UNIVERSITÉ DU LUXEMBOURG

Faculté des Sciences humaines, des Sciences de l'Éducation et des Sciences sociales

Master en histoire européenne contemporaine

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SITTING ON THE LEFT

French Political Identities at the End of the Long Nineteenth-Century

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Acknowledgements

> You often say, "I would give, but only to the deserving." The trees in your orchard say not so, nor the flocks in your pasture. They give that they may live, for to withhold is to perish. – Kahlil Gibran

It can often feel, bouncing between different screens and going from office chairs to sofas to bed, that we have become hopelessly alienated from one another, and that we are all, helplessly, alone. The people listed below have been the antidote to that alienation and proof that there is still a world of shared humanity, generosity, and solidarity. Thinking of that shared humanity, I invite us all to reflect on the words of Kahlil Gibran quoted above, because we do not, and ought not to, write for ourselves or our careers. We write, and we ought to write, because sharing our love of the world – our very being – is the essence of our shared humanity. This thesis is dedicated to my mother, who taught me that humanity; to Andy Weeks, who showed me its value; and to everybody else, with whom I have had the privilege of sharing it, "for to withhold is to perish."

* * *

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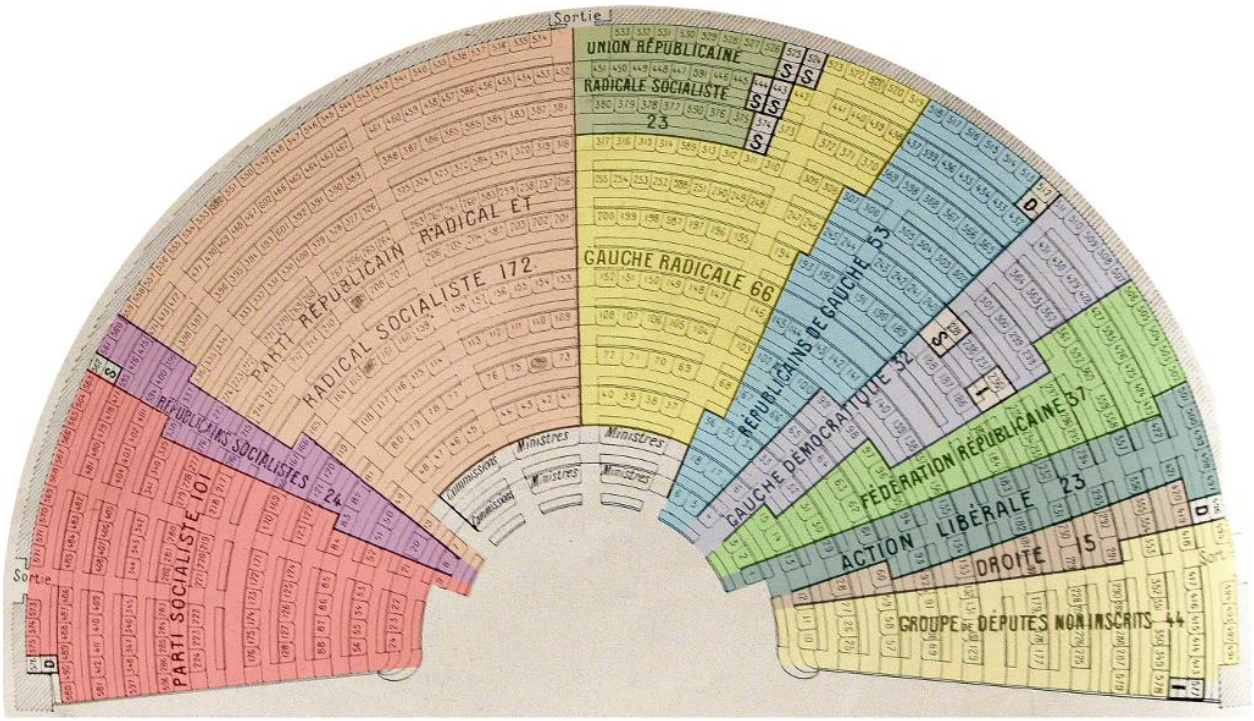

Figure 1. A reproduction of the seating arrangement in the *Chambre des Députés* after the 1914 *répartition*. Created by, and republished with the permission of, the *Archives de l'Assemblée nationale*. The S is for "savages" and D represents deputies who died.

Introduction

> History is full of examples of the transformation of parties of revolution into parties of order. Sometimes the only mementos of a revolutionary party are the watchwords which it has inscribed on public buildings. – Nikolai Bukharin[1]

In 1924, the Radical politician and future *président du Conseil des ministers*, Édouard Herriot, wrote a brief article about his party's "program of liberal France," a title that would have no doubt shocked his fellow Radicals since, in France, liberalism is the ideology of the Catholic Church and the far-Right.[2] Presenting himself to the American readers of *Foreign Affairs*, Herriot felt the need to address their concerns that his "so-called Radical Party represents ideas even more advanced than those of the Socialist Party" making him appear as though he was an "an extremist—almost an anarchist!"[3] To calm his readers, Herriot pointed to the topography of the Chamber of Deputies (*Chambre des Députés*) to show that while his party was on the left side of the Chamber, they were near the center. The meaning was obvious to his contemporary readers, the Radical Party is a moderate party, and one that would govern "responsibly." In 1924, Herriot was relying on the unspoken assumption that a party's political beliefs could be demonstrated by their physical place in a parliament. The idea is simple, where a party sits says something about its political beliefs.

When Herriot presented the Chamber's seating arrangement to his American readers, the system for distributing seats to deputies – a system which determined where the Radical Party would even sit in relation to other parties – was only ten years old. It had been created in June 1914 when the 'Unified' socialist deputy Arthur Groussier proposed rule 135 of the Chamber's standing orders: seats would be distributed to party groups – rather than to individual deputies by the speaker – and a definitive order, from right to left, would establish where each party would sit in relation to one another. Groussier's goal was to ensure that all of the 'Unified' socialist deputies would sit together

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[1] Translated in Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 186.

[2] The *Président du Conseil* (President of the Council of Ministers) was a position was similar to that of Prime Minister. Both were the head of government and the face of a parliamentary majority for the public. However, unlike other parliamentary systems, the *président du Conseil* was not a formal office. Instead, it was a title held in addition to one's regular ministerial duties at an established ministry. This meant that a deputy was simultaneously a minister in government and the head of that government as the *président du Conseil*. Because of this and other differences historians and I leave the title untranslated, see Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France: From the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 48; Edouard Herriot, "The Program of Liberal France," *Foreign Affairs* 2, no. 4 (1924): 558, https://doi.org/10.2307/20028329.

[3] Herriot, "The Program of Liberal France," 558.

on the far left of the Chamber. While self-evident to parliamentarians today, Groussier's proposal set off a raucous debate between his own 'Unified' socialists and older members of the Chamber's Democratic Left, Radical Left, and Federation of the Lefts over who would sit on the speaker's left. These deputies wanted to keep their seats. One commentator set the tone of debate by dramatically beginning his article declaring that the young deputies are "without pity."[4]

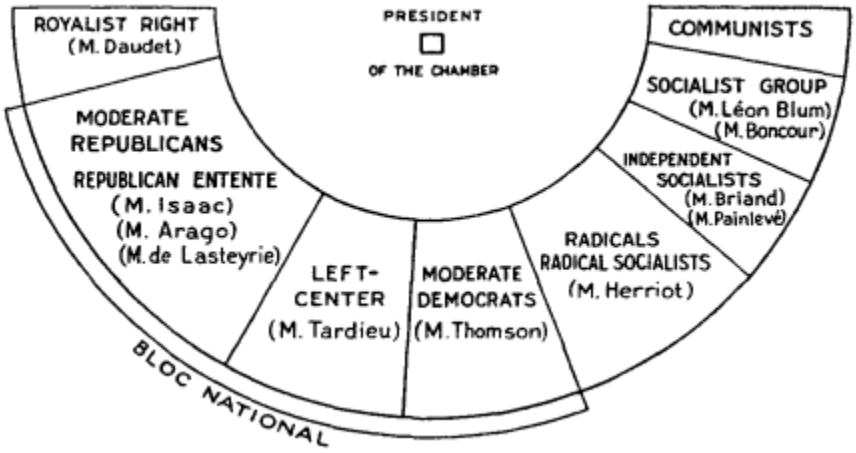

Figure 2. The parliamentary topography that Herriot is referring to, following the 1919 *Horizon bleu* coalition victory. Published in Herriot, "The Program of Liberal France," 558.

It is easy to mock these older deputies since – as other historians have commented – they were on the far-Right in 1914.[5] But they had not begun their political careers as creatures of the Right, instead they entered politics as members of the far-Left. Alexandre Ribot of the *Féderation républicaine* is the typical example: in 1870 he was a republican, propagandizing against Louis Bonaparte's second Empire and leading the Army of Brittany, organized by Léon Gambetta, to establish the newly proclaimed republic in the region; in 1914 he was still a republican and still politically active, but oversaw an abortive three-day government "from which the Lefts [were] excluded."[6] Throughout the Chamber, deputies who in previous eras had stood against the

[4] BnF, *Gallica*, A.B., "Plusieus orateurs défendent leur fauteuil contre le projet d'expropriation de M. Groussier qui est adopté," *L'Homme libre*, (23 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), page 2.
[5] William D. Irvine, *French Conservatism in Crisis: The Republican Federation of France in the 1930s* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), xiii–xiv.
[6] Vincent Duclert, *La République Imaginée: 1870-1914* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), 59; M. E. Schmidt, *Alexandre Ribot: Odyssey of a Liberal in the Third Republic* (The Hauge: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 1–22. BnF, *Gallica*, "La Crise Ministérielle," *Le Radical*, (published 10 June 1914, accessed 24 April 2023), frontpage.

monarchist restoration of power, against Boulanger's threat to the nascent Republic, and in support of Dreyfus' innocence saw history pass them by. The Chamber was now filled with Radicals militating against the Catholic Church and Socialists who were gaining power in their search for a solution to the 'social question.'[7] Onetime radicals had become *modérés* (moderates), but that did not mean they had lost right to sit on the speaker's left? They would point out that they were, after all, still on the Left.

At the heart of the debate in the Chamber and in the press, was an argument over the meaning of the Left and even of French history itself. Old men like Ribot, who had once been fiery members of the Left themselves, suddenly found themselves confronted with a younger generation which was just as fiery as they once were but saw *them* – the old men – as the enemy on the Right. These same old men, meanwhile, did not feel like they were any less on the Left than they had been forty-four years earlier. Over the course of the Third Republic the center had gradually shifted. Imperceptibly at first but every movement built on those that came before it, making 1914 look like a foreign land when compared to 1870. The physical seats in the chamber had been their bulwark against these changes. Now, that solid foundation had crumbled and the deputies who sat atop it found themselves off balance.

Even at the time, the debate was criticized as a matter of pure symbolism and of little interest to anyone who was not a deputy. But for those who had made politics their careers, the debate over a new seating arrangement – the *répartition* – was a moment where they were forced to articulate their different understandings of the Left as they came crashing into one another. It forced politicians and political commentators at the end of the long nineteenth century to comment on their place in that grand narrative and to tell each other what the Left is, what does it stand for, and, importantly, who is a part of it?

This phenomenon has been commented on before as we will see in part one. But historians and contemporary commentators alike see it – ironically or not – as a law of nature rather than a historical process. One historian writes about how "this [process] leaves an empty space on the far-Left. A new party moves in. The Radicals appear to the Left of the Republicans, who have been moved to Right, and then evolving in turn towards the center, they are replaced by Radical-

[7] The "social question" was, of course, just a euphemism for class conflict. See Judith E. Stone, *The Search for Social Peace: Reform Legislation in France, 1890-1914* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 1–23.

socialists, who themselves become bourgeois, allowing the Socialists to enter the scene."[8] A contemporary commentator compared the process to the Earth's rotation around the sun, an inevitable process of change whose "rotational movement… carries all its members from east to west, by the successive elimination of the elements which are seated on the right side."[9] But this process was not preordained. The *répartition* was the accidental but logical outcome of the ambiguous and simultaneous use of the same symbols and labels by various political groups over the course of the Third Republic. Above all, the meaning of the "Left" in France.

It was a moment when narratives about the French political past came into the present. These questions about the Left rely on a certain understanding of France in the long nineteenth century, the birthplace of the political revolution in the era of – as Hobsbawm called it – the dual revolution.[10] The Great French Revolution of 1789 looms large in the history of the Left and this story of the *répartition*. We do not just find the imagined origins of the Left and Right in the French Revolution, but the debates that would furnish the labels with meaning. The master narrative of nineteenth-century France that plays out like a long continuation of the Great French Revolution was not unknown to those who inhabited it.[11] By 1914, history was a battlefield where "disputes from the past accumulate so that present issues are still debated in terms of historical precedents, and old allegiances produce permanent animosities."[12]

Those past struggles, of course, were based in material realities. André Siegfried famously argued that the character of the land – which influenced the way people lived on it – gave voters a timeless material reason for their political beliefs.[13] The famous Marxist historian, Eric Hobsbawm, noted fifty years later that

> In fact the Sansculottes were one branch of that universal and important political trend which sought to express the interests of the

[8] Hervé Le Bras, *Tableau historique de la France : la formation des courants politiques de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 2022), 11–12.
[9] BnF, *Gallica*, Léonce Beaujeu, "Topographie parlementaire," *L'Action française* (published 26 June 1914, accessed 19 February 2022), frontpage.
[10] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962), 1–4.
[11] François Furet, "Penser la Révolution française," in *La Révolution française*, by François Furet (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 13–94 would, of course, point out that "*la Révolution française n'est pas encore finie*."
[12] Theodore Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One: Ambition, Love and Politics*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 365.
[13] See the original in André Siegfried, *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest sous la Troisième République*, Nouvelle édition (Bruxelles: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2010); Le Bras, *Tableau historique de la France*, 7–44 is an updated analysis of the the whole of France, building on the principles of Siegfried for the 21st century.

> great mass of 'little men' who existed between the poles of the 'bourgeoisie' and the 'proletarian', often perhaps nearer to the latter than the former because they were, after all, mostly poor. We can observe in the United States (as Jeffersonianism and Jacksonian democracy, or populism) in Britain (as 'radicalism'), in France (as the ancestors of the future 'republicans' and radical-socialists), in Italy as Mazzinians and Garibaldians), and elsewhere. Mostly it tended to settle down, in post-revolutionary ages, as a left-wing of middle-class liberalism, *but one loth to abandon the ancient principle that there are no enemies on the left*, and ready, in times of crisis, to rebel against 'the wall of money' or 'economic royalists' or 'the cross of gold crucifying mankind.'[14]

But we ought to ask why that ancient principle could not be abandoned. What was so damning about having enemies on the Left? In the debate over *répartition*, one deputy yelled that with republicans sitting on the right, the deputies that remained on the left (socialists and Radicals) would no longer be able to point to the right and shout, "Look who's applauding you!"[15] The boogeyman of the Right was an all-consuming specter in the minds of even the most timid republican who could, even in 1914, see himself on the Left.

Appropriately, we ought to begin with a brief discussion of the several themes and terms that will be invoked throughout this text. Only then can we move on. First to a general discussion of interpreting the Left and then, finally, the story of the *répartition*.

Modernity

When we use Left as a political label, we are relying on a mountain of assumptions. The same was true of deputies in 1914 as it was true of Left across the history of the long nineteenth century. Two of those assumptions, modernity and progress, need to be clarified before we can begin this study in earnest. Since their origins and popularization, the Left has been seen as the political embodiment of modernity while the Right is defined as the forces opposed to that modernity. Herriot's comment that to be extreme is to be "more advanced" makes this point clear but the wide variety of quotes, names, and euphemisms contained in these pages will reinforce this point. For

[14] My italics, Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, 63.

[15] BnF, *Gallica, Journal officiel de la République française. Débats parlementaires. Chambre des députés : compte rendu in-extenso*, "DISCUSSION D'UNE PROPOSITION DE RÉSOLUTION AYANT POUR OBJET DE COMPLÉTER L'ARTICLE 135 DU RÈGLEMENT DE LA CHAMBRE (RÉPARTITION DES PLACES DANS LA SALLE DES SÉANCES," (published 22 June 1914, accessed 26 March 2023), center, 2550.

example, one euphemism for the Left in 1848 was the 'Party of Movement' which arrayed itself against the Right, known as the 'Party of Resistance.'

The visual metaphor is clear, but it breaks down when we ask what that movement was toward? The diversity of answers that one would have received in 1848 shows that the Left is not a single thing but a wide variety of assumptions. At the same time, the various answers one would receive (democracy, a republic, social justice, etc.) all point towards modernity, but the various understandings, ideas, and imaginations of what was (or could be) modern clashed with each other just as much as they built off one another. Marx, for example, understood socialism to be the modern continuation of republican ideas; he agreed with republicans and Radicals that political equality could only be achieved through a secular republic, but did republicans and Radicals include social justice in their own visions of modernity?[16]

Progress, on the other hand, does not suffer from these same competing visions. If modernity was the goal, then progress was how that goal would be achieved. Progress was not only movement, but the idea of *positive* and continuous change over time. In the long nineteenth century, progress was the engine of modernity, a salient metaphor because it was directly associated with the scientific developments of the century. This was not original to the nineteenth century – Enlightenment philosophers saw their own resistance to the *ancien régime* as rooted in scientific progress – but the scale of scientific and industrial development lent credibility to the Left's opposition to the most reactionary thinkers of the era, not only were they standing against political progress, but against scientific progress and the improvement of all of society.[17] Because of the Left's association with scientific progress, we traditionally imagine that the Right rejects both modernity and progress, using a "forest of bayonets" to protect its established powers.[18] While it is true that the Right is popularly defined as supporting what already exists – hence why they are often called conservatives or reactionaries – but this is not purely the case. The Bourbon 'Restoration' embraced the administrative changes of the French Revolution, and no despot ever

[16] For more on this point see the introduction to Bruno Leipold, Karma Nabulsi, and Stuart White, eds., *Radical Republicanism: Recovering the Tradition's Popular Heritage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 1–14, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198796725.003.0001.
[17] Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), 5–12 & 127–86; Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 637–72 & 779–825.
[18] Mike Rapport, *1848: Year of Revolution* (London: Hachette, 2010), 6.

said no to a better rifle but progress was seen as more than simple scientific or administrative improvements. It became a byword for the semi-sacred memories of revolutionary moments throughout the century. Instead of messy political organizing, the Left "moved history forward," propelled by the spirit of progress. In the cultural struggles over cultural and scientific progress in the long nineteenth century, it was the Left that we imagine on the side of progress and the Right as those against it.

We must make these assumptions explicit before attempting to tackle the implicit, assumed, and often competing visions of modernity and progress presented here. These assumptions and euphemisms interacted with each other in countless political, visual, and symbolic contexts and were never set in stone. Both above and throughout this thesis, we will see how these popular assumptions are not wholly accurate and confront them as such. The Right was never purely reactionary just as the Left was never purely progressive. We should attempt to understand – and I have attempted to render explicit – how modernity and progress integrate into each competing vision of the Left, making it possible for so many people, regardless of their politics, to see themselves on the Left.

Symbolic Imagery

Another theme that reappears throughout this thesis can be found in the reproductions of parliamentary topography. Built into the idea that we can understand a nation's politics through the "landscape" of its parliament is that the metaphorical "peaks and ravines" *mean* something. During the French Revolution, the far-Left Jacobins and their allies were known as the Mountain because they occupied the nosebleed seats on the speaker's left while the great mass of deputies between them and the remaining aristocrats on the right were known as the Plain, or, by their critics, as the Swamp. These topographic labels took on more meaning than any mountain or swamp ever could and while the specific names would eventually fade away (although the Mountain had a long afterlife), the places where they sat were imbued with that meaning and had it continuously reproduced in various parliamentary topographies. But it is quite the assumption, that these "ravines and peaks" speak to a deeper character of a parliament, and that we can understand it by seeing them in the same way a tourist assumes that a beautiful countryside says

anything about the "character of a people."[19] By flattening the infinitely complex arrangement of political beliefs onto a one-dimensional axis – the semi-circle – parliamentary topographers assign their own meanings to the labels Right and Left.

Seats on the Chamber's left and right were not the only places to be given special meaning. The two-dimensional topographic maps of the Chamber of Deputies disguise the truth. The *Palais Bourbon*, the seat of the Chamber of Deputies, was a three-dimensional space. Those metaphorical peaks and ravines are made real by the amphitheater-style seating of the Chamber because they required those deputies who sat furthest from the speaker to climb several sets of stairs before finding their seats. In the same way that seats on the speaker's left were privileged by political belief, the seats closest to the speaker were privileged by practicality. They were close to the speaker and the ministers and do not require a deputy to climb any steps. This is not clear from our parliamentary topographies. It is implied. But during the debate on the *répartition* it was also these privileged seats closest to the speaker that the old deputies sought to protect.

In the same way that one must learn how to read a topographic map, we must learn how to read a parliamentary topography. Three-dimensional space has been flattened onto a two-dimensional image in the same way that the infinite complexities of political opinions are flattened onto a one-dimensional line. The two-dimensional parliamentary topography is the synthesis of these flattening processes. The innerworkings of an individual deputy obscure the perfectly articulated political line in the same way that a topographic map cannot show us the underbrush that makes a plain impassable. The three-dimensional nature of a parliamentary chamber undermines the masquerade of the one-dimensional line of political beliefs imposed onto a two-dimensional image. This is a prime instance of the process and equivocations addressed by visual information theory.[20]

The idea of presenting a label as amorphous as 'the Left' in an image is not new; Delacroix's famous *Liberty Leading the People* is the most famous example. Flattening any political idea onto a piece of canvas artists present their ideas of what the Left is. Parliamentary topographers do the

[19] It can have an influence as Siegfried, *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest sous la Troisième République*, 23–42 famously argued. But this misses the point. Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One*, 1:367–92 is an excellent criticism of Siegfried that understands the limits of literal geography in political analysis.

[20] Johanna Drucker, *Visualization and Interpretation: Humanistic Approaches to Display* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unilu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=6374829.

same. There is no objective measurement for what party is further to the Left than another, parliamentary topographers, like artists, must assign meaning by defining the Left and Right along a single axis, about a single 'great' issue. But political parties, especially in parliaments, are made up of individuals who may act in common but are never in perfect agreement about all things at all times. The place of a party along a single axis does not show its objective character the same way that a topographic map does not show the true height of a mountain. It shows the height relative to the features around it, the same way that a parliamentary topography can only show where the topographer thinks a party belongs relative to the other parties in parliament. A topographic map is not evidence of a party's political place, but an argument about the essence of that party. These images of parliamentary topography, like a painting, are symbolic, and show us how political positions are thought to be rather than how they are. We should not see the parliamentary topographies presented here as objective proof of anything – as Herriot did – but as a popular and common interpretation of the political landscape.

Symbolic Memories

Any history of France in the long nineteenth century has to come to terms with the Third Republic's boogeyman: the ever-present reactionary. Born alongside the Left in the French Revolution, the Right is often seen as *the* reaction of the *ancien régime* against an insurgent and revolutionary Left.[21] In the Third Republic, no republican politician could allow himself to be associated with the enemies of the French Revolution because these memories were still raw in both local and national imagination.[22] Because of the importance of these memories in the French political imagination, we should ask ourselves what these memories mean. Above all else, Maurice Halbwachs' works (translated into English as *On Collective Memory*) and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* are pillars of how collective memory is translated into the popular political consciousness.[23] Another fundamental text in the study of memory, Pierre Nora's monumental *Les*

[21] Albert Thibaudet, "Les idées politiques de la France," in *Albert Thibaudet : Réflexions sur la politique*, ed. Antoine Compagnon (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007), 166; and René Rémond, *Les Droites En France* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1982) both see the Right as a reaction while that view has been complicated by; Jean-Christian Petitfils, "Les origines de la pensée contre-révolutionnaire," in *La contre-révolution: origines, histoire, postérité*, ed. Jean Tulard (Paris: CNRS éd, 1990), 15–34 and; Jean Defrasne, *La gauche en France de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989) who both see the Right and Lefts origins in the Englightenment.

[22] Stéphane Gerson, *The Pride of Place: Local Memories and Political Culture in Modern France*, *The Pride of Place* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 6–10, https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501724312.

[23] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226774497.001.0001.

Lieux de mémoire includes the Right and Left as political labels among the *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory).[24] Beyond tracing how the memory of the French Revolution travelled across the long nineteenth century, we have to ask how the memory of the Revolution was interpreted at the moment of our story in 1914.[25]

Historical memory might be inherently sociological, but, for our purposes, it is the collection of highly individualized understandings of the past that are only then brought together through a collective understanding of the past. This means that we have to accept a highly flawed and generalized understanding of the memories that made up the Left. We cannot put our subjects on Freud's couch and interrogate their individual meanings with the hope of finding the common understandings. A psychological history like this would be impossible. Instead, we must take the sources that we do have – campaign pamphlets and public declarations – at face value and attempt to believe what they are saying. We must confront our subjects with compassion and empathy. We have to enter their world and listen to what they are saying and ask, with all the of the sympathy we can muster, why they are saying it? This is a study of identities. Identities are historically informed but impossible to challenge. Rather than attempt to prove that the identities in question are false we ought to embrace the identities of our subjects so that we can better understand who they are, who they say they are, and who they believe they are.[26]

Memory is the superstructure. Cultures exist, ignorant of the base, concealed within the superstructure. We must encounter these cultures where they exist in reference to the base and superstructure, rather than demand they conform to our theories about the world. We must begin with the historical memories of the French Revolution, harbored by the political actors in question. We must then retrace the paths these memories followed in the course of the long nineteenth century. This will require that we understand the labels once used and how they were intended in the course of the century.

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[24] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26, no. Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (1989): 7–24.

[25] Astrid Erll, "Travelling Memory," *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (November 2011): 4–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2011.605570.

[26] See Jacqueline Lalouette, *L'identité républicaine de la France : Une expression, une mémoire, des principes* (Paris: Fayard, 2023), 11–84 for an insightful discussion of the rise and dissemination of the concept of identity in the humanities and the social sciences.

Left and Right, right and left

A discussion of labels can be confusing because we lack the distance to properly confront the terms. They are also confusing because we are discussing them as abstract identifiers *and* as directions in a physical space. To ameliorate this Left and Right (capitalized) refer to the political concepts; left and right (lower-case) refer to the physical sides of the Chamber. I refer to it as the Chamber instead of the erroneous 'house' because, in English, studies of the French parliamentary system often translate France's institutions through a British lens. While the British and French systems are related (as we will discover below), they remain distinct from one another. This is why I have endeavored throughout this text to discuss the French parliamentary system in its own terms instead of relying on the British parliamentary system as an equivalent. The sole exception is my decision to translate the *président de la Chambre des Députés* as 'speaker.' The position carries similar administrative responsibilities to that of British speaker but, moreover, there is also a *président du Conseil des ministers* and a *président de la République*. With so many *présidents* it is better to use another term when possible.

A Bicameral Republic

For French republicans, republicanism meant unicameralism. The nation was unified and sovereign and could only be represented through a single legislative body. Republicans saw a divided parliament (bicameralism) as a bastion of aristocracy and privilege, a state of affairs fundamentally incompatible with the republican tradition of 1791. This is why it seems strange that the Third Republic had both the Chamber of Deputies and a Senate (*Sénat*).

The existence of the bicameral republic points to the Third Republic's non-republican origins. Referring back to ancient Rome, the Senate was designed to exercise conservative control over the semi-democratic Chamber. All senators were over 40 and many, 75 to be exact, were not even elected, but appointed for life by the Government of Moral Order. The name for the reactionary backlash against the Paris Commune that held sway in France between 1871 and 1877. The remaining 225 senators were elected, but only indirectly and by conservative and rural constituencies for nine-year terms. Only a third up for re-election every three years. Despite these antidemocratic hurdles, the republic was progressively conquered by republicans. One of the institutions conquered was the Senate. At first only the most moderate republicans won elections; and they did away with the senate's ability to topple a government. In 1884 lifetime senators were

at last abolished (although the last would only die in 1918). Radicals and Socialists, however, never ceased calling to abolish the Senate, whose membership always lagged behind the popular opinions of French voters. To no avail.[27]

By 1914, the senate only had a moderate influence, and it makes only the briefest of appearances in this story. It had its own party groups, but the Chamber of Deputies was both the center of political life and where the *répartition* occurred. The senate occupies a minor place in this history of French Left-wing political identities beyond their calls for its abolition.

On our *nom d'époque*

In our histories, the first half of 1914 appears in an anachronistic light. In most texts, the apocalyptic Great War has overshadowed the peaceful summer that preceded it. Histories of the year appear overdetermined in emphasizing how Europe "marched," "stumbled," or "sleepwalked" into war. I felt as much reading my newspaper sources from June and July 1914. I too was haunted by the knowledge that they did not have: the apocalypse was coming!

Or was it? For French and European society on the eve of the Great War, *there was no war*. This is not wholly true, of course – French papers were filled with reports about Albania's chaotic "six-month kingdom" – but this was far away and life continued apace. The historians Michael S. Neiberg and Christopher Clark have both pointed out that even throughout the "July Crisis" daily life continued as always.[28] Before 23 July, 1914 was just another year.

But many of the great French histories of the years that preceded 1914 know that it was not a normal year, and while their titles may claim that they end in 1914, we are better served by understanding them as really ending on 31 December 1913. Those seven months are forever affixed to what came next. The '*fin-de-siècle*' and the '*belle epoque*' – already post-hoc inventions by the apocalypse's survivors – are artificially shortened by seven eventful months that, at the time, were months like any other in the second decade of the twentieth century.[29]

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[27] Gisèle Berstein, *Le Sénat Sous La IIIe République: 1920-1940* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2014) is an excellent study on the senate of the Third Republic, also see; R. D. Anderson, *France, 1870-1914: Politics and Society* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1977), 9–11, 74–76; Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One*, 1:591–93.

[28] Michael S. Neiberg, *Dance of the Furies: Europe and the Outbreak of World War I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York City: Penguin Books, 2012).

[29] Willa Z. Silverman, "Fin de siècle," in *Les noms d'époque : De «Restauration» à «années de plomb»*, ed. Dominique Kalifa (Paris: Gallimard, 2020), 119–42.

These missing seven months mean that while the Third Republic has been a rich source of historical inquiry for decades, many of the great texts that every historian of the Republic ought to know will not be cited in these pages. This is not for a lack of familiarity, but because of that artificial division that took place on 31 December 1913.[30] Some historians are better than others – Jean-Marie Mayeur successfully made it to 16 June 1914 before writing that "Six weeks later, France entered the war" – but this story takes place across the breadth of the long-nineteenth century, and will cite those great texts when necessary, but the *répartition* and the seven eventful months of early 1914 have been left out far too often which puts this history in the unique place of crossing the putative divide that seems to exist between 31 December 1913 and 1 January 1914.[31]

* * *

This thesis is divided into two parts. Part one gives the reader the tools to understand the terms Left and Right as political identities by providing three understandings of the Left that are relevant for this story: as an idea, as a family, and as a place. The image of the Left as an idea goes all the way back to 1789 and presents a few fundamental principles that the Left, in every permutation, represents. Seeing the uses and limits of the Left as a utopian idea brings us naturally to see it as a family. Originally outlined by the famous French literary critic, Albert Thibaudet, his political families provide us with the tools to confront the problems created by seeing the Left in the singular by taking us from the French Revolution to the 1930s and forcing us to accept that multiple Lefts (and Rights) can coexist. Finally, we return to the origins of the Left and Right in the parliamentary debates of the 1810s, seeing the Left as a place one occupies in parliamentary politics and only after as a political identity. This last argument opens up the intriguing possibility that the Left is a much larger space than we, and French thinkers, traditionally imagine.

[30] Anderson, *France, 1870-1914*, 53 is where I first learned about the events of 1914, but he accidently attributes them to 1910. Throughout the book's thematic chapters, 1914 is only given single paragraphs or treated as a reflection point from which to comment on the changes that occurred. Rebérioux's final chapter of Jean-Marie Mayeur and Madeleine Rebérioux, *The Third Republic from Its Origins to the Great War, 1871-1914*, trans. J. R. Foster (Cambridge & Paris: Cambridge University Press, Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1987), 320–51 likewise, treates 1914 as a reflection point rather than as the scene of continued historical change; Serge Berstein and Pierre Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle, 1900-1930*, vol. 1 (Bruxelles: Éditions Complexe, 1990), 227–39; Duclert, *La République Imaginée*, 525–95, 706–61 are otherwise excellent and through texts that unfortunately chain the Great War to the rest of 1914.

[31] Jean-Marie Mayeur, *La vie politique sous la Troisième République: 1870-1940* (Paris: Seuil, 1984), 232.

The tools we discuss in part one will allow the reader to properly understand the events of part two: the *répartition* of the Chamber of Deputies in June 1914. We will first discuss the context of the *répartition*, looking at the uneven creation of political parties after 1900 and the various understandings of what a deputy even is before looking at the direct cause of the *repartition*, the 1914 legislative elections. The legislative elections created a whole new political context that made the *répartition* possible and, in the eyes of the 'Unified' socialists, necessary. At last, we will come to the debate over *répartition* itself, who defended their seats in the Chamber and why? Who jockeyed for better seats in the meetings that followed? Finally, we briefly discuss the aftermath of the *répartition*, its limits, and the reactions of politicians and commentators to this upheaval in French political identities.

The story of the *répartition* gives us a bookend for how Left identities were understood in the long nineteenth century. Each image of the Left is necessary to understand a different aspect of the debates surrounding an issue as arcane and immaterial as the seating arrangements of a parliament. But the arcana hides the truth, the *répartition* was the culmination of a century of debate about a political identity that was held by millions across the world from liberals in the United States to Bolsheviks in Russia. These are, as Marcel Gauchet pointed out, are "*the* universal political terms," and while there are many others, at the last resort, we always find new ways to divide these other terms into two fundamentally opposing camps: the Right and the Left.[32]

[32] Marcel Gauchet, *La Droite et La Gauche: Histoire et Destin*, Le Débat (Paris: Gallimard, 2021), 16 Originally published in Les lieux de mémoire, III. Les Frances, 1. Conflits et partages, Pierre Nora, ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 394-467. This claim to universality is not new and was reenforced by Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), but recent research in; Bruce Kuklick, *Fascism Comes to America: A Century of Obsession in Politics and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 94–97 argues that the Left-Right divide did not make a political crossing until after the Second World War. For my part, I believe that the transfer of "European" political ideas across the Atlantic world was constant dating back to Columbus. Later in this thesis, I will argue that much of the parliamentary symbolism inherent to the Right-Left divide can be found in the British parliamentary tradition. There are no local political traditions, references build upon references and even if the original meaning is lost, the reference remains.

Part One: Defining Left and Right

There is no shortage of commentary on the French Left. Almost any history of contemporary France is required to comment on the label's origins in the French Revolution or on its various meanings at any given moment. The term was and is used as a shorthand by contemporaries and present historians to place contemporary and historical figures in context with one another (e.g., "Filippo Buonarroti,… was their ablest and most indefatigable conspirator, though his doctrines were probably very much to the left of most brethren or cousins"), but they often do so without putting much thought into what puts someone, objectively, on the Left.[33] Historians are aware of this fact and have often crafted their own (self-consciously) subjective definitions for the sake of simplicity, but these are often only applicable to the historical moment that they are studying. Confronted with this dilemma, it is easy to simply criticize the label a floating signifier because it lacks precision.[34] Many historians solve this lack of precision by using the labels that contemporaries used (i.e. liberal, republican, revolutionary, etc.), but this caution itself becomes anachronistic because the Left became a commonly accepted label throughout the long nineteenth century.[35] This caution is also one-sided, since these same historians find few problems with the label Right, despite, ironically, its limited use by members of said group in any given historical period.[36]

While most historians are content to add their comments and move on, there are several serious studies of the label itself. Generally, historians who touch on the history of the Left and Right and their meanings tend to see the Left as a vessel for their own assumptions about modernity and history. They see a Left that is a constantly insurgent and progressive minority, gathering its strength for the "final battle." This vision of the Left as a utopian and revolutionary project that is constantly on the march for something better is buoyed by assumptions of historical progress, that something better is possible and that the Left is the force moving towards it. But at its core, this

[33] Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, 137.
[34] This is the argument Kuklick, *Fascism Comes to America*, 3–5 makes about fascism. Also see; Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Introductions to the Works of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950), 63–66 for a general introduction to the concept.
[35] Passmore, *The Right in France*, 12–13.
[36] Maurice Agulhon, *Histoire vagabonde : Idéologies et politique dans la France du XIXe siècle*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 198.

definition assumes a defined path of what progress is, one that is fundamentally Hegelian and can only be defined by future generations.

Conscious of these problems, many of the writers who have crafted their own histories of the French Left (and Right) have rejected the singular label (*a* Left and *a* Right) in favor of plurals, many *Rights* and even more *Lefts*, all following in the footsteps of the French literary critic Albert Thibaudet in his 1932 book, *Les idées politiques de la France*. By creating "families of ideas," these historians have been able to confront the different modernist understandings that are inherent in their different notions of the Left, but these families also force them to engage in a "classificatory struggle" over the border between Lefts and the rests.

Confronted with this "classificatory struggle," Marcel Gauchet has encouraged modern historians to return to the origins of the Left in Right in the French (and English) parliamentary tradition(s), by pointing out that these are administrative labels that have since taken on grand historical importance. Gauchet's history forces historian to confront the missing label in the history of the Right and Left, the center, and by extension question the principle that there is a fundamental gulf between the "two Frances" that is inherent to the history of the Left and Right. By situating the Left as a mundane place, rather than a grand-historical idea, Gauchet makes it possible for us understand the Left as a label that includes all manner of groups that have been excluded in the French context, above all, liberals.

All of these understandings of the Left are present in the debate over the 1914 *répartition* and point towards the irresistible but anticlimactic realization that 'being on the Left' is as simple as believing oneself to be there.

The Left as a Utopian Idea

The popular origins of the Left and Right are cliché but bear repeating. Between 23 August and 11 September 1789, the members of the national assembly voted on the issue of a royal veto for the new French constitution.[37] Supporters of the king (and by extension, his veto) sat on the speaker's

[37] Despite complete certainty among historians, each historian is certain about a different date. Gauchet, *La Droite et La Gauche*, 21 dates the "false" origins to 23 August while; Michel Vovelle, "La gauche sous la Révolution : naissance d'une notion," in *Histoire des gauches en France : L'héritage du XIXe siècle*, ed. Jean-Jacques Becker and Gilles Candar, vol. 1 (Paris: La Découverte, 2004), 50 dates the origins to Friday, 28 August. Defrasne, *La gauche en France de 1789 à nos jours*, 5, meanwhile, dates the debate to 11 September.

right while those opposed to the veto (or even the king himself) sat in the nosebleed seats on the speaker's extreme left. At the time, the deputies who sat there – Robespierre, Danton, etc. – were known as the Mountain, but during this debate, they were simply referred to as *the Left*.

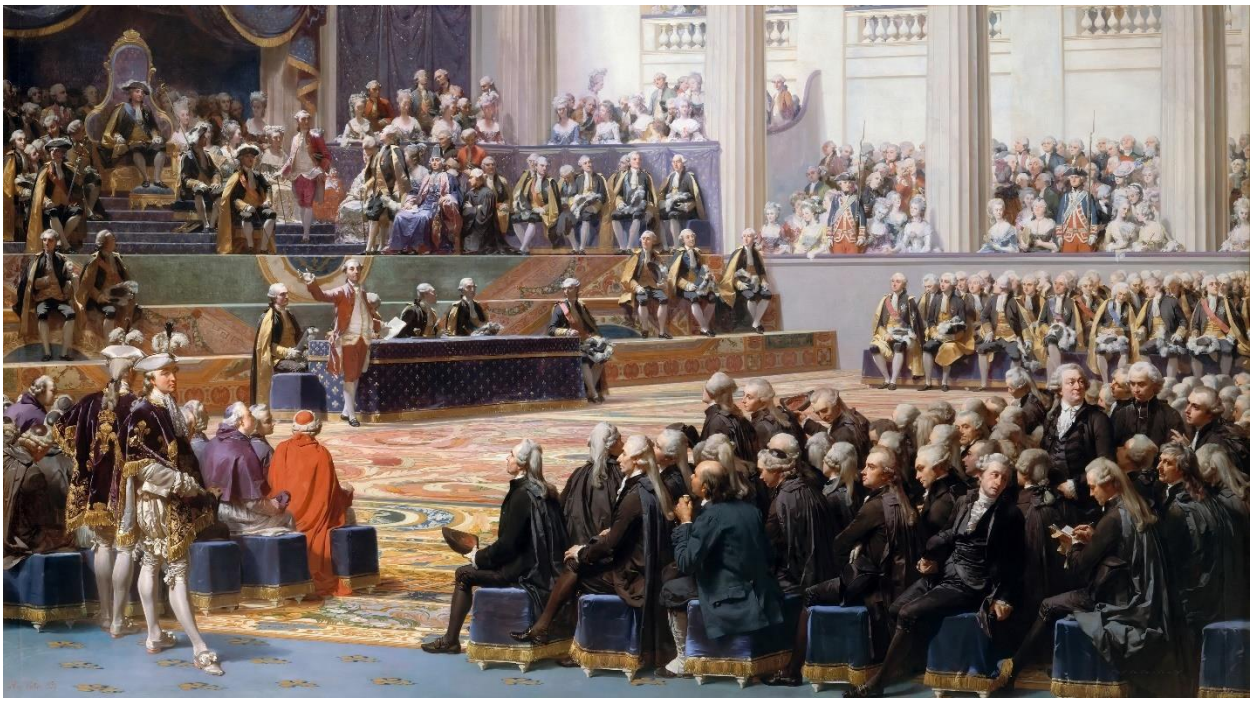

Figure 3. Auguste Couder, *Séance d'ouverture de l'assemblée des États généraux, 5 mai 1789*, oil on canvas, 1839, 400 x 715 cm, conserved in the Musée national du château et des Trianons. Published online by *Wikimedia Commons*. On the viewer's left (speaker's right) one can clearly see the red and purple robes of church officials while in the background (on the speaker's left) are dozens of aristocrats with their nobel robes and sashes.

But this 'accident of history' was anything but. In the preceding Estates General the aristocrat-dominated church (the 'First Estate') sat on the king's right to demonstrate the intense relationship between church and state. The allusion itself is biblical, sitting on the right of the head of household is a place of honor and trust. During the Estates General, it was the aristocrats of the Second Estate who sat on the king's left, but five months later, those same aristocrats in the newly minted National Assembly demonstrated their own allegiance to the monarchy by sitting on the right of the speaker who represented the king. The Left (Mountain) used English parliamentary symbolism to represent their total opposition to the supporters of the monarchy by sitting on the speaker's left. In the bifurcated House of Commons, members of parliament who are opposed to the king's

government sit on the speaker's left, while the king's preferred members (his government), sit on the speaker's right.[38]

By signaling their opposition to the French king's royal authority, the Mountain invented one of the most enduring myths of what the Left is: the opposition to power. This most basic understanding of what the Left is and represents makes it a unified and inherently insurgent party that is pushing towards a vision of progress and modernity defined by the watchwords of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, and the often forgotten fraternity. These watchwords can also be summarized, as they so often have been, as 'popular sovereignty,' which stands opposed to the 'divine rights of kings' and dates the ideas of the Left to before 1789.[39] This idea of the Left, also makes it an inherently oppositional force. During the 1914 debate, one commentator cited the Larousse dictionary saying that "…the opposition, which sits to the left…" is opposed to the "…*ministériels* [who are] those that occupy the right" in a deliberative assembly.[40]

Despite this definition of the Left as the parliamentary opposition, some writers have found it much easier to see the 'true' Left in extra-parliamentary oppositions. In an object, the nineteenth-century Left became synonymous with the barricade.[41] No historian of the 'Restoration' has seriously suggested that the revolutionary, republican, and Carbonari opponents of the regime that existed between 1814 and 1830 were not on the Left even though they were not seated in the parliament. But the historians who sympathize with these extra-parliamentary oppositions do not see the liberal deputies, also opposed Louis XVIII and Charles X, on the Left as well.[42] Because of their

[38] David Caute, *The Left in Europe since 1789* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 9. BnF, *Gallica*, Fernand Engerand, "Droite et Gauche," *Excelsior* (published 27 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), 2 also contains much of this information but the context of this specific article is discussed in part 2 of this text.

[39] For a discussion of popular sovereignty in the French Revolution please see Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, "The King and the Crowd: Divine Right and Popular Sovereignty in the French Revolution," *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 3, no. 1 (1996): 67–83, https://doi.org/10.1353/ctn.1996.0002 as well as the timeless; George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959); Jonathan Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas: An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from The Rights of Man to Robespierre* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015) is the most convincing example of this idea, whose two earlier monographs date these ideas to the Dutch philosopher Spinoza, other examples include; Michel Vovelle, "La gauche et les Lumières," in *Histoire des gauches en France : L'héritage du XIXe siècle*, ed. Jean-Jacques Becker and Gilles Candar, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Paris: La Découverte, 2004), 33–49 and; Defrasne, *La gauche en France de 1789 à nos jours*, 9–15.

[40] Quoted in Engerand, "Droite et Gauche," 2.

[41] Éric Hazan, *La barricade : Histoire d'un objet révolutionnaire* (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2013), 5–7.

[42] On the "Restoration" see Philippe Boutry, "Restauration," in *Les noms d'époque : De «Restauration» à «années de plomb»*, ed. Dominique Kalifa (Paris: Gallimard, 2020), 27–54; André Jardin and André-Jean Tudesq, *Restoration and Reaction, 1815-1848*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge: Cambrdige University Press, 1988), 50–54; Helena Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism: From Ancient Rome to the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 49–96.

proximity to power, modern historians and revolutionary contemporaries of that time saw parliamentary liberals as something different and liberals themselves wanted to be seen as something different. To this effect, Helena Rosenblatt commented that "…being liberal was not the same as being a democrat… when liberalism was just being born, liberal and democratic principles were often opposed to each other." She summarized one German liberal who wrote that "the '*True* majority'… should be distinguished from the 'majority by headcount.'"[43] This idea of the Left means that while it can challenge power it cannot hold onto it. A triumphant Left that holds on to power, by its very seizure of power, is magically transmuted into the new Right.

This is exactly what happened after the July Revolution of 1830, when the neo-absolutist Charles X was overthrown in favor of his liberal cousin, Louis Philippe, who went on to empower the liberal monarchists (*Orléanistes*) François Guizot and Adolphe Thiers. The new 'July Monarchy' gave France a written constitution and doubled the franchise from 100,000 to 200,000 (male) voters. But their failures to go beyond these basic reforms turned contemporary republicans, revolutionaries, and modern historians against them, damning the *Orléanistes* as either traitors to the Left or declaring that they were never even on the Left to begin with.[44] This later claim helps historians navigate the July Monarchy's fall in the 1848 Revolution by conflating the Left with republicanism, but, in the process revealing the extreme contextuality of any definition of a singular Left.[45]

This contextualism is fundamental our understandings of the long nineteenth century in France. Louis Philippe and his liberal supporters were overthrown by another (or perhaps the 'true') Left, the republicans who seized power in February 1848. They then in turn, depending on one's politics, betrayed the Left by suppressing the workers' revolts in the 'June Days' or were, in turn, defeated when the Second Republic was toppled and replaced by the authoritarian Empire of the "little" Louis Bonaparte. This narrative forces the years between 1815 and 1851 to play out Marx's

[43] Cited in Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism*, 52 & 92.
[44] Jardin and Tudesq, *Restoration and Reaction*, 104–5; Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism*, 89–92; Ronald Aminzade, *Ballots and Barricades: Class Formation and Republican Politics in France, 1830-1871* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 14–15, 28–32.
[45] This conflation is often made by historians of 1848 and the Second Empire like Priscilla Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952); Aminzade, *Ballots and Barricades*, 28–58; Roger Price, *The French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 318–94; while revolutionary contemporaries like Proudhon also understood the Left to be inherently republican K. Steven Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 166–208.

"farcical" repetition of the French Revolution. Authors end up ignoring the broader context of the long nineteenth century to create their own isolated histories that each begin with a (not-so) long standing *ancien régime* that is overthrown by a victorious Left. Historians of the next revolution repeat the story, the only difference is that the previously victorious Left is now, itself, the *ancien régime*.

This image of the Left as a utopian idea has been useful, ironically, for historians of both the Right and the revolutionary Left. For historians of the Right, this definition allows them to create a clean division from which they can start their histories. René Rémond's famous *Histoire de la droite en France* (which was later republished as the plural *histoire des droites en France*) posited that there are three tendencies of the Right in France: *Légitimiste*, *Orléaniste*, and Bonapartist. Each represents a different understanding of what the "established order" is, but unified in its support for that existing order, as opposed to the Left's common adherence to what *could be*.[46] But this definition of realists (the Right) versus utopians (the Left) is imperfect. In his own history of the Right in France, Kevin Passmore decided to include various republican movements that identified themselves with the Left (see Part 2).[47] Numerous studies of the Third and even the Fourth Republics, have demonstrated how *légitimisme* (that is support for an authoritarian Bourbon monarchy) and other monarchist ideologies increasingly became so impracticable that they could be easily described as 'utopian,' despite the fevered imaginations of certain Radical deputies.[48]

For writers from the revolutionary Left, this definition serves as useful propaganda. Maurice Agulhon has pointed out that the Left/Right labels are already a monopoly of the Left because the Right rarely employs the terms. The different factions that each identify with the Left compete to present themselves as "truly" representing what the Left stands for against other "false prophets."[49]

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[46] Rémond, *Les Droites En France*, 14–53.
[47] Passmore, *The Right in France*, 12.
[48] Samuel M. Osgood, *French Royalism under the Third and Fourth Republics* (The Hauge: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-0645-8; John Alexander Murray Rothney, *Bonapartism after Sedan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969); Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One*, 1:393–427; Patrick André, "Les Parlementaires Bonapartistes de La Troisième République (1871-1940)" (These de doctorat, Paris 4, 1996), http://www.theses.fr/1995PA040135; Peter Davies, *The Extreme Right in France, 1789 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2002), 76–79, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203495247; Gabriel Goodliffe, *The Resurgence of the Radical Right in France: From Boulangisme to the Front National* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 54–137; Chris Millington, *A History of Fascism in France: From the First World War to the National Front* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 13–28; Bernard Rulof, *Popular Legitimism and the Monarchy in France: Mass Politics without Parties, 1830–1880* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 283–85, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52758-7.
[49] Agulhon, *Histoire vagabonde, II*, 2:198–201.

From the perspective of the historian, liberals and other moderate figures are anachronistically pushed aside for their failures to represent what is now known to have always possible. At the heart of all of these arguments are the writer's own historical sympathies, making them the judge in their own trials of history.

Even the specific idea of the Left as opposition to power can even lead to confusing uses of the term. Looking beyond France in the long nineteenth century and at the Soviet Union, Communists – who are, by any definition, on the Left – took power and, importantly, held onto it. In his biography of Gorbachev, the historian William Taubman pointed out that:

> It became common practice during Gorbachev's years in power… to label his opponents as left-wing and right-wing. Hard-liners in the Communist party, the military, the security police, and elsewhere who resisted Gorbachev's reforms were dubbed right-wingers. Democrats,… who pushed Gorbachev to make haste in creating a market economy, were known as left-wingers. But given the way such markers are used outside the USSR—with Communists usually described as left-wing and true believers in a market economy known as right-wing—to use these labels [are] confusing.[50]

In a struggle between Communists 'on the Left' and democratic reformers 'on the Left' where is the Right?

"The Classificatory Struggle"

Does every historical struggle need a Right?

This was the realization of the famous French literary critic Albert Thibaudet in his 1932 book, *Les idées politiques de la France*. Looking at both his own moment at the previous century, Thibaudet recognized the pattern of victories by groups that identified with the Left label that were then declared a part of the Right by a new Left. By Thibaudet's own moment, this led all but the most reactionary politicians in France to identify, in one way or another, with the Left. The political scientist André Siegfried answered this by commenting on how the forces of world "compress the parties, to empty them of their left-wing energy, [and] reject them towards the center, paradise of the satisfied."[51] Thibaudet, meanwhile, made the label plural: there is not one Left, but several.

[50] William Taubman, *Gorbachev: His Life and Times* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2017), xi.
[51] Siegfried, *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest sous la Troisième République*, 496–97.

Thibaudet's explains this by positing that since "politics are ideas" there are several families of ideas that can be broadly grouped together as various Lefts.[52]

Himself a Radical, Thibaudet still referred to the Right in the singular, by his own label of 'traditionalism,' but he organized the Left, meanwhile, into five broad groups: liberalism, industrialism, social Catholicism, Jacobinism, and socialism. Each group represented a broad trend towards the Left and each one had dominated French politics in succession over the past century. He referred to the process by which each group came to dominate French politics, one after another, as *sinistrisme*.[53]

At its heart, *sinistrisme* does not differ from the modernist assumptions inherent in Left as an idea. It accepts the premise that the Left is an inherently insurgent force in favor of 'what could be,' but faced with a century of victorious Lefts, Thibaudet turned to the question of what happens when that victorious Left embraces the benefits of power. Looking back at the nineteenth century, Thibaudet saw each conflict as something that could be distilled into a struggle over a single idea (we might call it the 'Great Issue of the Day'), and each conflict was eventually resolved through the victory of the Left. In 1830 it was the question of a written constitution while in 1848 it was the question of the republic and with it, manhood suffrage. After each victory the Left would eventually split between those who were content with their success and those who wished to fight for what would become the next defining idea. Thinking back to the prelude of 1848 Thibaudet commented that "there is no longer a place for Lamartine" to signal how the revolutionary ideas of one family or epoch become commonplace and are superseded by new, more progressive, and revolutionary ideas.[54]

Interestingly, Thibaudet claims that once there is a new idea those old Lefts do not remain on the Left, rather their comfort with what now exist transports across the center to the Right, where their few remaining previous enemies are now allies against an idea that goes too far. This was because Thibaudet defines the Republic, and with it the Left, with action and movement. Writing that "the

[52] Thibaudet, "Les idées politiques de la France," 157.
[53] The term cannot be translated into English without causing confusion. The "*sinistre*" that he is referring to is the Latin "sinister," not meaning evil, but literally "on the left side." A loose translation of *sinistrisme* could either be made by calling it "leftism" which raises obvious problems while a stricter translation as "sinisterism" is prone to cause confusion without an accompanying explanation. It is, therefore, best to leave *sinisitrisme* untranslated to emphasis the original meaning of Thibaudet's observations.
[54] Thibaudet, "Les idées politiques de la France," 158.

Republic is not a *thing*, but a *movement*, the *movement*, a sort of continuous creation…" and that "a conservative is a reactionary when he conserves the Republic as it now is."[55]

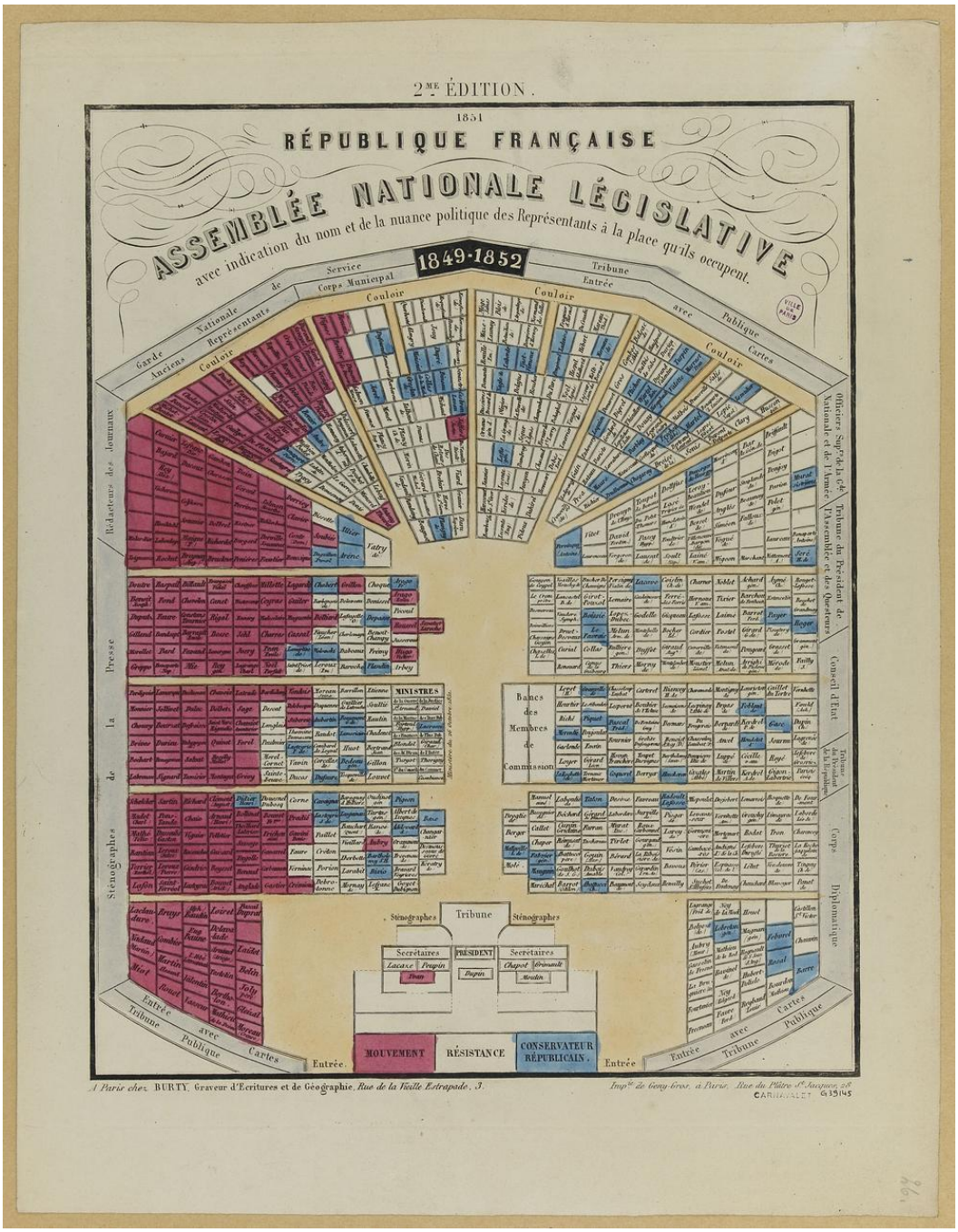


Figure 4. A plan of the 1849-52 session of the Second Republic's National Assembly originally published by *E* in 1851 and published online by *Cotigo*. Compare the homogeneous "Party of Movement" (red) on the speaker's left to the dispersed "Conservative Republicans" (blue) throughout the rest of the Chamber.

[55] Thibaudet, 167.

That the Lefts are identified with movement is best exemplified by the language of the 1848 Revolution when supporters of a Jacobin-inspired Second Republic were known as the Party of Movement while their enemies (who sat on the Chamber's right, see above) were the Party of Resistance. This contextuality is best exemplified by Jean Touchard's *La Gauche en France depuis 1900*. Building on Thibaudet's families, Touchard created his own criteria for classifying various Lefts based on their historical references, pantheons, and most importantly, their own historical moments.[56] By making the Left's families historically contingent, Touchard brought Thibaudet's understanding of the once revolutionary *Quarante-huitards* to life, while still demonstrating that it was, at one point, *a* party of movement.

Calling the Left the Party of Movement also articulates Thibaudet's observation that the Right is a reaction to the Left.[57] On the physical level, there cannot be resistance without movement to be resisted. Likewise, the Right, which wants to conserve what already exists, does not need to articulate its own preservation until challenged by those who seek to change it. So while not seriously considered by Thibaudet, Touchard's inclusion of the Enlightenment as one of the Left's many references showed that the label might have been born in the French Revolution, but the ideas can go back much further.[58] One example from the Second Empire makes this point plain as students from the *École Normale Supérieure* would display "a studied disrespect for religion, shambling into [compulsory mass] wearing slippers, with copies of Voltaire tucked under their arm."[59]

The forces that move an object, of course, are not always stronger than the resistance placed upon it. As the Second Republic gave way to Louis Bonaparte's Empire, republicanism returned to its oppositional roots alongside the other Lefts that the historian Michel Winock identifies in his own book on the subject (socialists, communists, and the far-Left).[60] Republicans and socialists were unified by their movement against Bonapartism's resistance but differed in their ideas about a

[56] Jean Touchard, *La gauche en France depuis 1900* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), 13–40.
[57] Thibaudet, "Les idées politiques de la France," 166.
[58] Touchard, *La gauche en France depuis 1900*, 18–20.
[59] Philip G. Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 37; see also Lalouette, *L'identité républicaine de la France*, 127–31.
[60] Michel Winock, *La gauche en France* (Paris: Perrin, 2006), 7–31.

world that was possible beyond his regime.[61] This opposition to the Empire is best exemplified by the criticisms of the "little Napoleon" published by Victor Hugo and other republicans alongside Marx's famous attacks in *18 Brumaire*.[62] This opposition to the Second Empire is a historical blessing to the republican legacy in France since its importance as a reference point for other French Lefts means they could much more easily hold on to the label unlike liberals and 'industrialists,' the later first oversaw the July Monarchy and then collaborated with Louis Bonaparte's project for a "liberal empire" in 1869-71.[63]

This historical bad press would extend to the creation of the Third Republic when the once Left Adolphe Thiers, a liberal opponent of the "restoration" whose support for the July Monarchy caused him to be rebranded as a member of the Right. Thiers and his supporters viciously suppressed the Paris Commune aligned themselves with *légitimistes* against a third republic in the National Assembly.[64] The "survival" of the that Third Republic – ironically created with the help of Thiers and other *Orléanistes* after the White Flag Affair – became the starting point for Thibaudet's initial observation on how "in France, everyone is on the Left."[65]

The Third Republic created the next splits that Thibaudet based his progression on. The new fundamental division can be summed up by the famous quote from Léon Bourgeois who declared "You all accept the Republic, *Messieurs*, that is well understood! *But do you accept the Revolution*?"[66] In a microcosm of what had occurred since 1815, *Orléanistes* allied with moderate republicans (*Opportunistes*) who then sided with *Progressistes* (less moderate republicans). By the time of Dreyfus, those *Progressistes* would find themselves confronted by Radicals, who, by

[61] One example of a world beyond Louis Bonaparte was articulated by Bakunin who, according to Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One*, 1:777, "...came to Lyon in September 1870 and on the 28th proclaimed the abolition of the state. The state replied by sending two companies of national guardsmen; and he fled at once to Geneva."
[62] Hugo's republicanism and anti-Bonapartist exploits are well known and well summarized in Winock, *La gauche en France*, 47–71.
[63] Touchard, *La gauche en France depuis 1900*, 24–26; Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One*, 1:544–52; Price, *The French Second Empire*, 210–49, 291–317.
[64] François Furet argued that by 1870 Thiers had personally converted to the ideas of a moderate republic but that claim is not without controversy. See Duclert, *La République Imaginée*, 107–8; John M. Merriman, *Massacre: The Life and Death of the Paris Commune of 1871* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014) is the best text on the suppression of the Commune.
[65] Sanford Elwitt, *The Making of the Third Republic: Class and Politics in France, 1868-1884* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975) is the best overview of the material base that built the Third Republic; Frederick Brown, *For the Soul of France: Culture Wars in the Age of Dreyfus* (New York: Afred A. Knoff, 2010), meanwhile, does a great job highlighting the cultural conflicts of the period. Thibaudet, "Les idées politiques de la France," 160.
[66] My italics, Thibaudet, "Les idées politiques de la France," 200.

1914, were confronted with the rising influence of socialists in French politics. *Opportunistes* and *Progressistes* do not align exactly with Thibaudet's industrialism and social Catholicism. The later represents Catholics who came to accept the Republic in the twentieth century (the ALP, see part two). Thibaudet is confused about the political place of industrialism, but elements of it and social Catholicism are present in *Opportuniste* and *Progressiste* republicanism.

The historian François Goguel wrote about the parties of the Third Republic. Though he cites Thibaudet liberally, Goguel found the *Opportuniste* and *Progressiste* difficult to understand in any depth. Consequently, Goguel argued that these ideas should be seen as various "temperaments" that existed within families and could present themselves in various ways depending on the historical moment. Goguel's idea was not entirely new: these temperaments could always be divided in two, into those for the established order, and those favoring movement.[67]

By 1914, the various factions that had seen their period of victory eclipsed by another faction were still represented in the Chamber of Deputies. Even with diminished representation, the members of each group had long historical memories. They could look back at the time when they had been an insurgent force. Some saw this as pure cynicism. One writer went as far as to say that "The man who destines himself to parliamentary politics… does not fail to begin his career with the extreme Left, so that he has time before him until the day when, from one step to the next, he too will have reached the fatal precipice."[68] But others, like the Catholic deputy Fernand Engerand, saw it as something akin to a law of nature, describing the "rotational circuit of the hemisphere [the semi-circular layout of the parliament]" the same way the earth mechanically revolves around the sun.[69]

Thibaudet, saw it the same way, going beyond 1914 and writing about his own historical moment, he saw political ideas as a never-ending story of historical progress. The Radicals and socialists had once shared in the common struggle against Louis Bonaparte and later Catholic Church but had split over the 'social question.' Following the Great War, Communists split with Socialists over the revolutionary means and ends of the social question, just as the social welfare state was finally being born. In some ways, this division mirrors the families of Winock's typology, with the

[67] François Goguel, *La politique des partis sous la Troisième République* (Paris: Seuil, 1946), 25–29.
[68] BnF, *Gallica*, Léonce Beaujeu, "Topographie parlementaire," *L'Action française* (published 26 June 1914, accessed 19 February 2022), frontpage.
[69] BnF, *Galiica*, Fernand Engerand, "Droite et Gauche," *Excelsior* (published 27 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), 2.

far-Left following the Communists, but *Sinistrisme* is a vision of the Left defined by progress "towards the Left."[70] Progress took the form of movement. To repeat Thibaudet, the republic is "…not one *thing*, but a *movement*, the *movement*, a sort of continuous creation…" which means that "the cessation of action is reaction – the reaction. A conservative is a reactionary when he conserves the republic as it already is."[71]

Faced with this continuous movement, Thibaudet is faced with two reactions. The first is a mirror of Proudhon, who famously wrote that "*Je rêve une société où je serai guillotiné comme conservateur*."[72] The other option, which Thibaudet's book embraces, is deep sympathy for those whom history had "left behind." Perhaps this sympathy was personal, Thibaudet was a Radical whose party was increasingly abandoned by the socialist Lefts of this revolutionary period after the Great War.[73] Many contemporary intellectuals in that period felt the same.[74] They had come of age on the Left but now that they were victorious, where were they to go?

Historians and political scientists have found Thibaudet's idea of families extremely helpful. The concept of families allow them to create shorthand labels that are more specific than the Left-Right spectrum but still easily identifiable. In his own research on the Fourth and Fifth Republics, Andrew Knapp uses Thibaudet's families to articulate the complicated relationships political actors have to parties and that these parties have to each other.[75] Looking beyond France, the German political scientist Klaus von Beyme systematized this same idea of spiritual families on an international level, creating nine different families with their own typologies that can be applied to the twenty-first century.[76] Political scientists and historians have also wisely disregarding the modernist assumptions which Thibaudet baked into his "families." While "families" do show

[70] Winock, *La gauche en France*, 369–417.
[71] Thibaudet, "Les idées politiques de la France," 167.
[72] "I dream of a society where I would be guillotined as a conservative." C.-A. Sainte-Beuve, ed., *P.-J. Proudhon : Sa Vie et Sa Correspondance, 1838-1848*, 3ème édition (Paris: Libairie Nouvelle, 1873), 342.
[73] Michel Leymarie, *Albert Thibaudet: l'outsider du dedans* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du septentrion, 2006), 189–278 is a great summary of Thibaudet's political beliefs.
[74] K. Steven Vincent, *Elie Halévy: Republican Liberalism Confronts the Era of Tyranny* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 212–52.
[75] See Andrew Knapp, *Parties and the Party System in France: A Disconnected Democracy?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); and Le Bras, *Tableau historique de la France*.
[76] Klaus von Beyme, *Political Parties in Western Democracies* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 29–158.

connections across time (Jacobinism and Radicalism) the progression of "families" does not need to include historical progression as von Beyme's families suggest.

"Families" also created, as should be clear by now, a "classificatory struggle" as the historian of the French Right Kevin Passmore calls it. Historians are forced to look at how groups interact with one another to create their own understandings of what each "family" is. This "struggle" also forces historians to see their own small moments in the broad stretch of history and how their characters interact with one another. And, while useful framing devices, "families" often obscure how contemporaries understood their own relationships to one another. Not only, as Passmore points out, are people and their actions not reducible to a single label or belief without connections between families, but historical actors understood their own actions with a wide variety of labels.[77] For example, in *Les lieux de mémoire*, Marcel Gauchet's chapter on the Right and Left (see below) is preceded by Jean-Louis Ormières's own study on the labels 'red,' 'white,' and 'blue' that were equally important throughout the long nineteenth century.[78]

The Left as a Place

What was wrong with the labels Left and Right in the first place? In his magisterial work on the subject, Marcel Gauchet returned to the origins of the terms to argue that they were not invented with grand historical ambitions to guide the conflicts of future generations, rather there were simple locational labels to denote allegiances in various French parliaments since 1815.

Gauchet points out that while the Left and Right existed in the French Revolution, they were not in popular use. They were in use during one debate during the first National Assembly in 1789, and existed so that the stenographers could quickly note the reactions of the assembly, and while the Mountain might have sat in the nosebleed seats on the speaker's extreme left, they were only a few of the many deputies on his left. As the Revolution radicalized in the face of invasion, 1789 was quickly forgotten in favor of new labels that deputies and revolutionaries could use to differentiate themselves from their and the Revolution's enemies.[79] Right and Left, which explicitly refer to assembly seats, were quickly forgotten along with the National Assembly as the

[77] Passmore, *The Right in France*, 12.
[78] Jean-Louis Ormières, "Les rouges et les blancs," in *Les lieu de mémoire III : Les France*, ed. Pierre Nora, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 231–393.
[79] See François Furet, "L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution," in *Les lieu de mémoire III : Les France*, ed. Pierre Nora, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 107–39.

Parisian crowd and the army became the center of Revolutionary politics.[80] The terms even quickly lost their relevance in the National Assembly as well, since deputies became so worried that parties would stifle free discussion that seats in many of the revolutionary assemblies were randomly rearranged every three months.[81]

This fear of parties among the Revolutionaries is an excellent example of why the traditional narrative of the Left and Right's origins should be treated with skepticism. Gauchet points out that the idea of a Left and Right implies a fundamental division that cannot be overcome, a thought that would have been anathema to the Revolutionaries of 1789 who saw the National Assembly as a place of reunion that worked towards the common, national, good.[82] The Revolutionaries saw the illogical and messy structures of the *ancien régime* as artificially dividing France and so they set out with the goal of flattening regional differences to create one national community. They did this through the creation of *départments*, the abolition of feudalism, and their proclamation of the National Assembly, destroying the old system of the Three Estates.[83] How could revolutionaries attempting to reunify all the French accept a new fundamental division in the nation?

This desire for unity continued through Napoleon's personal rule as he attempted to embody the whole of the French nation – replete with contradictions – in his own person. Bonaparte also saw the legislatures reduced to rubber stamps, centering political life around himself, his closest supporters, and the army. As political labels, the Right and Left were not used throughout the Napoleonic era.

If the French Revolution is the "false departure" of the Left and Right, then Gauchet finds the term's true origins in, ironically, the "laboratory of modern political thought" of the Bourbon 'Restoration.'[84] The 'Restoration' of the Bourbon monarchy included a parliament with political

[80] This is not the whole story of course. The "Terror" was never as terrible as some liberal historians claim it was and the Committee of Public Safety was not an independent body, but a parliamentary committee made up of members of the National Assembly. They had far-reaching powers but 9 Thermidor *was not* a *coup d'état*. The committee's powers were taken away leading Robespierre, Saint-Just, and their supporters to hide in the *hôtel de ville* until the legal "forces of order" would come and arrest them. The center of political life did move away from the National Assembly, but it was a truly post-Thermidorian phenomenon rather than a "terrorist" one.
[81] BnF, *Galiica*, Fernand Engerand, "Droite et Gauche," *Excelsior* (published 27 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), 2.
[82] Gauchet, *La Droite et La Gauche*, 28–29; Marisa Linton, *Choosing Terror: Virtue, Friendship, and Authenticity in the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[83] See Ted W. Margadant, *Urban Rivalries in the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 84–89, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1h9dh56.
[84] Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 28.

power that touched the interests of those wealthy enough to vote and those who wished they were.[85] The Chamber of Deputies was the parliament's lower house, there was an *even more* aristocratic upper house known as the Chamber of Peers that – like the British House of Lords – existed to check any threat to the aristocracy's power coming from the politically relevant Chamber below.

Inside the Chamber of Deputies, deputies were allowed to sit where they pleased since they had not been given assigned seats because the concept was an insult to a deputy's independence and it was common for deputies to change where they sat throughout a legislative session. By early October 1815, hardcore supporters of the Bourbon monarchy – or enemies of the Revolution –, known as *Ultras* began sitting on the speaker's right like their ideological predecessors had done in 1789.[86] They were not sitting in reference to the debate over the King's royal veto (in fact, they wished the debate never happened) but in reference to the New Testament: "And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left." (Matthew 25.33) and "I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power…" (Matthew 26.64 and Mark 14.62). These established the Christian preference for the right as a place of honor.[87] This preference is reproduced in the *Ultras* second reference of the bifurcated House of Commons where the government, which is theoretically the king's chosen representatives and their supporters, sit on the speaker's right.[88]

The Left, as one writer quoted from the Larousse dictionary, is where the opposition sits.[89] This was true in the British system since members of parliament who did not support the government sat on the speaker's left-hand benches, but also in the Chamber where the few liberals that became deputies did not support the reactionary governments on the speaker's right and gradually began to sit together on the far left.[90] Between 1815 and 1819, the Chamber, with its annual elections,

[85] Although he is a reactionary *tout cœur* Emmanuel de Waresquiel, *Penser la Restauration, 1814-1830* (Paris: Tallandier, 2020), 123–70 has two excellent chapters that underline the material basis for the Chamber of Deputies throughout the period. Legislative politics were not a universal gift but a way for French elites to express their interests in government.
[86] Gauchet, *La Droite et La Gauche*, 32.
[87] Cited in Caute, *The Left in Europe since 1789*, 9.
[88] References to the British parliamentary system were common throughout the period because the British system was seen as a solution to the tensions created by the French Revolution. Louis XVIII is even quoted as saying "Oh Tories, oh Whigs, where are you?" Gauchet, *La Droite et La Gauche*, 33.
[89] BnF, *Galiica*, Fernand Engerand, "Droite et Gauche," *Excelsior* (published 27 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), 2.
[90] This symbolism was reenforced by the British system which, since 1807 had been dominated by Tories. But, importantly, this was following a century of Whig (liberal) domination which saw the Whigs sitting on the speaker's right. Future commentators would reference how seats in the British parliament would change depending on who was

saw an increasing number of liberal deputies join their ideological colleagues on the speaker's left, conscious of both where their opponents sat and of the symbolism imported from Britain.

This system was finally formalized and publicized before the opening of the 1819 legislative session when E. Collin, an editor for the popular series *Statistiques* asked the speaker to formalize the seating arrangements so that he could make a map of the incoming Chamber that showed where each deputy sat. Although he could not force deputies to sit somewhere against their will, the speaker did mark out the "usual" seats of various deputies and arranged them based on the six administrative divisions that deputies were already using.[91] These divisions were arranged on the speaker's left and far left, right and far right, and center left and center right. Looking over his new map, Collin realized that liberal deputies were grouped together on the speaker's left and wrote in an accompanying text that "...the deputies who sit in the second of the left, in the second section of the right and in the center are placed in a manner indicating their [political] inclination."[92]

Statistique's map of the Chamber suddenly gave French civil society a shorthand for the disparate deputies who opposed the *Utlra*'s reactionary politics. Before, there was not a simple way to refer to the liberal monarchist or even republican deputies like Benjamin Constant, the father of French liberalism, Alexis de Tocqueville, and the Abbé Grégoire – who was still guilty of regicide because of his participation in the French Revolution – because they all followed different beliefs and were only unified in their opposition to the current regime.[93] That map, however, flattened these differences by unifying them under a single label and, provocatively, colored the left, center, and right the colors of the revolutionary tricolor – blue, white, and red – which was not in use at the time.[94]

Although they were administratively divided into six sections, the map broke them into just three and flattened these differences in the process. By presenting the map of the Chamber as such, E. Collin is helping to create the idea of a singular Left (in blue) in opposition to a singular Right (in red). Importantly, as Gauchet points out, there is also a center, which is often ignored in more

in government but, by the time of the Third Republic, once the Left began governing, they kept their seats instead of moving to the speaker's right.

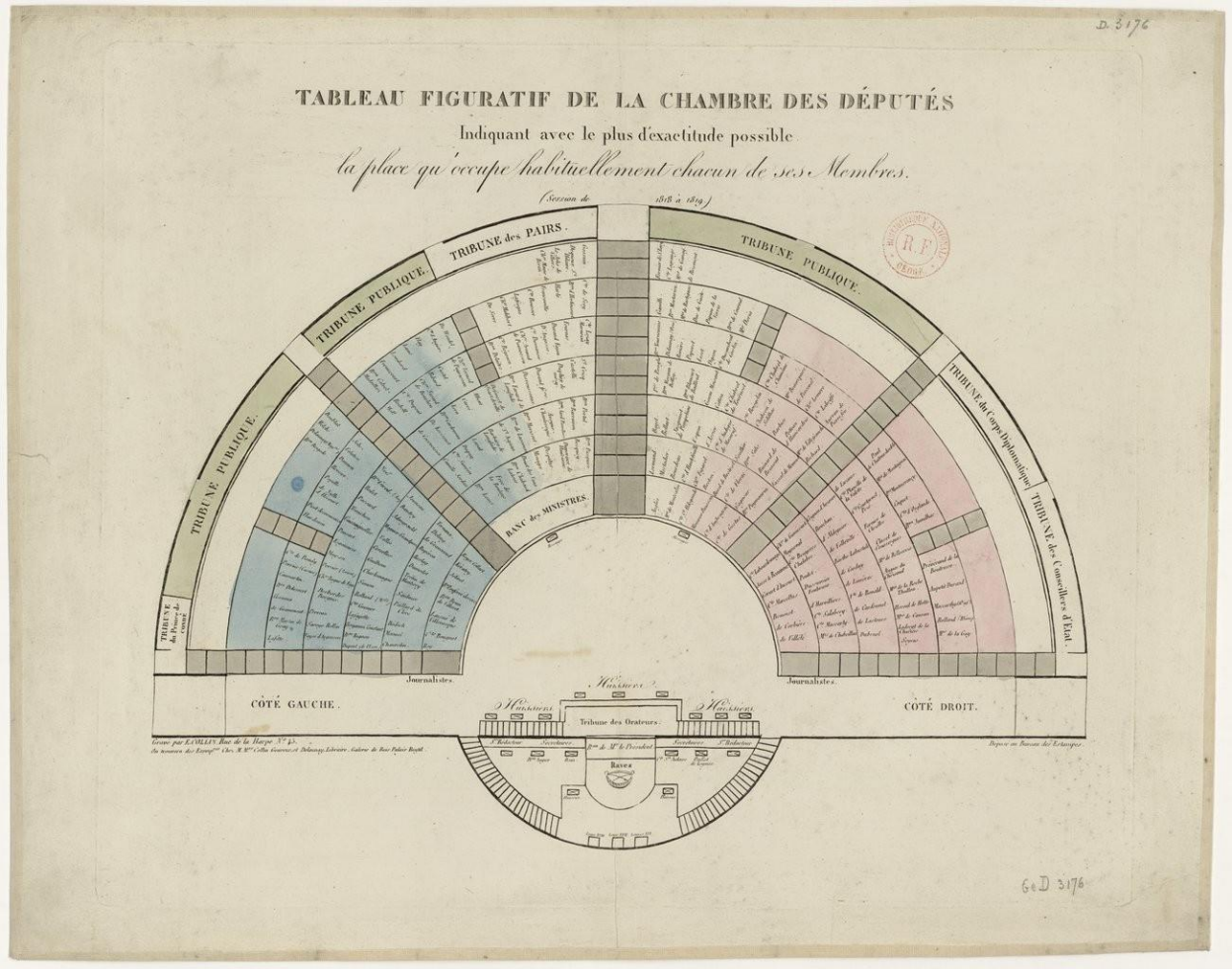
[91] These divisions were for purely administrative purposes like distributing offices, paperwork, pay, secretaries, etc. Often, deputies with similar beliefs – or from similar regions – would participate in the same administrative divisions because it was more pleasant to work with one's allies rather than one's enemies.

[92] Gauchet, *La Droite et La Gauche*, 35.

[93] Gauchet, 34–38.

[94] Between 1815 and 1830 France's official flag was the plain white banner of the House of Bourbon.

conversation of the Left-Right dichotomy. Both the center and the tricolor suggest that while there is a Right and Left, the divide is not unbridgeable and that the whole of the French nation can, like the revolutionaries of 1789 dreamed, be reunited in one place. The original goal of the National Assembly. As Gauchet pointed out, "there is a Left because there is a center."[95] It is an extremely idealistic document that reenforces, and it even helps create, the idea of a singular utopian Left, but one which is not fundamentally at odds with the Right since they can both be reunited by the center.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 5. BnF, *Gallica*, E. Collin, "Tableau figuratif de la Chambre des députés. Session de 1818-1819," originally published in 1818, acessed online 27 March 2023.

In popular usage, the terms took off. By 1835 Right and Left were included in the dictionary of the *Académie française* and in 1842, Jean Christophe Bailleul wrote in his own political dictionary

[95] Gauchet, *La Droite et La Gauche*, 33.

that the Left is "the portion of the Chamber composed of the deputies that we call the opposition."[96] The famous Larousse Dictionary, published in the 1860s and 70s, defined the Left as follows: "In our deliberative assemblies, the part of the assembly to the left of the speaker, where the opposition members sit, is called 'left.' By this word 'the left,' one understands that the whole of the members who are united in their political agreement."[97] The center was also included in the Larousse dictionary, as the place that does not seat the government *or* the opposition.[98]

A Liberal Left?

The existence of the center is made plain by returning the Right and Left to parliamentary usage. But we must ask also why this context was forgotten? Gauchet's emphasis on the center is what fundamentally differentiates his understanding of the Right and Left from the traditional narratives and ideas outlined above. In traditional narratives about the Left and Right, the center is excluded by revolutionary sympathizers who wish to celebrate the radical elements of a revolution. Historians of the Right include the center in their histories, to dismay of certain subjects.[99]

Those subjects in the center are liberals, who were often uncomfortable with the label "Left" themselves. The historian Helena Rosenblatt pointed out that for liberals like Benjamin Constant, the father of French liberalism, "being liberal was not the same thing as being a democrat…. When liberalism was just being born, liberal and democratic principles were often opposed to one another."[100] Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, many liberals were quick to demonstrate their own moderation as opposed to their "extreme" colleagues with Stendhal writing that the "center-left" was the "...spirit of the century" and the opinion of the "whole of France."[101] And when discussing the liberal opposition in the Chamber, *the Censur européen* wrote about the "praise given to the left and blame given to the extreme left."[102]

The liberal center's discomfort with the Left is reciprocated by the former since is seen as an enemy of both the broad Left for their failure to be more radical, and the other "families" of the

[96] Marc Crapez, "De quand date le clivage gauche/droite en France ?," *Revue française de science politique* 48, no. 1 (1998): 44, https://doi.org/10.3406/rfsp.1998.395251.
[97] Touchard, *La gauche en France depuis 1900*, 13.
[98] Cited in BnF, *Galiica*, Fernand Engerand, "Droite et Gauche," *Excelsior* (published 27 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), 2.
[99] Rémond, *Les Droites En France*, 101–19; Passmore, *The Right in France*, 12–13.
[100] Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism*, 52.
[101] Gauchet, *La Droite et La Gauche*, 41.
[102] Gauchet, 36.

Right; either for accepting the French Revolution or by not wholly endorsing one-man Bonapartist rule. Tony Judt argued in his appropriately named chapter on liberalism, "Liberalism, there is the Enemy," that "their dream of an English-style constitutional monarchy foundered on the rocks of social division in the mid-1830s..." and that as opposed to the liberal view of so-called negative rights the republicans' successes meant that "A universal and undifferentiated democracy replaced the deal of liberty as the subtext of mainstream republican language."[103]

Thibaudet argued that the reason is it is hard to speak to an Englishman or an American about liberalism in France is because of the modernist assumptions that undergird their liberalism.[104] French liberalism is obsessed with negative liberties (freedom *from* the state), in a form that came to resemble the resistance of reactionaries to the French Revolution.[105] This obsession with negative liberties crashes into Thibaudet's "republic of movement."

In recent decades, a major trend in liberal historiography has been produced in the United States where the term is traditionally associated with the Left, but historians in this recent tendency have been interested in proving that liberalism *is not* a part of the Left. Rosenblatt and her colleagues have emphasized the French origins of liberalism with thinkers like Benjamin Constant while other historians emphasize the complicity of French liberalism in the crimes of Empire like Alexis de Tocqueville in Algeria and the United States.[106] These historians who have attempted to expunge

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[103] Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944-1956* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1992), 240.
[104] Thibaudet, "Les idées politiques de la France," 166.
[105] For negative liberties and a general discussion on liberalism, see Samuel Moyn, "The Cold War and the Canon of Liberalism" (Lecture Series, The Carlyle Lectures 2022, Oxford, 2022), https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/event/the-carlyle-lectures-2022-the-cold-war-and-the-canon-of-liberalism; See also Guido de Ruggiero, *The History of European Liberalism*, trans. R.G. Collingwood (New York: Oxford University Press, 1927); Judith N. Shklar, *After Utopia: The Decline of Political Faith* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); Jeanne Morefield, *Covenants without Swords: Idealist Liberalism and the Spirit of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Michael Freeden, *Liberal Languages: Ideological Imaginations and Twentieth-Century Progressive Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2014); Amanda Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Tyler Stovall, *White Freedom: The Racial History of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).
[106] George Armstrong Kelly, *The Humane Comedy: Constant, Tocqueville, and French Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Aurelian Craiutu, *Liberalism under Seige: The Political Thought of the French Doctrinaires* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003); Helena Rosenblatt, *Liberal Values: Benjamin Constant and the Politics of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Annelien De Dijn, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberal in a Levelled Society?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Andrew J. S. Jainchill, *Reimagining Politics after the Terror: The Republican Origins of French Liberalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); K. Steven Vincent, *Benjamin Constant and the Birth of French Liberalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2011), https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230117105; Raf Geenens and Helena Rosenblatt, eds., *French Liberalism from Montesquieu to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Aurelian Craiutu, *A Virtue for Courageous Minds: Moderation in French Political Thought, 1748-1830* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Robert Leroux and David M. Hart, *French Liberalism in the 19th Century an*

liberalism from the Left do so because they see the Left as a utopian idea despite the interceding theories of Thibaudet, Gauchet, and their successors. They, historians of liberalism, are caught up in a search for fifth columnists on the Left because they believe that the Left *must* be a world-historical idea rather than what it is, a label. A label that even liberals can us.

This is not to say *all* liberals would identify with the Left. At the start of the twentieth century, the label, liberal, was adopted by the organized Catholic party, *Action Liberale Populaire* (ALP), to denote their adherence to the same principles – as they saw it – as Benjamin Constant and Alexis de Tocqueville. These political Catholics – as opposed to their predecessors – had rallied to the Republic, because of this they were as *rallies*. They were and they presented themselves as supporters of the republic.[107] Writing in the conservative newspaper, *Le Figaro*, however, the party's founders "did not, as did the rest of Europe, associate liberalism with anticlericalism but rather with favoring equal liberty for all, including the Church and the congregations, and in opposition to "illiberal" laws such as that on associations."[108]

But there were self-identified liberals who did identify with the (center-)Left. Léon Say in the 1880s had few qualms about the term, using it to describe himself on several occasions.[109] While the unjustly forgotten intellectual Élie Halévy wrote near the end of his life that "I was not a socialist [in 1902]. I was a 'liberal' in the sense that I was anticlerical, democrat, republican—to use a word which was this time heavy with meaning, I was a 'Dreyfusard.'" These examples all point to the fact that, on some level, liberals identified with the Left.[110] The term was jammed full of meaning, but at its heart was the "false" origin of the label, the Revolution of 1789. If the Left and the French Revolution are inseparable, then liberals remain tepid members of it. The label liberal does not necessitate expulsion from the Left. It remains a part of a broad family that is packed with collective meaning, but that meaning can be highly selective. So, if we accept that the Left is a label, we must accept that liberals are, in some way, on the Left.

Anthology (London: Routledge, 2012); Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism*; Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Andrew Stephen Sartori, *Liberalism in Empire: An Alternative History*, 2014.

[107] Passmore, *The Right in France*, 73–100.

[108] Benjamin F. Martin, "The Creation of the Action Liberale Populaire: An Example of Party Formation in Third Republic France," *French Historical Studies* 9, no. 4 (1976): 665, https://doi.org/10.2307/286210.

[109] Paul-Jacques Lehmann, *Léon Say: ou le Libéralisme assumé* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2010), 125–40.

[110] Vincent, *Elie Halévy*, 81.

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Every understanding of the Left(s) and Right(s) attempts to go beyond the terms as mere labels. But why? In every example given above, writers have attempted to find a world-historical meaning in the language being used, forcing them to create anachronistic divisions that explain this meaning. But we as historians should not attempt to create our own meanings, instead we should embrace the rich meanings that contemporaries included in their own definitions and attempt to approach the 1914 *répartition* on its own terms.

We will not benefit from arguing over who truly deserved to sit on the speaker's left in 1914. Instead, we should attempt to understand how each of these notions of what the Left is interacted with each other, how individuals and groups understanded their own place on the Left, and interrogate why something as simple as a seating arrangement necessitated a whole debate.

Part Two: Reordering the Left

The debate over the 1914 *répartition* did not occur in a vacuum. The phenomenon that caused Thibaudet to write *Les idées politiques de la France* was the names that parliamentary groups used to distinguish themselves. A headcount shows us that 91% of the deputies in the eleventh legislature (1914-1919) of the Chamber of Deputies were members of parliamentary groups that called themselves liberal, republican, democratic, socialist, or simply, Left. This simple headcount is deceptive for the reasons we will discuss below, but it highlights how one idea – that of the Left – had come to dominate French politics by the height of the Third Republic and would continue to do so for decades to come.

The conflict over the meaning of the Left label came to a head in the opening weeks of the legislature, just a few weeks after the 1914 legislative elections which saw, for the first time, 'Unified' socialists win over a hundred seats in the Chamber. Their success was not without consequences since there not enough open seats on the Chamber's far left to accommodate them, so they were given the empty seats next to reactionaries on the speaker's far right.[111] Following the abortive three-day ministry of the anti-socialist and anti-*laïc* Alexandre Ribot, the Republican-Socialist René Viviani was able to form a government without the support of Jaurès and the 'Unified' socialists – who organized the initial confidence vote against Viviani's "republican majority."[112] Still in the minority, the 'Unified' socialists looked for other way to demonstrate their increased power in the Chamber. In the face of mockery from the "republican majority," the issue of seating quickly became *the* symbolic issue for the 'Unified' socialists to demonstrate their influence in the Chamber and to demonstrate that while they were not a part of the majority, they were no less republican.

With the support of the Radicals in the Chamber who saw the 'Unified' socialist proposal as a modernizing reform – as well as a method to shore up their own new-found party discipline – a reform to the rules was introduced to turn parties into administrative groups and assign seats in the Chamber based on groups, rather than as individuals. The 'Unified' socialists would be able to sit together on the Chamber's far left, although this would not come to pass without consternation

[111] Anderson, *France, 1870-1914*, 42. The coalition that took down Ribot included the 'United' socialists was called the "republican majority," while Radicals and Republican-Socialists continued using the term throughout June and July despite the exclusion of the 'Unified' Socialists.
[112] BnF, *Gallica*, "Les débuts du ministère Viviani," *Le Radicale* (published 17 June 1914, accessed 8 May 2023), front page. The government won 362-139 with the main body of opposition coming from the 'Unified' socialists.

from older deputies who felt that they were being ignominiously pushed aside by a disrespectful younger generation.

The change of rules passed overwhelmingly, and the Chamber Rules Commission reconvened to decide who would sit to the left of whom. The list that they produced pleased most deputies. But one of the frustrated few was the former *président du Conseil* and independent socialist, Aristide Briand, who was told to sit with the other independent deputies on the Chamber's far right. After a day of complaints, he and his supporters were appeased with a unique block of seats in the center of the Chamber. Other deputies weren't lucky, learning that while a deputy's independence might have been sacrosanct in 1815, that was no longer the case in 1914.

The story of the *répartition* is a brief and materially insignificant story. But the fact that deputies debated it more than once tells how important labels were to the French political class, and to French voters more broadly. To understand why the seating arrangement would warrant debate, we must first understand the names and euphemisms of parties and groups in 1914 and the context of the 1914 legislative elections.

Clarifying Names in 1914

A 1928 edition of the Angevin satirical newspaper, *La Tribune Libre,* ended its frontpage article by imploring readers to "…ask your candidates to give you a clear and precise explanations of their political nuances, it is a way to be sure of the sincerity of their opinions."[113] The author – a local satirical journalist, Édouard Caris – had dedicated the article to mocking the aggressive and radical names of the parties that had participated in that year's elections. This was a common sentiment for many participants in French political life. In 1919 an aristocrat from the Midi told two candidates who had called themselves conservatives in that election that:

> ...'A Progressist [Moderate] Republican is a conservative and the great majority of Radicals are terribly conservative'. Whoa, eminent confrere! Do you think that Union national voters sent MM de Guibal, de Rodez and even M de Magallon to the Chamber so that they could be conservative in the same way as your Républicains de gauche [Moderate Republicans] and your Radicals . . .? For the great majority, if not all of them, that would be disappointing.[114]

[113] AD49, 130 JO art. 1, Tribune libre (la). Édouard Caris, "Les différents partis politiques," (published 25 August, 1928), frontpage.
[114] Translated in Passmore, *The Right in France*, 4.

Eric Hobsbawm summarized the phenomenon well when he wrote that:

> In France, the bourgeoisie had long ceased to be able to sail under its own, or even the Liberal flag, and its candidates sought popular support under increasingly inflammatory labels. 'Reform' and 'Progressive' were to give way to 'Republican', and this in turn to 'Radical' and, even in the Third Republic, 'Radical-Socialist', each concealing a new generation of substantially the same bearded, frock-coated, golden-tongued and frequently gold-lined Solons, rapidly shifting towards moderation after their electoral triumphs on the left.[115]

Party names accumulated at pace with the trend that Thibaudet described as *sinistrisme*. Each time the party associated with the Left triumphed it split as a more progressive wing embraced the next "Great Issue of the Day" while the remainder of the 'Left' party was forced into closer proximity to the recently defeated Right. Thus did the Left split after each triumph. But each defeated party never lost all of its representation in the Chamber. A succession of political conflicts accrued as each so-called Left was 'outflanked' by their successors to the Left. As Caris writes, "So why all these complications that only confuse what should be clear."[116] Almost all of these party and group names claiming their place on the Left, doing so explicitly, like the Democratic and Radical Lefts, or implicitly, with terms like liberal, republican, radical, or socialist. According to William D. Irvine, "No one, of course, denied that there was a Right, a nebulous realm inhabited by reactionaries, *chevaux-légers*, and other enemies of the Republic; but no one would admit to belonging to it."[117] In 1914 there was a parliamentary group called the Right, but only 15 deputies were officially a part of it, most of their ideological companions preferred an undefined independence.

To understand how and why so many factions identified with the Left, we will move across the Chamber from right to left, tracing how the history of the Third Republic unfolded, and how it was remembered by the different parliamentary groups claiming the legacies of the "Great Moments" of the "*Belle Époque*."

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[115] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975), 104.
[116] AD49, 130 JO art. 1, Tribune libre (la). Édouard Caris, "Les différents partis politiques," (published 25 August, 1928), frontpage.
[117] Irvine, *French Conservatism in Crisis*, xiv.

Roaming Deputies, the Right, and the *non-inscrit*

The period between 1900 and 1914 was an odd time to be a deputy in France. Before 1900, political parties as we imagine them barely existed. Politics were still highly local affairs and the favored sons of the various departmental bourgeoises were often contesting elections based on historical memories as much as any contemporary issues.[118] It was only upon their arrivals in Paris that they then attempted to find other deputies with which they could work. Before 1900, national parties were the creations of commentators and national figures who attempted to distill the mass of independent deputies into a coherent whole. Labels like the Mountain (in 1848) and the Republican Union (in the 1870s) were – and still are – a thin veneer of unity that is easily explained away by the fickle nature of government coalitions throughout the Third Republic (58 by August 1914).[119] That thin veneer could not be held together by party discipline because parties did not exist. This does not mean government coalitions had to be built from scratch every nine months, however, as charismatic deputies often found themselves surrounded by likeminded followers in the Chamber and the offer of a ministry to that charismatic deputy could be accompanied by his follower's votes as well. The possibility of a ministry demonstrates the main coercive force was the carrot rather than the stick. Pork-barreling was rampant throughout the Third Republic and deputies made ample use of it to shore up their electoral support in their departments.[120]

By the time of the Dreyfus Affair, however, political parties were being born. Catholic *Ralliés*, Radicals, and socialists all built, with varying success, national political parties that would attempt to contest elections nationally. This was a slow process – the Radicals faced serious difficulties convincing their own deputies to join the party – but the debate over proportional representation helped push more deputies to join parties than ever before.[121] But national politics were also republican politics which did not sit well with reactionary deputies who still dreamed of a restored

[118] Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870- 914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 241–77.

[119] Although this image is a myth propagated by writers who are critical of unchecked parliamentary government. In reality the governments Third Republic contained many of the same ministers over successive governments, the record being held by one minister who stayed at his post for 18 years and 2 months. Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One*, 1:587–90.

[120] Zeldin, 1:576–87; Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 268–77; Donald G. Wileman, "Not the Radical Republic: Liberal Ideology and Central Blandishment in France, 1901-1914," *The Historical Journal* 37, no. 3 (1994): 595.

[121] See Graham H. Stuart, "Electoral Reform in France and the Elections of 1919," *The American Political Science Review* 14, no. 1 (1920): 117–23, https://doi.org/10.2307/1945731 for the results of the eventual use of proportional representation in the 1919 legislative elections.

monarchy. [122] These deputies saw themselves as the representatives of their *pays* rather than the nation and never organized themselves into a coherent political party like the republicans or the Catholic *Raillés* (see ALP).[123]

But since they were introduced in 1815, administrative groups had grown and evolved into something that looked like a modern party group. There were as many groups as there were parliamentary factions and each contained as many or as few deputies as wished to join. Despite their independence, reactionary deputies sought the benefits that were given to administrative groups – committee assignments, the chance to debate their proposed legislation, etc. – and organized themselves, ironically, into the "the group of deputies who are not a member of any group" (*non-inscrit*). While nominally open to all independently minded deputies, it was little more than a code-word for reactionaries and nationalists. *Non-inscrit* deputies often participated in other groups at various points such as the mustachioed antisemite Joseph Lasies who was also a member of the "Antijew Group [*groupe antijuif*]" between 1898 and 1902.[124]

Lasies' membership in this colorful group highlights the political milieu of the *non-inscrit* but also how other groups could rise and fall alongside it. In 1914, there were 44 *non-inscrit* deputies but there were also 15 members of the *Groupe de Droite* (the Right).[125] The Right was a small gaggle of "respectable" royalists who accepted that the republic existed and wished to change it through legal means. Grouped around the Parisian author (and possible Dreyfusard) Denys Cochin, this 15-man group represented a monarchical alternative to the ALP which, while they agreed about their support for Catholicism, disagreed on constitutional issues.[126] This difference is symbolized by their names, the Right was the only group to use that label in the Chamber and it was used to demonstrate their support for the monarchy as opposed to the "liberal" ALP which had accepted

[122] Gerson, *The Pride of Place*, 1–19.
[123] Rulof, *Popular Legitimism and the Monarchy in France*, 326–40; Osgood, *French Royalism under the Third and Fourth Republics*, 197–210.
[124] See Laurent Joly, "Antisémites et antisémitisme à la Chambre des députés sous la IIIe République," *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine* 54–3, no. 3 (2007): 63–90, https://doi.org/10.3917/rhmc.543.0063.
[125] They are sometimes referred to in the plural form (Groupe des Droites) but I have never seen contemporaries refer to it in the plural form and will therefore keep it in the singular form. All numbers come from Charles Seignobos, *L'Évolution de la 3e république (1875-1914)*, L'Histoire de France contemporaine depuis la révolution jusqu'à la paix de 1919 8 (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1920), 288.
[126] Passmore, *The Right in France*, 120, 148–49, 171, 175.

the republic.[127] But they were in the minority, with the bulk of monarchist deputies coalesced around the *non-inscrit*.

But they were not the only deputies who guarded their independence. Throughout the creation of political parties, there were republicans who also guarded their independence for a variety of reasons. Republican military men, like the Admiral Bienaimé in 1914, could sometimes be elected and felt that their participation in party politics (the *non-inscrit* were considered a party) sullied their uniform. Others found themselves at odds with their natural allies and could not join another group. For whatever reason, these deputies were without a group and were referred to, in a demonstration of the early twentieth century's imperialist mindset, as "savages" and – like other "savages" across the colonized world – the seven of them in the 1914 Chamber received little sympathy from their grouped colleagues.

Much more common than "savagery" was party-hopping and inventing. Socialists often found themselves excommunicated from the wider movement for their participation in bourgeois governments. These independent socialists like Alexandre Millerand and Aristide Briand would spend time in the wilderness before attempting to create their own parties or joining new ones. After two tenures as the *président du Conseil* (1909-11 and again in 1913), Briand created the *Fédération des Gauches* (Federation of the Lefts) to contest the 1914 legislative elections under his own banner, but the results were a disaster. Nine of the deputies who supported Briand going into the elections lost their seats and the 22 deputies (23 total) that still supported him after the election were in search of a new political home. The Federation was never a formal parliamentary group and the deputies who supported Briand had left their previous groups to contest the election with him.[128] As part of the group formation process, they accepted the temporary label of "deputies of the Left who are not a member of any group" (Left *non-inscrit*) to denote themselves as a group but one that lacked any solid foundations. By late June the name had not changed, which would create problems for the group as the debate over *répartition* went from the theoretical to the practical order.

[127] This would not be a political hinderance since Cochin would go on to join the 'Sacred Union' in September, making him the first monarchist minister since 1877, demonstrating that while *non-inscrits* were often beyond the pale, the Right presented itself as a respectable group and benefited accordingly.
[128] Christophe Bellon, *Aristide Briand : Parler pour agir* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2016), 201–14.

Action Liberale Populaire (ALP)

We have already discussed the reasons for Popular Liberal Action's (ALP) use of the term "liberal" in above (see A Liberal Left?) but this information should be expanded upon. Helena Rosenblatt argued that the use of "liberal" by an explicitly Catholic party was cynical, quoting one ultramontane diatribe in 1897 that declared that "liberalism is, in itself, a mortal sin" before arguing that by rallying to the republic, the Catholic political leader Jacques Piou was "using republican and liberal means to combat liberalism."[129] Rosenblatt went on to explain that "The ALP's object was to use the liberal system its free elections, press, and media—to defend the rights of the Church against what it called the menace of 'Masonic . . . Jacobin and socialist tyranny.'"[130]

But we should question this interpretation since the ALP's use of liberal was not entirely cynical. The ALP was founded in 1901 by Jacques Piou and other Catholics who had "rallied to the Republic" (hence the name, *ralliés*) to moderate Radical and republican hostility towards the Catholic church. It was not even Piou's first group, he had participated in the *Droite constitutionnel* (Constitutional Right) parliamentary group in 1890.[131] Piou's political career was built on his idea of a compromise between organized Catholicism and the conservative republic like Napoleon's concordat in 1801.

Importantly, this compromise was predicated on a social peace which saw worker's condition's improved through piety rather than through political action.[132] This is fundamentally the same social principles that *Orléaniste* liberals held in the 1830s and the "Hungry 40s," but now it was finally embraced by the Catholic church, much to the frustration of Radicals like Thibaudet who had been raised on a diet of resistance to Catholicism dating back to the French Revolution and the later Syllabus of Errors. We should note that the social politics of the ALP were fundamentally the same as most republicans (the Radicals were the exception as we will discuss below) during this period, but by embracing what Thibaudet called a "Roman" and "popular liberalism" they had gone from a reactionary "traditionalist" movement to "social Catholicism."[133] But Thibaudet never disagreed that they were not earnestly liberal, liberalism was still, after all, the enemy.

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[129] She defines the Third Republic and secular education as inherently liberal projects; Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism*, 216.
[130] Rosenblatt, 217.
[131] Passmore, *The Right in France*, 73.
[132] Stone, *The Search for Social Peace*, 39–40, 58–63.
[133] Thibaudet, "Les idées politiques de la France," 190–96.

The ALP's *raison d'être* was still, however, to protect the Catholic church from *laïc* laws – especially on education – that were introduced over the course of the Third Republic which contributed to the party's liberal label. In a letter to the rector of the Université Catholique de l'Ouest, Piou thanked the school and the all the "*brave gens* who are for freedom of education, freedom of religion, and freedom of expression."[134] Directly opposed to this, as already mentioned, were the "illiberal," *laïc* laws that had been passed since 1885. For the rest of Europe – and even for commentators today – there is a great irony in former monarchists rallying to the Republic and using a term that was not only explicitly tied to the French Revolution, but one that was associated throughout the whole of Europe with anticlericalism.[135] But for the ALP, it was explicitly the 'liberty' in liberalism that appealed to them.

This liberty did not appeal to many French voters, however, with Thibaudet noting that, "According to young people: the Church is not only a hierarchy, it is a gerontocracy."[136] Catholic areas like the Vendée saw little value in compromising with the republic either, with one anonymous writer calling the ALP a "…formidable religious and social heresy. Of the same doctrinal formula as Islamism [*sic*] extracted from Muhammad's Quran, as well as the works of a new sect of liberalism…"[137] Squeezed from the Left and Right, it is little wonder that after the 1914 elections, the ALP only had 23 deputies in their parliamentary group.

Féderation républicaine

William D. Irvine called the Republican Federation (FR) "the most important French conservative political party of the Third Republic," and while their organizational origins only appear in the Dreyfus affair, their history truly begins with the Third Republic itself.[138] Organized in response to the Dreyfus Affair the old *Opportunistes* and especially *Progressiste* republicans that had created, following the *Seize Mai* crisis, the "republican republic" as opposed to the "monarchist republic" of Thiers and MacMahon.[139] As time wore on, however, their demands were increasingly

[134] AD49, 2 L art. 36. "Piou, Jacques."
[135] Martin, "The Creation of the Action Liberale Populaire," 665.
[136] Thibaudet, "Les idées politiques de la France," 185.
[137] AD49, 133 JO art. 3 Vendée catholique (la). Pierre Le Romain, "L'Action Libérale : ses doctrines, sa propogande, ALLOCUTION," *La Vendée Catholique*, supplément (published 12 July 1914), frontpage.
[138] Irvine, *French Conservatism in Crisis*, xiii.
[139] Irvine, 1 cited André Siegfried as writing that "It could, it more than one respect, claim to be of the *progressisite* tradition, a true child of the moderate republic."

successful: the Marseillaise became the national anthem, 14 July became the national holiday, and executive power was successfully curtailed, albeit through norms rather than laws.

By the 1880s the FR's predecessor organizations were the victims of their own success as they found themselves challenged over questions for which they were not prepared. While their loyalty to the constitutional regime was beyond question, the *Opportuniste* and *Progressiste* republicans had agreed with the *Orléanistes* and other monarchists in the 1870s that a *"juste milieu*" of "*honnêtes gens*" should govern the republic without the "excesses" of 1793-4 or 1848.[140] As Radicals, socialists, and Radical-socialists came to the fore, however, the FR's predecessors found themselves cautioning moderation, agreeing with the principles but never the practicalities.[141] Historians have criticized them for their "habit of dividing into a dozen indistinguishable groups, and their apparent unwillingness to accept change" and commented on how, above all, they encouraged moderation.[142]

These habits were only broken by the creation of Waldeck-Rousseau's Government of Republican Defense during the years of the Dreyfus Affair. Faced with what appeared to be a much more fragile republic than earlier republicans believed, Waldeck-Rousseau embraced a "*politique de gauche*" and – to the horror of bourgeois Europe – invited a socialist, Alexandre Millerand to join the government.[143] This jolted the FR into the moderate action of finally founding a party in 1903, after the Left-wing of *Progressistes* had split to form their own party.

The Government of Republican Defense was not, however, a socialist government. Based on the support of Radicals who were elected in increasing numbers to the Chamber and favored a second purge of reactionaries from the bureaucracy, and stricter control of the Catholic church. Neither of these were great issues for the FR, especially the laws on *laïctié*, which the party by promoting a "generous and tolerate application of the new law." The FR's issue with Waldeck-Rousseau was his inclusion of a socialist in government. The party's first president, Eugène Motte's claimed to have affinities for allies 'on the Left' instead of with the ALP 'on their right,' and the party's conferences never failed to bolster their own Left-wing credentials, evoking the "struggles of the

[140] Passmore, *The Right in France*, 18–19; Irvine, *French Conservatism in Crisis*, xiv–xv.
[141] Mathias Bernard, "La diffusion incomplète d'un modèle partisan : les progressistes et la Féderation républicaine (1903-1914)," in *Les Modérés dans la vie politique française*, ed. François Roth (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 2000), 153.
[142] Irvine, *French Conservatism in Crisis*, xv.
[143] Duclert, *La République Imaginée*, 458–76.

Federation's founders against the forces of reaction" and claiming that it is "an organization directed by republicans of the first hour."[144]

This preference for allies 'to their Left' and a continued fear of reactionaries and the *ralliés,* caused the FR to embody the most aggressive example of Irvine's observation that "[b]y the early twentieth century the preferred label for those on the right side of the political spectrum was Left!"[145] This climaxed in the claim that the FR was the home of "natural born republicans" while those late-comers (*ralliés*) to the republic were, at best, "naturalized republicans."[146] This question of "political birth certificates" highlights how desperately the FR was attached to the Left label. All the while, their social politics became ever more conservative, – by 1914 the word *reactionary* could even be used – so the FR held onto every label it could so as not to be lumped together with Catholics and reactionaries. The FR, after all, was made up of republicans, just ones in favor of a moderate republic.

While the party was founded in 1903, the FR parliamentary group would not follow until 1914, when it was created in June to reunite FR deputies into a single group.[147] The attempt at unity produced few results with the FR's most Left-leaning deputies siting with Poincaré's ARD (see below), the *non-inscrit,* or in the Democratic Left (see below). This not-so unified parliamentary group only had 37 deputies in the Chamber in 1914, led by Alexandre Ribot who would go on, with the help of Poincairé and the FR's senators, to lead his fourth, and shortest government for three days.[148]

Gauche democratique

The Democratic Left (GD) was one of those little groups that housed members of the FR who did not wish to sit with the rest of their party. While most of the *Progressiste* republicans were split between the FR and Poincaré's ARD, several independently minded deputies existed in an awkward middle ground known of the GD.[149] The group had evolved several times since it was

[144] Irvine, *French Conservatism in Crisis,* 4.
[145] William D. Irvine, "Beyond Left and Right, and the Politics of the Third Republic: A Conversation," *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques* 34, no. 2 (January 1, 2008): 135, https://doi.org/10.3167/hrrh2008.340208.
[146] Irvine, *French Conservatism in Crisis,* 5.
[147] Jean Vavasseur-Desperriers, "Associations politiques et groupes parlementaires : Groupe progressiste et Féderation républicaine (1905-1914)," in *Les Modérés dans la vie politique française*, ed. François Roth (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 2000), 136.
[148] Goguel, *La politique des partis sous la Troisième République*, 146.
[149] Seignobos, *L'Évolution de la 3e république,* 288.

first founded in 1898, first made up of socialists and Radicals who supported Waldeck-Rousseau and later *Progressistes* who had supported Émile Combs' *Bloc des Gauches* but most of whose members went on to join the ARD. This left a few scattered souls who did not feel at home among either group. In his 1914 election pamphlets, Germain Périer, a member of the GD until his death simply referred to himself as a republican and simply wrote that "I will criticize acts of favoritism and oppose the reconstitution of a so-called republican aristocracy,… [and] I will continue to fight for a truly republican policy…"[150] Certainly republican, but not much else.

The label, however, appealed to the whole of GD. Not only was it the name used by Radicals in the senate, but it was also a reminder of their principled stances against reactionaries and conservative republicans. They believed in a republic and in democracy and wanted to be accepted by the broader Left. This self-pity garnered little sympathy, however, with only 32 deputies participating in the group in 1914 of which 19 were members of FR.[151] Four of its members would die of old age during the war, including Périer, a fifth was young enough to die at Verdun, and the stumbling corpse of the GD would be mercifully put down before the 1919 legislative elections as members either resigned, lost, or finally adjusted to the new political realities.

Républicains de Gauche (ARD)

The Left Republicans were the parliamentary wing of the increasingly well-organized Alliance Républicain Démocratique (Democratic Republican Alliance, ARD), the party of the 'Left-wing' *Progressistes* who supported Waldeck-Rousseau's government. Lead by Adolphe Carnot – the son of the assassinated *président de la République*, Sidi Carnot – and bolstered by the newly elected *président de la République*, Reymond Poincaré, the party was officially founded in 1901. They were the final group of *Progressiste* deputies still represented in the Chamber. They were also the largest with 53 deputies after the 1914 elections.

The ARD was the party of the Third Republic's most infamous republican president. They also supported most of the "Radical Republic's" (1901-14) governments. These facts have led historians to debate about the character of the ARD. Poincaré's unique approach to the French

[150] Chambre des Députés, *Programmes, professions de foi et engagements électoraux de 1914*, Session de 1914, Onzième législature, 287 (Annexe) (Paris: Imprimerie de la Chambre des députés Martinent, 1914), 944, http://archive.org/details/sc_0000292202_00000000393693.
[151] Vavasseur-Desperriers, "Associations politiques et groupes parlementaires," 137; Seignobos, *L'Évolution de la 3e république*, 288.

presidency colors our understanding of the party.[152] It was not a proto-Gaullist party as Christopher Clark has suggested. Instead ARD was firmly rooted in its *Progressiste* origins and believed in the importance of parliamentary government, if also supporting Poincaré's political maneuvers.[153] In their national appeal to voters in 1914, the call was for tranquility and stability rather than any changes to the constitution.[154] This call for tranquility – rather than "social revolution" – demonstrates that the ARD was, according to Donald G. Wileman, "…made up of people who really did believe that what was good for the Suez Canal company was good for the nation."[155] Their desire to help the nation and the Suez Canal company led them to habitually support the Radical governments of the "Radical Republic."[156] Wileman does not see much in ARD's support for the governments of the "Radical Republic," following in the footsteps of Madeleine Rebérioux's criticisms of the Radicals from the Left, Wileman sees the ARD as the principle force driving the Radicals away from their "Left-wing" rhetoric in favor of glorified pork-barreling and taking electoral advantage of the famed republican discipline.[157]

Wileman has argued that "even for a single election campaign the ARD found it difficult to be a part of the Left."[158] This conflicts with the comments of Rosemonde Sanson, one of the best historians of the ARD who wrote that "the parliamentarians affiliated with the Alliance were an integral part of the *Bloc des Gauches*, participated in the *Délégation des Gauches*, and withdrew from the legislative elections of 1902 and 1906 in favor of their left-wing allies, the Radicals and even the Socialists."[159] The party's name in the Chamber, Left Republicans, shows that the ARD went to pains to express that it was on the Left. The name was even carefully chosen to invoke

[152] When he came to office, he announced that he intended to govern by the letter of the law and the (unwritten) constitution. Because the Third Republic was built on republican conventions that allowed them to govern without the threats that came about through any attempt to modify the constitution, the French presidency was incredibly strong, but the office's theoretical powers were not used by the republicans who were consistently elected to the office. Poincaré would publish *Questions et figures politiques* in 1907 where he outlined his constitutional theory of the French presidency which is remarkably similar to how he would govern six years later.

[153] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 302–13; Rosemonde Sanson, *L'alliance républicaine démocratique: une formation de centre (1901-1920)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003), 7 claims that they were the intellectual origins of the Gaullist UDF's attempt to formulate a political "center" but does not claim they agreed with de Gaulle's constitutional beliefs.

[154] Chambre des Députés, *Programmes, professions de foi et engagements électoraux de 1914*, xi.

[155] Wileman, "Not the Radical Republic," 595.

[156] Wileman, 594.

[157] Mayeur and Rebérioux, *The Third Republic from Its Origins to the Great War*, 177–352; Wileman, "Not the Radical Republic," 593.

[158] Wileman, "Not the Radical Republic," 602.

[159] Rosemonde Sanson, "Centre et Gauche (1901-1914): L'Alliance Républicaine Démocratique et Le Parti Radical-Socialiste," *Revue d'histoire Moderne et Contemporaine (1954-)* 39, no. 3 (September 1992): 499.

Gambetta and the Republican resistance of the 1870s to the project for a Third Restoration. Although Sanson has also cited examples of the ARD's decisions to emphasize their place in the "center" on intermittent occasions, or at least in the "center-Left."[160] But the ARD continuously argued that any other parliamentary name than the Republican Left, as some of their opponents suggested they embrace, would be "anachronistic" and only push the ARD "to the Right."[161]

The ARD could have friendly relations with parties 'to their Left' at times. The ARD supported governments "of the Left" and were thanked when mockery about *Progressiste* pretentions to be on the Left was directed at deputies from the FR rather than the ARD. By 1914 an unspoken working relationship had even broken out between the ARD and the Republican-socialists.[162] But this working relationship only went so far. In the ARD's second round election pamphlets for 1914, the party denounced a "secret plot" by the socialists and Radicals to keep them out of government.[163] The ARD was also hostile to even the most milk-toast social ideologies like Léon Bourgeois' Solidarism, whose social legislation they opposed in the Chamber. This leaves the ARD with a mixed legacy among historians who argue over the party's "true" character. This ambiguity might help explain why the ARD responded to the *réparition* with little commentary, accepting, as one historian put it, their own conservativism.[164]

Gauche radicale

The specifics of Radicalism as an ideology, its traditions, and the history of its milieu are too vast to be covered in any meaningful detail here.[165] Instead we ought to ask how, at the height of their

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[160] Rosemonde Sanson, "L'Alliance Républicain Démocratique : une reformulation du Centre gauche ?," in *Les Modérés dans la vie politique française*, ed. François Roth (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 2000), 158,165-166.

[161] Sanson, *L'alliance républicaine démocratique*, 369–70; Irvine, *French Conservatism in Crisis*, xiv tells us how "it was considered to be an act of remarkable frankness when, in 1932, some moderately conservative deputies formed a group which actually entitled itself the *républicains du centre*."

[162] Sanson, "Centre et Gauche (1901-1914)," 508–12.

[163] Chambre des Députés, *Programmes, professions de foi et engagements électoraux de 1914*, xii.

[164] Anderson, *France, 1870-1914*, 42.

[165] The most important study of the Radical Party is Serge Berstein, *Histoire Du Parti Radical : La Recherche de l'âge d'or, 1919-1926*, vol. 1 (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1980), 21–86; as well as Serge Berstein and Marcel Ruby, eds., *Un siècle de radicalisme* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2004), 1–97; Gérard Baal, "Le Parti radical de 1901 à 1914" (Thèse de doctorat, Paris, Université Paris-Sorbonne, 1991) is the best historian of Radicalism before 1914, along with his other works; Gérard Baal, *Histoire du radicalisme* (Paris: La Découverte, 1994), https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k48111294; Gérard Baal, "Radicaux et modérés (1901-1914)," in *Les Modérés dans la vie politique française*, ed. François Roth (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 2000), 169–84; Jean-Thomas Nordmann, *Histoire des Radicaux: 1820-1973* (Paris: La Table ronde, 1974) remains indespensable; while Francis de Tarr, *The French Radical Party: From Herriot to Mendès-France* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961) is perhaps the best (if biased) overview of Radicals in the interwar years and Fourth Republic; Mildred

political domination, Radicals understood themselves and their internal divisions. What do those divisions specifically mean for the story of the *répartition*? Because even though they were called the Radical Left, these Radicals found themselves sitting to the right of the Radical Party (PRRRS, see below).

If we could ask a deputy what the Radical Left was, he would inevitably say something to the effect of "*Eh bien*, it's the immortal principles of 1789 and all that."[166] The return to 1789 is especially ironic given how one deputy who would eventually join the FR reacted to Radical celebrations of the centennial of the French Revolution in 1889 by suggesting that they should wait four years for their *true* contributions, those of 1793-4.[167] Like the FR, deputies in the Radical Left pointed to their and their predecessors' participation in the creation of the Third Republic, identifying with the supporters of Léon Gambetta and the other "extreme" elements in the 1870s and 80s.[168] The memory of 1848 was also never far from the surface, celebrating the republican leadership of Ledru-Rollin and the parliamentary Mountain that resisted Louis Bonaparte's 1851 *coup*.[169]

But the revolutionary principles that the Radicals espoused were not always consistent. They were always aggressively republican and anticlerical but otherwise inconsistent. The most coherent idea of what Radicalism is, was written by the celebrated philosopher Alain (real name Émile Chartier). Despite the failure of his ideas to influence how Radicals governed, his name is enshrined in the Radical pantheon as one of their great ideologues.[170] One of Alain's ideas was a kind of little 'l' liberalism that emphasized government non-interference in the economic space alongside a vision

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Schlesinger, "The Development of the Radical Party in the Third Republic: The New Radical Movement, 1926-32," *The Journal of Modern History* 46, no. 3 (September 1974): 476–501, https://doi.org/10.1086/241238 offered great complimentary commentary, while; Aurélien Bouet, "Jacques Kayser (1900-1963) : un radical de gauche," *Revue d'Histoire Moderne & Contemporaine* 43, no. 1 (1996): 119–36, https://doi.org/10.3406/rhmc.1996.1806 and; Antoine Prost, "Présentation," in *Jean Zay et la gauche du radicalisme*, by Antoine Prost (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2003), 9–13 use individual Radicals to frame larger discussions of organized Radicalism; finally, Leo A. Loubère, *Radicalism in Mediterranean France: Its Rise and Decline, 1848-1914* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974) and; Pascal Ange Torre, "Le Radicalisme En Corse Sous La Troisième République" (These de doctorat, Paris 13, 2001), http://www.theses.fr/2001PA131021 are excellent regional studies of Radicalism that shed light onto how they functioned before there was a party and allow us to better understand Radical structures before the PRRRS.

[166] de Tarr, *The French Radical Party*, 1.

[167] Irvine, *French Conservatism in Crisis*, 2.

[168] Nord, *The Republican Moment*, 190–217.

[169] Raymond Huard, "Les débuts du radicalisme un idéal de vraie république à l'épreuve de la vie politique," in *Un siècle de radicalisme*, ed. Serge Berstein and Marcel Ruby (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2004), 15–28, https://books-openedition-org.proxy.bnl.lu/septentrion/53016.

[170] de Tarr, *The French Radical Party*, 7–8; Wileman, "Not the Radical Republic," 594.

of an aggressive modernity that took the form of an existential struggle against the remnants of feudalism, i.e. the Catholic Church.

The specific ideological current of the Radical Left is often referred to as "Classical Radicalism" to differentiate it from the Radical-Socialism that dominated organized Radical Party.[171] Classical Radicalism was the dominant ideology of the Radical Left and it is best exemplified by Georges Clemenceau. Clemenceau's early life was dominated his bellicose belief in Left-wing causes which clashes with his later career as France's "top cop," a label that earned by opposing France's first May Day in 1906.[172] After their liberalism, Classical Radicals believed in their own independence.[173] This independence was the norm for politicians before 1900. When the Radical Party was founding in 1901, the national party apparatus invited departmental and other local Radical and republican committees to join and submit themselves to the national party structure. The Radical Left was made of the Radicals who refused, or were sometimes not allowed to, formally join the national party.[174] This was often because the national Radical party had embraced the ideas of Léon Bourgeois' Solidarism and the provocatively called itself not just Radical, but Radical-Socialist.

The deputies of the Radical Left rejected the party's "social ideologies" while still supporting Radical governments, especially in the struggle against the Catholic Church. The Radical Left's opposition to verbal socialism has led historians to label them, alongside the GD and ARD, as moderates.[175] The Radical Left rejected their own moderation at the time by referring to anyone "on their Right" as "reactionaries" and keeping their beards long as symbols of their everlasting

[171] de Tarr, *The French Radical Party*, 14–29. If we were to use a Marxist lens, we could comment on how the Radicals are the most extreme faction of the bourgeoisie, wanting to bring the ideas of the French Revolution to their logical conclusion; the highest stage of bourgeois government.
[172] Clemenceau was, of course, a Senator after 1902 but is (correctly) associated with this form of Radicalism. Jack D. Ellis, *The Early Life of Georges Clemenceau, 1841-1893* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1980), 187–99 is a great study of the "extreme" Clemenceau (as opposed to the moderate he would later be) and is representative of the development of thousands of unknown Radicals who went through similar changes.
[173] See Raymond Huard, "La Préhistoire Des Partis Le Parti Républicain Dans Le Gard de 1848 à 1881," *Le Mouvement Social*, no. 107 (1979): 3–14, https://doi.org/10.2307/3777699.
[174] Gérard Baal, "La fondation du parti radical," in *Un siècle de radicalisme*, ed. Serge Berstein and Marcel Ruby (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2004), 69, https://books-openedition-org.proxy.bnl.lu/septentrion/53016; René Rémond, *La vie politique en France, 1879-1939 : La République souveraine* (Paris: Fayard, 2002), 250.
[175] Baal, "Radicaux et modérés," 169–70.

youth – more "proof" that they are on the Left.[176] As ridiculous as their name might have been by 1914, the Radical Left was a collection of 66 deputies that guarded their own independence as Radicals, albeit ones who were more interested in the destruction of the Catholic church than the conditions of the French working class.

Radical Party (PRRRS)

Unlike the Radical Left, the Radical Party found itself preoccupied with the 'social question.' This preoccupation was reflected in the party's full name: the *Parti republican, radical et radical-socialiste*.[177] By 1914, the party was at its apex leading historians to refer to the years between 1898 and 1914 as the "Radical Republic." Both Madeleine Rebérioux and Vincent Duclert have shown how the "Radical Republic" was not very radical and Donald G. Wileman has shown how the Radicals never governed alone. Despite this, the era was and still is perceived as one of political progress and democracy, especially when compared to other European states of the period.[178] By calling it the "Radical Republic" historians are not passing judgement on the period but are instead referring to Radical Party. But Radical politicians would not have seen a difference. Their slogan was simple and impossible to forget: "*Pas d'ennemis à gauche!*"

Although the national Radical Party was only created in 1901, the local "committees, leagues, unions, federations, publicity societies, Free Thought groups, lodges, newspapers, and municipalities" that made up the Radical Party give us an insight into who the Radicals were: the departmental bourgeoisies.[179] Before 1901 these committees – often more republican than radical – handled their own finances and selected their own candidates. The selection process was highly personal and the decision on whom to support in run-off elections was handled on the local level. Ironically, it was the committees in the areas with the strongest Radical traditions who resisted the national party because they saw it as interfering with their local prerogatives. The national party's leadership, meanwhile, resisted the establishment of new committees because they feared losing

[176] de Tarr, *The French Radical Party*, 14–15; Thibaudet, "Les idées politiques de la France," 197–98; Nord, *The Republican Moment*, 120 & 190–91.
[177] de Tarr, *The French Radical Party*, xviii liberally translates the name as "The Party of Radical and Socialistically Radical Republicans" while a more comprehensible translation would be the Republican, Radical, and Radical-Socialist Party. I will continue referring to the PRRRS as just the Radical Party.
[178] Mayeur and Rebérioux, *The Third Republic from Its Origins to the Great War*, 352–53; Duclert, *La République Imaginée*, 21–40; Wileman, "Not the Radical Republic"; Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One*, 1:681–724.
[179] Mayeur and Rebérioux, *The Third Republic from Its Origins to the Great War*, 217.

their influence.[180] These stresses on the Radical Party's organization are the forces that led to the continued existence of the Radical Left in the Chamber. But they did not inhibit Radical dominance in political life since they were all, at the end of the day, Radicals.

Thibaudet wrote that while the Radicals are not a traditional party, they are the most traditional party in France.[181] Their tradition was anticlericalism, which they pursued with renewed vigor following the realizations of the Dreyfus Affair. Radicals were not the only anticlerical politicians in France because, as the "*Affaire des Fiches*" made clear, being a republican deputy usually included some connection to freemasonry, which *always* included anticlericalism. The Radical Party was, however, the most aggressive, both rhetorically and politically.

In 1901, the Radical Party led the passage of the Law on Associations and – with the help of independent socialists – passed the final separation of church and state in 1905. As the years went on, the Catholic Church became increasingly lame, but the Radical Party never stopped. New religious communities were refused civil status and – after the Radical Party gave up the idea of a state monopoly on education in 1903 – Gambetta's 1869 Belleville program was revived as the modern justification for their war against the Church. The provisions in both the *laïc* laws and in Gambetta's almost fourty-year-old program created so much confusion that even after the legislative battles were won deputies began to fight over how their provisions would be enforced.[182] In 1907 the Radical Party's Nancy Program called for the complete enforcement of *laïc* laws and in 1914 one Radical candidate wrote that "Considering that the progress of the Republic is intimately linked to the maintenance of its work of *laïcité*, we intend to pursue its development and defense without weakness."[183]

The Radical Party was not, however, a single-issue party. The Radical Party supported constitutional revision, an end to the Senate, and an end to colonial conquests, although colonies that already existed were a different matter. But the Radical Party did not present itself as a party

[180] Berstein, *Histoire Du Parti Radical*, 1:59–84.
[181] Thibaudet, "Les idées politiques de la France," 200; an excellent example of traditional anticlericalism in the French countryside can be found in Roger Magraw, "The Conflict in the Villages: Popular Anticlericalism in the Isère (1852-70)," in *Conflicts in French Society: Anticlericalism, Education and Morals in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Theodore Zeldin (Lodon: George Allen and Unwin, 1970), 169–227.
[182] Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One*, 1:694.
[183] Jean-Thomas Nordmann, *La France radicale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 92; Chambre des Députés, *Programmes, professions de foi et engagements électoraux de 1914*, 42.

that would do X or Y, it was a "a party of ideas."[184] Those ideas came from "the regime illuminated by the sun of 1789, or even by that of 1793 and under constant attack from the 'unacceptable coalition' directed by the Roman Church."[185]

The Radical Party was not just the anticlerical idea, it was also "Radically socialist." That socialism could be found in Léon Bourgeois' ideas of Solidarism. Published in 1896 as *De la solidarité* (On Solidarity), Bourgeois posited that "capital and labor were naturally and historically united in the pursuit of social progress and social peace." Uncontrolled capitalism would lead to common ruin so social reforms would be the critical defense *against* the social revolution.[186] Bourgeois' ideas were not new. They go back to the primordial stew of social utopianism and radical republicanism that created the earliest socialist and democratic revolutionaries in the Age of Revolutions. Bourgeois' ideas present an image of historical progress that is rooted in the Third Republic as though it is the ultimate stage of historical development.[187] His ideas have been – not unfairly – denounced as paternalist for their assumptions about the political and intellectual capacity of the French working class. Solidarism also shows us that despite being Radical-socialists, this simple "socialism" was as far as the Radical Party would go.[188] One Radical, Ferdinand Buisson, made this point plain when he wrote in 1914 about his support of the "…people (one can excuse my predilection for this word from 1848, it is larger than working class, it is clearer and more French than *proletariat*)" before wondering aloud "…if one has to be a disciple of Marx to want social justice and to accelerate advancement."[189]

The Radical Party stood at the apex of its power and prestige between 1902 and 1914. By 1914 Radical deputies were participating in pork-barrel politics but also continued to argue for their limited social reforms. In 1914 they were also represented by the most deputies, 172, and their

[184] Thibaudet, "Les idées politiques de la France," 215; Touchard, *La gauche en France depuis 1900*, 72–78.
[185] Mayeur and Rebérioux, *The Third Republic from Its Origins to the Great War*, 215.
[186] Marxist historians have always been the most intrigued by Solidarism, including J.E.S. Hayward, "The Official Social Philosophy of the French Third Republic: Léon Bourgeois and Solidarism," *International Review of Social History* 6, no. 1 (April 1961): 19–48, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859000001759; Stone, *The Search for Social Peace*, 25–54; Sanford Elwitt, *The Third Republic Defended: Bourgeois Reform in France, 1880-1914* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 170–216 (where the quote comes from, page 170)] and; Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One*, 1:640–82 Often it is discussed in relation to the other socialist theories developed throughout the Third Republic but stands apart because it sees social reform as a defense of the existing order rather than an improvement.
[187] Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, 149–54; Leipold, Nabulsi, and White, *Radical Republicanism*, 1–19.
[188] Elwitt, *The Third Republic Defended*, 7–11 & 77–78.
[189] AD49 27 JO art, 18 Conseiller de l'Ouest (le), Ferdinand Buisson, "Le "Grand Parti de Gauche," in *Le Conseiler de l'Ouest*, published 23 May 1914, frontpage.

internal conflicts could cause governments to rise and fall. It was not radical but it was certainly the Radical republic.

Républicain-socialistes

In 1928, Édouard Caris mocked the Republican-Socialists "…because one is a republican or a socialist, the two regimes being different from one another, one cannot be one and the other (What the hell, we are a man or a woman, unless we are [from Auvergne])."[190] The father of political science in France, André Siegfried, criticized them for being "of those small support groups that have always existed in the socialist ambiance."[191] But, in 1914, one of their deputies, René Viviani, was the *président du Conseil* and another republican-socialist, Jean-Victor Augagneur, held the important ministry of education. The Republican-Socialists accomplished all of this despite their late formation in 1910.

The Republican-socialist Party represented the long tradition of non-scientific socialism in France. Most of the party's deputies were independent parliamentary socialists who had been excommunicated from mainstream socialism for their participation in bourgeois governments. Parliamentary socialism was not new in France, it had been represented in the Chamber since 1881 but only had its "breakthrough" in the 1893 legislative elections, when socialist candidates received over 600,000 votes.[192] Not all socialists in parliament were reform socialists but reform socialists were usually parliamentary socialists. Parliamentary socialists did not possess "socialist birth certificates" like the FR's deputies had for their republican credentials. Often parliamentary socialists started their careers in Radical and republican politics, rather than with socialists.

Jean Jaurès is the typical example; he began his career as a republican deputy in 1885 but he lost his seat it in 1889. It was only while writing his doctoral thesis after his defeat that he embraced socialism.[193] Jaurès was reelected to the Chamber in 1893 as a socialist deputy. His reputation

[190] I don't get the joke either. AD49, 130 JO art. 1, Tribune libre (la). Édouard Caris, "Les différents partis politiques," 25 August, 1928.
[191] Quoted in Yves Billard, "Un Parti Républicain-Socialiste a Vraiment Existé," *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, no. 51 (1996): 43, https://doi.org/10.2307/3771301.
[192] Winock, *La gauche en France*, 169–76.
[193] The amount of works written about Jaurès are too vast to be recapitulated here. Harvey Goldberg, *The Life of Jean Jaurès* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968) remains the indispensable biogrpahy by one of the best historians of his generation; Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders - The Golden Age - The Breakdown*, trans. P.S. Falla (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 447–67 is a brief but well-structured philosophical study of Jaurès' socialism; Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One*, 1:757–69 places Jaurès into his context, and; Geoffrey Alan Kurtz, "The Political Thought of Jean Jaurès: Liberal Socialism, Radical Reform, Cosmopolitan

within the broader socialist movement was helped by his principled support for the famous workers of Carmaux, setting Jaurès apart from other parliamentary socialists.[194] Unlike the deputies who founded the Republican-socialist party, however, Jaurès embraced and reconciled with the various factions of French socialism. The parliamentary socialists habitually stood apart. Alexandre Millerand – who was the first socialist minister in Europe – and Aristide Briand rarely interacted with workers movements before their participation in bourgeois governments never after they were expelled from the mainstream socialist by the Second International.[195]

These excommunications were the basis for the Republican-socialist Party. Viviani, for example, was expelled in 1907 for accepting the Ministry of Labor from Clemenceau's government.[196] What unified Republican-socialists was their exclusion from the 'Unified' socialist party after its formation in 1905 (see below). To compensate, the Republican-socialists announced in their 1910 declaration that they were "one and unified." This unity was not entirely imaginary, all of their socialism were eclectic but also "resolutely and exclusively reformist." The Republican-socialists believed that socialism – the solution to the 'social question' – meant state regulation rather than class conflict.[197] This was not uncommon. There were several contemporary variations of non-scientific socialism that argued the same. What made the Republican-socialists different is that they had gone a step further by participating in bourgeois governments rather than attempting to win elections on their own, socialist, terms.[198]

Participation in government was not the only reason someone would join the Republican-socialist Party. The deputy Jules-Louis Breton left because of the 'Unified' socialists' antimilitarism. He justified this decision to voters in his 1914 election booklet by arguing that the Republican-

Patriotism" (New Brunswick, NJ, The State University of New Jersey, 2007), https://www-proquest-com.proxy.bnl.lu/pqdt/docview/304819283/878FF7462B364A76PQ/143 is a great text that helps us understand the real Jaurès rather than the myth that is entombed in the Pantheon today, Geoffrey Kurtz, *Jean Jaurès: The Inner Life of Social Democracy* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2021) helps reenforce this point and is easily the most useful recent biography on the man.

[194] Joan Wallach Scott, *The Glassworkers of Carmaux: French Craftsmen and Political Action in a Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 124–38.

[195] Bellon, *Aristide Briand*, 49–78; Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One*, 1:769–75.

[196] Billard, "Un Parti Républicain-Socialiste a Vraiment Existé," 45.

[197] Billard, 45.

[198] One of the best examples of this comes from Paul Brousse who believed that reform socialism could be best achieved through the "propoganda of the deed" by which he meant municiple socialism. But this "propoganda of the deed" would be done by purely socialist municipalities rather than in cooperation with Radicals and other republicans. Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One*, 1:752–57.

socialists promoted practical collaboration and individualism.[199] This individualism also explains why the Republican-Socialists did not institute a system of party discipline before 1913 and why they were also opposed to one of the major Left-wing issues in 1914: proportional representation (see below).[200] Breton dedicated a large section of his booklet to explaining his opposition. He claimed that proportional representation was a threat to the republic and would increase the number of reactionary deputies while simultaneously squashing contrarian voices within parties, as he had experienced while leaving the 'Unified' socialist party.[201]

These differences did not mean that the Republican-socialists had poor relations with the 'Unified' socialists. Several Republican-socialist deputies had left the 'Unified' socialist party with Jaurès' permission so that they could participate in governments that the SFIO was unable to officially support. Breton's own election booklet was even printed by the 'Unified' Socialists' printers. But while they kept good relations with the 'Unified' socialists during parliamentary sessions, Republican-Socialists set out to differentiate themselves during elections. Breton wrote that his decision to leave the 'Unified' socialist party was an of extreme conviction and courage, declaring that while he may be shy "…there is nothing that touches heroism like shyness."[202]

The Republican-Socialists were clear about who they were. At their 1913 congress in Grenoble their banners read: "neither Radicals, nor *unifiés* ['Unified' socialists], but republicans and socialists."[203] Their socialisms led them to support an income tax and workers' insurance but their willingness to pursue these goals through participation in bourgeois governments excluded them from mainstream socialism.[204] Despite this, the small group had an outsized impact. After the 1914 elections they were represented by just 24 deputies: of which two were current ministers and several others were ex-ministers. In the Chamber, the FR represented one end of the respectable republican spectrum while the Republican-Socialists represented the other end.

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[199] Billard, "Un Parti Républicain-Socialiste a Vraiment Existé," 44. AN 398AP/1 *Action Politique et Parlementaire du citoyen J.-L. Breton* (Bourges: Imprimerie de la Dépèche du Berry, 1914), 8–28.
[200] Billard, 45.
[201] AN 398AP/1 *Action Politique et Parlementaire*, 64–117.
[202] Ibid, 24.
[203] Billard, "Un Parti Républicain-Socialiste a Vraiment Existé," 47.
[204] Billard, 47–51 makes the arguement that the party's small size makes it a "modern party." This is true if we consider modern to be the neoliberal party structure which has ground mass politics into a fine powder, but the fact that the Republican-Socialists were a small party with few adherents and many more voters does not make it modern, it just means tha party was not mass.

‘Unified’ socialists (SFIO)

There is little to add to the history of socialism in France. The history of the ‘Unified’ socialist Party (PSU), which is more often remembered by its subtitle, the French Section of the Workers’ International (SFIO), has left the realm history to become a part of the mythic past.[205] We will not dwell on the history of French socialism. Instead, we will content ourselves by asking how their identities interacted with the trends and labels discussed above. There was little debate about whether or not socialism is on the Left in 1914 or today. While the most strident anarchists and Marxists might claim to be the “true” Left, that leaves socialists on the Left, but just a “false” one.[206]

The twin names of the ‘Unified’ Socialists reveal the two defining elements of the party. Their official name, the ‘Unified’ Socialist Party highlights the party’s origins. Before 1905, French socialism had been split into five major factions: the Federation of the Socialist Workers of France (FTSF), the Revolutionary Socialist Workers’ Party (POSR), independent socialists, the French Workers Party (POS), and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR). Each faction represented a different tendency or tradition in French socialism. From Marxism to Blanquism, reformed and municipal to revolutionary and national, the parties were divided over everything, from theory to history to even the labels they used. It was only when at the famous Amsterdam Congress in 1904 invited representatives of each of the competing factions to present their grievances and positions relative to one another. The congress cut the Gordian knot by ordering the parties to unify and present a common front against their bourgeois opponents. The various factions that did unify were united by their common adherence to the Second International. Their dedication to international socialist was demonstrated by the party’s subtitle: The French Section of the Workers’

[205] A complete of even just the important works on the SFIO is practically impossible, but also undesirable. Instead, here are some of the works on which I have based my brief analysis Thibaudet, “Les idées politiques de la France,” 218–35; Robert Wohl, *French Communism in the Making, 1914-1924* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 1–43; Goldberg, *The Life of Jean Jaurès*; Michael Sabatino DeLucia, “The Remaking of French Syndicalism, 1911-1918: The Growth of the Reformist Philosophy” (Ph.D., Providence, Brown University, 1971); Jacques Fauvet, *Histoire du Parti Communiste Français, 1920-1976* (Paris: Fayard, 1977), 13–16; Touchard, *La gauche en France depuis 1900*, 52–69; Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, 447–67; Edward Mortimer, *The Rise of the French Communist Party, 1920-1947* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 19–26; Raymond Anthony Jonas, “From the Radical Republic to the Social Republic: On the Origins and Nature of Socialism in Rural France, 1871-1914 (Textiles, Workers, Peasants)” (Berkley, University of California, Berkeley, 1985), https://www-proquest-com.proxy.bnl.lu/pqdt/docview/303361773/878FF7462B364A76PQ/44; Mayeur and Rebérioux, *The Third Republic from Its Origins to the Great War*, 301–10; Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One*, 1:725–88; Winock, *La gauche en France*, 129–251; Kurtz, “The Political Thought of Jean Jaurès”; Kurtz, *Jean Jaurès*.

[206] Agulhon, *Histoire vagabonde, II*, 2:198–200.

International. This later name stuck because although the party claimed to be unified many parliamentary socialists refused to join or were kicked out. It is hard to have a unified socialist party if there is another socialist party.

The SFIO subtitle demonstrated the fundamental difference between the Republican-Socialists and the 'Unified' socialists: the SFIO would adhere to the principles of the Second International, they would not join a bourgeois government. This refusal to join bourgeois governments was enshrined by the compromise that created the party. The 1905 *congrès du Globe* saw the various parties agree to form a unified party under the banner of Jaurès' tripartite compromise: revolution as the ultimate goal to appease Marxists; insurrection and general strikes when the opportunity arose to appease the large trade-unionist faction; and electoral and reformist politics as the immediate method, which was the preferred method of Jaurès and other reform socialists.

The 'Unified' socialists who were elected after 1905 show the ideological diversity of the party. We have already discussed Jaurès' republican origins, Jules Guedes, the father of Marxism in France, was another deputy, as was the reform socialist and active freemason Arthur Groussier.[207] Importantly, Groussier represented the 'Unified' socialists in the Chamber's Rules Commission and supported a verbally bellicose socialist movement, even if his politics were solidly reformist.

Most historians argue that the 'Unified' socialists were not unified. The Unified' socialists participated in the Great War government, the Sacred Union. In 1920 the new communist party (PCF) split from "*la vieille maison*" (SFIO).[208] This is proof of the shallow unity created in 1905. But this divide does not concern us. Few people could have imagined a great power war breaking out in the months leading up to July 1914. The division that historians have pointed to are over the issues of the Great War. Before July 1914 there was not a Great War. French socialists were divided, but not yet over the Great War. They were internally divided over how to understand their own place in political life. Even though the SFIO rejected any participation in bourgeois governments there were still factions in the party that encouraged cooperation. Would control of the French state come through the ballot box or insurrection? What were the goals of the party beyond the 1905 compromise? On the question of methods both Republican-socialists and

[207] Jean-Numa Ducange, *Jules Guesde: The Birth of Socialism and Marxism in France*, trans. David Broder (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 113–39, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unilu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=6187116.
[208] Ducange, 141 & 167.

'Unified' socialists endorsed electoral action and they even shared similar demands in 1914: a progressive income tax and opposition to the *loi de trois ans*. To justify this split and to appease radical members of the party, the SFIO found it necessary to engage in verbal radicalism. While the party was officially unified, we ought to refer to them as 'Unified' socialists with some skepticism.

The party's 'unity' was paying dividends, however. In 1906, the SFIO was represented by 54 deputies. In 1910 it was 75. And in 1914 the 'Unified' socialists had 102 deputies in the Chamber.[209] The SFIO was the clear winner of the 1914 elections and their victory would be the direct cause of the *répartition* two months later.

The Spring 1914 Elections

Reflecting on those 1914 legislative elections, the historian François Gogoul commented that "The violent and passionate fights of the 1914 electoral campaign prove that forty years of the Republic had not reduced the importance of the gap that existed between the two halves of the French public spirit."[210] But by historical standards, the 1914 elections were no-more hotly contested than previous elections. It is their place as the final elections before the Great War that induces reverence. The 1914 elections are also famous for finally cracking the five years of ministerial instability that existed between 1909 and 1914. Those five years are as important as they are impenetrable, packed with interminable controversies that even seasoned historians have difficulty understanding. To understand the 1914 legislative elections, we must understand two proposals, a law, a presidential election, and an assassination.

The 'social question' had dominated French politics for the past ten years. It was the cause of great social eruptions like the first May Day in 1906. While the social conflict had not died down, progress was being made. Workplace accident insurance was passed in 1906, old age pensions in 1910, and workplace safety law had gradually improved working conditions over the course of 00s. But we should not see these reforms as examples of the Radical Party's solidarity with the working class, we should see them as the results of the continued growth of the French socialist

[209] Seignobos, *L'Évolution de la 3e république*, 288 says that there were 104 deputies while other sources count only 101. This is because there were 101 deputies when the seats were finally assigned but "unified" socialists would win three follow-up elections after the main elections, and so they had 104 deputies throughout most of the parliament. For our purposes, there were only 101 "unified" socialists in 1914.
[210] Goguel, *La politique des partis sous la Troisième République*, 147.

movement, a movement that was winning more seats despite more reforms being passed every session. But the 'social question' was not solved by 1914.[211] It had evolved, eventually concentrating on a national income tax. Denounced as "inquisitorial" and "collectivist" by the FR, 'Unified' and Radical-socialists had been arguing in favor of an income tax for over a decade by this point.[212] Radicals were also beginning to support one. Joseph Caillaux famously endorsed an income tax in 1907 while supporting the winegrower's revolt in the south of France telling them that "I will give France an income tax."[213] There was significant support for an income tax throughout France by 1914 but coalitions were consistently unable to find the parliamentary support to make it a reality. While the Radical Party, 'Unified' socialists, and Briand's heterodox coalition all supported an income tax in their national manifestos, many deputies, like Jules-Louis Breton, did not even bother to record their opinions on an income tax in their election literature. The issue had wide but uneven support.[214]

The same was true for proportional representation. Unlike the income tax, proportional representation – which was often shorted to *R.P.* by newspapers – had been tried once before in in 1885 with mixed results.[215] The results were mixed because while proportional representation had accurately demonstrated the opinions of French voters, they did not vote for republicans, setting the stage for the prolonged Boulanger crisis of the late 1880s.[216] Since that election, French republicans had embraced the old system of single seat-constituencies that elected candidates in two-round votes; the same system French elections uses today. It turned out that while republicans valued a rational and democratic system, they did not value it over the republic itself. In 1885, monarchist candidates were overwhelmingly victorious because proportional representation accurately represented the beliefs of French voters. In previous elections and in elections after 1885, republicans overwhelmingly relied on the famed "republican discipline" where republican

[211] Stone, *The Search for Social Peace*, 73–98.
[212] Irvine, *French Conservatism in Crisis*, 3–4.
[213] As Caillaux saw it, the high land taxes that contributed to the winegrower's revolt was because there was no income tax, Joseph-Denis Bredin, *Joseph Caillaux* (Paris: Hachette littérature, 1980), 90–103; also see Mayeur and Rebérioux, *The Third Republic from Its Origins to the Great War*, 251–52.
[214] Chambre des Députés, *Programmes, professions de foi et engagements électoraux de 1914*, i–ix.
[215] see Maurice Tournier and Yun Son Yi-Choi, "Des traditions de raccourcis aux sigles sociaux des débuts de la Troisième République," *Mots. Les langages du politique*, no. 95 (March 1, 2011): 24, https://doi.org/10.4000/mots.20017.
[216] Bertrand Joly, *Aux origines du populisme : histoire du boulangisme (1886-1891)* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2022), 131–60.

candidates in a run-off election with a non-republican candidate could always be assured of his fellow republicans' votes. Republican victories through quasi-democratic means.

By the 1910s, however, the republic was on a much more stable footing than it had been in 1885. The births of major political parties also gave proportional representation a much stronger argument. Many of the parties that supported proportional representation did not just see it as the most rational way for voters' beliefs to be represented in the Chamber, it was also a tool parties could use to enforce discipline. That was the same view of opponents of proportional representation. Jules-Louis Breton wrote that it was a threat to the Republic and to "free-thinking" deputies like himself, making his opposition to it "unfortunate" given the importance of the debate in 1914.[217] Unsurprisingly, organized parties were generally in favor of proportional representation while independent deputies opposed it. The most important exception is Aristide Briand, who had pushed for it while *président du Conseil* in 1910 and continued to push for it in 1914 despite his stint in the political wilderness.[218] In 1914, several deputies published a national "Appeal for Universal Suffrage" asking voters to support candidates who were in favor of proportional representation.[219]

The 1914 election campaign was not just dominated by what could come next, but by what had just occurred. The *loi des Trois ans* (Three Years' Law), which increased the period of conscription from two to three years, passed the Chamber in July 1913 after a year of protests against it. The law was part of a plan to increase the size of the French army following the tensions created by the Tangier and Agadir crises and to secure France's place in the rapidly evolving great power realignment.[220] This expansion was, of course, unpopular with those voters and their sons who would be forced to spend another year in the army but also with antimilitarists like the 'Unified' socialists. Conscription was a social issue. The men who were drafted into the army were workers and so the 'Unified' socialists encouraged desertions and organized massive rallies against the increased conscription period.[221] Some non-socialist republicans were already hostile to the army

[217] AN 398AP/1 *Action Politique et Parlementaire*, 64–117.
[218] Stuart, "Electoral Reform in France and the Elections of 1919"; Seignobos, *L'Évolution de la 3e république*, 275–77; Mayeur, *La vie politique sous la Troisième République*, 254–56; Bellon, *Aristide Briand*, 255–57.
[219] Ironically, women were excluded from this image of "Universal Suffrage." Chambre des Députés, *Programmes, professions de foi et engagements électoraux de 1914*, xix–xxii.
[220] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, xxi–xxix&121–35.
[221] Paul B Miller, *From Revolutionaries to Citizens: Antimilitarism in France, 1870–1914* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 132–39, 155–61.

following the Dreyfus Affair and saw it as a bastion of reaction that would turn young republicans into reactionaries.[222] This last idea was tempered by other republicans who argued that the only way to republicanize the army was forcibly filling it with young republicans.[223] In 1913 the logic of state security overpowered any antimilitarist arguments and the law was passed. But it was not a *fait accompli*. 1914 election manifestos are filled with commentary on the law, either defending the increased conscription period or agitating for its repeal. Breton called the law an abrogation of democracy while the 'Unified' socialist's national manifesto called for a complete reorganization of the army for "national defense" rather than imperial grandeur.[224] Briand's national manifesto summarized the complicated blend of antimilitarism and patriotism that was common throughout the period, writing that "democracy has no more compelling duty than to defend the nation," but that defending the nation, was *not* the purpose of the law.[225]

The man who helped push the law through was the new *Président de la République,* Raymond Poincaré. 1913 was an election year, although not for the French public. One of the antidemocratic provisions of the Third Republic's unwritten constitution was that the president was elected by the National Assembly, rather than a popular vote. The National Assembly was a joint sitting of the Chamber and the senate that elected the president for a single seven-year term known as the *septennat*. Tradition held that the presidency would go to an older republican in recognition of his years of service to the republic. In 1913, however, the relatively young ARD candidate, Raymond Poincaré, defeated the Left's Radical candidate, Jules Pams. By tradition, the French president was a purely ceremonial position, but that was just a norm. The antidemocratic compromises of the 1870s gave the office significant powers, but, as republicans conquered the republic, they elected their own candidates who would not use them. Poincaré, by contrast, was only 53 when he was elected and he was still politically active. Poincaré's tenue as a *président de la République* was controversial because, as he said in his address to the National Assembly, "the reduction of executive power is neither in the wishes of the Chamber nor those of the country…"[226] Poincaré believed in using executive power to further his political career because the presidency was a powerful post if one ignored the many norms around it. Poincaré's belief in executive power

[222] Seignobos, *L'Évolution de la 3e république*, 284–86.
[223] Duclert, *La République Imaginée*, 567–70.
[224] AN 398AP/1 *Action Politique et Parlementaire*, 133–144.
[225] Chambre des Députés, *Programmes, professions de foi et engagements électoraux de 1914*, i–vi.
[226] Seignobos, *L'Évolution de la 3e république*, 283.

demanded commentary from candidates in 1914. 'Unified' socialists feared he would become another MacMahon – the second president of the Third republic and famous monarchist – while the Republican-Socialist Breton implored voters to give the man a change, suggesting that there should be a "republican amnesty" and a "republican union."[227]

These were some, but certainly not all, of the major issues as the 1914 elections began. The first round was scheduled for 26 April and every party and every candidate thought that these would be issues for debate. That was until Henriette Caillaux, the wife of the Radical Party president Joseph Caillaux, walked into the office of the chief editor of *Le Figaro*, and shot him. The editor died of his wounds the same day and the reasons are not important, but the context is. *Le Figaro* was a public enemy of Joseph Caillaux and the assassination caused everyone to wonder why his wife had killed a man.[228] Poincaré publicly wondered out loud if he should send his wife to assassinate his own political opponents.[229] The scandal irrevocably ruined Caillaux's career. Although he won his reelection and remained politically active until 1940, he quickly lost his place as a Radical grandee and his wife's 'crime of passion' would color voter's opinions going into the elections.[230] Were the Radicals assassinating their political opponents?

The election's first rounds proceeded smoothly, and the second round took place on 10 May. When the results from the second round were tallied it was clear that the Radical Party was not hurt, just Caillaux. The Radical Party won 24 seats, the ALP won 9, and the SFIO won 32.[231] Interpreting the election's results depend on one's subjects and one's framing. Duclert classes the FR, ALP, Right, and the *non-inscrit* as parties of the Right while every other group is of the Left, meaning that for the first time in years, a government majority *on the Left* was possible.[232] Serge Berstein and Pierre Milza, meanwhile, classified the elections as a victory for the FR and ARD because of the uncertainty around Poincaré's politics. For Madeleine Rebérioux the elections are proof of the

[227] AN 398AP/1 *Action Politique et Parlementaire*, 128–130.
[228] See Edward Berenson, *The Trial of Madame Caillaux* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unilu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=834871 for a detailed study on the assassination and its impact. Duclert, *La République Imaginée*, 573–74.
[229] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 408.
[230] Bredin, *Joseph Caillaux*, 174–96.
[231] BnF, *Gallica*, *Le Radicale*, (published 12 May, 1914, access 23 April 2023), frontpage.
[232] Duclert, *La République Imaginée*, 574.

continued rise of the SFIO.[233] What was clear was that the election results would have to be interpreted by the Chamber.

Since 1909 there had been nine governments and the FR and ARD were hoping to build a stable coalition for themselves. what followed was a farcical "majority of the Left, a government of the Right," as Duclert called it.[234] With the backing of the conservative senate, Poincaré used his presidential powers to invite the FR politician, Alexandre Ribot, to form a government. Ribot's long career had already seen three stints as *Président du Conseil* but this would prove to be his shortest. Three days later, the frustrated Chamber was eager to exert its own prerogatives and form its own government. It voted down Ribot's government by a margin of two to one.[235] Poincaré had specifically appointed Ribot because of the man's support for the *loi de trois ans*. The *président de la République*'s constitutional prerogatives lay in foreign policy and Poincaré desperately wanted a government that would support *his* foreign policy agenda, and with it, a larger army. The impasse was only solved by a compromise government that saw the Republican-Socialist, René Vivinai became the *Président du Conseil* and minister of foreign affairs with the support of the Radical and ARD deputies, agreeing *not* to repeal the *loi de trois ans* and to support Poincaré's foreign policy agenda in exchange for a free hand domestically.[236] This compromise was not without its virtue, since, one week later, the Chamber passed an income tax. But Viviani has also been labeled as "in over his head" by historians of World War I, since Viviani had little interest in foreign affairs as the July Crisis reached a boiling point.[237] Viviani's government would survive an initial confidence vote called for by the 'Unified' socialists. Viviani's government had 362 votes in the 602 seat Chamber, making it the first stable coalition since 1909.

The Rules Commission Decides

Now that a stable government was firmly established, parliamentary committees could begin their work. One of those committees was the Rules Commission, headed by the Republican-Socialist, Jules-Louis Breton. Breton was a massive supporter of parliamentary reforms. During the previous

[233] Mayeur and Rebérioux, *The Third Republic from Its Origins to the Great War*, 348–49; Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle, 1900-1930*, 1:58–62.
[234] Duclert, *La République Imaginée*, 573–75.
[235] Schmidt, *Alexandre Ribot*, 89–115.
[236] Seignobos, *L'Évolution de la 3e république*, 287–88.
[237] Duclert, *La République Imaginée*, 574–75; I am refering specifically to Clark, *The Sleepwalkers* who greatly admires Poincaré at the expense of Viviani's reputation.

parliamentary session he oversaw the creation of the *Encyclopédie parlementaire des Sciences politique et sociales* which, he explained to his constituents, was a way to make the laws, debates, and documents of the Chamber more accessible to interested outsiders.[238] In his 1914 election booklet, Breton doubled down on his desire to bring the Chamber to the people in a dedicated a section to the parliamentary reforms he had already accomplished and those that he wanted to push for next. Those upcoming reforms, Breton totted, made up 235 pages, each intending to streamline parliamentary work and make the Chamber accessible to the public.[239] After the 1914 session began in June, Breton had the Rules Commission's *rapporteur* submit a long report detailing all the possible changes to the rules of Chamber. These proposed reforms were not purely technocratic. The main argument of the report and of Breton's campaign literature was that too much legislation was proposed and that it was too easy to topple a government.[240] Breton also wanted to create a rule that would protect a deputy's "personal vote" against coercive party discipline.[241] He even kept a large collection of documents about other national parliaments and how they were organized. Breton wanted to create a fully rationalized parliamentary system that would be efficient, modern, and reflect the will of the voters, not parties.

But Breton was not alone in his desires. Many of his colleagues on the Rules Commission were also interested in parliamentary reforms. The commission's *rapporteur*, Louis Morin, was a Radical and the man who wrote most of the commission's proposed rules and had his name attached to them. Another important supporter of reforming the Chamber was the 'Unified' socialist deputy Arthur Groussier. Groussier had joined the SFIO through his membership in the POSR, the faction of French socialism that argued in favor of decentralized and militant trade-unionism but still called itself a revolutionary party. He was by no means a party grandee but he represented his own beliefs and those of the 'Unified' socialists on the Rules Commission admirably. Groussier was one of the Commission's vice-presidents and presented his party's proposals and grievances amicably. This was especially important given Breton's role as the Commission president. This hodgepodge of deputies in the Commission was united by a

[238] AN 398AP/1 *Action Politique et Parlementaire du citoyen J.-L. Breton*, 61–64.
[239] Ibid, 177–84. I have not located to entire 235 pages of proposed reforms and cannot comment if the *répartition* was envisioned among them.
[240] Ibid. A *rapporteur* is the equivalent to a bill's sponsor in other parliamentary systems but there are some differences that revolve around analysis and studies of the proposal that the *rapporteur* is in charge of that don't exist in system's that call a bill's lead supporter the sponsor.
[241] AN AD/XVIIIc/1482, Vote Personnel.

modernizing ethos. They believed that their institution, the Chamber, could be improved and streamlined, making it a rational and modern institution.

It was in this air of reform that Groussier addressed an unusual grievance from the 'Unified' socialists: the elections had gone too well. At the start of each legislative session, the physical seats were apportioned out by the speaker as had been done since 1815. There were now more than the original six groups, but the speaker often did his best to assign deputies seats near their colleagues in the order to be he thought they belonged. This gave the speaker – and his office – significant symbolic powers. But his power was not unlimited. Reelected deputies had the right to keep their previous seats. The logic behind this decision made sense, deputies were supposed to be static representatives of their constituent's principles and ideas, so while the issues of debate often changed, the principles, which reflected were a deputy was on the Left-Right spectrum, stayed the same. Deputies were supposed to be independent representatives of voters, *not* parties. And deputies could – and often did – remain in the Chamber for decades. The political landscape would change around them while they sat still like a forgotten statute. But before 1914 this had never caused a serious problem. Over a long enough period, older deputies would lose elections, die, or retire and their seats on the left would be given to newly elected deputies who did not have the same right to their predecessors' seats.

But in 1914 the speaker could not find enough seats on his left for the 32 new 'Unified' socialists deputies. The speaker had to give the deputies seats, and so he gave them the only available places in the Chamber: the far right seats next to the reactionary *non-inscrit* deputies. This upset those 'Unified' socialist deputies who felt insulted and uncomfortable sitting among their political enemies. The 'Unified' socialists wanted, instead, to sit with their colleagues on the far left.

Groussier brought this to the attention of the Commission. He suggested that seats should be apportioned to the party groups rather than to individual deputies. The party groups would then assign individual deputies their places within the group's bloc, making it possible for the 'Unified' socialists to sit together. Despite increasing the power of parties, the idea appealed to Breton's sensibilities. A logical reordering of the Chamber would – as the commission's report on the proposal argued – easily demonstrate "parliamentary movement" (i.e. which side supported a piece

of legislation) in the parliamentary record and make the Chamber more accessible to the public.[242] Groussier's proposal received unanimous support from the 20 other members of the commission.[243] The Radical deputy Jean-Baptiste Morin was chosen as the proposal's *rapporteur* while Groussier's name remained was attached as the deputy who proposed the new rule, Rule 135 of the Chamber of Deputies.[244]

J.-B. Morin's role as the *rapporteur* was to write a brief report to be submitted alongside the proposal before the Chamber would debate. The report took the logic of reform further than the Rules Commission originally had. Morin argued that deputies who share the same opinion, "rightly" ought to be grouped together so that they could better coordinate during debates. Morin repeated one of Breton's common concerns for those following the debates in the *Journal officiel*, writing that the *répartition* would allow readers to better understand who is reacting to legislation in the Chamber, and to better understand, therefore, "parliamentary movements." Morin also appealed to the speaker directly by claiming that it would make his and the parliamentary stenographers' roles easier. "It is unquestionable…" he concluded "…that such a provision cannot be detrimental to the good order of the discussions and complicate the task already so heavy in the hectic sessions."[245] In Morin's report, he suggested that the new rule could be accompanied by new names for the parliamentary groups reflecting each groups' new place on the right, left, or center of the Chamber.[246] This last suggestion was a personal dig at the Radical Left who would end up sitting on the Radical Party's right and who Morin already saw as being on *his* Right. But this suggestion does not appear in the parliamentary record. Group names would remain unchanged.

Morin's dropped suggestion is also the only reference to a formal reordering of the groups in Groussier's proposal. The proposal left the groups' order to a later meeting of group presidents. It

[242] AN AD/XVIIIc/1482, Rapport par M. J.-B. Morin (Cher), 2.
[243] The president of the commission was Jules-Louis Breton; Arthur Groussier, Louis Marin, and Louis d'Iraiart d'Etcherpare were all vice presidents; Emile Henri Ternois, Henri de La Porte, and Joseph Denais were secretaries. The rest of the members were Félix Bouffandeau, Lucien Lecointe, André Honnorat, admiral Amédée Bienaimé, Édouard Barthe, Jean-Marie Guiraud, André Ballande, Victor Peytral, Hippolyte Mauger, Jean-Baptiste Morin, Paul Constans, Ellen Prévot, Alexandre Lefas, Louis-Lucien Klotz, and Ferdinand Bourgère.
[244] BnF, *Gallica*, *Journal officiel de la République française. Débats parlementaires. Chambre des députés : compte rendu in-extenso*, "DISCUSSION D'UNE PROPOSITION DE RÉSOLUTION AYANT POUR OBJET DE COMPLÉTER L'ARTICLE 135 DU RÈGLEMENT DE LA CHAMBRE (RÉPARTITION DES PLACES DANS LA SALLE DES SÉANCES," (published 22 June 1914, accessed 26 March 2023), center & right columns, 2251.
[245] AN AD/XVIIIc/1482, Rapport par M. J.-B. Morin (Cher), 1-2.
[246] Ibid.

was understood that this rationalization would put parties 'of the Left' on the left, and those 'of the Right' on the right but as far as the proposed rule was concerned, the order was left unspoken.

Groussier's proposal and Morin's report were submitted for debate by the whole Chamber on Friday, 12 June.[247] In a brief preface to the proposal, Groussier emphasized the practicability of the new rule and that all due respect would be paid *within* groups to longstanding members.[248] The final text that they presented to the Chamber was one article, eight paragraphs:

> After the general elections, a provisional allocation of seats will be made in accordance with the provisions of the standing order of March 13, 1902.
>
> As soon as the electoral lists of the groups have been deposited and published in accordance with Article 11, the group offices shall be convened by the speaker in order to divide the Chamber into as many sectors as there are groups.
>
> Members who do not belong to any of groups shall inform the President of the group among which they wish to sit within the four days following the publication of the electoral lists.
>
> The proposed division into sectors shall be submitted to the speaker who, after notifying the Chamber of the deposit, shall post it.
>
> The complaints that may arise against the establishment of the sectors must be submitted to the speaker within three days of the posting; the decision is then taken by the Chamber administration, together with the group offices.
>
> As soon as the decision has been taken, or if no complaint has been made after the expiration of the three-day period, the speaker will announce to the Chamber that the sectors have been definitively established and convene the group offices, who will proceed with the individual distribution of seats.
>
> In the event of disagreement, seniority shall be taken into account. Any member of the previous legislature whose seat is inside the sector allocated to his group shall be entitled to retain it.

[247] BnF, *Gallica, J.O.*, "Discussion…," (published 22 June 1914, accessed 26 March 2022), right, 2464.
[248] AN AD/XVIIIc/1482, Proposition de résolution ayant pour l'objet de compléter l'article 135 de la règlement du Chambre, 1-2.

> The same procedure shall be followed when by-elections or changes in the groups' electoral lists make it necessary to rearrange the sectors.[249]

The Chamber Debates

Rule 135 was scheduled to be debated on 22 June. After a brief vote to assign members to various committees, Germain Périer from the Democratic Left (GD) took the floor to begin criticizing Groussier's proposal. Chaos began immediately. After briefly saying that nothing like this had ever been tried – "Because there has never this many socialists" retorted one member – he told the Chamber that he felt like the 'Unified' socialists were just showing off their increased parliamentary strength. "*Trés bien! Trés bien!* (*from the far left.*)"[250]

Périer believed that there had always been enough seats on the far left for the 'Unified' socialists, but now that they had surpassed 100 deputies, they expected every other party to sit further on the right. "Without returning to the prehistoric era…" began Périer, causing laughter and inducing a taunt from Jaurès: "To the deputies from the caves!" Before Périer could recompose himself a *non-inscrit* deputy, Joseph Lasies, screamed that "…if we go back further to the time of Jesus Christ, the apostles were already socialists!" Finally, Périer was able to spit out his point, that when other Left-wing parties had their own massive electoral victories, they never resorted to rearranging the seats.[251]

Périer demanded respect from his younger colleagues. The 'Unified' socialist deputy, Jean-Pierre Raffin-Dugens, called out to tell the old man that if he wanted to keep his seat on the speaker's far left, he could simply change his parliamentary group. Périer snidely remarked, "My dear colleague we cannot just change groups as we'd like. If tomorrow, I presented myself to become a member of the Unified socialists, I probably would not be admitted. (*laughter*)."[252]

Raffin-Dugens offered a compromise, "We would make you do an internship first."[253]

Périer attempted to go on with his point that older deputies had *always* been given priority in the Chamber's seating arrangement before another 'Unified' socialist, Edouard Barthe, cut off his

[249] AN AD/XVIIIc/1482, Rapport par M. J.-B. Morin (Cher), 3.
[250] BnF, *Gallica, J.O.*, "Discussion…," (published 22 June 1914, accessed 26 March 2022), right, 2549, left, 2550.
[251] Ibid, left, 2550.
[252] Ibid, left, 2550.
[253] Ibid, left, 2550.

argument by commenting that "it is not a dishonor to sit on the right." Lasies loved this comment and sarcastically repeated it, "Have you heard monsieur Périer? It's not a dishonor to sit on the right. (*laughs*)."[254]

"Without a doubt;" Périer finally continued,

> …but many members of this Chamber, I can say the great majority, want to belong to groups considered Left-wing. I do not know under what circumstances all the groups have changed their names to give themselves the epithet 'left'.
>
> The Radical group is called 'Radical Left;' the Republicans, previously without an epithet, have taken the title of 'Left Republicans;' they have added this designation probably to make it clear that they want to follow a Radical policy.
>
> The 'Democratic Left,' inspired by the same feeling, wanted the word "Left" to appear in its title. Pure and simple democracy was not enough.[255]

Groussier was not impressed but rather fed up with Périer's history lesson. He yelled that there are "500 deputies who want to sit on the left, in this condition it is difficult to satisfy everyone."[256]

Périer continued:

> There is even a new group called "the savages of the Left." (*laughs*) So you see that everyone wants to be on the Left!
>
> And then, socialists, see what a valuable argument you will lose! When speakers are applauded by the right, you will no longer be able to say to them that dreaded line: "Look who's applauding you!" by Republicans. (*New laughter*) I add that you will also be obliged, if you accept you accept the proposal of *monsieur* Groussier, to change governmental vocabulary.
>
> Indeed, it is often said that the government sees no enemies on the Left. What does that mean, if not that it sees them on the Right? If the draft resolution is accepted, there will be Left-wingers sitting on the Right, and the expression "No enemies on the Left" will lose all its salt and precision. (*Applause and laughter*)

[254] Ibid, left, 2550.
[255] Ibid, left, 2550.
[256] Ibid, center, 2550.

> And then you have heard all the ministers, for some time now, announce that they would only remain in power if they had a Left-wing majority; of course I do not approve of this way of seeing things, which is contrary to the parliamentary system, but I am obliged to note this state of mind in all our governors.
>
> I think I remember that it was M. Poincaré, when he was a minister, who was the first to say: "We want a Left-wing majority". M. Briand then repeated it, then M. Barthou!
>
> Then came M. Doumergue; this one even limited his program to the excommunication of the Right. Finally, M. Ribot himself, who has sat in this place (the center) all his life, who also declared that he only wanted to govern and administer with a Left-wing majority.[257]

"*Très à gauche!*" and "Poor Right" were heard on the speaker's Left. Périer concluded:

> … as far to the left as possible.
>
> Finally, you heard the honorable *président du Conseil*, M. Viviani, repeat in his ministerial declaration, six times in a row – I had fun counting them – that he only wanted to rely on a Left-wing majority.
>
> So you can see what embarrassment you will put the government in when it says that it wants to rely on a Left-wing majority and that this majority will be on the right.
>
> All these considerations, together with the more serious ones I mentioned at the beginning of my explanations, militate in favor of the status quo; the best thing would be, I believe, to leave things as they are. (*Applause on various benches in the center*)[258]

But, Périer droned on "…my ambition is not so great." Périer's long-winded speech was only to propose a grandfather clause. His proposal would allow deputies like him to keep their long held seats for the rest of their time on Earth while still, as he was at pains to point out, "consecrating the reform."[259] Périer emphasized how modest his proposal was and played the part of a simple old man who did not wish to be "displaced." He was not the only one. Louis Andrieux from the

[257] Ibid, center, 2550.
[258] Ibid, center & right, 2550.
[259] Ibid, right, 2550.

ARD declared that he simply wanted to defend his place and was mocked by a 'Unified' socialist who quoted Patrice MacMahon's famous remark: "*J'y suis, j'y reste*!"[260]

The absurdity of the proposal was not just its cynicism. Deputies could be sentimental about their seat in the Chamber. The speaker, Paul Deschanel, always kept his 1885 map of the Chamber with his artifacts. His seat was marked with a large blue X.[261] Andrieux claimed to be comfortable in his place on the "good Left side… n° 7" and he did not want to be "expelled."[262] This comment turned the debate over seats into one about history. The 'Unified' socialist Charles Benoist replies to Andrieux's desire not to be "expelled" by saying that "It's your turn (*laughs*)."

"Ah!" Andrieux reacted. "It reminds you of a distant memory. If you are referring to the expulsion of the Jesuits, you should know that we were not as bad as you seem to think… and we did not expel all of them."[263] As though he was offering a historic compromise Périer politely began referring to the nosebleed seats on the speaker's Left, saying that "I believe that the socialist deputies could very well go there; wouldn't they be in their place, since, according to historical tradition, it was in this place that the deputies of the Mountain, *whose descendants they are*, sat!"[264] Andrieux showed less sympathy. He commented that "while a considerable part of the ['Unified' socialist deputies] arrive with a purely socialist origin, others among you have been elected under very different conditions and can, without any risk of quarrel with their neighbors, sit on the far right."[265]

Andrieux was referring to the long shadow of the Boulanger Crisis. A hundred years later historians are still debating the ideology of the origins of "French fascism" but even in 1914 early participation by some socialists in Boulanger's coalition was not forgotten. Andrieux had a much longer memory than most of his fellow deputies. He was first elected in 1876 in the wave of

[260] My Italics. The full line is "My place is here, I am here, I am staying here." Patrice MacMahon famously said the line during the Crimean War (1853-6) after going to a forward position during the Battle of Malakoff an English officer suggested that he was in danger and should return to the rear. In 1873 MacMahon was elected to the French presidency and attempted to use the office's powers to protect the Government of Moral Order (1873-7) and continue his personal project for a restored Bourbon monarchy. Raffin-Dugens who is using the line in the debate, is using it as an insult, since MacMahon's intransigence eventually led to the *Seize Mai* crisis when republicans were finally able to take control of the Third Republic while MacMahon would resign in indignation. Ibid, right, 2550.
[261] He sat in column E, row 3, seat number 44 (directly behind the minister's benches). AN 151AP/43.
[262] BnF, *Gallica, J.O.*, "Discussion…," (published 22 June 1914, accessed 26 March 2022), left, 2551.
[263] Ibid, left, 2551.
[264] My italics; ibid, right, 2550.
[265] Ibid, left & center, 2551.

republican elections that lead to the *Seize Mai* Crisis and had been a public opponent of Boulanger in 1885.[266]

Andrieux's nasty antisocialism continued when a well-meaning 'Unified' socialist said that "The whole Chamber has an interest in this ordinance." "*Eh bien*..." began Andrieux, "…in fact a certain group in this Chamber has an interest in the proposal and even only a fraction of this group is interested in it…" With a flare for the dramatic, Andrieux concluded by saying that "If you believe, M. Groussier, that the rigor of principles and doctrines requires it, take my fields, take my house, but leave me my place in the Chamber. (*laughter*) My seat is not 'a means of production;' I refuse to have it socialized. (*new laugher and applause*)"[267]

As the debate quickly went off the rails Jean-Baptiste Morin stepped in as the proposal's *rapporteur*. Morin calmly reiterated the Rules Commissions reasons for the proposal by appealing to the speaker's workload as justification. Who wouldn't want to help an overworked old man? After explaining the Commission's unanimous support for the rule, Morin pointed to the rule's logic versus the current "illogical system," a point that was received with applause from the speaker's left. Morin pointed out the obvious, "…how can deputies be offended by sitting on this or that side in this assembly rather than on another?"[268]

Over various exclamations from across the Chamber Morin remarked that "Earlier, it was said that there is no dishonor in sitting on the right. There is no question about that. But sometimes there are disadvantages in sitting on the right for those deputies who do not share the opinion of those who sit on this side of the Chamber."[269]

"And the Center?" asked the FR deputy Charles Benoist. "You've insulted geometry by getting rid of the center." Morin snarked back that "We haven't gotten rid of the center, we've just misplaced it."[270]

[266] He would also continue to be a deputy until 1924!
[267] Ibid, center, 2551.
[268] Ibid, center & right 2551.
[269] Ibid, right, 2551.
[270] Ibid, right, 2551.

In an uneventful speech by the 'Unified' socialist Barthélémy Mayéras, simply repeated his comrades' remarks and closed with an appeal to the logic of making the debates understood by the French public. Afterwards, Louis Andrieux began to speak again and claimed that it did not matter, "we are preparing a vaudeville (*applause from the center*)… are we going to publish in the *Journal officiel* the political positions of each movement relative to one another, imagine, 'prolonged applause from the deputies who do not appear to be in any group.' (*laughter*)."[271]

At this point the full text of Groussier's proposal was read to the Chamber. Alexandre Lefas of the FR submitted a prejudicial motion that attempted to defer a *répartition* of the Chamber until after the group presidents were consulted. This caused an eruption in the Chamber. Lefas claimed that Groussier's proposal was not nearly as popular as Morin had claimed. Lefas went on to articulate three criticisms of the proposal. The first reason was that it was too long and complicated. He claimed this was the result of the project's rushed creation. "You have proposed, in effect: imperatively dividing the Chamber into geometric sectors."[272]

Groussier sharply responded. "We never wrote geometric."

"The word has already been used in this debate" Lefas replied, before continuing to his point; the rule has not ordained which group will sit where, relative to one another. Lefas believed that this made the text incomplete and wondered out loud if any deputies who *truly* wanted to preserve their seats could force a disagreement over the order provided by paragraph six.[273]

"*Mais non*" replied Groussier before Lefas shouted back: "It's your text!" As a gentle chaos filled the Chamber as naive 'Unified' socialist asked "why complicate such a simple reform?"[274]

As the chaos simmered down, Morin finally went on to his second of three objections by asking if the Chamber would be modified *every time* there was a by-election as the final paragraph suggested. It would be agony for the deputies to regularly shuffle their seats to accommodate recent results from small obscure constituencies. This was a fair concern. While 'Unified' socialists were safely anchored on the far left of the Chamber, any change in could be easily accommodated with

[271] Ibid, left, 2552.
[272] Ibid, center & right, 2552.
[273] Ibid, right, 2552.
[274] Ibid, left, 2553.

the seats gained or lost. The deputies from other groups would be constantly shuffling left and right to account for *one* new deputy. This problem was particularly pressing in the context of the Third Republic because of the frequency of by-elections. Lefas asked if there was going to be a constant shuffle for every by-election, would it not be easier to do away with the concept of individual seats all together?[275] But, he concluded, "there were no revolutionaries revolutionary enough, in your Rules Commission, to go as far as renouncing this individual appropriation seats in the Chamber."[276]

Figure 6. René Achille Rousseau Decelle, *Une séance à la chambre (ou Jaurès à la tribune)*, oil on canvas, 1907, 145 x 180 cm, preserved in the Palais Bourbon, published online by *France Culture*. Notice the sheer number of deputies, 602(!), but also the how heigh the seats go and how crammed the deputies are when sitting at full capacity. Also consider the painting's perspective, from the left aisle at a sea of deputies sitting on the speaker's right.

Before getting to his third point, Lefas again criticized the rushed nature of the proposal by suggesting that there would be significantly less opposition – by him – if the group presidents had been consulted beforehand. He suggested that the order of the parties and the general distribution of seats should have been presented to the Chamber as a whole, rather than as little more than

[275] BnF, *Gallica, J.O.*, "Discussion…," (published 22 June 1914, accessed 26 March 2022), left, 2553.
[276] Ibid, center, 2553.

Groussier's proposal which he saw as a blank check. This would have meant that deputies would already know what would happen before they voted on the proposal.[277]

Finally arriving at his third point, Lefas felt that it violated parliamentary traditions. Deputies were supposed to be reasoned individuals who stood for ideas. That was the intention behind the original division of the Chamber into six equal parts in 1815, but Lefas was in favor of *this* geometric division.[278] The Chamber's divisions were not supposed to be parties but a way of easily mapping parliamentary opinion. If they were now organized by parties and representatives of their parties, they would be throwing away ninety-nine years of tradition and the idea of what it meant to be a deputy. Lefas criticized the proposal as revolutionary and the younger deputies as who supported it as unable see themselves as reasoned individuals who represented their electors, unlike his own cohort from 25 years earlier. Instead, they now only saw themselves as representatives of mass parties whose party interests outweighed the national one. The old ideas of being a deputy had crashed headlong into the era of mass parties.

Lefas wanted them to stop any discussion of geometry and instead emphasize the historic roles of deputies. He compared the project to the creation of the French departments, when, in 1789, the Sieyès-Thouret committee had suggested dividing France into perfect geometric squares before settling on the familiar system France uses to this day.[279] In both cases, idea of perfect geometry was rejected as impractical and idealistic.[280] Lefas saw the *réparition* the same way. The perfectly divided parliament was idealistic but wholly impracticable. Unlike, of course, the six equal divisions of 1815 which he so loved.

[277] Ibid, center & right, 2553.
[278] Ibid, center, 2553.
[279] Ibid, center, 2553.
[280] Margadant, *Urban Rivalries in the French Revolution*, 84–110.

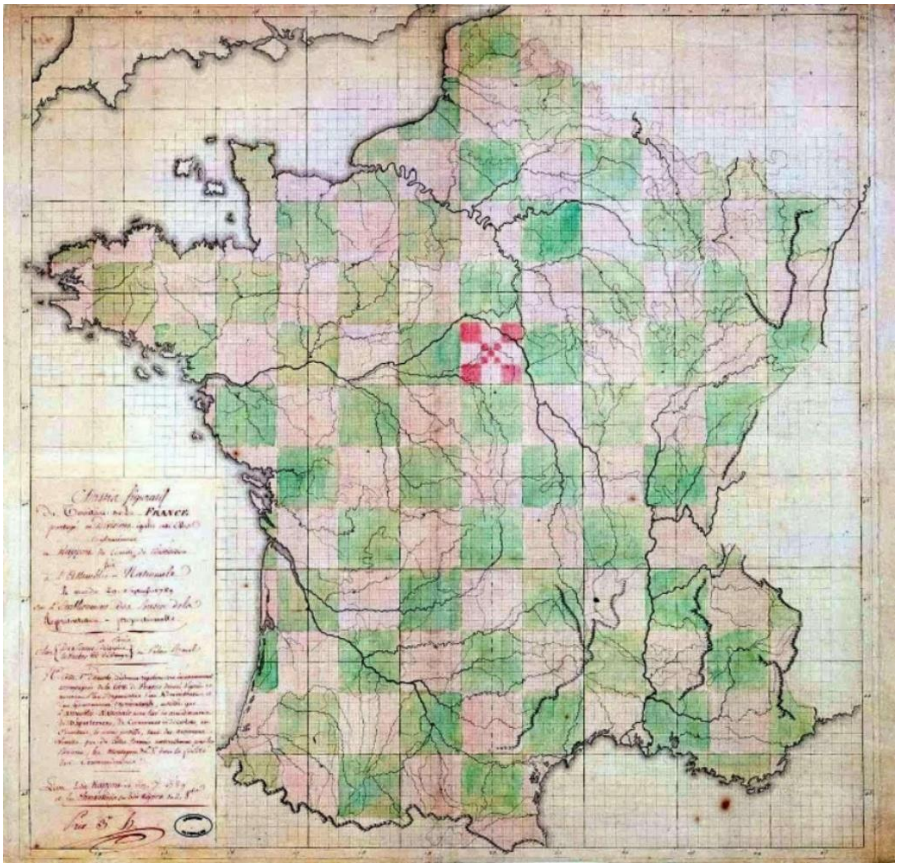

Figure 7. A map of the geometric *départements* proposed by the Sieyès-Thouret committee that Lefas is refering to. AN NN/50/6, photo by Cécile Souchon and Marie-Élisabeth Antoine, "La formation des départements," published online by *Histoire par l'image*.

Lefas finally concluded aggressively:

> All the parties, believe me, my dear colleagues, but especially those of the majority, have an interest in not trying to use a kind of violence here. (*Exclamations from the left*) Yes, a kind of almost brutal violence. (*Further exclamations on the same benches*.) I maintain the word; it is a procedure that leads to a sort of expulsion of some of our colleagues. (*Protests on the left and on the extreme left.)* Let's say 'move,' [*déloger*] if you like, instead of "expel", but that's not the case. instead of expelling, but it's the same thing.[281]

"To summarize…" Morin calmly retorted, "…you are asking us to purely and simply keep the *status quo*." Groussier also calmly responded. He pointed out that there are two ways to organize a semi-circle: into a half-crown or sectors. The Commission, he began, never proposed geometric sectors and a semi-crown would not work. The sectors, he argued, had to be arranged according to

[281] BnF, *Gallica, J.O.*, "Discussion…," (published 22 June 1914, accessed 26 March 2022), left, 2554.

groups because fixed sectors never have the correct number of seats for a group's members. Groussier implored independent deputies who truly wanted to protect their seats that they would just have to join a parliamentary group. Otherwise, like the group of "savages" who refused to join a group, "they will not be in privileged seats."[282]

An FR deputy asked "Where will the *non-inscrit* deputies sit?" to which the exasperated Groussier replied that "… this is the task that will be accomplished by the presidents of the groups."[283] "I can understand the preoccupations of our old colleagues who do not desire to sit in the higher seats," he began, explaining that if deputies were truly concerned about that, they would join a group that would respect those particular wishes. But, he concluded:

> The whole problem, in my opinion, consists of this: Do we or do we not want the parties in the Chamber to be organized? (*Très bien! Très bien!*) I am, for my part, very surprised that the most lively opposition we encounter comes from certain colleagues who are [in favor of proportional representation]. (*Applause*) and who, more than any others, have fought for the organization of the parties. At least, when we seek to organize the deputies, they should help us to do so, instead of postponing the question with proposals such as they are making.[284]

Hearing the support Groussier's proposal commanded and conscious of the mockery his cries of "violence" received, Lefas gave in. He dropped his motion and claimed that he was satisfied by Groussier's assurances. The president of the Rules Commission, Jules-Louis Breton, confirmed that the group blocs would be made in such a way as to ensure the availability of seats near the floor for older deputies. Breton said that "it is evident that we cannot make an exact geometric division, but we can try to make it the best possible." Lefas announced that he did not doubt the sincerity of the intentions.[285] The motion was dropped.

Only Périer's grandfather clause remained and Périer refused to withdraw it. After being implored not to cause more debate, Périer stubbornly repeated his desire to keep his seat and to not sit on the right. The FR's Charles Benoist empathized that:

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[282] Ibid, left, 2554.
[283] Ibid, left & center, 2554.
[284] Ibid, center, 2554.
[285] Ibid, center & left, 2554.

> …we who are historically the center, to find ourselves moved to the right (*smiles*), not at all that we consider the right to be an inferior part of the Assembly, and I am bound to add that, not that, for my part, I consider the left to be a superior part.[286]

He went on to half-jokingly propose rearranging the Chamber to resemble the German *Reichstag* before being cut off by Groussier who was desperate to end the debate. Groussier reiterated the Commission's opposition to Périer's grandfather clause and voting commenced. First was the vote on Périer's grandfather clause. The vote was by roll call and the results were disastrous for Périer: 161 to 405.[287] There would be no grandfather clause. The rest of the rule did not require a head count, after such a trouncing the Chamber assented to its newest rule with a vote by voice. Rule 135 of the Chamber of Deputies was introduced. The *répartition* could begin.[288]

Répartition

The next morning's papers reported the previous day's debates with little fanfare. *le Radical*, *le Petite Journal*, and *la Croix* all printed the debate's highlights on page two with a short summary of Périer and Andrieux's protests. These summaries quoted liberally from the debate and they all emphasized the barbs and laughter that was thrown around freely during the debate.

Three papers did offer commentary on the previous day's debate. Clemenceau's *L'Homme libre* published its own summary by Auguste Bernier that dramatically opened by declaring that "The young deputies are without pity." Bernier saw the demands of the 'Unified' socialists wanting to sit together as the same demand that Périer and Andrieux's put forward, everyone wanted to be comfortable. Bernier could not understand why they would ruthlessly choose their own comfort over that of their elders. In fact, Bernier commented, "There was no longer any Right or Left" because of the republican groups with 'Left' in their name that would now be sitting on the speaker's right. Bernier also complained of the constant interruptions, concluding that the new system was to be "the Left to the left – spilling over into the center – and the Right to the right."[289]

Alain Mellet from the far-Right *Action française* sympathized with deputies like Andrieux who saw this as nothing more than a demonstration of force by the 'Unified' socialists. Mellet wrote

[286] Ibid, center, 2555.
[287] Ibid, left 2555 & left 2562–left 2563.
[288] Ibid, right, 2555.
[289] BnF, *Gallica, L'Homme libre*, "Plusieus orateurs défendent leur fauteuil contre le projet d'expropriation de M. Groussier qui est adopté," (published 23 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), 2.

that "Once again, the socialists, who will not make room on the far left, have shown themselves to be the masters."[290] Despite this, his summary was accurate and explained that the 'Unified' socialists wanted to be united in one sector. Mellet just felt that it was a waste of time that only showed that the Chamber was beholden to 'Unified' socialists.

In the conservative *Gaulois*, Georges Foucher saw the logic in allowing the 'Unified' socialists to reorganize themselves on the left. Foucher found their arguments completely reasonable and "for this reason, I will refrain from going into the details of the discussion, which are of no interest to the reader, but I want to note, however, some really amusing arguments." Périer's argument about the language of government was, to Foucher, little more than the desperate excuse of an old man who did not want to move. Lefas' accusation of violence was too ridiculous for Foucher to treat it seriously. Foucher concluded with what was to come next. There would be a meeting of the group presidents to decide, finally who would sit where.[291] But that would not be, as another paper pointed out, "without great difficulties in practice."[292]

That meeting took place later that same morning in the speaker's office at 10 AM. An initial order was quickly agreed to but the Radical representatives from both the Radical Party and the Radical Left "energetically" opposed a request by Briand's *Groupe des non inscrits dit de Gauche* (Left *non-inscrits*) to sit between them; on the Radical Party's right and to the left of the Radical Left.[293] According to Clemenceau's *L'Homme libre,* the Radicals opposed Briand's group because they "do not represent any political party and that it must be placed after the true groups, that is to say after the Rights."[294] *Le Radical* even suggested that the Left *non-inscrits* should not be a group because its deputies were not an established political party. The paper suggested that they should have to sit with the rest of the *non-inscrits* on the speaker's far right. This idea was, of course, unacceptable to the Left *non-inscrits*.[295]

[290] BnF, *Gallica*, *L'Action française* "LA CHAMBRE," (published 23 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), 2.
[291] BnF, *Gallica*, *Le Gaulois*, "Question de Places," (published 23 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), 3.
[292] BnF, *Gallica*, *L'Echo d'Alger*, "La nouvelle répartition des places," (published 25 June 1914, accessed 19 February 2022(, 2.
[293] BnF, *Gallica*, *Le Radical*, "La Répartition des sièges," (published 25 June 1914, accessed 13 February 2022), 2.
[294] BnF, *Gallica*, *L'Homme libre*, " La répartions des places A LA CHAMBRE," (published 24 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), 2.
[295] BnF, *Gallica*, *Le Radical*, "La Répartition des sièges," (published 25 June 1914, accessed 13 February 2022), 2.

Reporting on the meeting a few days later, the *Echo d'Alger* in Algeria sardonically reported from a distance that:

> the eleven constituted groups are more or less accommodated, but this is not the case for the group of the Left *non-inscrit*, for the group of the *non-inscrit* and for the group of members who do not belong to any group ["savages"].
>
> Let's see who can tell us who is who!
>
> As for the commissioners in charge of finding the solution to the problem, they are losing their minds.[296]

They were. At the end of the meeting the Radicals and Radical Left won out and the first draft of the *répartition* went from left to right: 'Unified' Socialists, Republican-Socialists, Radicals, Radical Left, Left Republicans (ARD), Democratic Left, Republican Federation, ALP, the Right, Left *non-inscrits*, and *non-inscrits*.[297]

The Left *non-inscrit* were initially ignored because none of their members had attended the meeting. Now that the proposal was public, Aristide Briand began to protest. With his influence as a twice former *président du Conseil* he could not be ignored. Both the speaker – Deschanel – and Groussier were eager to find a solution that would save everyone from a second debate. The compromise they came up with was a typical example of the Third Republic's political process. Theodore Zeldin called it *débrouillage* ('coping').[298] Each group was, theoretically, to be given a long slice of the Chamber, ensuring that older deputies from every group would be able to keep their seats at ground level while still providing enough seats for all the members of each group. The Left *non-inscrits* – and later the "savages" – would be given the left half of the Radical Left's top three rows. The Left *non-inscrits* would not have any of the prized seats near the floor, *but*, they could sit in between the Radicals and the Radical Left.

To address the Radical complaints that Left *non-inscrit* did not represent a party, Groussier and Deschanel suggested that Briand get on with formalizing it, and so it was. Briand hastily created his new party, now called the *Union républicaine radicale et socialste* (Radical Republican and

[296] BnF, *Gallica*, *L'Echo d'Alger*, "La nouvelle répartition des places," (published 25 June 1914, accessed 19 February 2022), 2.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One*, 1:365–92.

Socialist Union).[299] The new Radical Republican and Socialist Union was barely a party, but a fiction with its own manifesto. If we compared it to the Republican-socialists it would be difficult to spot the differences of opinion. That it was barely a party is emphasized by the reaction it received in the Parisian press. They recognized it as nothing more than a name change for deputies who were already a known group. *Le Rappel* reported on the name change *as a name change*, explicitly saying that the name change was to receive seats to the Right of the Radicals.[300]

A Chamber Turned Upside Down

Just before another vote to appoint two different deputies to a committee, at 5 PM on 25 June the revised map of the *répartition* was posted in the assembly.[301] Unlike the first map which placed Briand and his followers on the speaker's right, this map included the compromise arrangement, to the right the Radical Party and above the Radical Left. The new map was the first version that the public could actually see, and it was quickly republished by *L'Humanité* on the 26th and *le Radical* on the 27th. In both instances, the semi-circle is flipped on its head so that it is shaped like a 'U.' Leaving the 'Unifed' socialists on the speaker's far left but on the viewer's far right. This new map of this "parliamentary topography," a term that the reporting quickly embraced, appeared on the frontpages of both papers.

[299] BnF, *Gallica*, *Le Petit Journal*, "Le répartition des sieges à la Chambre des Députés," (published 25 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), 2 ; BnF, *Gallica*, "Les secteurs politiques," (published 25 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), frontpage.
[300] BnF, *Gallica*, *Le Rappel*, "Changement de titres," (published 25 June 1914, accessed 16 February), 2022, 2.
[301] BnF, *Gallica*, *Jornal Officiel*, "Dépòt du pan des secteurs de la salle des séance," (published 25 June 1914, accessed 26 March 2022), 2584.

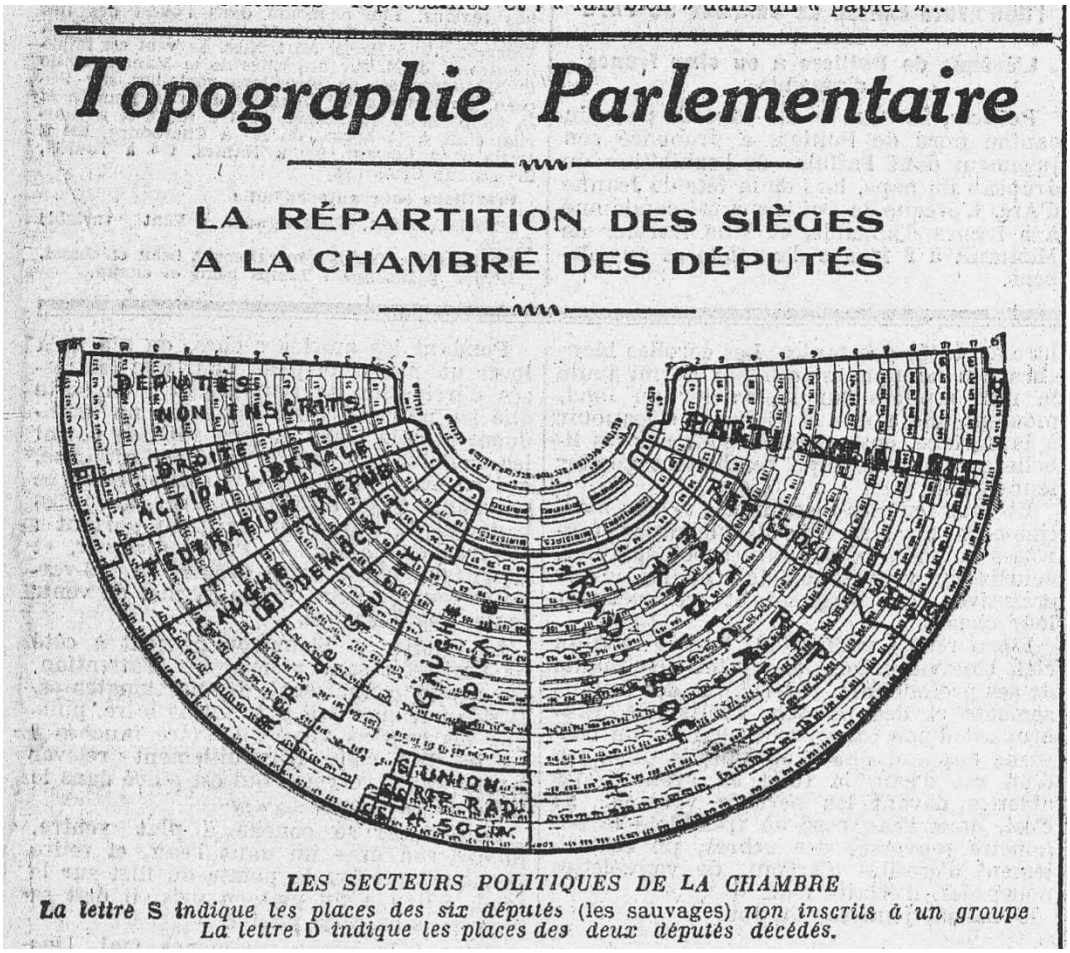

Figure 8. Published in *L'Humanité* on 26 June.

After explaining the details of the *réparition* to readers who had not followed the news, *le Radical* took the time to mock one *non-inscrit* in particular, saying that "obviously, the deputy of Paris is unhappy."

> He wants to be considered as a republican. He believes that his place is on the left. M. Georges Berry does not seem to be consistent with who he is.
>
> Elected in 1893, he chose, in that era, his place on the right – although there were a very large number of vacant seats on the left – because he had just triumphed on a conservative program; since then, he has not stopped sitting in the same place. He never asked to be included in a Left-wing group.
>
> Now he is protesting. He considers himself a 'republican.' We want to believe him…. There are some members of the group who should be sitting on the left, since they vote with the Left, but M. Georges

> Berry and most of the members of his group are right-wing men, and they should stay there.[302]

An ALP deputy from Normandy, Fernand Engerand, agreed with *le Radical*'s conclusion. Engerand wrote in the Catholic *Excelsior* the same day that "…the label Right is rehabilitated; another term will be needed to challenge republican orthodoxy."[303]

Engerand's article displayed an impressive understanding of the symbolism of the Chamber's seating. He quoted the Larousse dictionary that followed the English tradition of the governmental Right and oppositional Left before moving onto the French tradition where, in the National Assembly of the French Revolution, counterrevolutionaries grouped themselves together on the speaker's right. He gives the same reasons for Groussier's desire to the 'Unified' socialists on the speaker's left. Engerand said that it "answered a natural disposition: men who have the same opinions tend to approach and to group themselves in the assembly…" but that it was also a form of party discipline, "because it takes strength of mind to hold one's opinion opposed to that of one's friends." Engerand claimed that the revolutionary assemblies disliked how these groups "alienated" deputies from their independence and so countered this by assigning seats in their assemblies at random.[304]

Engerand went on to recapitulate the origins of the Left and Right in the French parliamentary system. He argued, importantly, that the French system was explicitly inspired by the English system as his citation from the Larousse dictionary demonstrated. He went on to claim that "this practice, interrupted under the Second Empire because of the numerical insignificance of the opposition, resumed under the Republic and continued as long as the Republicans did not have power." Engerand then quoted the French writer and journalist Francisque Sarcey to that effect. The Republican seizure of power was the critical moment for the Catholic Engerand, writing that the Left, as a term, became confusing. It symbolized both republicanism *and* opposition.[305]

Engerand then wrote that,

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[302] BnF, *Gallica*, *Le Radical* "La nouvelle répartition des sièges à la Chambre," (published 27 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), frontpage.
[303] BnF, *Galiica*, Fernand Engerand, "Droite et Gauche," *Excelsior* (published 27 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), 2.
[304] Ibid.
[305] Ibid.

> When the Republic became the legal government, these names of Right and Left underwent a deviation that has not been rectified since. And Francisque Sarcey, who knew the value of words, then invited 'the Left to sit on the right, the republicans not being able to be at the same time the masters of the situation and the opponents.'
>
> The advice was not followed; neither the Right nor the Left changed seats, and it was the words that changed their political meaning the Left became governmental and the Right oppositional.[306]

According to Egerand, it was only the rise of socialists that made the situation untenable. He pointed out that as the number of republicans and socialists in the Chamber increased it, became "impossible for them to move completely to the left, and a large surplus of the most extreme Left was thrown to the right end of the room," making the *répartition* necessary.[307]

Reflecting on the consequences of the *répartition*, Engerand agreed with Périer, because "it [the *répartition*] brings down these names of Right and Left which have been used so disastrously."

> The governmental Left is no longer on the left, the 'Left Republicans' sit on the right, and because half of the Left is in opposition there can no longer be, for a government, a Left-wing majority, and the Right will be able to applaud it without the risk of the government being compromised by such an approval.[308]

Still Engerand mocked the "parliamentary childishness" of those who attached their opinions to the seats they sat in and sarcastically wrote that "…the more votes one had from the Right, the more one wanted to sit on the left!" Engerand saw this as the moment to unite the conservative factions in France because putting the various republican factions "in their true political place" would give the Right a new sense of strength. The new deputies on the right would no longer reject parties like the ALP and the Right would stop being dominated by reactionaries. Instead, it would be dominated by men like Engerand who had rallied to the republic. He concluded that "this placement thus constitutes a great political truth, since the group is elected, no longer according to their personal convenience, but according to the opinion of the voters, from whom they hold their mandate."[309]

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[306] Ibid.
[307] Ibid. The idea also suggests an early idea of "horseshoe theory," where the far-Right and far-left are seen as being closer to each other than the center, Kuklick, *Fascism Comes to America*, 119–21.
[308] Engerand, "Droite et Gauche," 2.
[309] Ibid.

It is surprising that writers who identified with the Right saw the *répartition* as a victory, especially when we remember the role of the 'Unified' socialists in making the *répartition* possible. It should not be. Throughout the debate, the antisemitic deputy Joseph Lasies took joy in mocking Périer for his desire to keep his seat on the left. Lasies' mockery came from a place of satisfying irony. A man who *hated* the Right was now being forced to sit closer to them. Lasies was, of course, under no illusions about Périer's politics given his own affinities for the antisemitic and anti-republican far-Right, but the Right-wing deputies who had rallied to the republic like Engerand saw their chance to create a bloc that was unified around the idea of a conservative republic.

Léonce Beaujeau, writing in *Action française*, might have agreed with Périer about Engerand's illusions, but he had an impressionable amount of sympathy for a debate that he criticized as a "superficial *chinoiserie*." Three days earlier, another writer for *L'Action française*, Alain Mellet, had criticized the debate for only being "of interest to parliamentarians."[310] Despite these criticisms by his colleague, Beaujeau understood the debate to be rich in symbolic meaning.

> It will result, indeed, from the new distribution of the various groups on the benches of the Chamber that the old names drawn precisely from the physiognomy of the places will not find themselves corresponding any more to the places occupied henceforth by the majority of the deputies. Thus, in particular, the parties whose pride and strength was to be based on Left parties will now have to make a conversion movement to the right, having been overrun by more advanced elements. The Left Republicans will be forced to move to the center, along with the old Radicals. The center will pass to the right. So that if we recall the Chamber as it was composed some twenty years ago, we find that the '*progressistes*' who… made up the formerly powerful center, had to move back several degrees under the name of the Republican Federation and settle where the *ralliés* sat at that time. However, the Radicals… must now sit on the old benches of the [*progressistes*]. From which the following consequences result.
>
> The half-moon formed by the Chamber seems to be animated by a rotational movement which carries all its members from east to west, by the successive elimination of the elements which are seated on the right side. Imagine a semicircle which, at one of its ends, would present a portal communicating with universal suffrage and, at the other, would offer a precipice. Under the effects of the thrust which occurs on the side of the door, a pressure is exerted on the

[310] BnF, *Gallica*, Alain Mellet, " LA CHAMBRE," *L'Action française* (published 23 June 1914, accessed 19 February 2022), page 2.

> elected and pushes them insensibly towards the abyss, where they end up, after a more or less long time, by falling. This is a law as certain as that of gravitation.
>
> Without any relation to the realities of the national life, this law recommends itself and authorizes itself of all the fictions of the elective regime, reflected – real shadow of a shadow – in the mirror of the parliament.
>
> The man who destines himself to parliamentary politics, if he is gifted with some reasoning and the feeling of foresight, does not fail to begin his career with the extreme Left, so that he has time before him until the day when, from one step to the next, he too will have reached the fatal precipice.
>
> A politician who dips into the profession by registering with a group that sits on the center-right…, would only spare himself a ridiculously insufficient margin. He would have as little time left before him as a man who got up at six o'clock in the evening would have to deal with his day. This is what the Briands and the Vivianis, without looking any further, have understood so well...
>
> Another consequence: the extreme Left is constantly renewed and periodically a new extreme party is formed on the side of the entrance door. Note that in the Chamber of 1914, already exists the embryo of a revolutionary Socialist party. It still counted only two members. But it will grow.
>
> Finally, one can sympathize, if one has a good heart, with the misfortune of the old radicals who are forced to sit on the benches of the conservatives. Their only *raison d'être*, as parties 'of the Left' was to oppose the right. The right having disappeared under their victorious efforts, what is left for them to do, if not to take the place of the defeated and to wait until their turn to be thrown into the churn has come?[311]

Beaujeau concludes his article with the story of a legendary priest who has to kill his predecessor to take his place, but who must, from that moment on, live in fear of the same fate. The most striking feature of this article is how it perfectly understands the phenomena that Thibeaudet would enumerate eighteen years later. For both authors, the *répartition* signaled another "rotation" that turned Right in the eyes of Beaujeau and Left in the eyes of Thubaudet. Beaujeau's sympathy for the Radicals – like Thibaudet's – should not escape our notice. Both authors still considered the Radicals to be firmly placed on the Left but saw history as passing them by. The Radicals were

[311] BnF, *Gallica*, Léonce Beaujeu, "Topographie parlementaire," frontpage.

powerless to stop it. This sympathy was the polar opposite of the triumphant 'Unified' socialists in *L'Humanité*, whose brief article accompanying the topographical map took the time to mock "the Radical 'Left' [who] are thrown back to the center right, while the 'Left' Republicans and the Democratic 'Left' are now called upon to fill part of the right benches." As opposed to the sympathy that could be parceled out along the wide range of political opinions, *L'Humanité* triumphantly and aggressively ended its article by declaring that "For people who call themselves Left-wing, this is enough to make them sick!"[312]

* * *

The *répartition* clearly did make them sick. The issue of labels reared its head at two meetings in the Chamber on Wednesday, 1 July. The first meeting was in the speaker's office, which, after addressing the rapidly increasing number of written questions in the Chamber they turned to the new 'problem' of locational labels.[313] The speaker, Deschanel, presented Morin's deleted proposal for a continued *répartition* and referred back to Périer's objection, that groups with the label "Left" would be forced to sit on the right. With this concern in mind, Morin modified his proposal to suggest that the terms Left, Right, and center no longer be used on the recordings of the debates! The *répartition* was already a massive change. Now it went on to task the stenographers with "defining the character of the movement…[and] indicating the group's bench by giving its name as it appears on the electoral lists" said that "*until such time as new lists are published and the plan is corrected*, no changes can be made to the names, even if a group is formed, split or joined with another."[314]

The suggestion went over like a lead balloon. There were objections from all sides and Morin was forced to defend his proposal by reiterating that "It is well understood that the report, instead of fixing the movements of the assembly by the old denominations of Left, center and Right, will have to enumerate them according to the groups themselves, in order to write any equivocation on

[312] BnF, *Gallica*, *L'Humanité*, "Topographie Parlementaire," (published 26 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), frontpage.
[313] This was how governments were challenged in the Third Republic. Originally, questions were asked orally and intended to lead to interpellations (i.e. no confidence votes) but they were asked so often – and so they could be reprinted in the *Jounral Officiel* – that written questions were introduced so that ministers were not required to always been in the *Chambre*, while freeing up ministers' time, it also dramatically increased the number of questions submitted. Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume One*, 1:584–88.
[314] AAN, Chambre des Députés, Secrétariat général de la Présidence, Procès-verbaux des délibérations du Bureau, Registre n°20.

the classifications of the parts." Still, various members objected, and Deschanel intervened to bring the argument to a diplomatic conclusion. He suggested that Morin bring the proposal be brought to the meeting of party presidents that Friday. Morin agreed to his stay of execution. When the group presidents did meet that Friday, they swiftly buried Morin's proposal under more objections and rule challenges. Back on Wednesday, Deschanel was able to conclude the first meeting in time for his next one, with the group presidents.[315]

Before this meeting, Deschanel had received more complaints from the several "savage" deputies who were all grouped together on the right of Briand's Union of Radical Republicans and Socialists. They had sent a letter on 26 June saying that they

> …have met only for the necessary distribution of the seats that may be theirs in the *Grandes Commssions*, protest against the allocation, resulting from a false interpretation, that has been made to them of a sector that includes all of them, whereas paragraph 3 of the draft resolution adopted by the Chamber allows all the *non-inscrit* deputies 'to make known to the speaker between which groups they wish to sit.'[316]

The group presidents were unsympathetic to their plight. Even in their own document they admitted that they were only interested in participation in the prestigious committees and now they had the nerve to complain of not sitting in perfectly articulated spots? One by one, the party representatives expressed how little they cared and suggested that the "savages" should have made their complaints sooner or sat with the group they wished to be associated with.[317]

One of the "savages," Admiral Bienaimé, came to the meeting to speak on behalf of his fellow hunter-gatherers. Bienaimé said that he was not protesting his seat, but the fact that his colleagues wanted to remain independent. The group presidents, however, remained uninterested and suggested that the issue be brought up in the Chamber where it died a quick death. Deschanel, eager to avoid *another* debate, announced that the sectors were definitively established.[318] It was a *fait accompli*.

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[315] Ibid.
[316] *Grandes Commissions* were the permanent committees that oversaw and associated ministry like finance or war. A seat in the commission was prestigious and powerful and could often lead to the ministry itself, Ibid.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Ibid; BnF, *Gallica, Jounral officiel*, "Communication relative a l'établissement des secteurs," (published 2 July 1914, accessed 26 March 2022), 2652.

Conclusions

lichtung
manche meinen
lechts und rinks
kann man nicht
velwechsern.
werch ein illtum!
– Ernst Jandl

Monday, 29 June was the first day of the newly divided Chamber. On Saturday *le Radical* had predicted hilarity. Deputies would not know where to sit and would be so embarrassed that they would jump to their feet and continue to argue over their new seats.[319] But the space that the paper reserved for that hilarity was overtaken by the news that Serbian nationalists had shot the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne and his wife in Sarajevo. Poincaré, Viviani, and Paul Deschanel all had their condolences read in front of the gather Chamber as polite society expected them to and the assembled deputies played their part. They presented an atmosphere of solemnity and decorum rather than the raucous parliament they were known to be. In any event, assassinations happened all the time, this was not the end of the world. The 29th would have been a great chance to make public statements, but this was not the right moment. Not all was lost, however, anyone who still wanted to fight over their seats would just have to wait for the next opportunity.

11 September 1789 to 29 June 1914 are excellent book ends for this story, as they are for any story in the long nineteenth century. While the ideas that we have come to identify with the Left preceded the National Assembly and will continue into the foreseeable future, the end of this debate invites us to reflect on the variety of meanings that the Left carried throughout the long nineteenth century and beyond.

If we see the Left as a utopian idea, the *répartition* is the climax of the socialists' long climb to power following the disaster of the Paris Commune. For the moment the 'Unified' socialists had protected their purity by remaining out of power and chastising – and recording for posterity – how those who claimed to still be on the Left were nothing more than old men who were clinging

[319] BnF, *Gallica*, *Le Radical* "La nouvelle répartition des sièges à la Chambre," (published 27 June 1914, accessed 16 February 2022), frontpage.

to rapidly fading memories of their youths. The *répartition* is also the last moment that 'Unified' socialists can even claim to be on the Left. As they finally surpassed one hundred seats in the Chamber, they revealed themselves to be another false prophet by entering a bourgeois government *en masse* – the Sacred Union – to defend the Republic.[320] Only a growing minority in the soon-to-be Communist Party would remain pure, for the moment, in the eyes of their historical judges who are able to charge them with the crime of having failed to embrace what *we all now know* was always possible.[321] The old 'Unified' socialist party and the many deputies had who had embraced the war effort – including men like Jules Guedes himself – are thrown aside for their failures.[322] A generous judge would reflect on how they played their roles, only for history to move on. A critical judge would not be so merciful since extenuating circumstances do not absolve the accused of their crimes: the 'Unified' socialists are not on the "true" Left.

If we see the Left as a family, however, we are invited to dwell upon how the various Radical and Republican deputies came to terms with where the Left now stood. For the FR it only led to increased fervor to prove that while they now sat next to clerical Catholics and monarchists, they were different. They were *republicans*. For the ARD, this was a moment of recognition of their own conservativism. They did not embrace it, but the ARD's massive electoral victory in 1919 demonstrated that while they were already comfortable with allies to their Left, they did not oppose allies to their Right. In the process, *modéré* lost some of its sting. The Radical Party was not symbolically affected as much. The hollowed phrase that *there are no enemies to the Left* already assumed others on the Left, but they were always allies. It was only the rise of the Communist Party that complicated this hallowed phrase. In 1936 the Radicals could accept a coalition with

[320] The outbreak of the Great War occurred so perfectly to ensure that every power could justify its enemies as the aggressor. In the case of France, this meant that a monarchist and aristocratic German government was invading France just as the Prussians had done in in 1870, only this time the Republicans were in power. Army bureaucrats genuinely believed that socialists would take advantage of the war, like republicans had done after Sedan and planned to arrest socialists in the name of the war effort. But French socialists were also horrified by the possibility and believed that the only way to protect the gains of the French working class so far, was to join the war effort. This was also the same for the German SPD in the face of the Russian Tsar; a perfect storm. Geoff Eley, *Forgin Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 123–31.

[321] R. Craig Nation, *War on War: Lenin, the Zimmerwald Left, and the Origins of Communist Internationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), 118–19.

[322] Jaurès had the good fortune to get shot by a pro-war nationalist. There is nothing that suggests that he would have been any different from the rest of the European socialists. Indeed, he was demonstrably less radical than many other European socialists that did support the war. Only the Bolsheviks in exile and the Socialist Party in the United States stand apart from the rest of the major participants' socialist movements. Raoul Villain deserves credit for saving Jaurès's legacy from himself.

Communists, but it was never their first choice. The realities of coalition politics never greatly impacted the *ideas* of the Radical Party. For the various families of the Left, the *répartition* was an acknowledgement of the changes that had taken place over the previous ninety-nine years and a reevaluation of what that meant about them going forward. It was a moment of gradual change of the kind outlined by Touchard when he emphasized the importance of historical epochs in his families of the Left.[323]

And if we see the Left as a place and as an identity, then we can reflect upon the debate as parliamentarians and parties engaged in a personalized struggle over who they were. Périer and Lefas' protests reveal that the label had a psychological and personal meaning.[324] The fact that a seating arrangement could elicit a full debate shows us how important symbolic meaning was at this point in the Third Republic. "Naturally born" republicans suddenly found themselves sitting where the hated reactionaries had once sat and were forced to watch as the old political landscape eroded while a fresh layer of sediment was deposited on top of where they had one sat. This is the relative Left. It assumes constant debate. So long as there is a place to debate, there will be two sides debating. They are not alone, of course, we would be "insulting geometry" if we misplaced the center, but the easiest way to frame political debate is with a Left and Right.

What unites each of these interpretations is motion. Political labels are not stable. One is never guaranteed a place on the political spectrum and this story reveals how little control we have over our political identities. This is made even clearer by looking beyond 1914 at the short twentieth century between 1914 and 1991 and the End of History which is only now coming to a close (1991 to the present). Following 1914 and 1945 the fundamental assumptions of historical progress fell apart and since the End of History we no longer trust the idea of a linear spectrum to describe our political beliefs. The long nineteenth century was only the birthplace of the modern world, we ought to pursue our story to the present.

[323] Touchard, *La gauche en France depuis 1900*, 13–15.

[324] Psychologists like John T. Jost, *Left and Right: The Psychological Signifigance of a Political Distinction* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2021) are beginning to analyze the meanings of political distinctions in contemporary society but the results are limited and of little historical use. We cannot put Périer or Lefas on the sofa to see what these seats and labels meant to them.

The Left in the Short Twentieth Century

The outbreak of the twentieth century in August 1914 was not the death blow to progress or to the modernist assumptions of the Left(s). Instead of a "second Thirty Years' War," as De Gaulle so famously put it, the first post-war order reinvigorated modernist hopes for a new progressive political era. The utopian possibilities of the New Deal in the United States, the Popular Front in France (which Philip Nord calls France's "New Deal"), the Soviet project of the 1920s and 30s, and even Mussolini's fascist Italy were all seen to widely varying extents as the embodiment of an transatlantic modernist and progressive project.[325] Progressive politics were not, of course, synonymous with the Left as Mussolini's inclusion makes clear, but the underlying assumption that to be modern was to make positive progress continued throughout the not-yet interwar years and shows us that our ideas of the Left did not end with the long nineteenth century.

An observer in June 1936 could look back at 66 years of France's electoral history and see clearly defined progress. Despite intermittent setbacks, the Chamber always trended towards the Left. One chart on the *Wikipedia* page for the National Assembly depicts the results of every legislative election between 1871 and 1936 (figure 9). The chart is a grave distortion of the historical reality of being a deputy as we discussed in part two. Many deputies were or claimed to be independent and parties did not truly exist. But by flattening deputies onto a one-dimensional line we are able to visualize how our June '36 observer would have seen historical progress over the course of a human lifetime. The parliament had become increasingly Left-wing and instead of rubble, it was historical victories that pilled endlessly upon one another. Four years after Thibaudet had published *Les idées politiques de la France, sinistrisme* was at its zenith.

[325] James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 349–94; Gregory M. Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy: Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 267–315; Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992), 138–64; Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 318–484; Philip G. Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 25–87; Conan Fischer, *A Vision of Europe: Franco-German Relations during the Great Depression, 1929-1932* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 56–84; Stefan J. Link, *Forging Global Fordism: Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, and the Contest over the Industrial Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 90–130; Kuklick, *Fascism Comes to America*, 11–32.

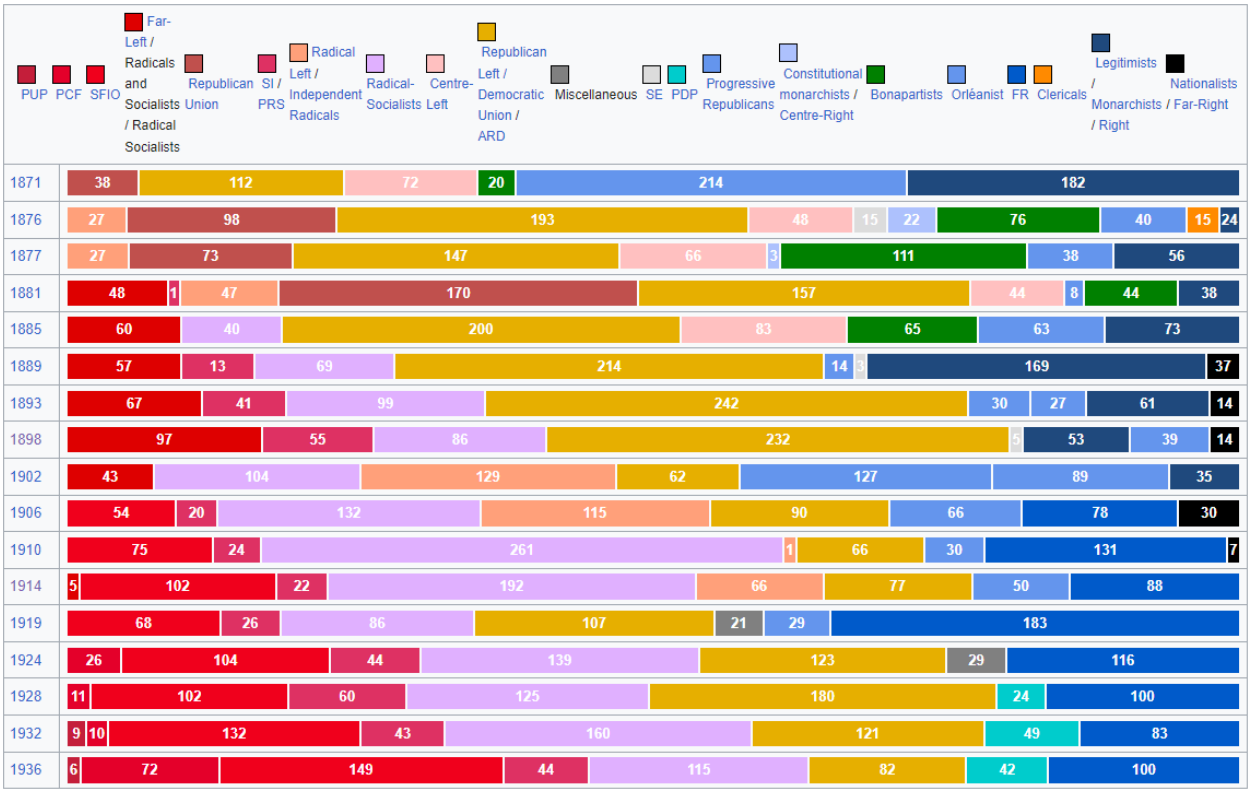

Figure 9. Taken from the *Wikipedia* page "National Assembly (France)," accessed 9 April 2023. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Assembly_(France)#French_Third_Republic_(1870%E2%80%931940)

Ideas of modernity did, eventually, come to an end on the Left over the slow course of the forty-year crisis of Cold War liberalism.[326] The crisis first occurred in the North Atlantic World with the fall of France in 1940 and continued until the decline of the Soviet Union in the 1980s. During this period, North Atlantic liberalism was confronted with the dual crises of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, which were seen as two forms of the same beast: totalitarianism.[327] North Atlantic liberals saw that the progressive assumptions that are used to define the Left were also inherent in Italian fascism, German Nazism, and Soviet Bolshevism. Faced with this, North Atlantic liberals abandoned their ideas of progress and went over the defensive. They saw the Weimar Republic as a failure that inevitably led to the Holocaust. Social reforms in the Soviet Union had gone too far

[326] Daniel Bessner and Michael Brenes, "Cold War Liberalism in Historical Context" (unpublished manuscript, 2023).
[327] Stephen Wertheim, *Tomorrow, the World: The Birth of U.S. Global Supremacy* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020) and; Michael S. Neiberg, *When France Fell: The Vichy Crisis and the Fate of the Anglo-American Alliance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021) provide the best analysis of the crisis' origins while; Losurdo, *Liberalism*, Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism*, and; Moyn, "The Cold War and the Canon of Liberalism" are the best at bringing the crisis into the cold war. Moyn's lecture is a good overview and pairs well with; Shklar, *After Utopia: The Decline of Political Faith*.

and led, inevitably, to Stalinism. Progress was no longer inherently positive. It was no longer a staple of the Left.

North Atlantic social democrats were placated by the successful creation of universal (representative) democracies and social welfare states after the Second World War.[328] The extended economic prosperity that made these reforms possible had to be protected. Thibaudet's "movement" – the attack – had been replaced by its stagnation – the defense. As this essay is written, French workers are protesting Emmanuel Macron's retirement reforms. The 2022 presidential election saw Macron organize a "Republican Front" of the various French Lefts – Lefts that included himself – to defeat Marine Le Pen.[329] Faced with the image of a French Left that can include voices from Macron to Phillipe Poutou, those who identify with the Left as a label are forced to confront two competing images of what the Left is. The first is of Macron's Left, which is active and moving, but in the "wrong direction." It is pushing to end welfare benefits in the name of neoliberal economies. The other image is the Left of Jean-Luc Mèlenchon, a Left that is singularly obsessed with how bad things can become and stopping them from getting worse. This is not movement, but resistance. In this way, the party of what exists is sitting on the Left.

Mèlenchon's "better world" was not only not "possible," it was also undesirable to the liberal-Left. The risks inherent in creating a "better world" were much worse than what already exists. In the North Atlantic world, *sinistrisme* had ended and been replaced by a lack of movement, which Thibaudet called "*the reaction*" or, more concretely, *dextrisme*.[330]

During the Cold War western Communists and other far-Lefts were the exception to this ideological stagnation. Communists saw the Soviet Union as a model while other far-Lefts argued that it was an imperfect idea, that it was nonetheless a step towards a utopian future.[331] Their non-stagnation was proof that they were on the Left. They were on the march, and they were the next progressive stage in human history. The collapse of the Soviet Union, however, brought that idea

[328] Aurélie Dianara Andry, *Social Europe, the Road Not Taken: The Left and European Integration in the Long 1970s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192867094.001.0001.
[329] Le Pen is a bad person with rotten politics, but I have argued in "For France, Another World Was Possible," *The Activist*, April 22, 2022, https://y.dsausa.org/the-activist/another-world-was-possible/ that she is still a republican. For some, that would qualify her as being "on the Left." For my part, however, she is a fascist and definitively of the Right.
[330] Thibaudet, "Les idées politiques de la France," 164–65.
[331] The most coherent explanation of the Soviet Union as a "degenerated workers" state' can be found in Ernest Mandel, *Trotsky as Alternative* (London: Verso, 1995), 32–58.

down with it. Progress suddenly ceased to be a guaranteed fact and the idea that things could become irreversibly worse entered Communist and other far-Left circles. This was the same disillusionment that overcame Cold War liberals in the 1940s.

At the End of History *Sinistrisme* is dead.

The Left at the End of History

The prolonged death of the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991 was also the beginning of the End of History, as Francis Fukuyama famously put it.[332] Forced to ask "what now?" The many global Lefts found themselves questioning how they should even understand the Left in the first place.

Inherent in Marcel Gauchet's argument that the Left is, above all, a place, is the belief that we can map people's politics on a simple spectrum from Right to center to Left. As we discussed in part one, the British House of Commons is laid out to present a basic division, a member of parliament could either be for or against the government, there is no middle ground. The innovation of a semicircular Chamber allowed for a range of opinions to be exhibited across a spectrum. This spectrum, however, is just a glorified geometric line connecting two points and requires a single issue along which all political belief can be mapped. It is an impossible task. How can the infinitely fractal nature of political belief be grafted onto a simple line? Political opinions are not integers that can be perfectly placed like on a number line. Political opinions are infinitely diverse, and ordering them on a supposedly objective – or even self-consciously subjective – line is a political statement.

That political statement is an attempt to visually define the essence of a political movement or individual. The essence of each group is defined relative to one another, regardless of the "distance" between them. As an example, after the *répartition*, the *Féderation républicaine* sat next to the clerical *Action Liberale Populaire*. The FR's deputies would argue that there is an impossible gap between the two parties, but this does not matter to the "mapmaker" because there is nothing between them. They are the two closest points on a line, the other "numbers" might exist, but they are not marked because they do not exist on *this* line. Every topographic

[332] For the End of History please see Daniel Bessner, "A Bad Breakup: The Disconents of Francis Fukuyama," April 17, 2023, https://www.thenation.com/article/society/francis-fukuyama-liberalism-discontents/.

arrangement of a parliament (see figures 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, and 9) makes this argument unconsciously. The *répartition*'s provision that every group would receive a cross section of seats, unintentionally, reinforced this interpretation. No group could be "as Left" as another because every group had to be provided with seats along the whole width of the Chamber.

The exception was Briand's Radical Republican and Socialist Union, which – alongside the "*savages*" – was given seats in the upper banks of the assembly between the Radical Party and Radical Left. By being given a rectangular bloc of seats, the Chamber did not wholly embrace a liner continuum of political opinions. The visual that the *répartition* presented was that *both* the Radical Left and Briand's party were equally "to the Right" of the Radical Party, but also equal to each other. Put in theoretical terms, instead of positing that X > Y > Z, the *répartition* posited that X > Y and X > Z, but also Y = Z.

With the breakdown of progress and modernity at the end of the short twentieth century, the assumptions of linear politics no longer make sense. Green parties are the most well-known example, but even fascist movements have proved difficult to easily classify along the Left-Right axis. This difficulty led Zeev Sternhell to write that French fascism was "neither Right nor Left," much to the frustration of a generation of French historians.[333] Plenty of French commentators now agree with Sternhell, the Right/Left divide is becoming *depassé*.[334] Faced with the impossibility of categorizing political opinions across a one-dimensional axis, some have begun to embrace two (as the Political Compass puts forth) or even four axes like the aptly named, "Four Axes Test." For modern commentators and politically interested people alike, the increased "definition" that comes from an increased number of axes helps in the goal of perfectly articulating every possible political ideology, no matter how obscure.[335] This task and method was mocked by one performing

[333] Beyme, *Political Parties in Western Democracies*, 130–36; Sternhell has published too many books arguing the point in different eras, but Zeev Sternhell, *Ni droite, ni gauche: l'idéologie fasciste en France*, 4 édition agumentée (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 11–218 is the most relevant for this discussion. Also see Irvine, "Beyond Left and Right, and the Politics of the Third Republic" for how historians have reacted to Sternhell's argument and an excellent defense of Sternhell's overall point.

[334] Janine Mossuz-Lavau, *Le clivage droite gauche : Toute une histoire* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2020), 15–36.

[335] One critical differentiating factor that we do not have space to discuss here is that parliamentary topographers believing in only representing political divisions that exist in a legislature (i.e. that engage in electoral politics). Not only does this limit their representations to those that are popular enough to be elected, it also limits their comparisons to those who wish to be elected. Tools like the Political Compass reject the relativistic places of parties in relation to one another to a perfectly articulated independent framing of all political beliefs that could possibly exist. The question of this idea and the rise of internet culture is one that is worth discussing but we cannot here. The idea of perfectly categorizing every possible belief also ignores the changes that occur overtime that we have discussed in this text. What is important is that these tools assume an objective and perfectly measurable continuum of every type of political

artist who sarcastically proposed using one-hundred dimensions to "properly" and "objectively" understand every possible political ideology.[336]

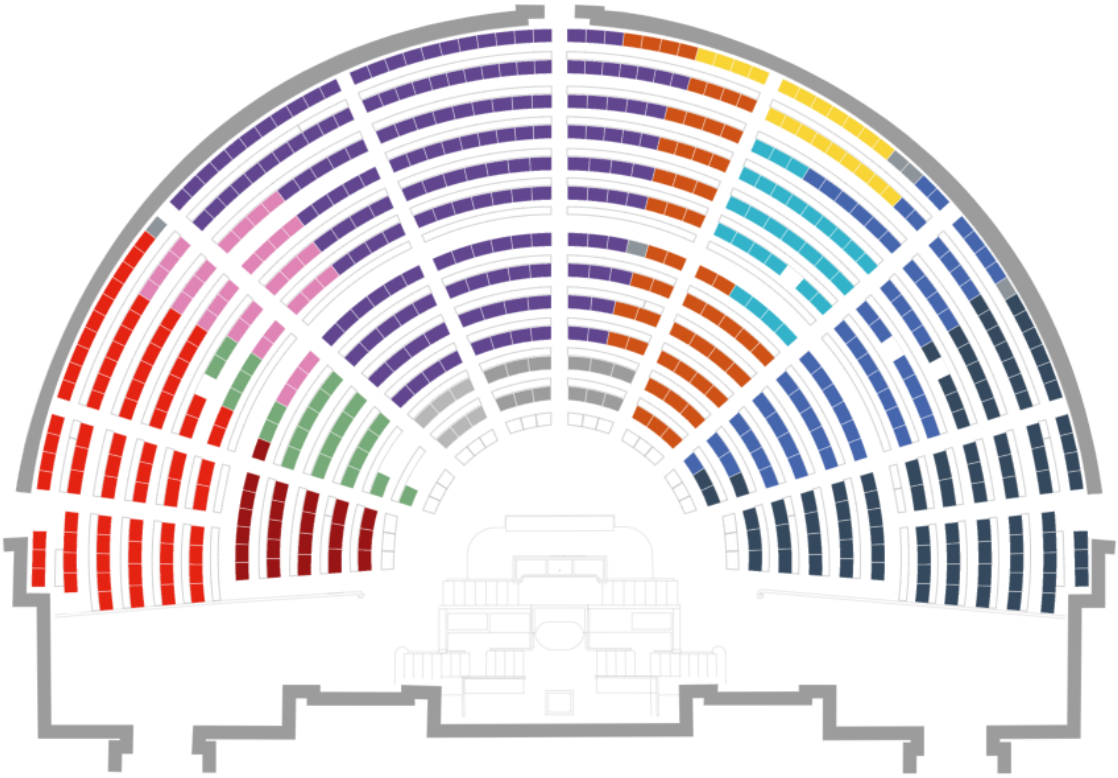

Figure 10. The National Assembly in 2023. Published online by the National Assembly. The *Parti communiste française* (PCF) is in dark red; *La France insoumise* (LFI) is in bright red; *Europe Ecologique – les verts* (EEV) is in green; the *Parti socialiste* (PS) is in pink.

The absurdity of the challenge has led parliamentary topographers to embrace a family of Lefts. The 2022 French legislative elections were defined by a broad coalition of Lefts known as the New Ecological and Social People's Union (*Nouvelle Union populaire écologique et sociale*, NUPES). Following the election, the group dissolved and each of the composite parties – *La France insoumise* (LFI) and the Green, Socialist, and Communist parties – created their own parliamentary groups (figure 10). But these groups are not in perfect order like the 1914 *répartition* would have suggested. The anticapitalist LFI and Communist Party share the extreme-left end of the Chamber. LFI sits in the prestigious place of the Mountain while the Communists, equally on the left, sit in

belief, if anyone actually believes it is another issue. See A.M. Gittlitz, *I Want to Believe: Posadism, UFOs, and Apocalypse Communism* (London: Pluto Press, 2020), 161–200 for a discussion on this obsession with articulating every possible political ideology.

[336] *The 100-Dimensional Political Model*, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuopBeaUN24.

the “more comfortable” seats closer to the ground. The same is true of the Socialist and Green parties who are to the right of LFI and Communists respectively, but in a similar arrangement that does not easily suggest that one is to the Left of the other. This is even the case on the Chamber’s center right. The *Mouvement démocrate* in orange, *Horizons* in teal, and the broad-church *Groupe Libertés, Indépendants, Outre-mer et Territoires* in yellow all present a confused cross-section of parliamentary topography where the orange *Mouvement démocrate* is to the left of the other parties, but only just. What we see is the interlocked nature of modern political life.

The awkward arrangements of issues and beliefs that cannot be easily organized along as many axes as the viewer wishes to create. To the left and right of the purple *Groupe Renaissance* there is not one, but several Lefts and center-Rights. That mess is why, when searching for the composition of the National Assembly, the first image one will find is not the real seating arrangement, but an approximation (figure 11). This approximation, made by *Wikipedia*, puts parties in their perfect cross sections and attempts to define which groups are to the Left of one another. Unlike the official seating arrangement in the National Assembly, this map takes a stand and argues that the Communist Party, for example, is to the Left of LFI.

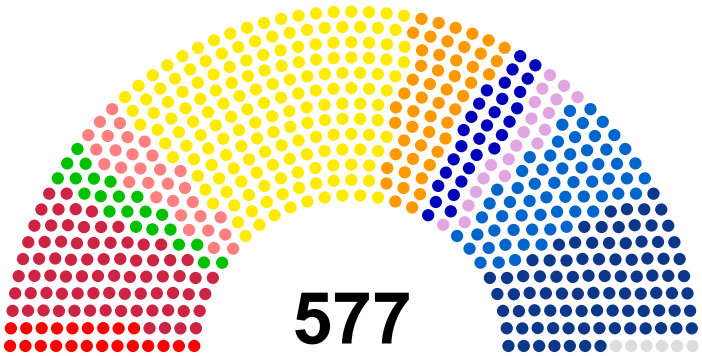

Figure 11. A representation of the same National Assembly in 2023. Published online by Wikipedia. https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assembl%C3%A9e_nationale_(France)

Confronted with the total impossibility of categorizing political beliefs we ought to ask what the point even is. The Enlightenment dream that it is possible to categorize perfectly and comprehensively all of human existence has fallen apart at the seams. Human existence, and the messy, inconsistent, and illogical ideas, beliefs, and feelings that compose our political ideologies cannot be comprehensively categorized. These parliamentary topographies help us understand the center of gravity in our representative democracies and offer us insights into the neighborhoods of

our imagined communities. But the dream of perfect visualization cannot compete with the realities of this historical moment.

When E. Collin first told the French public that those who support the monarchy sit on the speaker's right, he made a political statement. Since then, we have inadvertently repeated Collin's observation, adding layers of complexity and meaning until we reach today, where a simple direction is imbued with the historical memories of previous centuries.

Speaking between past and future our words are filled with import. The idea of the Left is rich in meaning and richer still in ambiguity. With a single word, we invoke a memory that reaches across two centuries to invoke a future yet to be made. It is a token of a world we have been thrown into. We are compelled by what was, what is, and what could be to create our own Lefts. Each filled with the memories of martyrs, friends, comrades, legends, heroes, and a sacred feeling that we call hope.

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