

Robert Brasillach and Lucien Rebatet's Ideological Reasoning for Collaborating with Nazi Germany

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It takes highly compelling reasons to motivate a person to reject his or her own country and to aid and abet its fiercest enemy. Yet this is exactly what some French people chose to do in Nazi-occupied France during World War II. From 1940 to 1944, the Vichy government controlled this portion of France, and the entire country was under strict Nazi supervision. The vast majority of French people claimed to remain neutral toward this dramatic regime change, but a small minority split into two generalized camps: the resisters and the collaborators. The resisters fought and risked their lives not only to regain the sovereignty of their homeland and to take back their republic, but for higher moral reasons as well. This now infamous Resistance movement included intellectuals such as Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir, all of whom were praised and worshipped as heroes after the liberation of France in 1944 by the Allied forces. But the question remains as to why a small minority of the French people chose to collaborate with the Germans. Undoubtedly, some or even most of the collaborators were motivated out of fear for their lives and the lives of their families. Other inducements may have been the material gains and lofty government positions that were bestowed upon ardent collaborators. All of these practical reasons for collaborating with the Germans are understandable within the unique context of Vichy France.

Yet some intellectuals collaborated for more than purely pragmatic reasons: they agreed with the Nazis on an ideological basis. These French intellectual collaborators were attracted to Nazi ideology because it was characterized by beliefs such as the failure of the liberal democratic government of France's Third Republic, an intense and virulent anti-Semitism, a reaction against the growing decadence of France and Europe in general, and a desire to embrace National Socialism and authoritarianism. These controversial intellectuals included Robert Brasillach and Lucien Rebatet, both of whom were highly influenced by the philosophy and writings of the older intellectual Charles Maurras. Maurras refused to collaborate with the German occupiers, but Brasillach and Rebatet both became extremely pro-German due to their pre- and WWII experiences and their belief that Germany would save France from its ruinous state of failure and defeat. Both Brasillach and Rebatet expressed their ideological compatibility with Nazi Germany and their pro-German sentiment in their writings throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, especially in their journalistic contributions to the collaborationist newspaper, *Je Suis Partout*. Both Brasillach and Rebatet collaborated with the Vichy government not only for self-preservation in a war-wrecked country, but also because they held ideological views compatible with Nazism and were explicitly pro-German.

Historiography

Nazi-occupied France has received much attention in the years since the Allied Liberation of 1944 and has been a topic of interest for the scholar and the casual historian alike. Accordingly, enthusiasts have authored countless books, articles, and other secondary sources on the topic. Numerous films, museum exhibits, workshops, and other attractions have also fed this ongoing public fascination. However, the vast majority of historical analysis has been devoted almost exclusively to the Resistance movement and its intellectual leaders, an unsurprising fact given that the collaboration with Nazi Germany has been an embarrassing and shameful historical event in the post-World War II French national consciousness. By focusing their historical analysis on the Resistance movement, the French people were better able to restore their national self-confidence after the trauma of the occupation and the subsequent internal chaos.¹ In addition to this, the French people were able to appear to the rest of the world as a brave and highly moral nation when faced with the evils of Nazism. This sometimes intentional misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the actual events of the Occupation has led to what historian Henry Rousso calls the "Vichy syndrome" in the French national consciousness.² This syndrome remains present even today in France and has led to an insufficient understanding of the Nazi Occupation and inspired a defensive attitude. Now that some time has passed and fascism is no longer a real political threat in the world, historians and the public have finally begun to objectively analyze the motivations and ideology of the French collaborators.

The Context of WWII-Era France

Full comprehension of the complicated reasoning of Brasillach and Rebatet for their ideological collaboration with the Germans necessitates familiarity with the unique setting of Vichy France and the powerful historical

¹ Gerhard Hirschfeld and Patrick Marsh, eds., *Collaboration in France: Politics and Culture during the Nazi Occupation, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Berg, 1989), vii.

² Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1991), 272.

influences that shaped it. On July 22, 1940, after much painstaking and relatively unsuccessful fighting on the side of the Allied forces, France signed an armistice with its long-hated rival Germany. This degrading defeat meant that Germany would now set up a provisional government in France that was under direct German control. Some Germans saw this as an opportunity to humiliate France and to exact revenge for their devastating loss in World War I and the Treaty of Versailles.

The German occupiers quickly divided France into two zones, one occupied and one unoccupied from 1940 to 1942, in order to oversee the country more strictly. The northern zone would be directly controlled by the German army, while the southern zone would be run by a group of ardent French collaborators. The German occupiers wisely chose the eighty-four-year-old Marshal Henri-Philippe Petain, a conservative French hero of World War I who was also an opponent of France's Third Republic, to head the Vichy government and to oversee the southern zone. Petain's government was unsurprisingly very receptive to the highly demanding requests of Germany; as Hitler's war plan became more and more grandiose, the Vichy government unquestioningly fulfilled German requests for the vast amounts of raw materials and manufactured goods needed to keep the German war machine running at top speed.³ In April 1942, Pierre Laval, a conservative French statesman who had served in the Third Republican government, once again gained power in France and became the head of government due to German pressure. Laval took the collaboration efforts even further: he sent French workers to Germany to aid its industry and orchestrated round-ups of French Jews. Laval acted out of political opportunism because he believed, even more so than Petain, that Germany would be the decisive victor of WWII, and he wanted France to be treated favorably in post-war, Nazi-run Europe.⁴

In addition to this form of material collaboration, Petain also went above and beyond the requests of the Germans by enacting a type of social and political collaboration in France in order to solve specifically French problems. He began a program referred to as the National Revolution, or *la Révolution Nationale*, that was strongly influenced ideologically by Charles Maurras and the Action Française. This state-run program had quite lofty aims that were all deeply rooted in a commitment to collaborate closely with Hitler's Germany. The main impetus behind the National Revolution was that many French people, especially the collaborators, were beginning to believe that the liberal republican government of the Third Republic was to blame for the embarrassing defeat at the hands of the Germans. This anti-republican sentiment can be summed up in the words of Christian de la Maziere, a French aristocrat who joined the S.S.

[D]efeat was the inevitable consequence of French politics. In fact, this was the theme propagated by the Vichy government. If we were defeated, they claimed, it was because for so many years, we had to put up with party politics which are the reason France is in this situation today.⁵

They also believed that France and Europe in general had become too decadent and had lost sight of what was truly important in life. The proponents of the National Revolution wanted to respond to this deep humiliation by recovering France's pure spiritual values and formerly respected political standing in a new, Nazi-controlled, authoritarian Europe. Petain and his fellow advocates of the National Revolution encouraged traditional French Catholicism, family values, and a strong work ethic in order to revive France from its defeat.⁶

Another notable aspect of the Vichy government's outright collaboration with Nazi Germany was its eventual compliance with German demands for anti-Semitic laws that were different from the ones it had created on its own. In some ways, the French dragged their feet when it came to imposing Nazi anti-Semitic laws such as the statute that Jews in the unoccupied zone must wear a yellow star, which was not enforced until 1942. However, before the Germans began to enforce any anti-Semitic legislation, the French set up purge and quota systems and placed economic and social sanctions on French Jews. There was a connection between anti-republicanism and anti-Semitism because many French people wanted to keep France for the "French" as Charles Maurras advocated. Maurras' desire to return to the old authoritarian order emphasized a Catholic France in which groups such as Jews, Protestants, and foreigners were not real French people and were even considered to be enemies of France. Under Petain's watch, 76,000 French Jews were first detained in French holding camps and were then transported to German and eastern

³ Robert O. Paxton et al., eds., *Collaboration and Resistance: French Literary Life under the Nazi Occupation* (New York: Five Ties Pub., 2009), 12 & 132.

⁴ Michael Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy: Power and Prejudice in the Vichy France Regime* (New York: Arcade Pub., 2002), 82 & 85.

⁵ *The Sorrow and the Pity: Chronicle of a French City under the Occupation*, directed by Marcel Ophuls (1969; Harrington Park, NJ: Milestone Film & Video, 2001), DVD.

⁶ Paxton et al., eds., *Collaboration and Resistance*, 13-14.

European concentration camps.⁷ In addition to this, the French media became overrun with anti-Semitic propaganda and many Jews were subject to harassment. The French police played a key role in carrying out these anti-Semitic laws; the traditionally xenophobic institution was quick to target immigrant Jews who were seeking refuge in France.⁸

This intense anti-Semitism was nothing new in France. A mere forty years earlier, France was torn apart with debate over the controversial Dreyfus Affair. This event brought to the surface a deep anti-Semitic sentiment held by many French, and several anti-Dreyfusard groups, such as the Action Française, became popular advocates of anti-Semitism and anti-republicanism. For these reasons, some historians have linked republican France with the birth of fascism in the twentieth century.⁹ It is within this context of Vichy France that the intellectual views of Maurras, Brasillach, and Rebatet can be fully analyzed.

Maurras' Ideology and His Influence on Brasillach and Rebatet

Even though Charles Maurras cannot technically be categorized as a collaborator with the Nazi occupying forces and the Vichy government due to his intense French nationalism and rejection of German authority, his influence over other younger French intellectuals who did choose to collaborate was immeasurably strong and his distinctive ideology was one of the powerful precursors to fascism. Maurras' ideology centered on a few basic tenets: anti-republicanism, a desire to return to the old order of Catholic France, French nationalism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia.¹⁰ Maurras' family and personal background were highly influential in shaping this worldview. He was born in 1868 into a strict Catholic and pro-monarchist French family. Growing up in such an environment meant that Maurras was exposed to anti-republican sentiment early on in his life, which probably made it easier for him to criticize and utterly reject France's Third Republic as an adult. The desire that Maurras' family held for a return to traditional French values and the Old Order certainly imbued Maurras with a sense of French nationalism and pride that eventually led him to form such an anti-Semitic and xenophobic ideology that sought to keep France for "the French."

He first began to take real political action on behalf of this unique ideology and philosophy when he began dominating the group called the Action Française in 1898.¹¹ The beliefs and actions of the Action Française gained much popularity and attention throughout Europe during the Dreyfus Affair at the turn of the twentieth century. This political group's main focus was to remake France into a highly nationalistic, xenophobic, royalist, and Catholic nation. In order to achieve this goal of saving France and turning the country back towards its idealized roots, Maurras and the Action Française believed it was necessary to attack those they perceived to be France's true enemies who would eventually destroy the country. In their eyes, these enemies included liberals, republicans, communists, foreigners, Protestants, and especially Jews.¹² Thus, Maurras' ideology and political actions were a direct precursor to the fascism of the 1930s and left an impression on the French national consciousness.

Charles Maurras and his ideology also strongly influenced two young and impressionable intellectuals, Robert Brasillach and Lucien Rebatet. Maurras served as a personal mentor for Brasillach and Rebatet in the years leading up to World War II. Both Brasillach and Rebatet were involved with the Action Française in some capacity: Brasillach was intellectually trained by this organization beginning in the late 1920s and Rebatet began his professional writing career in 1929 as a cultural critic on the staff of the Action Française newspaper in Paris.¹³ Throughout the late 1920s and the 1930s, during Brasillach and Rebatet's heavy involvement in the activities of the Action Française, both men developed an immense respect for Maurras on both a personal and ideological level.

This passionate respect and admiration is apparent in the vast amounts of correspondence between Brasillach and Rebatet and their intellectual leader. Both Brasillach and Rebatet began all of their letters to Maurras with the greeting, "Mon Cher Maître," or "My Dear Master."¹⁴ The content of the letters follows along this master-servant pattern as well. Each and every letter that Brasillach and Rebatet wrote to Maurras contains a plethora of flattery and often asks for his sage advice. Brasillach included such phrases as "if it wouldn't annoy you too much" and "I beg you

⁷ Simon Kitson, "From Enthusiasm to Disenchantment: the French Police and the Vichy Regime, 1940-1944," *Journal of Contemporary European History* 11, no. 3 (2002): 379.

⁸ Kitson, "From Enthusiasm to Disenchantment," 379.

⁹ Jeremy D. Popkin, *A History of Modern France* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/ Prentice Hall, 2005), 186.

¹⁰ Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy*, 41.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² John F. Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: the French under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986), 105.

¹³ Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy*, 234.

¹⁴ Robert Brasillach to Charles Maurras, letter translated by author, 25 July 1931, Deschodt, in *Cher Maître: Lettres à Charles Maurras De L'Académie Française*, ed. Pierre-Jean Deschodt (Etrepilly, France, 1995), 273 & 274; Lucien Rebatet to Charles Maurras, letter translated by author, 29 September 1938, Deschodt, in *Cher Maître: Lettres à Charles Maurras De L'Académie Française*, ed. Pierre-Jean Deschodt (Etrepilly, France, 1995), 550.

to accept the assurance of my highest respect.”¹⁵ Rebatet went even further in his commitment to Maurras when he wrote to him on September 29, 1938,

You know, my dear master, what is your place in our admiration, our gratitude: the highest. We know that your efforts have been heroic. . . You cannot know at what point you have been our light, our comfort in these sad days. . . I agree entirely with you. . . Believe, my dear master, you have my full devotion. And again I thank you.¹⁶

Thus, Rebatet proclaimed a total embrace of Maurras’ ideology and his intention to loyally do as his intellectual mentor dictated. Brasillach also wrote to Maurras about their shared ideological belief that the world was becoming too decadent and that the system should be changed.

[I]t is obvious at this time that a certain era is over. If politically, the implications of the war are not completely exhausted, it seems that general ideas in literature and a number of ancient myths are alive: it seems, the myths of selfishness and disorder are prominent. We should judge very severely common men, general themes, and leaders of recent years. . . It would be desirable to balance this occurrence and look to classicism.¹⁷

Brasillach agreed with Maurras that looking to the past would absolve the present society of its sins and failures. Based on this correspondence, it can be concluded that Maurras’ proto-fascist ideology was highly influential on and eagerly accepted by both Brasillach and Rebatet, thus setting the stage for them to collaborate with the Nazis as soon as the opportunity arose.

Despite the intimate mentor-mentee relationship that Maurras had with Brasillach and Rebatet throughout the 1930s, Maurras completely cut off contact with them when they began to collaborate with the Germans. This is because Maurras was an unyielding French nationalist and wanted no part in aiding a German-controlled France. Maurras clearly expressed this sentiment in a letter he wrote to a Nazi collaborator on August 1, 1940:

Goodbye, sir, and good luck, as you say that you are confident under the banner of your employees and your protection of the German victory. Live with her in an agreement without reluctance; get drunk on all the elixirs of her goodwill. We are honoring ourselves by staying away, staying within a France worthy of the name. Believe me, it is impossible to exchange pleasantries with you.¹⁸

Yet, Maurras did offer his unwavering support to Petain up until the 1944 Liberation and even inspired the ideological reasoning behind Petain’s National Revolution. It is because of his support of Petain that Maurras was arrested on charges of collaboration in September 1944. He was then tried and convicted of complying with the Nazis. In March 1952, Maurras was released from prison on medical grounds and died eight months later in November.

Brasillach’s Collaboration

By the time of the French defeat at the hands of the Germans in July 1940, Robert Brasillach, having been a disciple of Charles Maurras and an active participant in the Action Française and similar organizations, had formed a personal ideology that was extremely compatible with the fascism of Nazi Germany. This ideological compatibility with fascism drove Brasillach to cooperate fully with Nazi propaganda efforts in France and inspired his collaborationist writing in *Je Suis Partout*.¹⁹ Brasillach’s path to embracing fascism involved several factors. He was born in 1909 in the city of Perpignan, in southern France. In 1928, at age nineteen, he began his studies at the prestigious Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. It was there that Brasillach came into contact with ideologies that

¹⁵ Robert Brasillach to Charles Maurras, letter translated by author, 25 July 1931, Deschodt, in *Cher Maître: Lettres à Charles Maurras De L’Académie Française*, ed. Pierre-Jean Deschodt (Etrepilly, France, 1995), 273 & 274.

¹⁶ Lucien Rebatet to Charles Maurras, letter translated by author, 29 September 1938, Deschodt, in *Cher Maître: Lettres à Charles Maurras De L’Académie Française*, ed. Pierre-Jean Deschodt (Etrepilly, France, 1995), 550.

¹⁷ Robert Brasillach to Charles Maurras, letter translated by author, 3 September 1931, Deschodt, in *Cher Maître: Lettres à Charles Maurras De L’Académie Française*, ed. Pierre-Jean Deschodt (Etrepilly, France, 1995), 275.

¹⁸ Charles Maurras to Dominique Sordet, letter translated by author, 1 August 1940, Deschodt, in *Cher Maître: Lettres à Charles Maurras De L’Académie Française*, ed. Pierre-Jean Deschodt (Etrepilly, France, 1995), 18.

¹⁹ Alice Kaplan, *The Collaborator: the Trial and Execution of Robert Brasillach* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), x.

would eventually become the tenets of fascism. Brasillach's intellectual and political training at this time and at such a young age can be attributed to Charles Maurras and other intellectuals surrounding the Action Française.²⁰ Also, during the 1930s, Brasillach was inspired by events such as the Spanish Civil War and the birth of fascism in Italy and Germany. He was so inspired by these events because they were explicit rejections of republicanism and victories for authoritarian rule, as his mentor Maurras so favored. In addition to this, Brasillach's relatively young age for being an intellectual made him susceptible to the concept of the cult of the youth that the fascist movements incorporated. In 1936, having adopted such a right-leaning worldview, Brasillach decided to undertake a career as a journalist and began contributing to the ultra-conservative French newspaper *Je Suis Partout*. However, Brasillach did not have much of an opportunity to immediately cultivate his journalistic skills because he was drafted into the French army. While serving in the French ranks, Brasillach was captured and held as a prisoner of war in Germany from June 1940 to March 1941.

It was at this key point that Brasillach began to intellectually differentiate himself from his mentor Maurras because he essentially became pro-German. During his time as a POW in Germany, his respect for fascism, and especially its German form, grew even more because he thought highly of certain aspects of Nazi culture that he was able to observe firsthand such as nationalistic flags, parades, and rituals as well as homoerotic male bonding.²¹ Brasillach remained a French nationalist like Maurras, but he was so impressed with what he observed of German Nazism that he believed the Germans would be able to halt France on its destructive republican path; thus, in Brasillach's mind, collaboration with the Germans still supported French nationalism, but to Maurras, it was pure treason. In these ways, Brasillach's path to fascism was multi-layered and eventually firmly based on pro-German sentiment. Since he held such strong pro-fascist and pro-German sentiments, it is not surprising that he would become a collaborator with the Germans during the Occupation.

In March 1941, Brasillach returned to France and became the editor-in-chief of *Je Suis Partout*, which gave him full reign to express his strong personal conviction for fascism to all of Nazi-occupied France with a circulation that reached 300,000 by 1944.²² As editor-in-chief, Brasillach was guilty of a great deal of intellectual collaboration with the Germans. He wrote a front-page article for almost every issue during his tenure as editor-in-chief, some of the titles being "The Captivation of the National Revolution"²³ and "Voices of the Popular Front." He denounced certain French citizens as his enemies, printed lists of the names and addresses of French Jews to facilitate their arrest by the French police and their placement in concentration camps, and virulently attacked politicians of the Third Republic such as Leon Blum.²⁴ In his aforementioned editorial, "Voices of the Popular Front," Brasillach criticized American capitalism as well by deeming it selfish and bad for France. He wrote,

There is an admirable lesson that the French need to learn: the American capitalists need you. . . American capitalists are fast but cannot survive alone. They also need Lenin and are only temporary allies with the Bolsheviks. . . I know some French bourgeoisie and this lesson has already begun to hit them.²⁵

Brasillach clearly rejected capitalism and its corresponding republicanism and advocated a different way. Brasillach also welcomed contributions to *Je Suis Partout* from other French fascist writers. These contributions ranged from relatively tame political cartoons claiming that Stalin was in bed with the bourgeoisie to radical editorials such as one entitled "There it is! The English and the Jews are now together like the French are with the French" which comprehensively espoused anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and nationalism all at the same time. This particular article also attacked the French Resistance movement.

It is fatal. We are getting it. It is no longer just the English and the Jews who are warring against France by intermediaries. . . They now entrust the French ourselves with the task of destroying our cities and our women and children everywhere . . . in France there are ruins and there are dead.²⁶

²⁰ Margarete Zimmermann, "Six Heures a Perdre," in *Collaboration in France: Politics and Culture during the Nazi Occupation, 1940-1944*, eds. Gerhard Hirschfeld and Patrick Marsh (Oxford: Berg, 1989), 227-228.

²¹ Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy*, 235.

²² *Ibid.*, 57.

²³ Robert Brasillach, "Revolution Nationale et Captivite," *Je suis partout* (Paris, France), Jul. 7, 1943.

²⁴ Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy*, 235.

²⁵ Robert Brasillach, "Et Voici le Front Populaire," *Je suis partout* (Paris, France), Mar. 6, 1942.

²⁶ Dorsay, "Ca y est! Anglais et Juifs Font Maintenant Ensemble Comme les Francais avec les Français," *Je suis partout* (Paris, France), Mar. 5, 1943.

Thus, it is clear that Brasillach was eager to collaborate with the Germans via his political journalism and the collaborationist writing he printed in his paper.

Despite Brasillach's strong presence as editor-in-chief, he decided to leave his post at *Je Suis Partout* in 1943 because he believed that the Allies would eventually defeat the Nazis. After breaking ties with the paper, Brasillach began to write for *La Revolution Nationale*. In a June 3, 1944 article he wrote entitled "A Little Advice Regarding Key Words," Brasillach expressed his growing disappointment with the trajectory of the war and the impending German defeat:

We use words, but those words mean less and less. . . the most magical words, the word Liberation and the word Resistance are being stripped of their contents at a dizzying pace because in the eyes of the various populations, the realities nearest to them are Bombings and Murders.²⁷

After the Nazi defeat and the Allied Liberation that Brasillach predicted, he gave himself up to the authorities. His infamous trial lasted only one day and ended with his conviction for intellectual treason. This essentially means that he was killed for the things that he had written during his time at *Je Suis Partout*. He was shot on February 6, 1945 and was the only collaborator killed for purely intellectual crimes.²⁸

Rebatet's Collaboration

Much like Robert Brasillach, Lucien Rebatet was highly influenced by his relationship with Charles Maurras and the activities of the Action Française throughout the 1930s. This influence led him to the formation of a personal worldview that had much overlap with the main ideological tenets of Nazi Germany and eventually caused him to become pro-German like Brasillach. It is because of this overlap in ideology that Rebatet collaborated so eagerly with the German occupying forces via his Occupation-era literary pursuits. Like Brasillach, Rebatet's journey to fascism involved a combination of many factors. He was born in 1903 and studied philosophy at the Sorbonne. After working for a while at an insurance agency, Rebatet decided that he wanted to be a writer. In 1929, he joined the writing staff of the Action Française newspaper in Paris, strictly as a cultural critic. Yet being a part of such an intensely political and right-leaning publication had a profound effect on Rebatet's personal ideology and he was soon embracing fascist tenets.²⁹ He then began to contribute to *Candide*, another prominent anti-Semitic weekly in France. In 1932, Rebatet made his first contributions to *Je Suis Partout* and, in 1938, he was appointed as the head of information for the Action Française and truly developed his mentor-mentee relationship with Maurras. Rebatet was then drafted into the French army, but even though he was wearing a French uniform and fighting for France, he hoped that his own country would lose. This is because, like Brasillach, Rebatet admired what he saw in the military forces of Nazi Germany. Both Rebatet and Brasillach, based on their first-hand experiences, came to believe that the order and authoritarianism of Germany's brand of fascism could solve France's woes. In this way, Rebatet became staunchly pro-German, unlike his mentor Maurras; as he saw it, he never abandoned his French nationalism. Upon returning from war to a defeated France, Rebatet left the Action Française based on this ideological split, although he still believed a great deal of the ideology that Maurras had imparted on him.³⁰

During the Occupation, Rebatet resumed his position on the writing staff of *Je Suis Partout* and also became the editor of another popular collaborationist newspaper called *Le Cri Du Peuple*. In his contributions to these publications, Rebatet freely expressed his radical fascist ideology and pro-German sentiment. He worked closely with Brasillach at *Je Suis Partout* and he soon achieved star status as both a cultural critic and a front-page editorialist. He made his first printed anti-Semitic remarks, advocated National Socialism, and praised Hitler and concentration camps. Many Vichy officials even found him to be excessive in this regard.³¹ He mocked republicanism in an article printed in *Je Suis Partout* entitled "Civilization Before the War":

European democracy has died. She died because she has always preached, for a hundred years, a utopian and equal government. This goal was not realized. Its fatal error was its mediocre personnel and corruption. This made it impossible for her to establish the order for which our century awaits.³²

²⁷ Robert Brasillach, "Petits Conseils sur les Grands Mots," *Revolution Nationale* (June 1944), 1.

²⁸ Kaplan, *The Collaborator*, xi.

²⁹ Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy*, 57.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 237.

³¹ Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy*, 234.

³² Lucien Rebatet, "La Civilisation Devant la Guerre," *Je suis partout*, 3 February 1943, p. unknown, translation by author.

Here, in Rebatet's own words, it is clear that he despised republicanism and yearned for the "order" that he believed German authoritarianism would bring to France and all of Europe. However, he either did not realize or purposely failed to acknowledge that authoritarianism can suffer from corruption and sub-par bureaucrats as well. Rebatet also expressed his pro-German, anti-republican position in his book, *Les Décombres (The Ruins)*, which he published in 1942 while contributing to *Je Suis Partout*. In the introduction, Rebatet blamed republicanism for France's woes:

France is covered in ruins: ruins of things, ruins of dogmas, ruins of institutions. They are not the work of a single, chance cataclysm. This book is a chronicle of a long slide, of successive collapses that have accumulated these enormous piles of rubble.³³

He proceeded to argue that France should embrace fascism because it would restore the country to its past glory. Thus, Rebatet believed that he was still a French nationalist even though he advocated all things German. This is because, according to him, the German way would help France to resurrect itself from its ruinous state. From such writings, it is clear that Rebatet was in complete ideological agreement with the Nazis.

In 1943, when Brasillach left *Je Suis Partout*, Rebatet split with him because he did not believe that the Germans would lose the war. He chose to stay with the paper until the Allies folded it on the day of the Liberation in 1944. Rebatet immediately fled to Germany, but was eventually arrested in Austria in May 1945. In November 1946, he was tried and convicted of collaboration. He was initially sentenced to death, but a group of fellow writers pleaded for mercy on his behalf and his sentence was commuted to five years of forced labor. In 1952, he was released from prison and he returned to writing. Rebatet remained an unrepentant fascist until his death in 1972.

Conclusion

The French collaborationist intellectuals Robert Brasillach and Lucien Rebatet clearly had purely ideological reasons for choosing to collaborate so ardently with the German occupying forces and the Vichy government from 1940 until the Allied liberation in 1944. These reasons included, but were not limited to, an unwavering anti-Semitic sentiment, a rejection of the liberal republicanism of the Third Republic, a rejection of the perceived decadence of contemporary European society, a desire for an authoritarian government to take power, and a strong pro-German sentiment. Their intellectual promotion of this highly fascist ideology, except for their pro-German sentiment, was directly shaped by their respective personal relationships with Charles Maurras and their work with the Action Française. Brasillach and Rebatet believed that the way to solve France's woes was to accept German authority. Both Brasillach and Rebatet's adoption of this ideology and pro-German sentiment is evident throughout their published writings, and especially in their political journalism. Their many editorials in the collaborationist newspaper *Je Suis Partout* provide a thorough explanation in their own words for why these two once-promising intellectuals held the views they did. These two men were clearly motivated to collaborate based on purely ideological reasons; any material gains or protection they may have acquired from the Nazi occupiers or the Vichy government were simply added bonuses. Based on this analysis, it is possible to better understand an intellectual's full embrace of an enemy ideology and the betrayal of his own country.

³³ Lucien Rebatet, *Les Décombres*, (Paris: Denoël, 1942), p. unknown.