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Maritain, Simon, and Vichy's Elite Schools

I. Forming Youth Leaders: August 1940 to June 1941

During the early years of the war, the Vichy regime tried to revolutionize French young people with elite schools in an effort to transform the country through a "National Revolution." One of those schools, the Ecole Nationale des Cadres d'Uriage, was particularly prominent and sophisticated—a surrogate for the old Ecole Normale Supérieure, which, despite its very limited enrollment, had produced an impressive number of the leaders of the now defunct and discredited Republic. From August 1940 to June 1941, the Uriage school evolved from the relatively modest ambition of training instructors for one of the new scout-like youth movements,¹ to becoming a "spiritual university" geared toward forming the elite of France's future leadership. As we shall see, there was a peculiar and somewhat paradoxical relationship between Jacques Maritain, and Yves R. Simon, and these now forgotten Vichy initiatives.

During the early 1940s, Simon told Maritain that their Thomism had failed as a guide to confronting the political situation in Europe. Simon was reading books on the French revolution, and he urged Maritain, too, to "rethink his past," especially his past attitude toward democracy. What disturbed Simon, first of all, was the shocking behavior of some of their friends during the war (eg., Father Garrigou-Lagrange, distinguished authority on Saint Thomas and celebrant of the Maritain retreats at Meudon a few years earlier, had become a firm champion of Franco and

¹The *Chantiers de la jeunesse*.

Pétain, declaring support for de Gaulle a mortal sin for Catholics). In fact, there were problems with the attitude of a whole Catholic generation toward fascism. Simon, and eventually Maritain, too, wondered over the wisdom of their having concentrated their own energies at promoting a Thomist renaissance in their country, as the political situation steadily worsened.²

Jacques Maritain's influence in the 1920s and 1930s was not only in inspiring young philosophers such as Simon, Mortimer Adler, Etienne Borne, or Emmanuel Mounier, but also in more broadly shaping a new collective religious mentality. His popular books, such as *Antimodern*, *The Primacy of the Spiritual*, *Three Reformers*, and *Integral Humanism*, his efforts to shape a Catholic counterculture in reviews such as *Sept*, *Temps Présent*, or *Esprit*, the Meudon discussion and study circles, were all important for this. Internationally renowned and respected as a Catholic philosopher, theologian, and political theorist, Maritain was also a respected commentator on the arts, a social critic, and an expert on medieval thought who also lived as a conspicuous and charismatic ascetic, as a sort of lay cardinal, in the most rarefied intellectual and literary circles of Paris and New York. He was eventually venerated as a moral guide if not some kind of living saint by his contemporaries,³ and so his attitude toward fascism in general, and toward the kind of clerico-quasi fascism around Pétain in par-

²Simon lamented, for example, that Christian and Thomist moderation of his earlier denunciation of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia that had rejected the idea of violent resistance to fascism. For further details on the events mentioned in this paragraph, see my essay, "Yves R. Simon, Jacques Maritain, and the Vichy Catholics," in Yves R. Simon, *The Road to Vichy, 1918–1938*, revised edition (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), vii–xxxiv.

³A typical anecdote: Paul Martin, Sr., later a distinguished Canadian politician, retains, as one of his most vivid memories of student days at Saint Michael's College at the University of Toronto during the 1930s, observing the great Jacques Maritain serving the morning Mass of a humble young priest in a campus basement chapel "as if he were just anyone" (interview with the author). In North American Catholic circles, where serious Catholic thought was largely imported, having Maritain around seemed the next best thing to having Saint Thomas Aquinas himself.

ticular, was of some importance.

At Vichy, the metamorphosis of young people was to be the thrust of the "National Revolution," a transformed elite among them was deemed essential to achieving this goal. Catholics were to be crucial to this effort;⁴ on September 6, the new governmental organization created a "Secrétariat général à la jeunesse" with a young, devout engineer, Georges Lamirand, as "secrétaire général."

A thirty-four-year-old Catholic cavalry officer from a traditionalist provincial aristocratic background, Captain Pierre Dunoyer de Segonzac, received permission on August 12, 1940, to create a special school in a château near Vichy. It was to transform 140 junior officers into the first cadres for the "Chantiers de la Jeunesse."⁵ With the requisitioning of a new château in the mountains above Grenoble and the arrival of a new cohort on October 5, 1940, however, Segonzac's school was no longer merely a leadership school for the "Chantiers" but, rather, a "Centre supérieur de formation des chefs," with what soon appeared to be the grandiose ambition of constituting an alternative sort of "Ecole Normale Supérieure," to replace the old secularizing and anti-Catholic one, and of creating a fresh kind of elite for a new kind of France.⁶ The Catholic influence was graphically represented by the fact that the group of ninety-five original trainees

⁴Jean Ybarnégaray was given the new position of "Le Secrétariat d'Etat à la Famille et à la Jeunesse," created on July 12, 1940. He had been a right-wing deputy and the vice-president of Colonel de la Rocque's Parti Social Français (an organization dominated by Catholics), and he soon hired many Catholics.

⁵W.D. Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 311–12.

⁶The Ecole Normale Supérieure had long been a bête noire for French Catholics, for it had "long been the hatchery of France's liberal academic and even political elite," having "not only nurtured the secular sociology of Durkheim and the socialism of Jaurès and Lucien Herr," but also "served as headquarters of the pro-Dreyfus camp during the Affair." Cf. Paul Cohen, *Piety and Politics. Catholic Revival and the Generation of 1905–1914 in France* (New York: Garland, 1987), 19. By the late 1930s, French Catholics held the ENS responsible for an over-representation of Jews and Protestants among France's intellectual and political elites. Once the Catholics had the political backing, they turned to creating alternative institutions.

would number ten seminarians, . . . and even a Cistercian monk!⁷ Captain Dunoyer de Segonzac was an ardent Catholic, had contacts with the energetic “Latour-Maubourg” Dominicans⁸ (the publishers of several reviews to which Maritain contributed), and deemed the French Catholic intellectual renaissance an inspiration for his school.

The school’s dramatic new setting was the romantic “Chateau Bayard” near the alpine village of Saint Martin d’Uriage, on a high plateau above Grenoble. This imposing seventy-room historical edifice, whose first constructions dated from the twelfth century, was requisitioned, along with neighboring properties, including several chalets placed at the disposition of the married instructors. The school chaplain, the Abbé René de Naurois, would play a decisive role in its early ideological orientation. He was a disciple of Maritain’s close friend Père Bernadot, founder of the erudite *La Vie Intellectuelle*, as well as of the more popular *Sept*. Despite his ties to intellectuals, Naurois was basically an activist,⁹ who had been a militant member of *Esprit*’s activist auxiliary, the “Third Force,” and had led *Esprit* group trips to Germany in the 1930s.¹⁰ Naurois contributed to the distinctive religious element in the Uriage “style.”

What was to be the general orientation of the new Ecole Nationale des Cadres d’Uriage? In an article on “youth movements” in Europe, one of the young instructors promoted the idea of a distinctly French experience

⁷The idea of even a few seminarians in the prewar ENS, with its high-powered rationalism, is hard to imagine. For these, and many other details regarding the Uriage school, I am much indebted to Bernard Comte’s doctoral dissertation, *L’Ecole Nationale des Cadres d’Uriage. Une communauté éducative non conformiste à l’époque de la révolution nationale (1940–1942) I & II* (Lyon, 1987), 1203 pp. (in this case, 111 and 335). As M. Comte mentioned in his text, I do not agree with his general view of the overall significance of the Uriage enterprise.

⁸The convent and publishing offices of the avant-garde French Dominicans were located on the Boulevard Latour-Maubourg in Paris, near the Invalides.

⁹M. Hubert Beuve-Méry remembered him as “an odd sort of curé who looked more comfortable in battle fatigues with grenades strapped about his waist than in a cassock” (interview with the author).

¹⁰One of these, during Easter vacation in 1938, is described in Jacques Madaule’s memoirs, *L’Absent* (Paris, 1973), 113–14. The young Frenchmen were invited to dinner by the *Deutsche-Französische Gesellschaft* and to visit a National Socialist *Ordensburg* (elite school) in the Baltic Sea.

over against the Italian and the German.¹¹ At this time, the Study Bureau of the "Secrétariat Général à la Jeunesse" was itself putting out a literature that referred to the famous reactionary writers of the nineteenth century such as Joseph de Maistre and Charles Maurras, but also to the authors of the Catholic revival—Péguy, François Perroux, Mounier, Berdyaev . . . and Jacques Maritain—and calling for a "purely French" youth option, a "Catholic Order."¹² And the Uriage school was to be just a beginning: in December 1940, Georges Lamirand proudly announced that he had created almost sixty "Ecoles des chefs" that rivaled one another in vision and enthusiasm. But at the head of them all was Uriage, the "université spirituelle de la jeunesse."¹³

II. The Study Group and the New Christian Order

The Abbé de Naurois encouraged *Esprit* director Emmanuel Mounier and the personalist philosopher Jean Lacroix, as well as Père Henri de Lubac, to help elaborate the Uriage ideology. And as it was being hammered out, in a crucial debate over "the future of French youth," Mounier's "communitarian personalism" surfaced as the most popular doctrine there. So, from relative obscurity, as a marginal radical Catholic writer, Mounier became *the* philosopher of the "spiritual university" of France's National Revolution. Displaying the school's greater ambitions, Segonzac and Naurois announced to the first evening fireside gathering of the December 1940 cohort, that all men, whatever post of command they would be responsible for in the outside world, whether functionaries or engineers, professor or lawyers, would submit to a training period at the school as part of a process of effecting the total transformation of France.¹⁴

At this point, a decisive, remarkable personality joined the staff of the school as director of studies. Hubert Beuve-Méry had been at *L'Institut français de Prague* from 1928–38, as well as correspondent for the prestigious newspaper *Le Temps* (whose confiscated facilities he would use, after the war, to create *Le Monde*). A vigorous and manly Catholic, a dedi-

¹¹The sociologist Paul-Henri Chombart de Lauwe, cited in Comte, *Uriage*, 172.

¹²P. Ordoni, *Tout commence à Alger*, 106–15, cited by Comte, *Uriage*, 182.

¹³This is what the Uriage school was called in an official publication. See Comte, *Uriage*, 187.

¹⁴Comte, *Uriage*, 230.

cated alpinist convinced that the French were no match for the Nazis he had seen on the march in eastern Europe, Beuve-Méry had encountered similar thinking at the progressive Catholic weekly *Temps nouveau*,¹⁵ directed by Maritain's close friend Stanislas Fumet, as well as at Mounier's *Esprit*.¹⁶ After having held a French cultural and foreign affairs post of the French government in Lisbon for six weeks, Beuve-Méry returned to France to take up the position of director of studies at the Uriage school in June, 1941. Some months before, in an essay analyzing National Socialism, Beuve-Méry had argued that "over against the deprivations of intellectualism, of individualism, of liberalism, and of capitalism, over against the watering down and deviations of Christianity . . . before degenerating . . . into corruption and cruelty, [National Socialism] helped give men . . . a taste for life and the courage of sacrifice, the feeling of a solidarity and of a certain grandeur."¹⁷ Soon, Beuve-Méry began setting forth a vision of a new, more virile Christianity, a personalist humanism, which could inspire the work of the men of Uriage.

By spring of 1941, the Uriage school had drawn the elite of France's young Catholic intellectuals:

- Hubert Beuve-Méry, founder of France's most important newspaper;
- Henri de Lubac, later to become one of France's most important post-war theologians and cardinal in the Catholic Church;
- Emmanuel Mounier, director of *Esprit*, France's most important Catholic intellectual review;
- Jean Lacroix, perhaps France's most important postwar personalist philosopher.

These talented, dedicated, and energetic young intellectuals were put together in a château with the flower of the younger members of the French officer corps and an apparent mandate to transform France's whole educational system, and, with it, French society. In any case, the naively enthusiastic general secretary, Lamirand, was delighted with Uriage and would remain a firm supporter . . . whatever the young people there thought of him. (On visiting Uriage, Lamirand began shaking hands

¹⁵He wrote a column for this journal under the pen name "Sirius."

¹⁶Maritain had played a key role in founding this. See my *Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left, 1932-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

¹⁷Hubert Beuve-Méry, *Vers la plus grande Allemagne* (Paris, 1938), 100-01.

warmly with the cadets, looking each individual directly in the eyes in good "personalist" fashion. So, as a joke, several of the trainees, having passed to the other side of the hall, climbed down a drain pipe only to reappear at the door again . . . and receive another "personal" handshake.)¹⁸

The "Uriage spirit" was first formulated, and then diffused, in the teaching given to the trainees and later passed on by them in the different schools in which they taught. After that, there was a publicly circulated, popularized periodical: *Jeunesse . . . France!* There were also the Uriage Study Group's efforts to achieve a formal expression of their ideas, particularly in the Charter set down in late 1941, and also the alumni network set up by the school, the "Equipe Nationale d'Uriage." At Uriage, philosophers, heirs of Péguy, Blondel, and Maritain, with their dream of a spiritual revolution, met young army officers, heirs of Lyautey, with their own idea of a patriotic education geared toward disciplined and efficacious action. But always, at Uriage, the spiritual dimension drew everyone together. Père de Lubac described the "Catholic renaissance" as an element in the "present work of reconstruction" in France; citing Beuve-Méry, he conveyed the "dream of a generation of young Frenchmen who would take Christianity seriously."¹⁹ Beuve-Méry, for himself, spoke of a "communitarian order" over against "anarchic individualism" and the "reign of money." In portraying what was distinctive about Uriage in *Temps nouveau*, Beuve-Méry described the school doctrine as contained in the

¹⁸Comte, *Uriage*, 320.

¹⁹Père de Lubac cited Beuve-Méry's article "Révolutions nationales, révolutions humaines," which had been published in *Esprit* (March 1941): 281–84. It is possible that de Lubac's hopes for a Christian renaissance growing from such somber times were encouraged by the cosmic optimism of his close friend and fellow Jesuit, the evolutionist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Mimeographed copies of Père Teilhard's speculations circulated at Uriage, and de Lubac wrote of his own hopes for a spiritual revival in France to the paleontologist, then in exile in China. Beuve-Méry's idea of creating elites who would be crucial once the inevitable authoritarian revolution came to France had already been noted in *Esprit* before the war. See *Esprit* 80 (May 1939): 302–03.

speeches of Pétain, but said "its method, its spirit" constituted its originality.²⁰

The Uriage Charter, set down in fall of 1941, seemed a sort of "rule of life of a community," in which references to a "collective experience" eclipsed references to the Marshall and to the objectives of the National Revolution. The fundamental commitment of the school was to "the service of the spiritual," but, while only "a religious faith" could give "full value to that affirmation," a "man of good will" deciding to "transcend himself toward the ideal," could nurture an authentic interior life. The foremost authority on Uriage has described the first chapter of this Charter as very much reflecting "the vocabulary and structures of thought familiar to the readers of Jacques Maritain."²¹ The visionaries of Uriage—consciously avoiding "the capital sin of caste spirit"—recognized that, for national renovation, the first condition was the "determining and putting in place of authentic elites." But how could one create these new elites in a France dominated by the Nazis? The correct sense of "strength" was regularly debated by the Christians at Uriage. In 1941, Etienne Borne showed the similarities and differences between the sort of "heroic" morality then being vaunted in France and true Christian morality. Père de Lubac analyzed the notion of a "virile order." Dunoyer de Segonzac rejected the notion that Christianity necessarily devirilized men.²²

²⁰*Temps nouveau* (August 15, 1941). This review was suppressed, along with *Espirit*, soon after the appearance of this article, as part of a struggle for the ideological orientation of the National Revolution. Dunoyer de Segonzac's pretensions and radical Catholic rhetoric had attracted people. Sympathizers of the *Action Française* feared for their own influence over the young.

²¹Comte, *Uriage*, 380.

²²Etienne Borne, "D'un héroïsme chrétien" in *Jeunesse et communauté nationale* (Cerf, Rencontre, n. 3, 1941). Pierre Dunoyer de Segonzac, "Réponse: Le christianisme a-t-il dévirilisé l'homme?" *Jeunesse de l'Eglise* 2 (1943): 78–82.

III. The Uriage "Style"

Was Uriage as uplifting as its instructors imagined it to be? One former trainee described his "growing discomfort in that 'community,' which seemed to have something of both the regiment and the monastery about it with . . . neither the interior liberty which . . . the army left to soldiers, nor the personal space which monastic silence provided. . . ." ²³ But there were admirers, too. The extreme-right writer Alfred Fabre-Luce found the idea of an Order in the air at Uriage in fall 1941: "The carefully chosen youth of Uriage are like a first cell of a new world. . . . From a union of young and ardent young men, in a sublime setting *from which women are excluded* [emphasis my own], was germinating a force which endures. To the France of Pétain, will survive, if necessary, an Order of Knights of Uriage." ²⁴ Again: "On that hill, I dreamed . . . of an Order of Knights who would maintain lofty values in the vulgarized 20th century world." ²⁵ In fact, chivalry was evoked in the symbol marking *Ecole Nationale des Cadres* publications: a lance-bearing knight, mounted and armored from head to foot, his face entirely hidden in his mask. Here was a medieval ideal of honor and generosity over against the individualism and the materialism of a bourgeois and urbanized modern era. The influence of Berdyaev, with his book predicting *A New Middle Ages*, and of Maritain, combined with Péguy to inspire these initiatives. Maritain had backed Belgian Raymond De Becker's *Communauté* movement in 1933–34, an effort to create an explicitly Catholic "order" of laymen oriented toward the purification of its members while also supporting their political or social initiatives. ²⁶ Another ecumenical, communitarian-style endeavor of the period—although itself directed by clergy, not laymen—was the famous Protestant monastic community of Taizé, near Lyon, which has promoted

²³Interview recorded in Comte, *Uriage*, 397.

²⁴Alfred Fabre-Luce, *Journal de France, 1939–1944*, definitive edition, vol. II (Geneva, 1946), 387. The original text is from 1942.

²⁵Alfred Fabre-Luce, *Vingt-cinq années de liberté*, II: *L'épreuve* (1939–1946) (Paris, 1963), 95. This text dates from twenty years later.

²⁶Etienne Borne, "D'un héroïsme chrétien."

charismatic multinational ecumenical gatherings of young Christians to this day. Some of these spiritual initiatives were less explicitly "medieval" than others, but all tended to assume that Western Europe had entered into a "New Middle Ages," probably for a long time, and one had to attune accordingly.

A year after the creation of the Ecole Nationale des Cadres d'Uriage, its directors enjoyed an attractive community life in an impressive retreat setting (facilities which the advocates of personalist revolution, at *Ordre Nouveau* or *Esprit*, did not yet have),²⁷ a task (the training of young men), a network of affiliates, and a method. They also enjoyed high-level government and Church endorsement and the encouragement of a whole network of prewar counterculture groups. Convinced of the insufficiency of the purely intellectual selection criteria of the *grandes écoles*, Uriage sought candidates "selected for their leadership abilities" or "remarkable simply for their aptitude to command."²⁸ The Uriage school alone (without its affiliates), during the first fifteen months of its activity, "formed" about 1,000 young men in ten normal sessions, and 600 in special sessions.²⁹

The intelligentsia at the Ecole Nationale des Cadres regularly thought about their role in an international perspective. In his lecture on "a Christian explanation of our times," Père de Lubac criticized contemporary illusions and called for the development of a truly "Catholic" spirit after

²⁷After the war, however, the *Esprit* group would build a community, which exists to this day, in the grouping of romantic old buildings in "Les Murs Blancs" at Chatenay-Malabry, near Paris, buildings acquired on the eve of the war. Mounier, Henri-Irénée Marrou, Jean-Marie Domenach, and Paul Ricoeur have been among the best known inhabitants.

²⁸Dunoyer de Segonzac, "A la recherche des chefs," *Jeunesse ... France!* (September 22, 1941).

²⁹Comte, *Uriage*, 419.

centuries of individualistic and rationalistic deviation ... a "human revolution." Père de Lubac's had something of the trans-cultural cosmic optimism of his friend Père Teilhard de Chardin, and he could have sketched the vast horizons of Teilhard's evolutionary metahistory at Uriage.³⁰ Hubert Beuve-Méry was, characteristically, more down to earth in his conferences, as he stressed the positive qualities of the Portuguese youth movements he had observed firsthand.³¹ This was not so surprising because several French Catholic intellectuals in the 1930s had also evinced a sympathetic interest in the Portuguese model. Maritain, for example, was read and admired by Dr. Salazar and had visited Portugal on the dictator's personal invitation. Salazar represented a relatively "soft" Catholic authoritarianism, firmly "spiritualist" and anticommunist, capable of making its own sort of peace with a fascist Europe. Portuguese efforts to promote spiritual values among the young had to seem an attractive alternative to Nazism, to Bolshevism, and to the "materialism" of East and West for many French Catholics. The Uriage leaders, on their alpine plateau, seemed to think that France, too, could transcend republicanism, liberalism, and democracy, and create a relatively humane and Christian authoritarian regime, nurtured by "the primacy of the spiritual," in a lucid, critical acceptance of a European New Order.³²

³⁰Since, in Teilhard's evolutionary philosophy, "everything which rises must converge," fascism and National Socialism, however rough and aberrant at present, had necessarily to contribute to the inevitable spiritualization of mankind in the "noosphere." This was a useful perspective for trying to "Christianize" fascism or Nazism, but less encouraging to resisting totalitarianism in the name of individual liberty. Like so many others of his generation, Père Teilhard argued for the "personalizing" of the individual through communitarian involvement.

³¹Comte, *Uriage*, 466.

³²Catholics had become so critical of "individualism" and "liberalism" by the late 1930s that they voiced little regret over their apparent disappearance from the European scene ... even if it was a scene dominated by Adolf Hitler. Nevertheless, Professor Comte tries hard to prove that, in contrast to the gist of several of their public pronouncements, the Uriage leaders never believed that international fascism would win the war.

IV. Life on the Mountain

The style of humanism that the Uriage school was trying to promote is well illustrated by the authorities, or literary references, alluded to in the lectures given there. Charles Péguy was most often cited; after him, Vigny, Montherlant, Saint-Exupéry, Malraux, Pascal, or Dostoevsky. Despite the grandiose pedagogical ambitions of the school, contemporary scientific thought was ignored, as were the questions that it raised about the human condition.³³ Georges Bernanos (who, like Maritain, had evolved from sympathy for the extreme right to antifascist, anti-Vichy polemics) was not cited at all, but Jacques Maritain often was—especially for his catchwords “primacy of the spiritual” or “integral humanism.” In fact, poet Pierre Emmanuel thought that Maritain should be delighted by what was happening there, as he wrote the latter on September 27, 1941:

... great movements are taking form in France: some . . . are rich with hope and promise. . . . In the youth movements whose leaders are among our friends there is . . . enthusiasm in discipline and hope for the future. L'École des Cadres d'Uriage . . . is forming true men, in whom the feeling for spiritual reality is not stifled, but rather exalted, because it is considered in its relation to the most ordinary and everyday realities of political and social life.³⁴

Emmanuel's assumption that Maritain might be pleased with Uriage is understandable if one considers Maritain's conceivable contributions to the style of the place:

(1) Maritain had helped precipitate general criticism of the “individualism” and “rationalism” of the modern world in his polemical works *Antimoderne* (1922) and *Trois réformateurs* (1925);

(2) he had eloquently called for the “primacy of the spiritual” (*Primauté du spirituel*, 1927);

(3) he had juxtaposed the “person” to individualism in the name of a “true humanism” that would herald a new Christianity (*Humanisme intégral: Problèmes temporels et spirituels d'une nouvelle chrétienté*, 1936);

(4) he had celebrated the Middle Ages, medieval virtues, aspects of the medieval *mentalité*, in his crusade for the philosophy of Saint Thomas

³³Comte, *Uriage*, 473.

³⁴Pierre Emmanuel to Jacques Maritain (September 27, 1941), cited and translated by Bernard Doering, *Jacques Maritain and the French Catholic Intellectuals* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 201.

Aquinas;

(5) he helped create communities of Christian elites—in the groups that met in his home in Meudon, in religious orders, and in concert with the reviews to which he contributed;

(6) he was a charismatic layman living an “antimodern” life of asceticism, purity, and chastity.

Even if Maritain would have been shocked by Uriage, his writings did contribute, at least to some extent, to what was distinctive about the school.

What was daily life at Uriage? The trumpet sounded at seven and the trainees had five minutes to gather in shorts in front of the château from where the physical education instructor led them across the park, with all of the instructors, Segonzac at their head, invariably participating. For twenty minutes, there were exercises of various sorts, then jogging and running at full speed, and finally the return to the château, chanting and in step, while all the while being exhorted by the coach “Allons garçons!” and “Secouons-nous!” Each student had his day set out on a chart divided into quarter-hour segments, color-coded for each activity. They were required to go everywhere in step, because, according to Segonzac, “to go from one point to the other in order and in rhythmic step is the best way to move quickly, harmoniously, buoyantly.” But a trainee who was late for a meal—even if he had been performing a service for an instructor—had to stand and sing alone at his place before he could take his seat.

“Le vieux chef”³⁵ met with each candidate on arrival and “with his clear look and patient voice assessed his intentions.” Cadets recalled Segonzac, interviewing a very promising prospect for membership on the staff, suddenly breaking off the interview and ushering the candidate unceremoniously to the door: the young man had wanted to know, first of all, how much he would be paid each month.³⁶ While singular dedication was expected of the staff, Segonzac also had a unique notion of the role of intel-

³⁵This was the pet name given to Segonzac by the trainees, who were, themselves, only a few years younger than the “chefs” of Uriage.

³⁶Comte, *Uriage*, 481, 486–87.

lectuals: "We should commission the intellectuals of the National Revolution without delay," he urged in March 1941; "Let's choose them preferably in good physical condition, good fathers of families and capable of jumping onto a moving streetcar."³⁷

V. What Happened to Uriage?

It is highly unlikely that Jacques Maritain was pleased with initiatives like Uriage, for he was far more critical of Vichy privately than publicly. Yves R. Simon, for his part, was outraged by the Vichy involvements of their friends and pressed Maritain to denounce treasonous complicity with the values of the occupant. The Maritain-Simon letters during the late 1930s and the first two years of the Pétain regime show a growing sense of alienation from some of their closest friends over an increasing "softness" towards fascism in reviews like *Esprit* and *Temps Présent* in France . . . or even in *The Commonweal* in the United States.³⁸

The Uriage School continued until the outright support of Vichy for the Nazi war effort, and the occupation of all of France by German forces in late 1942. In total, about 4,000 men had passed through it before it was closed down at the end of that year.³⁹ But even before the final disbanding of the school there had been tensions with the government. In fall 1941, for example, Maritain's old protégé Emmanuel Mounier was barred from the school as a result of animosity at Vichy toward the Christian personalism at Uriage by both some "Action Française" sympathizers (such as Henri

³⁷"Intellectuals," *Jeunesse . . . France!* (March 8, 1941). Jacques Maritain would have probably been eliminated on all counts; Yves R. Simon, who had a tubercular leg, on one or two. Segonzac's idea seems to have been taken seriously. There was a conscious effort at Uriage by mountaineer Beuve-Méry to form intellectuals who were in top physical condition. Like Segonzac, he seemed to equate stoical virtues with Christian virtues.

³⁸For more details on this matter, see John Hellman, "Yves R. Simon, Jacques Maritain, and the Vichy Catholics" in Yves R. Simon, *The Road to Vichy, 1918-1938*, revised edition Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), vii-xxxiv, or "The Road to Vichy. Yves R. Simon's Lonely Fight against Fascism," *Crisis* VI:5 (May 1988): 30-37.

³⁹Halls, *Youth*, 312.

Massis) and certain committed pro-Nazis.⁴⁰ The school became more and more sensitive to the internal power struggles in the Vichy regime, and identified, more and more, with old Marshall Pétain (as he was, or as they imagined him) over against the Pierre Laval clique. The directors of the school seemed more and more independent, charting their own course of National Revolution. As an historian of the regime remarked, Uriage was "the history of an alternative Vichy, one that might have been."⁴¹

By the end of December 1942, when the school was closed, the German disaster in the Russian campaign was apparent, and the occupation of all of France made Vichy's pretense at independence no longer credible. With the war turning against the Germans, and fear of communist domination of the Resistance growing, Dunoyer de Segonzac went to Algiers in early 1944 to explore the possibility of putting "his men" at the service of de Gaulle but, not altogether surprisingly, was rebuffed.⁴² The Uriage network, without turning directly against the Marshall, organized more and more overtly for armed combat. Late in the war, Segonzac was given a command in the Free French forces, and, with several of his lieutenants, participated in the liberation of France. Several Uriage alumni lost their lives in liberating their homeland.

The Uriage château was taken over in early 1943 by an eccentric Acadian-American with a Ph.D. in Thomistic philosophy, M. de la Noüe du Vair, who lived there with his wife and many children like a great feudal lord. He turned the château, flying pennants with du Vair coat of arms from the battlements, into an aristocratic training school, in which everyone attended daily Mass, for the notorious *milice*. Subsequently, these white-gloved militia cadres, fearing Western Christian civilization threatened by an insurrection of the atheistic communists, did their best to help the Gestapo track down members of the Resistance. There are anecdotes of devoutly Catholic *milice* members saying the rosary together before facing Resistance firing squads.

At the end of the war, the members of the old Uriage circle came to power to a remarkable extent in France, not only in journalism—as Beuve-

⁴⁰For example, Pierre Pucheu and Paul Marion, who wanted French youth remodeled along frankly National Socialist lines with less Catholic influence.

⁴¹Halls, *Vichy*, 324. This is also the judgment of H.R. Kedward, *Resistance in Vichy France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 209.

⁴²Among other things, Dunoyer de Segonzac had denounced as traitors the French officers in Syria who supported the Free French.

Méry, using some Uriage alumni and the confiscated facilities of the collaborationist *Le Temps*, built *Le Monde* into one of the world's great newspapers—but also in book publishing, film, and various branches of religious, cultural, and academic life. In general, the men of Uriage were unrepentant about their past, and, to the horror of “resisters” like Bernanos, Maritain, and Simon, several became pioneers in postwar “dialogue” with the French communists. For Maritain, Bernanos, and Simon, the Stalinists were not essentially different from the Nazis, and they were bitterly critical of the new “ecumenism” that grew out of the Uriage experience.⁴³ The rise to prominence of National Revolution veterans as anti-American “progressive” Catholics in France after the war had something to do with Bernanos' bitterness,⁴⁴ Maritain's only returning to France for brief periods in the immediate postwar period, and with Simon's decision never to set foot on his native soil again.⁴⁵

⁴³See the concluding chapters of my *Emmanuel Mounier*.

⁴⁴See, for example, his *Français, si vous saviez!* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), 172, in which he explicitly denounces this development.

⁴⁵The author is grateful to McGill University and to the Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for their research support.