

During my sophomore year of college, I took a course with Professor Herf entitled *Twentieth Century European Thought*. The course surveyed the major intellectual and ideological trends of the time, discussing readings of politicians and philosophers such as Joseph Stalin, Theodore Adorno, and Friedrich Hayek. I found reading the essays of the French political Left during the postwar period most fascinating. I wrote my final term paper on the lasting impact of the French Revolution upon twentieth century interpretations of communism, as evinced by French intellectuals Raymond Aron, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Albert Camus. The subject matter stimulated my historical curiosity, and I knew that I wanted to further investigate the postwar French Left for my senior Honors thesis.

I began my research in the summer of 2012. Professor Herf recommended I start with a historiographical survey of several respectable and established historians such as François Furet, Tony Judt, and Philippe Burrin. McKeldin's extensive collection of French historiography allowed me to easily access these materials. A collection of essays by Raymond Aron concerning the "Jewish question" in France, published following Charles De Gaulle's unfortunate pronouncement following the 1967 Six Day War, that the Jews were an "elite people, domineering and sure of themselves," first introduced me to the topic of anti-Semitism in postwar France. Shortly thereafter, I became interested in the question of Holocaust denial upon reading Elhanan Yakira's *Post Zionism, Post Holocaust*. In his essay on French Holocaust denial, Yakira points to a unique aspect of French Holocaust denial: Paul Rassinier, a man of the political Left, had initiated the first wave of Holocaust denial during the 1950's, and radical Leftists of the 1970's beyond continued his legacy.

While, anti-Semitism on the Far Right was hardly surprising, it seemed atypical to find it on the political Left. My research question thus became this: How could a political family, that is the political Left, that claims to protect the rights of oppressed and minority groups, support an overtly anti-Semitic doctrine? Was this widespread and if not, how did the opposition respond? To answer these questions, I needed to construct a textual exposition of all the actors involved – from historians to journalists to the denialists themselves. So, I began by reading the original French Holocaust denier, Paul Rassinier. Marginal essays about Holocaust are not widely available but inter library loan

and the Maryland University system allowed me to access works like *Le drame des Juifs européens* (*The Drama of European Jews*, 1964) and *Le mensonge d'Ulysse* (*The Lie of Ulysses*, 1961).

My plan was to progress chronologically through the history of French Holocaust denial; thus, after studying Rassinier, I arrived at the intellectual collaboration of the revolutionary book club *La Vieille Taupe*, led by Pierre Guillaume, and Robert Faurisson himself. Again Faurisson and Guillaume's works were also available through ILL and the University library system. The next step was to analyze Faurisson's works as he entered the public arena and the public responses to him. This meant reading major French newspapers such as *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* as well as journals like *Les Temps Modernes*, *Esprit*, and *L'express*. McKeldin had each of these materials available. I used microfilm to read the newspapers, while the journals were available as hardback textbooks. For the materials I could not find at McKeldin or through ILL- such as the newspaper *Liberation* and the journal *Commentaire*, I traveled to the Library of Congress.

After drawing upon existing historical scholarship, denialist literature, newspaper articles, and journal editorials, I was able to begin writing and to complete an abridged version of my senior thesis by the end of the Fall Semester. I would not have been able to complete this project without the help of Professor Herf and the extensive resources of McKeldin and the Maryland Library System. Professor Herf originally pointed me towards general histories that brought me to my research question, while the ability to access original source documents, particularly those in the French language from which I could offer my own translations, allowed me to thoroughly tackle the topic.

The project taught me valuable skills that will certainly come of use as I pursue a graduate degree in History during the next few years. The skills were both mechanical and theoretical: I learned practical processes like using microfilm and Research Port, but also expanded my intellectual capacity to analyze texts for what they say and what they mean to different individuals. Ultimately the project confirmed to me the necessity of continuously asking historical questions with the hopes of illuminating current political and intellectual trends. With the presence of Holocaust denial in France, Great Britain, America, and Germany, its noted prevalence in North Africa, and its indoctrination as

state orthodoxy in Iran, the study of this phenomenon is indeed vital to protecting historical truth and liberalism.