range of issues, including management of housing centers; questions of expulsions; camp administration; relations with workers; and coordination with the Secours National, the French Red Cross and American relief services, and the Red Cross in Geneva. The division of "Reclassement" (worker re-education) dealt with job training of refugees in the Free Zone; relations with the Ministry of Industrial Production and the Minister of Agriculture; all questions regarding foreigners; and all affairs concerning refugees especially in the Occupied Zone. The Transportation division worked on questions regarding repatriation, especially railway organization. To accomplish this task, the bureau employed one person in Paris and one person in Vichy. Questions of finance fell to the lieutenant prefect in Paris and his staff. He wrote: "Chartered as an ad-hoc service, we have always been under funded."<sup>18</sup> While the head of transportation at the Service of Refugees routed information concerning train departures and issuance of laissez-passer, the SNCF scheduled return trains and the German border control checked or issued identity papers. The Service of Refugees had its hand in a multitude of tasks relating to repatriation as well as to economic renewal. For months after France's defeat, the Service of Refugees lay at the heart of national reconstruction.

On August 2, 1940, after a month of negotiations, the Service of Refugees received its official mandate: "To return all 'approved refugees' to their places of origin." Created as a Vichy government cabinet post, but reorganized under the French Armistice Services' Delegate-General of the French Government in Occupied Territories (*Délégation générale du Gouvernement français pour les territoires occupés*, DGGFTO), the Service depended upon the DGGFTO's leaders for approval of its actions. The Service coordinated its activities

<sup>18</sup> AN F/1a/3660, Lassalle-Séré, "December 10, 1940 Note."

through Noël's and La Laurencie's liaison with the German command in France, but Marlier also entered into one-on-one negotiation with the Germans.

The August decree restored an independent budget to the Service of Refugees and mapped out an internal structure. Vichy appointed a director to exercise operations under Marlier's lead. The Germans agreed to allow Vichy to establish two offices: one in Paris and another at Vichy, with a small regional office in Clermont-Ferrand.<sup>19</sup> The Service essentially acted as a link between the Minister of the Interior located in Vichy, and the Armistice Commission, located in Paris. Marlier's responsibility was to defend French interests regarding the partitioning of France and hence the repatriation of refugees. But, because the repatriation issue stemmed directly from principles governing the enforcement of the Line of Demarcation, Marlier's powers of negotiation extended to matters governing the monitoring of the partition and all passage between the two zones.

### **All power lies with the Armistice Commission: Marlier negotiates a return**

The Armistice Commission held its first meeting on repatriation on July 5, 1940 at the Hôtel Majestic in Paris a month ahead of the Service of Refugees' official reorganization.<sup>20</sup> Although General Otto von Stülpnagel only took over as head of the Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich (MBF), the chief German military authority over France, in October 1940, he represented Germany at the July 5 meeting.<sup>21</sup> The Armistice Commission held virtually all authority over Occupation policy. However, it had to consult with German occupation offices in Belgium, and with Berlin on military matters, ideological issues, or policies whose jurisdiction extended beyond French borders, such as repatriation of Belgian refugees. Several German officials presided over the meeting, led by President von Pfeffer, who was President of the Occupied Zone; he was accompanied by General von Streccius, the Official Representative of the Head of the German Army, and Minister Schmidt, the Head of German Administration. General Charles Huntziger had negotiated the Armistice for the French and held the title of President of the Armistice Commission for the French, but did

<sup>19</sup> AN F/1a/3660, "On the Subject of the Activity of the Service of Refugees," 1941.

<sup>20</sup> AN F/1a/3660, Minutes for the Service of Refugees' Meeting at the Hôtel Majestic, Paris, July 5, 1940.

<sup>21</sup> Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, 30.

not participate directly in repatriation negotiations. Instead, Marlier was empowered to negotiate a repatriation settlement with Huntziger's full authority. At the first meeting, the atmosphere was cold and formal. The Germans showed themselves determined to frustrate French ambitions to achieve a complete and rapid repatriation of all refugees. As far as the Germans were concerned, the Line of Demarcation sealed traffic between the two zones.

A description of the partitioning of French territory by the Line of Demarcation is essential to understanding repatriation negotiations. French officials' postwar memoirs suggest that not even Pétain believed that the Germans would impose such a harsh punishment on the French. To strictly partition the country and prohibit the government from returning to Paris seemed unimaginable not only to Reynaud, but also to others who supported an Armistice, like Queuille and Schuman. The Line of Demarcation restricted population movement and eventually reshuffled not only spatial configurations, but also individual and collective identities. Immediately after the Armistice's conditions took effect at 12.35 am on June 25, French and German personnel began construction of a physical and administrative border that spanned 2,000 km from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port in the Basses-Pyrénées (now Pyrénées-Atlantiques) to Geneva, Switzerland. Its length and impact outstripped even the Maginot Line. Article 2 of the Armistice loosely described a "line of demarcation," but remained mute about its exact configuration.<sup>22</sup> The "green line," as Germans first called the Line of Demarcation, divided German occupied territory from Free France. Eventually policed by 5,460 predominantly French guards, the Line partitioned thirteen departments and reconfigured the geopolitical contour of France.<sup>23</sup> The subdivided departments included Ain, Jura, Saône-et-Loire, Allier, Cher, Loir-et-Cher, Indre-et-Loire, Vienne, Charente, Dordogne, Gironde, Landes, and Basses-Pyrénées. At the beginning of July, authorities did not know whether a fourteenth department would be divided, and they had few instructions regarding which towns would be cut by the Line.<sup>24</sup> Vichy lay in the southernmost region of Allier, one of the divided thirteen departments. In the north of Allier sat the town of Moulins, which would serve as a kind of "Checkpoint Charlie" for passage between the Occupied and the Non-Occupied zones. The Armistice Agreement offered no specifics about

<sup>22</sup> Alary, *La ligne de démarcation: 1940–1944*, 27.

<sup>23</sup> Alary, *La ligne de démarcation: 1940–1944*, 49; Souleau, *La ligne de démarcation en Gironde*, 330.

<sup>24</sup> Alary, *La ligne de démarcation: 1940–1944*, 26.

how business and administration would be conducted in the partitioned departments, nor did it offer explanation about interzonal trade.

From the beginning of Armistice discussions, the Germans disagreed among themselves about the wisdom of dividing France and allowing a zone of self-governance. Hitler insisted to Mussolini on conceding to the French a national government, with a considerable part of the French mainland remaining unoccupied by German or Italian forces.<sup>25</sup> Eric Alary's work has cast new light on the historical understanding of the Line of Demarcation, and traces the slow evolution of the idea of the Line within various German political and military camps. Opponents argued that patrolling the Line would burden German military personnel, which is one reason the Armistice Commission wanted to limit points of passage along it. From a security perspective, some Germans, such as Joseph Goebbels, feared the Free Zone would serve as a training ground for resistance fighters who might launch guerrilla attacks in the Occupied Zone. General Charles Huntziger's thinking, although practical in concern, aligned with Hitler's dream of redrawing the European map. Hitler hoped to revive a "Germanité" that laid claim to French territory in three ways: annexation, the creation of protectorates, and the formation of colonies.<sup>26</sup> Hence, the Third Reich annexed Alsace and Lorraine. The departments Pas-de-Calais, Nord, Aisne, and Ardennes served as types of experimental colonies, being designated for military operations or for the resettlement of ethnic Germans from the Reich. The Occupied Zone formed part of a protectorate, although the forms of requisitioning that took place left the relationship open to definitions that leaned toward colonization. The "Free Zone" did not fit into any of these categories, which should have warned Vichy leaders of its threatened longevity.

General Falkenhausen, commander of the German Military Administration in Belgium made practical and ideological arguments for partition and annexation. He recommended several subdivisions of French territory to facilitate military operations along the English Channel coast. Falkenhausen lobbied for the administrative attachment of Pas-de-Calais and Nord, which he believed were essential positions for launching an invasion of the British Isles. On the ideological front, he contended that the northern European territory, including Belgium and the Low Countries, belonged to a Germanic heritage and should be considered part of a larger Germany. Alary points out that

<sup>25</sup> The author is grateful to an anonymous reviewer for *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* for sharing information about Hitler's discussions with Mussolini.

<sup>26</sup> Alary, *La ligne de démarcation: 1940–1944*, 32.

Falkenhausen's ideas were drawn from the nineteenth-century German geographer, Friedrich Ratzel.<sup>27</sup> Ratzel reasoned that: "In denying a state [nation] its spatial particularity: she is deprived of the means for maintaining her power."<sup>28</sup> Based on Ratzel's analysis, the Germans believed that, by dicing France into small administrative morsels, they would "deprive France of the means for maintaining her power." We can understand how Goebbels' camp could have initially lost the partition argument. Hence, the Germans who advocated the creation of a "Free Zone," believed that allowing a token puppet state to exist apart from its industrial base, mineral resources, and capital city, would offer an illusion of a viable nation. They further believed that French troops in the colonies, including North Africa, and the French Navy would remain loyal to this puppet state. Rather than dismantling French power after the defeat, the Germans intended to use what was left for their own war efforts.

For the first two years of Occupation, the partition worked as the Germans expected. However, partitioning had other effects, as Goebbels' camp imagined. Hitler had blundered in thinking that he could keep French colonies and the remaining military forces loyal to the French government, thus, preventing them from joining a government in exile, let alone the British camp. The Germans' ultimate miscalculation lay in their belief that men and women, defined by their borders, would accept the German redefinition of their space, and by association, their own identities and allegiances. During the two years that the Line functioned, it gave life to new ideas of resistance and transgression, destroying old sentiments of unity and regional cohesiveness. For a time, the Line offered the Germans a tool for imposing Lebensraum and for occupying France, but it also galvanized French resistance and extended asylum to increasingly endangered individuals and communities. By 1941, it was the only viable, non-fascist asylum remaining on the continent besides Switzerland. (This excludes Vichy from being classified as fully fascist based on Paxton's criteria for occupied, collaborationist regimes.<sup>29</sup>)

Falkenhausen also prevailed on subdivision of the Occupied Zone. The designation of Pas-de-Calais and Nord for military operations held life-changing consequences for refugee populations native to those departments. The Germans decided to capitalize on the fact that

<sup>27</sup> Alary, *La ligne de démarcation: 1940–1944*, 27–28, 36.

<sup>28</sup> Friedrich Ratzel, *Géopolitiques et stratégies* (Paris : Fayard, 1923), cited in Alary, *La ligne de démarcation: 1940–1944*, 36.

<sup>29</sup> Paxton, *Anatomy of Fascism*, 116–117.

residents of the north-east had conveniently evacuated the territory. They did not have to implement large-scale forced population removal or carry out ethnic cleansing as they would do in the east. The absence of residents made the process of building fortifications and setting up military operations advance more smoothly than if the entire population had remained in place. Soldiers billeted in refugees' houses without the social discomfort of having to negotiate for space in civilian residents' homes. To enforce their control over the Channel and Atlantic coastal territory, the German military drew another subdivision within their zone of occupation, complete with policed checkpoints designed to monitor and restrict refugee re-entry to the "Forbidden Zone."

The Germans used additional subdivisions to designate areas open for the return of French refugees, as well as areas restricted to the return of refugees. These subdivisions were called "Reserved Zones." Alary maintains that the French deeply resented, and failed to understand, the proliferation of subdivisions within the German Occupied Zone. Military arguments did not suffice since, operationally, Falkenhausen only needed the coast and roads servicing shore points. The lines patrolled by German border guards seemed completely arbitrary to most French officials and rejected refugees. The Germans, for their part, continually debated how to enforce the "Reserved Zones" and "Forbidden Zone," and whether or not to erase or extend the dividing lines. Mounting a futile resistance, the French repeatedly advanced the argument that the Armistice Agreement and international law did not provide for the subdivision of occupied nations.<sup>30</sup> While Marlier and the French authorities resisted the rules governing fortification and control of passage of the Line, tricking French and German border patrols became the dangerous rebellion of refugees moving in both directions.

By July, the Germans had carved a total of four main subdivisions on the French map: the Southern Barrage (Loire linie); the Line of Demarcation of Article 2 of the Armistice; the Median Line (Mittellinie or Seine-Marne linie); and the North-East Line. In redrawing the map of continental Europe, the Germans created a new set of core-periphery relationships. Berlin became the new European core, and France was reduced to a peripheral political and economic entity. The great bonus of the battle of France, besides the victory over the French military, was to have geographically displaced the center of French government and power from Paris to the hinterlands of Vichy.

The divisions of French territory became one of the main topics of negotiation between Marlier's team and the German officials on the

<sup>30</sup> Alary, *La ligne de démarcation: 1940–1944*, 30.

Armistice Commission.<sup>31</sup> The French attempted throughout the early period of the Occupation to contest the legality of the subdivisions according to international law, which in 1940 held few specifics about the rules of occupation and territorial subdivision.<sup>32</sup> Given the benefit to the Germans for military operations and providing security, it is remarkable that the Germans even agreed to sit down at the table to negotiate refugee repatriation.

### Early efforts at repatriation

The July 5 meeting lasted only an hour, but it established the dynamics and articulated the issues between the Service of Refugees and the Armistice Commission. The French delegation advanced nine requests regarding the repatriation of refugees and passage between the two zones. Marlier first requested permission to return government officials to the Occupied Zone, reflecting Vichy's desire to rebuild local governments in the north; the first step toward full repatriation. Facing communication and infrastructure problems, and desiring assistance in restoring damaged sewage, electrical, and telephone equipment, the Germans welcomed repatriation of departmental prefect staffs, but did not agree that this should set in motion a mass return. Marlier conveniently misinterpreted German intentions.

Marlier's main directive from Vichy was to pressure the Germans to allow fluid passage of people and materials between the two zones. Von Streccius, the German chief negotiator, expressed a grave reluctance to even begin the flow of traffic between the zones. Pointing out the imperative of German security, he argued that unrestricted interzonal travel would cause surveillance problems for the Germans.<sup>33</sup> As a result, von Streccius tabled Marlier's requests to improve postal delivery and telephone service between zones. He also wanted to delay the passage of National Assembly deputies and senators from the Occupied Zone to Vichy. Henri Queuille had successfully traveled from Bordeaux to Corrèze, but only because he did so before the Germans began enforcing the Line of Demarcation.

<sup>31</sup> Alary, *La ligne de démarcation: 1940–1944*, 30.

<sup>32</sup> Gildea argues that the Germans did attempt to rule by law, but insists: "The rules of the Occupation thus evolved according to case law rather than legal principle ... In order to protect the security of the military, the Germans established a network of military courts to administer martial law. Any action deemed to threaten German military security was brought before the military court." Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, 37.

<sup>33</sup> AN F/1a/3660, "Minutes from the meeting at the Hôtel Majestic," Paris, July 5, 1940.

Von Streccius, agreed “in principal” to Marlier’s requests to repatriate functionaries, but took the first recorded opportunity to decree that the Germans would not allow the return of communist or Jewish officials to government posts or to the occupied territories.<sup>34</sup> Marlier assured the Germans that communists had already been divested of their electoral mandates at all levels: municipal, *arrondissement* (county/city district), general council (regional district), and the National Assembly. Marlier objected in purely legal terms to von Streccius’ suggestion to effectively revoke Jewish officials from public office and remove them from repatriation rosters. He said: “Regarding the Israélites, French law does not make distinctions based upon the religion of its functionaries and elected officials. A functionary or an elected official cannot be removed from office except according to conditions stated in French laws.”<sup>35</sup> Marlier further protested that: “anti-Israélite policies were not part of the language of the conventions of the Armistice.”<sup>36</sup> Von Streccius suggested “tabling” the Jewish question indefinitely, knowing that regardless of French protest, the point would not be renegotiated. These discussions marked the first exchange between French and German officials concerning racial exclusions with regard to repatriation policy.<sup>37</sup> This conversation concerned elected officials, but von Streccius likely anticipated that the principle would soon extend to all Jewish refugees. The French had articulated their opposition to the exclusions, but on this issue the Germans held them hostage to Vichy’s broader repatriation goals. The first meeting about refugee repatriation came to an abrupt end when von Streccius announced that he had “heard enough discussion,” and would consider official approval of the French requests.<sup>38</sup>

Two days after the meeting, having received no official German approval for any of the repatriation terms, Marlier urged the Minister of the Interior to order preparations to repatriate municipal, departmental, and national employees to the Occupied Zone. In departments and towns in the Free Zone, mayors and SNCF rail personnel hurried to organize the repatriation of state functionaries and small business owners. A Ministry of the Interior notice to prefects of Free Zone departments, dated July 7, 1940, ordered all Occupied Zone prefects, general secretaries, subprefects, and administrative personnel back

<sup>34</sup> AN F/1a/3660, Minutes from the meeting at the Hôtel Majestic.

<sup>35</sup> AN F/1a/3660, Minutes from the meeting at the Hôtel Majestic.

<sup>36</sup> AN F/1a/3660, Minutes from the meeting at the Hôtel Majestic.

<sup>37</sup> AN F/1a/3660, Minutes from the meeting at the Hôtel Majestic.

<sup>38</sup> AN F/1a/3660, Minutes from the meeting at the Hôtel Majestic.

to their posts in the Occupied Zone.<sup>39</sup> Posters glued to walls in public places throughout the south warned civil servants that: "refusal to return to the Occupied Zone would be considered the equivalent to the resignation of one's job."<sup>40</sup>

Marlier would continue to oppose exclusions from the Occupied Zone based on ethnic, national, and religious identity. Nevertheless, the Germans began to enforce these exclusions, however unevenly, and the French would unevenly follow the German lead. On July 30, 1940, the office of the French Secretary of State at the Ministry of the Interior instructed prefects in the Free Zone *not* to issue authorization for Jews or those of mixed bloods to cross the Line of Demarcation.<sup>41</sup> Yet the conflicting directives regarding eligibility to cross the Line were sent by, and to, different branches of the French government. French Army archives show that French guards were not told that Jews were among the refugees denied permission to re-enter the Occupied Zone. On September 14, 1940, army authorities at Chateauroux received a note stating that: "Jews could cross the Line, furnished with approved papers, but certain German posts might send them back without any explanation."<sup>42</sup> The ensemble of conflicting documentation confirms that the enforcement of restrictions prohibiting Jews and other excluded persons from crossing the Line of Demarcation did not achieve uniform application during the early months of occupation and repatriation.

Outside the conference room, German troops used French labor to begin fortifying the Line; but it would take months to establish surveillance along the 2,000-km border. Ultimately, the Germans delegated the job of patrolling the border to the French, with the exception of staffing of established crossing stations. The French complained that they did not receive adequate resources from the Germans to patrol the Line. The French hoped to recruit 7,000 guards to work the border, but Vichy never provided funding to employ more than 5,460.<sup>43</sup> French and German authorities exchanged serial correspondence to determine exactly where the Line would bifurcate a city or a single farmer's field. Only in December of 1941 did the Institut Géographique National, located in Paris, issue a map tracing the agreed route of the Line.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> AN F/1a/3660, Note, dated Paris, July 7, 1940.

<sup>40</sup> AN F/1a/3660, Note, dated Paris, July 7, 1940.

<sup>41</sup> ADC 528/W/4, Secretary of State for the Interior, Circular, July 30, 1940.

<sup>42</sup> SHAT, 1P9, EMA, 2ème Bureau, "Note pour le franchissement de la ligne de démarcation," Chateauroux, September 14, 1940, quoted in Alary, *La ligne de démarcation: 1940–1944*, 60.

<sup>43</sup> Alary, *La ligne de démarcation: 1940–1944*, 49.

<sup>44</sup> Alary, *La ligne de démarcation: 1940–1944*, 56.

For Vichy, repatriation was the prerequisite to the resumption of full economic recovery in the north as well as the south. The French mistakenly believed that the Armistice Agreement intended the same objective. Hanna Diamond explains that Article 16 of the Armistice: “required the French government to organize the return of refugees to the Occupied territories with the agreement of the competent German services.”<sup>45</sup> She suggests that the Germans were eager to facilitate the return of refugees to the Occupied Zone; but if that had been the case at the moment of victory, it had quickly ceased to be the German position. Marlier spent much of July, August, and September trying to persuade the Germans to allow repatriation to proceed at a steady pace. He advanced arguments he thought might appeal to German self-interest, stressing the value of French labor for alleviating the prospect of winter shortages in the Occupied Zone. He urged von Streccius to concede to the rapid repatriation of farmers and all agricultural and alimentary workers in order to feed the German Army. Among this group he included proprietors of small shops, such as bakers and butchers. The Germans, eager themselves to extract whatever possible from French agricultural production, readily conceded to Marlier’s requests regarding the return of agricultural workers. However, they hesitated to approve the return of small agricultural property owners wanting to reclaim their farms in Aisne, Ardennes, and Nord. Land redistribution in the north-east was a key component in Germany’s attempt at economic colonization of northern France. Operation Ostland aimed to settle ethnic Germans in the area in a pilot program for similar strategies planned for eastern Europe. Having suffered the loss of his home during Germany’s World War I invasion, and having managed the reconstruction of the territory, the renewed German assault on Aisne must have pained and angered Marlier; perhaps accounting for his determination to challenge German exclusions from this particular region.

Von Streccius tried to appear obliging by granting approval to less controversial requests for the return of doctors, midwives, and pharmacists, as well as those capable of assessing damage to the infrastructure of northern cities. Indeed, the Germans would argue among themselves about how many French workers they wished to repatriate to the mining areas of Nord. When it later became clear that German labor would be needed to enforce military occupation, and to fight the war with the Soviet Union, they were forced to reconsider policies of excluding miners from returning to the Forbidden Zone.

<sup>45</sup> J. Lagrange, “Rapatriement des réfugiés après l’exode,” *Revue d’histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale* (1977), 43, cited in Diamond, *Fleeing Hitler*, 148.

With regard to repatriation, correspondence between Marlier and the Ministry of the Interior is striking for what is absent. French officials never discussed the conditions under which repatriated refugees might live. Communication throughout France faltered, and the Germans restricted entry to some areas in the north, but surely the French held reports about the destruction levied on towns in the north. Still, the question of whether repatriation was a sound policy, and for whom it would work, never entered into internal policy discussions. Indeed, in September 1940, as the Allies bombed Le Havre and Dieppe in the Forbidden Zone, forcing an emergency evacuation of the few remaining residents, Marlier's team continued to push for the lifting of restrictions on refugee repatriation to the Forbidden Zone.<sup>46</sup>

Marlier's determination to pressure the Germans to accelerate repatriation, and Vichy's willingness to support his recommendations, raise questions about Vichy's motivations and refugees' desires. Why did Vichy want to repatriate its civil servants and France's population to Occupied Territory? Why did Marlier push so hard to open the Line of Demarcation to refugee passage? Why would refugees want to repatriate to the Occupied Zone? Should they not have considered themselves fortunate to land in the Free Zone? Contemporary knowledge of the German Occupation and the harsh realities of the war's end color these questions. However, one must consider the viewpoint of Marie Limousin and others. Mothers juggled family responsibilities while sheltered in public school lunch rooms in strange places like Brive-la-Gaillarde. Families ate meals twice a day at the train station canteen. Often, they had received no word about their husbands, fathers, and brothers in over two months since the invasion began. Mothers and children had no sweaters for chilly evenings, no shoes without holes, and no money. Even if they had money, it would have done little good because shoe supplies were so short that any available shoes were priced astronomically high. Thus, it is easy to imagine why a refugee might think of nothing else besides returning to their home in occupied France, Belgium, or Luxembourg. The language of the "right to evacuation" and the "right to shelter" that civilian women had marshaled to pressure the government to improve home front security prior to the invasion, now served them in their demands for refugee aid and petitions for return to their homes. Unfortunately, many did not understand that Britain and Germany continued to wage battle in the skies of northern France.

<sup>46</sup> AN F/60/1507, "Summary of the history of evacuations in Nord and Pas-de-Calais," to DGGFTO from Louis Marlier, March 2, 1941, note 1293.

### Fortifying and controlling the Line of Demarcation

The Line of Demarcation's success in ensuring German security rested in limiting the number of crossing points. On July 7, French officials told state functionaries to prepare for repatriation, as soon German authorities intended to release acceptable routes for travel to the Occupied Territory by foot, bicycle, automobile, or train.<sup>47</sup> On July 11, Ambassador Léon Noël received German instructions and reported that they included an "invitation" to establish an office to distribute laissez-passers at Moulins (Alliers). Moulins sat 452 km from Bordeaux, where some of the greatest refugee concentrations lingered, and 297 km from Paris. It was hardly a convenient location. The Germans insisted that Moulins would be the only allowed point of entry to the Occupied Zone. At Moulins, Chief of Staff Auleb reported that French and then German border guards would establish a checkpoint for examining the credentials of all refugees applying for re-entry.<sup>48</sup> In addition, the Moulins office would be responsible for submitting a daily list of persons entering the Occupied Zone to the German command. This list was to contain the name, profession, race, organization to which the person "belonged," and purpose of the refugee's voyage.<sup>49</sup>

Along a 2,000-km border, there existed only one point of entry. The establishment of a single point of entry and a monitoring station at Moulins held dual significance: first, it allowed both sides to monitor the flow of people; and, second, the requirement of assigning every traveler an identity card and a laissez-passer, categorized each according to profession and race, marking an important step toward the surveillance of the populations in both zones. Most refugees passing through Moulins would have already registered with the state as a consequence of receiving refugee allocations and railway tickets. Issuing of laissez-passers at Moulins reinforced both the Germans' and Vichy's ability to monitor individuals and restrict the movement of refugees. Monitoring refugees' identities and enforcing German categories of exclusion at Moulins thus became a significant act of cooperation between the new French regime and the German authorities regarding the reordering of national space.

Marlier met again with the Armistice Commission on July 13 in the hope of widening and accelerating repatriation. Replacing von Streccius as head of the hearings, von Pfeffer received Marlier's complaints.

<sup>47</sup> AN F/60/1507, "Summary of the history of evacuations in Nord and Pas-de-Calais."

<sup>48</sup> AN F/1a/3660, letter signed by Chief of Staff Auleb, dated July 11, 1940.

<sup>49</sup> AN F/1a/3660, letter signed by Chief of Staff Auleb.

Topping the list were the restrictions on communication between the two zones. Von Pfeffer reported that letters and visitors requesting information about individual refugees' families and government repatriation policies inundated his office.<sup>50</sup> He appointed the Society of the French Red Cross, the Belgian and Luxembourg Red Cross, the French Bureau of Refugees, and the Belgian Ambassador to France to propose a system for improving communication between the zones and for determining the status of foreign refugees. The latter endeavor especially interested the Germans, who had insisted upon Armistice Article 19 requiring the French to hand over "all the Germans whom they, the Nazis, 'wanted.'"<sup>51</sup> Lion Feuchtwanger, among other notable German refugees, sat in a temporary internment camp at San Nicola (Gard), when a fellow refugee handed him a newspaper in late June, which reported the French agreement. For Feuchtwanger, enforcement of Article 19 was a life or death matter. He remembered processing the news:

My knees trembled. I read no further. "All Germans whom the Nazis wanted." For years past the Nazis had been calling me their Enemy Number One in their speeches and newspapers. If they turned in a list of "wanted" persons my name would surely be near the top ... It was the third time in a short period that I had felt death near at hand.<sup>52</sup>

Was the provision of lists of foreigners the price Marlier paid von Pfeffer to allow postal services between the two zones?<sup>53</sup> It was finally agreed that the French Red Cross would act as a neutral agent, moving letters and information between zones, thus assuming a key role in establishing contact between separated families and friends. Von Pfeffer agreed to allow the Red Cross to set up an office in Paris to supervise postal services. Belgian and Luxembourgish citizens, he directed, should send their mail to the Belgian services in France. Pierre Caron, President of France's National Archives, was charged with overseeing the establishment of the Red Cross postal bureau.<sup>54</sup> By July 29, three offices (in Paris, Bourges, and Vichy) would be established to transfer mail between zones.<sup>55</sup> Von Pfeffer required more scrutiny over

<sup>50</sup> AN F/1a/3660, Minutes of meeting at the Hôtel Majestic, July 13, 1940. Numbers are unavailable for July 13, but by August 1, the Armistice Commission received 500 letters per day requesting information about PoWs and missing civilians. Alary, *La ligne de démarcation: 1940–1944*, 69.

<sup>51</sup> Feuchtwanger, *Devil in France*, 173.

<sup>52</sup> Feuchtwanger, *Devil in France*, 174.

<sup>53</sup> AN F/1a/3660, Minutes of meeting at the Hôtel Majestic, July 13, 1940.

<sup>54</sup> *Journal Officiel*, July 15, 1940.

<sup>55</sup> Alary, *La ligne de démarcation: 1940–1944*, 69.

correspondence between the Service of Refugees at Clermont-Ferrand and Paris, insisting that a percentage of interagency letters transmitted from the Free Zone to the Occupied Zone be translated into German and kept on file.<sup>56</sup> This policy created more work than either side could handle. By September 26, all communication was limited to preprinted postcards that refugees could purchase for 0.90 centimes. The cards allowed refugees to check a list of choices:

- \_\_\_ I am not dead.
- \_\_\_ in good health.
- \_\_\_ in prison.
- \_\_\_ without news of \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_ the family is well.
- \_\_\_ we received \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_ entering school.
- \_\_\_ affectionately \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>57</sup>

On July 17, in evidence of the eagerness of French officials to begin the repatriation process, Marlier, in collaboration with the Chief of French Military Administration, Monsieur Parisius, disseminated a proposed schedule of trains to all Free Zone prefects. The plan was designed to repatriate refugees by departments of origin. First priority was given to residents of Paris and those from the departments of the Seine, Seine-et-Oise, and Seine-et-Marne. Marlier issued these plans without German approval and knowing that the departures would create a terrible bottleneck at Moulins. In a July 19 directive to all prefects titled, "Return in Parts of the Occupied Zone Currently Authorized," Marlier gave the green light for repatriation, mentioning few of the German restrictions articulated by von Streccius.<sup>58</sup> The note is significant in three ways. First, Marlier outlined the geographical subdivisions of the Occupied Zone for the first time to prefects in both zones. Second, he specifically listed the professions permitted to return to the "Non-Restricted Occupied Zone" and those permitted to return to the "Restricted Occupied Zone." The list of approved refugees included farmers, farm workers, agricultural professionals, manure merchants, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, metal merchants, and mechanics able to repair agricultural equipment. Marlier's list does not mention exclusion of native farmers of the Restricted Zone – an exclusion stipulated by the

<sup>56</sup> AN F/1a/3660, Minutes of meeting at the Hôtel Majestic, July 13, 1940.

<sup>57</sup> Alary, *La ligne de démarcation: 1940–1944*, 70.

<sup>58</sup> AN F/1a/3660, Central Service of Refugees, President of the Council to prefects, "Return in Parts of the Occupied Zone Currently Authorized," July 19, 1940.

Germans on July 5. Third, the memo makes no mention of the exclusion of Jews, communists, those of mixed bloods, or foreigners from the Occupied Zone. Furthermore, the July 19 memo makes no mention of the fate of thousands of Alsatian and Lorrainer refugees, such as Marie Limousin. The directive does specify that all demobilized soldiers could return to their homes. It also cautions that no refugees may pass through Paris.

The memo raises questions: did the Service wish to openly defy German restrictions?; did they wish to create confusion, allowing excluded categories to travel to the Line of Demarcation, thus forcing the Germans to enforce the exclusions themselves? In the second two weeks of July, the French directives coming from the Service of Refugees did not direct prefects to enforce German categories of exclusions. By July 30, other branches of the French state and the occupying apparatus moved to "clarify" policy. However, ambiguity regarding refugee exclusions would reign throughout the fall of 1940. Only after weighing more of the historical record can we determine whether Marlier intentionally created this ambiguity so as to avoid enforcing German policy.

Despite the fact that his July 19 memo indicated that trains would be routed around Paris beginning on July 22, Marlier scheduled two trains to depart daily for Paris from seven departure points around the hexagon: Bordeaux, Nantes, Brest, Clermont-Ferrand, Tours, Toulouse, and Marseille. To facilitate the passage of these trains, Huntziger sent a petition to German officials requesting the opening of multiple points of passage in addition to the checkpoint at Moulins. In the same request, Chief of Staff Auleb sought to persuade German officials to reconsider the "one way only" policy of passage. He requested that repatriated business executives be allowed to travel back and forth between zones in order to report to Vichy on the material conditions and extent of property damage in the north.<sup>59</sup> Between July 22 and July 27 trains boarded refugees in the south and moved them toward Moulins for passage through the Line. At Moulins, refugees would board a train for Paris. After less than five days, the Germans ordered the entire program suspended. They informed Marlier that they required more time to implement security procedures. They assured the Service of Refugees that the trains would begin running again on August 2, 1940.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> AN F/1a/3660, Memo, July 18, 1940.

<sup>60</sup> Pierre Durand, *La SNCF pendant la guerre, 1939–1945* (Paris: PUF, 1969), 130, cited in Alary, *La ligne de démarcation 1940–1944*, 6. AN F/60/1507, Service of the Armistice to Minister of National Defense, Circular, August 24, 1940.

## Conclusion

The negotiations between the Vichy regime and the German Armistice Commission for the return of the approximate 7 million refugees to the Occupied Zone in France and the Benelux countries formed the foundation for the second phase of the refugee crisis. These negotiations marked the national government's efforts to resume control of local crisis management within the larger context of accelerating national reconstruction.

Four parties emerged during these negotiations to shape relief and repatriation policy: Vichy delegates, German Armistice representatives, local officials, and refugees. Between July and September 1940, the Honorary Prefect and Special Delegate for the Refugees, Louis Marlier, promoted a policy of refugee repatriation. Vichy hoped that refugee repatriation would speed up political and economic reconstruction in the north; relieve pressure on Free Zone communities to feed and house refugees; extinguish the potential for resistance movements to grow among displaced communities; and resist the strict partitioning of "Free France" from "German Occupied France."

Temporary refugee "settlement" in various departments on both sides of the Line of Demarcation introduced the second phase of the crisis where people and policies stagnated, reconsidering the wisdom of repatriation. Factions arose within the refugee community as regional, political, religious, national, and ethnic differences influenced how well refugees might thread through the new weave of Occupied and Free France. The Germans quickly capitalized on the opportunities presented to them with regard to refugee repatriation. Creating multiple regional partitions within French territory and the Benelux countries that served as the basis for accelerating population relocation schemes, they began refusing Channel coast residents the right of return. By clearing the Forbidden Zone, they hoped to secure military operations along the Channel and Atlantic coast; transfer French property in the north to German settler populations; and, in a Machiavellian way, curb French ambitions for economic and political reconstruction.

This chapter thus importantly modifies the historiography on the Holocaust in France, producing evidence that racial selection began at the Line of Demarcation as early as July 15, 1940. It identifies the French Service of Refugees' rejection of that policy, but also its failure to make universal repatriation a precondition of any repatriation. This practice bought time for displaced racial minorities who would become targets for repression, arrest, and deportation from the Occupied Zone. The Line of Demarcation emerged as a fundamental tool in the racialization

of bureaucratic practices in France that ultimately contributed to the German project of ethnic cleansing in western Europe. Significantly, this chapter describes how the Line of Demarcation, operating as a selection point for refugee repatriation back to the German Occupied Zone, functioned as an integral component to the larger project of racial and ethnic segregation facilitated by partitioning France into smaller geographic zones.

By tracing the relationship between occupation operations and consciousness-building, we see that a complete understanding about what German occupation would mean for different segments of the population revealed itself over a period of time and through civilians' and French officials' interactions with German negotiators and military personnel. In exchanges with French authorities, as well as with German occupying officials, many civilians began to reformulate the notions of individual and collective security that they had relied upon prior to the invasion, adapting these concepts to the new context of occupation and partition. The preinvasion concept of the "right to relocation" away from war's impending violence, slowly transformed into a desire to exercise a "right to asylum" in the Free Zone or a "right to return" to the Occupied Zone.