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Alice Kaplan, *The Collaborator: The Trial and Execution of Robert Brasillach*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000. xvi + 308pp. Notes and index. \$25.00 (cl). ISBN 0-226-42414-6.

Megan Koreman, *The Expectation of Justice: France 1944-1946*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999. xviii + 340pp. Notes, maps, index and bibliography. ISBN 0-8223-2373-7.

Review by Robert Zaretsky, Honors College, University of Houston.

Alice Kaplan's important book brings Camus' name to mind. Albert Camus, of course: editor of the resistance paper *Combat*, author of the classic account of Occupied France, *The Plague*, and embattled conscience of postwar France. Camus played a signal role in the Brasillach affair, crossing swords with François Mauriac over the competing imperatives of justice and mercy. Camus at first held that France's future depended upon delivering exemplary, severe punishment to those who had betrayed the nation. Yet, when presented with a petition to commute the death sentence of Brasillach, accused of treason, Camus signed it. He explained: "I've always held the death penalty in horror and judged that, at least as an individual, I couldn't participate in it, even by abstention. That's all. And this is a scruple that I suppose would make Brasillach's friend laugh." Camus signed neither for the writer, whom he found insignificant, nor the individual, whom he despised; instead, moral scruple dictated his decision.

A second Camus, however, hovers over this book: Renaud Camus. During most of 2000, Paris intellectuals were boxing one another's ears over the publication of the lesser Camus' journal *La Campagne de France*. Renaud Camus would have remained obscure in France, and unknown in the US, had he not decided to share with his journal, and thus with his few thousand readers, his belief that elements of the French media are dominated by Jews -- a people, he added, who require at least a few generations to become truly French. The subsequent debate sparked by Camus' dim, Barresian reflections, which his publisher Fayard expunged from a revised edition, has centered on the conflicting duties of the public intellectual. Some insist upon the right to "*mal penser*," which echoes the claim made by the editor Jean Paulhan, in the wake of Brasillach's sentencing, that the writer has the "right to error." Others emphasize the imperative to challenge any and all instances of racist or anti-Semitic discourse. The recent furniture breaking and breast beating that constitutes the Camus Affair reminds us of the relevance of the issues raised in the Brasillach Affair. Kaplan's study, however, provides a welcome perspective in the current welter of bruised egos and name-calling. Her study is a deeply personal, yet selfless account -- one that unsettles by the power of its insights and candor of its interpretation.

A professor of French at Duke University, Kaplan specializes in the literature of French fascism and may be best known for a memoir published in 1993, *French Lessons*. The book is a deeply moving account of Kaplan's relationship with her father, who had served as a lawyer at the Nuremberg Trials -- a relationship which, in marvelous ways, led to her love of French. Kaplan recounts a series of interviews with Maurice Bardèche, Brasillach's brother-in-law. Refined, courteous, even charming, Bardèche was a man of letters and a specialist on Balzac and film. He was also a "negationist" (the more accurate French term for revisionist), fascist, and anti-Semite, devoting his life to maintaining the flame

of Brasillach's memory. Kaplan had brought a plum tart to one of the Bardèche family gatherings, leading Brasillach's widow, Suzanne, to say, "Robert loved these tarts." Confusing, disturbing moments for anyone, not to mention for a young graduate student. Alice Kaplan left these encounters as doubtful and troubled by her own reasons as Bardèche's for entering this relationship. She wondered why she fought "the battles of another time and place, as though they were mine" (p.199). Following the publication of her first book, Kaplan received a letter from Bardèche, in which he released the pent-up venom of his racist urges. In response, she describes an "imaginary movie" about visiting Bardèche's summer house: "I run back to [his] study and challenge him; tell him I despise him, that he is lying, that he can't face the truth of his own guilt. I refuse to eat with his family, out of ethics. I put on my headphones, and I put him on the stand" (p.200).

The movie has finally been produced. One of the many merits of the present book is its dissection of Bardèche's suppression of numerous anti-Semitic passages, and his fanciful interpretation of other treasonous or simply despicable passages, in Brasillach's writings. Kaplan thus succeeds, many years later, in challenging Bardèche. She challenges his and his brother-in-law's decision to engage in the adventure of French fascism, she challenges his subsequent revision of this adventure, and she makes a powerful case against their knowing and willful acts. Her analysis of Brasillach's trial is a second trial of sorts: it weaves the re-construction of her father's role at the Nuremberg trials -- a young man wearing headphones, listening to the testimony of the defendants -- and Brasillach's trial at the *Palais de Justice*. Historian and lawyer, Kaplan provides a lucid commentary on the public and historical events, and a liberating conclusion to her private and autobiographical events.

Based on one's perspective, Robert Brasillach was either the beneficiary or victim of the education provided at the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*. Yet Brasillach left before graduating and made a dazzling entrance onto the Paris literary scene. In 1931, when he was just 21, Brasillach was named literary editor at *Action Française*; a few years later, he became editor-in-chief of *Je Suis Partout*. The papers were equally notorious for their anti-Semitic rants and conspiratorial world views. But as Kaplan notes, *Action Française's* literary qualities claimed the attention of even those opposed to its politics: "Even Walter Benjamin read the *Action Française* daily" (p.11). In addition to his meteoric rise as a critic, one who expressed a steady admiration of Nazi Germany, Brasillach also published a number of novels during the 1930s, most notably *Comme le temps passe* and *Les Sept Couleurs*. France's defeat in 1940, followed by a stint in a POW camp, hardly dampened Brasillach's frenzy to write. In 1941, Brasillach was released from his POW camp -- an act initiated by the German Embassy in Paris, which had fingered Brasillach as a willing and talented collaborator in the construction of the New European Order. He reassumed his editorial duties at *Je Suis Partout*, which had the highest circulation of any daily in Occupied France, and also wrote for other collaborationist journals. He wrote and wrote to the day of France's liberation. In hiding, then in prison, during his trial, and to the very eve of his execution for having betrayed France, he continued to write. He wrote as if it would save his life. He wrote, in fact, as if it was the sole way to create his life. On both counts, Brasillach failed.

Brasillach failed to live up to his literary ambitions. Even for fellow writers on the Right, like Thierry Maulnier, Brasillach's novels were naïve and sentimental, flat and empty of complex characters. Kaplan points to a "radical disjunction" between Brasillach's two writing styles: on the one hand, it is nostalgic and sentimental, on the other hand, it is cruel and dehumanizing. He was incapable of channeling "anger and criticism into the world of his fiction, and wasn't able to nuance his critical judgment in the world of journalism" (p.25). It was, in the end, as a journalist and critic that Brasillach left his mark. The *enfant terrible* of the Paris intellectual scene, Brasillach mocked, cursed, denounced the literary and political institutions of the Republic. His writing was steeped in the tropes of anti-Semitism -- for example, recasting the so-called "Jewish Question" as the "The Monkey Question" -- and, as editor of *Je Suis Partout*, he oversaw the even more defamatory prose of writers like Lucien Rebatet. His journalistic and editorial practices, noxious in peacetime France, became criminal in the context of Occupied France. Denunciatory and hate-ridden, his writing could now be fatal to others. As Kaplan writes, following

France's defeat, the "written word had a new status, a new power to do evil and good. Writers and intellectuals, whether they liked it or not, were read politically" (p.33).

Kaplan analyzes the words chosen by Brasillach, then broadcast by the collaborationist press. While still a POW he wrote an article in which he mockingly identified certain fellow officers as Jewish—an act pregnant with horrific consequences for those officers. Once released from camp, he maintained his attack against the "Judeo-Gaullist" forces threatening France. For example, in "Les Sept Internationales contre la patrie," written after the round-up of the *Vel d'Hiv*, Brasillach identified the Jews as one of the anti-French elements, demanding that France separate from "the Jews *en bloc* and not keep any little ones" (p.50). In yet another piece, titled "La Conjuración anti-fasciste au service du juif," he identifies Léon Blum and Georges Mandel, then being tried at the infamous Riom trials, as enemies of France. There are yet more examples, but the point is clear: in a country occupied by a regime whose ideology dictated the destruction of entire peoples, Brasillach collaborated fully and willingly. In one of his most notorious phrases, found in an article written shortly before France's liberation, Brasillach described the experience of collaboration with Nazi Germany: "We will have lived together." This phrase, cast in the future perfect tense — a tense that "looks toward the future by anticipating the past" (p.59) — serves as epitaph for the life and death chosen by Brasillach.

The book's longest chapter is devoted to the shortest event, the trial itself. It lasted a single afternoon. The jurors heard the defendant's own responses to the court's questions, followed by the arguments of both prosecution and defense. They quickly returned from their adjournment, having found Brasillach guilty of violating Article 75 of the French Penal Code, "intelligence with the enemy." Kaplan does a fine job in recreating the context and atmosphere of the trial, helped by the colorful personalities of those involved. There is, of course, Brasillach himself. One moment styling himself as Julien Sorel imprisoned in the tower at Besançon, the next moment posing as an aristocrat preparing to confront the Terror's revolutionary tribunal, Brasillach was always playing a role, always conscious of playing a role. He never grasped the consequences of his playacting nor the enormity of the charges brought against him. It is perhaps no accident that his most convincing book is the history of cinema he co-wrote with Bardèche. As with his writing, Brasillach himself seemed to lack a sense of reality. Kaplan's conclusion for Brasillach's understanding of fascism, that he "relied on the reference points and vocabulary of a literary critic — images, poetry, myths with barely a reference to politics, economics, or ethics" (p.13) — can also be applied to his understanding of life and the consequences of his words and acts.

Brasillach's defense attorney, Jacques Isorni, turns out to be a surprisingly complex individual. The child of an Italian immigrant, Isorni was momentarily subject to Vichy's law barring the children of non-French parents from practicing law or medicine. Deeply marked by this experience, Isorni devoted himself to the cases of those victimized by unjust laws and systems. From the defense of resistance fighters and hostages during the war, he moved to the defense of individuals accused after the war of collaboration. Incapable of distinguishing between the underdog and the criminal, resisting injustice and resisting justice, Isorni became one of the leading apologists for Petain and Vichy in postwar France. His gift for intellectual confusion is revealed in a childhood anecdote concerning Charles Maurras, the leader of *Action Française*. Isorni heard him give a public address and compared the scene to "Socrates teaching his disciples" (p.110). How telling that Isorni confounds the pedantic and humorless mandarin of reactionary thought with the sly and ambiguous master of dialectics.

The government prosecutor, Marcel Reboul, was, unlike Isorni, a private man. Most of what Kaplan learns about him is taken from personnel files, ministerial dossiers, the court transcripts and, most importantly, the testimony, given fifty years later, by his worshipful daughter. Kaplan acknowledges the problematic nature of such evidence. She thus annotates one of Bernadette Reboul's anecdotes, for which there is no archival evidence, about her father's clandestine resistance activity: "The archives themselves are no guarantee: what's in them, what's missing, has its own story. In this instance [Reboul's activity], there is only testimony, one generation removed. I like to imagine that Marcel Reboul was more decent

than the structure allowed, that he was principled in an unprincipled time. Maybe here I am indulging too much in the American tendency to think about this period in terms of ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys’: either I pin a medal on him, or I suspect his resistance stories. The only real proof we have of his behavior under Vichy comes after the fact. It is easy to imagine the way he told the story of the SS men to his daughter, the way he shaped it, with his booming voice, his rhetorical skills” (p.103).

Many issues are involved in this complex and intriguing passage that, rather than making an argument, confesses a desire. Kaplan’s sincerity and self-doubts are powerful and sincere. She reminds us of the ultimate elusiveness of human character, the shifting tones to personal memory, the role of self-fashioning, and the complexity of human agency. She also reminds historians that the epistemological foundations of our *métier* are not as solid as we would like. Desire may well play as decisive a role in our elaborate accounts as it does in Bernadette Reboul’s anecdote. (Implicit in Kaplan’s interpretation of Reboul’s character is her attitude towards her own father, who had been assigned a similar task at Nuremberg, and whose memory she clearly cherishes.)

These issues grow thornier as Kaplan continues her account. In a second anecdote, we learn that soon after Paris’ liberation, the family was listening to the radio and heard a broadcast from Sigmaringen, the German castle where the fanatics of Vichy’s last days had taken refuge. The announcer read out the names of those Frenchmen who, due to their resistance activity, would be shot if the Nazis retook France. Reboul’s name topped the list and his wife asked him to quit his job. Reboul refused, telling his wife that he chose to become a judge, not a haberdasher, and he would do his duty regardless of the risks. In the endnote, we learn that the account is based uniquely on an interview with Bernadette, recorded a half century later. In the same footnote, Kaplan observes that she looked for this particular radio transcript, but without success.

That Kaplan is limited to a single source is not in itself a problem—we have all known that in our research. Instead, the discomfort lies elsewhere. First, there is the nature of the scholarly apparatus. The endnotes are not numbered, but instead are cued, at the end of the book, by the relevant page number and key phrase. This streamlines the text, but also renders it more ambiguous, creating a novelistic sheen and inviting a blending of citation and speculation, interpretation and speculation. It also contributes to a kind of free indirect discourse, one that allows the author at times to confuse the attribution of speakers or sources. For example, in a passage devoted to the opening phase of the trial, when Brasillach is easily parrying the clumsy questions of the presiding judge Maurice Vidal, Kaplan writes “Reboul, who knew the *Je Suis Partout* articles by heart, was outraged. Why wasn’t Vidal challenging this distortion?” (p.157). This seems to be a straightforward passage. Yet, when we turn to the end of the book for the appropriate sources, we discover there are none. There neither is documentation for this moment of drama nor any clarification as to whom, in fact, is speaking. Is it Reboul who is wondering why Vidal is not challenging this distortion? Is it instead the narrator? Or is it the reader?

The German Romantic philosopher Novalis wrote that novels are born from the shortcomings of history. One values these narrative shifts in, say, Flaubert’s *Sentimental Education*, but worries about them in a work of history. My aim is not to question either Bernadette Reboul’s sincerity or Kaplan’s strenuous efforts to find corroborating evidence. Instead, it simply is to wonder where the lines are to be drawn between historical and novelistic narratives. This question crops up repeatedly, sometimes in the most banal moments. For instance, Kaplan tries to reconstruct the personalities and lives of the four jurors for Brasillach’s trial. It is an admirable, brilliant effort to gauge the distance between the working class suburbs and the *Palais de Justice* on the *Ile de la Cité*. As Kaplan notes, the Purge juries were liberally stocked with representatives of the working class, who were held *a priori* to be opponents of Vichy. But their class backgrounds render difficult any attempt to trace their lives, leading Kaplan to exclaim, “When it comes to what one might call the ordinary person, how few traces a life leaves!” (p.127). This more or less applies to the four Brasillach jurors, all from the Parisian suburbs. Faced with

mere scraps of documentation and a handful of oral accounts, Kaplan concludes, "I can only describe them, pointing to them as a cast of characters, locating them on a map of postwar suburban Paris" (p.142).

But Kaplan is being overly modest, if only because she has, at times, an ample, generous understanding of the term "description." For example, she writes that the four jurors, before leaving that afternoon for the court "bolted down their meals" (p.143). We don't know, of course, if they actually did so. That Paris was gripped by food shortages, that these men were about to judge the life of a fellow human being, might have incited them to drag out rather than dash through their meal of (we assume) soup, bread and cheese. But is it important, finally, that we don't know if the men ate slowly or quickly, thoughtfully or mechanically, praying for wisdom or asking for salt? Yes, it is important, if only because Kaplan, through her thoughtful reconstruction of the event -- and candor concerning her own motives -- makes it so. In the end, it is for the reader to accept or reject the author's effort to imagine her way into the everyday thoughts and gestures of these men. At critical moments, Kaplan reminds us of these interpretative constraints. When, for example, the jurors are called upon to decide Brasillach's fate, she concedes: "They listened and wrestled with their consciences, according to their personalities, their own experience, their sense of justice. We have virtually no access to their subjectivity. What leads up to their decision is inaccessible" (p.141).

In the end, the problem, if that is the word, is that Kaplan is not consistent in the work of historical recreation and empathy. On the one hand, she respects the inaccessibility of the jurors' consciences (if not their lunch menus), yet on the other hand, she assumes access to Reboul's motivations. Why one and not the other? And what is the key to this access? Or, in fact, to the reader's assent? Reboul's moral portrait is compelling, but is it because, like his portraitist, who worked largely from snapshots provided by his daughter, we wish him to be good? The meaning to some stories, as Kaplan notes, may be "wishful" (p.103), but where does this leave the ultimate historicity of this or any account?

And where does it leave our understanding of human agency? For example, Kaplan briefly traces the moral itineraries of a few other intellectuals across the rupture of 1940. She cites the case of the novelist and critic Claude Roy, who had been a member, like Brasillach, of *Action Française* during the 1930s, but met Louis Aragon in the wake of France's defeat: "This association changed the course of Roy's life and his politics" (p.33). Roy left the *Action Française* for the French Communist Party, and thus the Resistance. Kaplan concludes, "Many intellectuals changed their positions radically during the Occupation. Brasillach didn't" (p.34). But, phrased in this way, we are left with the impression that the choice between collaboration and resistance was a matter of chance, not will. Rather than falling in with Louis Aragon at *Ecole Normale Supérieure*, Brasillach attached himself to Maurice Bardeche. But this, as Kaplan makes clear, was a choice made by the young man -- just as Roy, in turn, was clearly disposed to cast his lot with the PCF and the Resistance.

At a more superficial level, there are a few hesitations. In terms of her historical account of Vichy, one might take issue with the reference to Vichy's anti-Semitic legislation as the one notable exception in the "administrative continuity" that existed between late Republican France and Vichy. (p.31) Though there was, of course, no anti-Semitic legislation in Republican France, there were, in the waning years, official policies of exclusion and surveillance of Communists and Spanish Republican refugees. Philippe Burrin, Robert Paxton, and Michael Marrus, among others, have suggested that such policies created an intellectual and administrative space for Vichy's subsequent frontal assault on French Jewry. Stylistically, Kaplan's account sometimes falls short of the heights attained in *French Lessons*. There is an occasional *faux ami*: for example, her description of the Charonne district as "popular" (p.76). It certainly is popular today with Parisian yuppies but was "populaire" only with the Parisian working class in the '40s. Sometimes she tries too hard to depict a scene, as when she describes Reboul's presence in the courtroom as a "long black silhouette, the very image of human conscience" (p.169) -- an odd image, to my mind, for human conscience. But much more often, Kaplan jolts with the apt phrase, as when she

describes the post-war Brasillach as “the James Dean of French fascism” (p.224). Or wonders what would have happened had General de Gaulle commuted Brasillach’s sentence: “Would he be sitting with his cohorts in the *Académie Française* today, a venerable eighty-eight-year old writer?” (p.214).

In the end, Kaplan is an eloquent and disturbing guide to the historical, historiographical, and moral issues she raises. These issues often overlap, as in her reflections upon the issue of timing for Brasillach's arrest and sentencing. Brasillach did not flee France, as did many of those who were hip-deep in collaboration. This meant that he was tried approximately a year before the great majority of collaborators, straggling in from Sigmaringen or from hiding places closer to home. As passions ran highest in the first months, Brasillach perhaps paid a higher price than he would have if he had been tried a year later. Yet Kaplan is unsparing on the question of Brasillach’s guilt. She makes clear the poisonous nature of Brasillach’s anti-Semitism, his incendiary, denunciatory and dehumanizing journalism, his calls for vengeance against the imagined enemies of France, his pleas for close collaboration with the Nazi occupiers. Was Brasillach guilty of the charges brought against him? Yes, Kaplan concludes. Should he have been shot? No, she affirms. Instead of rendering justice, the execution created a myth that eclipsed the reality of a second rate writer and truly nasty human being. Had it not been for the firing squad, the plum tart would have remained just a plum tart.

Brasillach’s trial riveted the attention of Paris intellectuals, perhaps even suburban workers, but did it also play in Ploermel? In her dazzling comparative study, Megan Koreman reminds us that justice could mean many things to “ordinary” men and women living far from Paris. *The Expectation of Justice: France 1944-1946* is a model of local and comparative history. Clearly written, extensively researched, and deeply reflective, the book assesses the experience of three provincial towns in the wake of France’s liberation. Though the Brasillach Affair was largely a Parisian affair, we find in Koreman’s study that provincial France nevertheless was concerned deeply by the issues of postwar justice. But it was an understanding of justice articulated less by the abstract discourses of intellectuals than by the material and historical peculiarities of local experience. The great failure of the postwar Provisional Government was its inability to either understand or act upon these local expectations of justice.

Koreman argues that the nature of the Gaullist, or so-called Resistencialist, myth -- that all of France, apart from a handful of collaborators, had risen as one to throw off the yoke of the Nazi occupation -- had a paradoxical impact on postwar France. On the one hand, by deliberately obscuring the complexities of French behavior during the Occupation, it allowed de Gaulle’s France in 1944 to claim equal status with its allies. It also provided the symbolic means for the Provisional Government to impose its authority on a deeply fractured nation. On the other hand, however, it collided with the expectations of justice that the experience of war, and the ideology of the Resistance, had created in the provinces. As Koreman points out, the Second World War “created the unusual situation in which ordinary people thought about the social contract and had an opportunity to renegotiate it. In *après-libération* France, the general consensus of the people in the provinces was that the new, postwar society should be based on justice” (p.4).

Whereas the issue of justice in Brasillach’s case was largely legal, Koreman shows that provincial Frenchmen and women understood the question in other, equally compelling ways. They too, of course, were concerned by the legal implications of a just society, but they also worried about the imperatives of social and honorary justice. Social justice governs the equitable distribution of essential good and services. In liberated France, hobbled by a severely damaged infrastructure and mushrooming inflation, social justice was articulated in the operations of the rationing system and the distribution of scarce commodities. As for honorary justice, it was fulfilled or denied in the ways in which heroes, dead or returning, were acknowledged by the state. For example, should honor be translated into political or electoral power? Here and elsewhere, Koreman reveals how these three facets of justice often overlapped.

No less importantly, she shows how the particularities of the various prewar and wartime experiences of each of these towns led, at times, to very different postwar attitudes. Koreman chose three ordinary, yet exceptional towns as the basis for her comparison: Saint-Flour, Moûtiers and Rambervillers. She reveals how Saint-Flour, located in the Auvergne, was largely spared the torments of the Occupation thanks to its proximity to Vichy (and its distance from sensitive areas or frontiers). The small Savoyard community of Moûtiers was galvanized by intense anti-Italian sentiment, as it fell within the Italian zone of occupation. It also became, given its strategic position and proximity to the Vercors, an arena for intense battles between the Resistance and Germans. Finally, Rambervillers, a settlement in the Vosges, lived under an overwhelming German presence during the war, followed at Liberation by an equally overwhelming American "occupation." As Koreman rightly notes, these towns' itineraries remind us that there are many histories of France's liberation. She thus explodes the *images d'Épinal* we have of France's liberation, restoring to each of these towns the specificity of its historical experiences.

Part of this work's fascination lies in the details that distinguish the experiences of these communities from one another. For example, we discover that the postwar purge in the Savoie was far more violent and enduring than it was in the other two regions. Not only was there a greater incidence of vigilante activity and head shaving of women accused of "horizontal collaboration," but the people of Moûtiers also felt a greater independence from and mistrust of Paris. When the Provisional Government, determined to establish its authority and enforce the myth of national reconciliation, granted clemency to a local member of the murderous Milice, the region protested so violently that Paris was forced to agree to a retrial (though we do not learn how it turns out). The region, bloodied by terrific civil war between the Resistance and Milice, had assumed, well before the Liberation, the "culture of the outlaw." Koreman makes excellent use of H.R. Kedward's notion to describe those regions, ranging from the Vercors to the Cévennes, where the local Resistance, and not the central authority of Vichy, embodied the ideals of justice. Yet, in the Savoie's case, this vacuum of centralized power continued through the first several months of the Provisional Government. Ironically, Paris responded to this vacuum by insisting upon its primacy, even if it had to do so by granting pardons to criminals abhorred by the local community. In 1944, there was a greater likelihood in certain regions for confrontations between the state and locality over the extent of the Purge and, more broadly, the meaning of justice.

As Koreman reminds us, justice was not only rendered in courts; it also was upheld or flouted through the rationing of food and the distribution of honors. Just as the administration of the nation's laws after the Liberation seemed, at times, to be a throwback to the Old Regime, so too did the system of provisioning. The post-liberation economy "looked more like that of 1738 than that of 1938 in terms of its vulnerability to the weather and the seasons [and] the prevalence of local economies over the national economy . . ." (p.148). The Provisional Government was remarkably blind or indifferent to the grim economic realities of the provinces. As a result, Paris unwittingly undermined its popular legitimacy in August 1945 by reintroducing free market principles in the distribution of bread, when neither the means nor material existed to guarantee equitable distribution. No less as symbol than as foodstuff, bread has played a critical role in French history. Just as Steven Kaplan has shown bread's importance in determining relations between the French monarchy and people, Koreman also argues persuasively that bread was the very foundation of popular legitimacy in 1944-45. Though the government soon realized its error and reinstated controls of bread provisioning, the damage had already been done: "the new Resistance government displayed a reprehensible lack of dedication to the principles of social justice and an inability to implement them" (p.254).

There are yet other continuities between Old Regime and post-liberation France. For example, Koreman persuasively argues that the widespread practice of shaving the heads of women accused of collaborating with the enemy was rooted in age-old communal methods of punishing transgression. When central authority is too weak or distant to mete out punishment, it falls to the local community to do so. But beyond these provocative continuities across time, Koreman also underscores the constants across space. In other words, despite the important differences among the histories of these three towns

-- and, by extension, the countless other communes of France -- there was a certain convergence of attitudes towards the Provisional Government. In the end, the Provisional Government privileged national goals, not local expectations. This explains both its clumsy handling of bread distribution and its inability to control the black market. It also motivated its generous granting of pardons and ill-considered holding of elections before the return of the so-called Absents (the approximately two million prisoners of war, deportees, laborers and others still in Germany at the time of Liberation). As a result, the government, if not the person of Charles de Gaulle, gave itself -- and the cause of republicanism -- a tremendous black eye. It also dealt a fatal blow to the ideals of the Resistance, whether the perspective was from the heights of the Alps or the blue line of the Vosges. While in Alice Kaplan's account, Camus and Mauriac, Isorni and Reboul battled over the imperatives of justice for a new France, Megan Koreman observes that the fate of this same France was also played out hundreds of miles from the *Palais de Justice*, in bread lines and municipal electoral lists.

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