

**Nacelles**

ISSN : 2552-6987

10 | 2021

Bataille de France, 1940. Repenser les forces aériennes au combat


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## Introduction. Victories in Defeat? The Writing of Air Forces' History in the "Battle of France" (1940-2020)

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 <http://interfas.univ-tlse2.fr/nacelles/1260>

### **Electronic reference**

Jean-Charles Foucrier and Aurélien Renaudière, « Introduction. Victories in Defeat? The Writing of Air Forces' History in the "Battle of France" (1940-2020) », *Nacelles* [Online], 10 | 2021, Online since 10 mai 2021, connection on 18 mai 2023. URL : <http://interfas.univ-tlse2.fr/nacelles/1260>

# Introduction. Victories in Defeat? The Writing of Air Forces' History in the "Battle of France" (1940-2020)

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## OUTLINE

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1. The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "Battle of France": Untangling the memorial and historiographic web
2. A new army in a modern war? For an interdisciplinary and inter-army history of the air battle of France
3. Air forces at the crossroads of many avenues. For an international and multinational history of the air battle of France.

## TEXT

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### **1. The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "Battle of France": Untangling the memorial and historiographic web**

- 1 What position should the historian take towards the fighting of May-June 1940 and towards the shadow it casts over the present? This is no easy question to answer: we need to evaluate perceptions during the period immediately and throughout the second half of the 20th century; we need to place events in their historical context and conceptualise them; and, finally, we need to decide, reflexively, which approach needs to be taken when faced with the requirements of the past and the present. It is also necessary to unravel the historiographical timeline of this episode of history that can be interpreted in a number of different ways, and to identify actors whose acts are part of specific recollective and scientific temporalities. As for the "Battle of France", the historian's pathway is punctuated by quite an

impressive number of preconceptions from which it is sometimes hard to escape. Moreover, it should be highlighted that there is a particularly significant recollective legacy that continues to distort the story of this battle. A number of ponderous questions still hang over debates, some are heavy with ulterior political motives, while others remain interesting from a scientific point of view.

- 2 This episode of history has been reviewed several times. In 1942, at the Riom Trial, those deemed responsible for France's defeat were tried by those who had suffered it. Scapegoats were identified, guardians were spared; and -apart from the notable exception of Maurice Gamelin- military commanders left civilian officials to defend their record and reject the blame for the errors that led to "disaster". During the trial, questions surrounding French military aviation from the inter-war period up to the Armistice of 22 June 1940 became central in the arguments presented by former Air Minister Guy La Chambre and former Defence Minister Édouard Daladier.<sup>1</sup> The (mostly army) commanders who did attend the trial did, nonetheless, present reports and testimonials on which judges relied to weigh up the gravity of the errors committed by the air force. To all intents and purposes, it was seen as largely to blame for the disastrous outcome of the battle, and it was firmly accused of having not implemented suitable industrial production, as well as failing to carry out its mission to provide support for ground missions and defending French soil.
- 3 The aerial fighting that took place over the bay of Mers el-Kébir and the bombing of Gibraltar from 3-11 July 1940 are frequently examined through the prism of the history of International Relations or through that of naval forces. This said, French aircraft used in the attacks against the British "H Force" to defend Admiral Gensoul's fleet can be used to illustrate the combativeness of French air forces. These attacks that were rapidly put together in the chaotic conditions present in North-African bases had a rather limited tactical impact, but, nevertheless, demonstrated that the *Armée de l'air* was still operational and could be used against former allies. Subsequently, the Third Reich -through the voice of its leader and the action of the *commission d'armistice*- provided the means for the French Air Force to quench its thirst for recognition on the condition that it sacrificed its autonomy on the altar of collaboration.<sup>2</sup> The easing of the terms of

the Armistice of May 1940 obtained by the *Armée de l'air* allowed them to maintain several groups and squadrons; the Vichy air force commanders thus following the path of the so-called "*Révolution nationale*". The *Secrétariat d'Etat à l'Aviation* (SEA) even showed a certain degree of fervour when it came to the question of the Jews. Indeed, in May 1941, the chief of the *cabinet civil* backed by French Air Force Chief of Staff, General Romatet, suggested a reinforcement of anti-Jewish legislation by arguing in favour of a restriction of the exemptions awarded under Article 2 of the Law on the Status of Jews of October 1940.<sup>3</sup> Emboldened by its position within the Vichy Regime, the *Armée de l'air* initiated moves to rewrite the history of the aerial fighting of 1940.<sup>4</sup> In 1945, France then set about removing any trace of the defeat of 1940 and, with this, it faded memories of any positive element with which it was associated. The question of blame was not, however, completely erased since immediately after the war the French Air Force saw itself as still burdened with guilt, and wanted to rehabilitate the role of its men and aircraft in the fighting of May-June 1940. As soon as fighting finished in 1945, a number of air force officers still involved in the reconstruction of the army, or retired, wrote biographical -and often hagiographical- accounts of how they saw the unfolding of events. These accounts suggested adopting a more global view in order to re-evaluate the image of the *Armée de l'air*. Relying on that of the pilot as an epic figure, they portrayed the "Ace" circling the skies whilst never giving up his honour and facing a superior enemy with chivalric heroism. His acts are seen as even more heroic given that his tools are outdated. In this respect, he becomes part of the "traditional" imagery the Great War; one that is epitomised by fighter pilots such as Georges Guynemer or René Fonck.<sup>5</sup> The limited number of publications glorifying bomber crews do nothing to reverse this trend.<sup>6</sup> Works such as those by Jean-Mary Accart written as early as 1942<sup>7</sup> foreshadowed others such as the "*grand cirque*" by Pierre Clostermann in which he describes the actions of Free French air forces.<sup>8</sup> Describing the events of 1940, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry also provides the reader with phantasmagorical visions of the defeat.<sup>9</sup> Here, events are turned on their head with the pilot being the only one who can see things clearly. Ultimately, then, these descriptions do not distance themselves from the notions of criticism raised by Vichy France and the Gaullist movement direc-

ted at the *Armée de l'air*. Rather than the crews of the aircraft, technical and industrial deficiencies are to be blamed [for the defeat].<sup>10</sup> In this respect, undoubtedly one of the most significant works produced is that written in 1943 by Commandant Pierre Paquier who uses the careers of three aviators belonging symbolically to the three branches of the *Armée de l'air*: combat, reconnaissance, and bombing.<sup>11</sup> The deeds of these "Trois de l'aviation" serve not only to illustrate the fighting spirit of defeated airmen, they are also part of a movement to revitalise aviation by condemning the criticisms expressed in military circles and by edifying young French citizens.

- 4 One finds here an image that is closely linked to the anthropologic field of catastrophe, that of the sacrificial hero whose individual or collective epic is to be found in post-defeat times, and that which serves the safeguarding strategy of the heroic capital of national armies. This strategy works all the better as aviators have interiorized this "warlike heroization" and use it as the cornerstone of their involvement.<sup>12</sup> Former air chiefs such as François d'Astier de La Vigerie -commander of the *Zone d'Opérations Aériennes Nord* (ZOAN) in 1940- wanted to bring the *Armée de l'air* to the recollective forefront by showing the reality of the operational commitment of air forces through the deconstruction of the myth of the "empty sky". Beyond the individual exploits that he extols, d'Astier de La Vigerie proceeds to a transfer of guilt whereby he states that accepted doctrines and the hierarchal command structures have deprived air forces of victory in battle.<sup>13</sup> There is no time for "penny-pinching calculations", he adds. Feuds over figures have to show the presence of the allied pilots in the sky of France, as well as their pugnacity. This often doubtful tallying, one that is ultimately in vain; the "confirmed" and "probable" victories, as well as losses led, as early as 1940, to the splendid but fanciful ratio of "one thousand victories" per 500 to 900 lost aircraft.<sup>14</sup> Thanks to this process of "internal distinction",<sup>15</sup> pilots were able to close ranks around a common belief in the success of their army. This dialectic of responsibility and rehabilitation complicates our perception of the defeat *de facto*, and even the very understanding of the word "defeat". The latter takes on a different meaning depending on the case in question. From "defeat in victory" to "victory in defeat", there is also the notion of "vanquished" and "vanquishers".<sup>16</sup>

- 5 From the 1960s to the 1980s, the vision of a shambling, morally corrupt France, saw a certain amount of success in the historiography of the "Battle of France", and is one marked by the publication of works that paint a picture of a decaying society marching towards defeat. *À la recherche de la France* published in 1963 is an excellent example of this type of work in question.<sup>17</sup> The result of a collaboration between French and English-speaking scholars, one of its contributors, Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, also authored *La Décadence* (1979), a highly representative example of the established triptych of decline, catastrophe, and renaissance.<sup>18</sup> This teleological reading of the period in which the weapons of France are doomed to failure, leaves little place for the expression of recollective combativity. Robert Paxton's thesis -translated into French only in 2003-<sup>19</sup> offers a new approach on the role of the army in Vichy France. Describing the French Army -and more precisely its officers- accurately, it also succeeds in generating an historiographical school of thought that -along with the works of Claude d'Abzac-Epezy- takes an interest in the *armée de l'Air*. Throughout the 1990s, this fresh look provided for a re-evaluation of the role of pilots in the defeat, and to recontextualise and explain the choices made during the period known as the "*années noires*", or "dark years". Concurrently, Patrick Facon's work deals with the "former" *Armée de l'air*, from its creation to the fighting of 1940.<sup>20</sup> A primary-source narrative that originates from historical documents held in the *Service Historique de l'Armée de l'Air* (SHAA),<sup>21</sup> this objectified history was written under the aegis of military authorities who cooperate in such projects without question and who even sponsor them.<sup>22</sup>
- 6 A question that may be asked is whether the increasing study of "air power" seen throughout the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century illustrates a disinterest for the aerial combat of 1940.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, works focusing on the pioneering theorists of the strategic use of air power and the conflicts of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century seem to have dried up demand for the study of the "Battle of France".<sup>24</sup> On this note, it has become evident that what took place in May-June seems to have been demoted to the status of an almost forgotten "bump in the road" as new areas of research on military aviation and the *armée de l'Air* become apparent.

- 7 The *Armée de l'Air* becoming the *Armée de l'Air et de l'Espace* on 24 July 2020, on 11 September of the same year, Army air general Philippe Lavigne made it his first point to press home the need for pilots to "always aim higher" while making a comparison between what was achieved by Georges Guynemer and what could be achieved by the future conquerors of space. Seemingly, what remained for the combatants of 1940, at the same time, was to hide from the limelight: the only unit to receive any kind of tribute in 2020 was the *Première compagnie d'infanterie de l'air* (CIA), an airborne unit created in August 1940 outside France, and after the defeat. Its story told in *Air Actualités*, a journal produced by the *Armée de l'Air et de l'Espace* itself,<sup>25</sup> it should be said that the French Air Force has not completely forsaken its rocky beginnings to the benefit of a more recent past and a present more in harmony with its ambitions. This can be witnessed through its sponsoring of a vast project involving military historians and researchers that provides a written account of French military aviation in the twentieth century,<sup>26</sup> and even if the events surrounding the birth of the *armée de l'Air*, the quest for a doctrinal identity, and defeat in combat become, once again, part of a long episode whereby the "Aces" of the Great War are part of the story that leads to the conquest of space.
- 8 Yet, can we not ask ourselves if there is something particular about the aerial combat of 1940? It is not a question that be answered easily, especially as what happened during the fighting has been necessarily clouded and drawn out, while the records of engagements in the skies above are thin on the ground. Where are the battlefields, the mass graves, the monuments? It is undoubtedly time to give more significance to the aerial fighting of 1940, and to let it bathe in the afterglow in order to peacefully leave the "work of the dead"<sup>27</sup> to resume its course.

## 2. A new army in a modern war? For an interdisciplinary and inter-army history of the air battle of France

- 9 The institutionalisation of the armed forces was not an *ex nihilo* creation. It is the result of a fighting heritage, and the product of a technical and doctrinal genesis.
- 10 However, the *armée de l'Air* is a recent (and difficultly assembled) construction (1933-1934), on which both centrifugal and centripetal contrary forces were rapidly exerted. Indeed, despite a focus on new types of warfare aiming at mobility, innovative doctrines and "technical surprise",<sup>28</sup> military aviation found itself at the heart of the geopolitical issues turning towards thoughts of war in the 1930s. It struggled, then, to dominate strategic arguments and found itself subject to contradictory and opposing decisions.
- 11 Henceforth, the events surrounding the birth of the "third branch" of French armed forces is well known, with the works of Patrick Facon<sup>29</sup> or Thierry Vivier<sup>30</sup> providing a solid historiographical platform. Along with this, the industrial thought process that guided the creation of a national military air fleet have also been explored. Nevertheless, some themes should still be subject to further exploration, and the events of 1940 deserve to be reintegrated on to the timeline of the institutional and operational genesis of the air force.
- 12 Redirecting attention back on to fighting will doubtless allow for the emergence of specific issues linked to aerial combat; in terms of how war is conceived, as well as the doctrinal and operative planning, and the understanding of men -whether they be leaders or fighters- or their representational systems and warlike mentality. On this point, we should note that those sent hastily into combat and who were part of the first generation of "unadulterated" aviators were either veterans of trench warfare (Joseph Vuillemin and Jean Bergeret) or young recruits trained at the *École de l'air*. Equally, we could ask ourselves about the relations between the air force and their older brothers, the army and the navy during fighting. We could ask



whether decisions taken in regards to industry and doctrines are sufficient to understand what took place, and we could wonder whether "warlike ideologies" were not at play during the Battle of France, and whether they are observable through the prism of land-air-water relations. We could also ask whether or not ground and air forces possess their own sensitivities.

- 13 In addition to these points, more needs to be known about the *armée de l'Air* in regard to its technical and operational diversity. Under study from the end of the war, aviation intelligence, for example,<sup>31</sup> is an aspect of the time-frame in question that remains largely unknown despite the interwar period being characterised by a deep and abundant doctrinal production dedicated to exploring this new horizon of technical and tactical possibilities. Among many others, the work of Camille Rougeron or Paul Armengaud needs to be given as examples. The *armée de l'Air* being not just aircraft and aviators, more questions need to be asked about air defence, observation techniques, and air infantry given that the *armée de l'Air* did not always control these different "weapons", and that the existence of the latter satisfies the needs of other specific questions.
- 14 Lastly, the development of aviation implies the resetting of the limits of war zones, an updated and military mapping out of conflict,<sup>32</sup> creating, consequently, a new perception of the aforesaid. Indeed, should we not witness the mental reversal that took place during the Second World War, and the transition from an heroic war fought by "knights" of the air<sup>33</sup> and a "dirty" war that wrought destruction from the skies. Do we then need to break up the primacy often given to strategic matters to be able to focus on the tactical implications of conflict aviation, a subject on which there is still much to be written particularly when it comes to close air support during the Battle of France.<sup>34</sup>

### **3. Air forces at the crossroads of many avenues. For an international and multinational history of the air battle of France.**

- 15 It is on an international -and even a global- scale that we should be looking at the preparations for war as well as how it is to be waged. Effectively, the drawing up of a doctrine or the acquisition of aircraft belongs to a process that goes beyond national borders. Each country gathers information, and analyses the decisions made by its present allies and its future enemies, and the doctrines and weapons possess their own characteristics precisely because they are the fruit of exchanges that take specific restrictions and requirements into consideration.
- 16 For this reason, the theories of Italian General Giulio Douhet are at the heart of controversies surrounding the use of the air force in the 1930s, and are the subject of a number of different interpretations, national adaptations, and also to refutations that allow for the encompassing of discordance and friction lines that are established within state military structures. Allies and belligerents interact: every country watches what the others are doing; they influence each other; and they adapt depending on what their allies and enemies are planning. One only has to look at how Hermann Goering boasted and what impact it had on French military aviation.
- 17 To conceptualise the evolution of the French air doctrine involves the crossing of different points of view and putting into perspective the decisions and renunciations of a minimum of four different Allied or Axis powers (the UK, France, Italy and Germany), and also thinking about the way an inter-ally system was set up in the 1930s during the so-called "Phony War" on the question of aviation. In May-June 1940, it was a coalition that was defeated, and its workings raise many questions that cannot be answered in a satisfactory manner without taking into account the geopolitical and operational divergences between the allies.<sup>35</sup> In order to be convinced of this, one needs only to recall the words of the air minister Pierre Cot:

I have prepared a coalitional war. I have brought the French air force and the British air force closer to the Czechoslovakian and Soviet air forces and the French technicians close to their American colleagues.

Is this not enough to enable me to join, like Messrs. Eden, Winston Churchill and Duff Copper, on the list of dangerous men for anyone dreaming of building a German *Mitteleuropa* or of reconstructing the Roman empire?<sup>36</sup>

- 18 If we stay with France, then what about the colonial Empire? Even if it was on the fringes of the conflicts of May-June 1940, it was also involved in the preparation of the war, the elaboration of an air doctrine and the acquisition of new equipment.<sup>37</sup> Again, this is only partially correct as the frontline aerial battles were fought with aircraft and crews based in North Africa. Here, we are indeed, talking about international avenues especially given that equipment was sometimes purchased abroad; the American-made plane Curtiss P-36 Hawk being operated by certain French units. In the least, the war should be pieced together to reflect its most "basic" dimension; one that was a Franco-German conflict, and one that does not appear to be evident in a large part of the historiography on the question.
- 19 It is not very often that the activities of the *Luftwaffe* -that quite significantly dictated the tempo of the aerial warfare, and that had a more or less imaginary impact on French decision-making- are evoked. How can it be possible, then, to understand the strategic and tactical dynamics of the defeat without providing a Franco-German angle? Work on this aspect started from the 1990s, and it is essentially from the English-speaking world that the historiography continues to emerge.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, we are discussing a coalitional war in which four nations (France, UK, Belgium, Netherlands) fought against Germany, as well as those that were in theory neutral, but who were implicated either because their nationals were involved in the fighting or because their airspaces were being violated (Ireland, Switzerland and Luxembourg, for example). This is an invitation to extend research to the field of international relations; they're also being influenced by the aerial dimension of the fighting.
- 20 The principally aerial combat, which lasted from September 1939 to June 1940 extended from the English coastline to the *Ruhr* Valley (and

even Berlin), and from the Netherlands to Italy. The use of air power, and the setting up of "frontlines" and "home fronts" thus leads to re-interpretation of what constitutes borders. Moreover, with the use of bombers the concepts of dissuasion and coercion emerge,<sup>39</sup> and they have an impact on public opinion in the countries at war. This opinion has an impact when it comes to deploying armed forces.<sup>40</sup>

- 21 Alliances contain, by their nature, a strong multinational dimension - this is particularly evident with air forces- and so the countries of central and eastern Europe such as Poland or Czechoslovakia provided pilots to the French air forces. On the other hand, nationals of Commonwealth countries were to be found in the cockpits of the Royal Air Force. How they became to be there is a question that automatically differentiates them from the nation for which they chose to fight.
- 22 This dossier, which is part of the memorial context of the eightieth anniversary of the "Battle of France", aims to propose a study of the air battles of May and June 1940 in view of updated historiographical data. Attempting to deconstruct certain myths that are still very much alive -that of the "thousand victories", for example- concurrently it restores the successive phases of reinterpretations to which the "1940 moment" has been the subject up to the present day. Furthermore, the aerial dimension of the conflict is anchored in the field of military social history, in the history of representations and sensibilities, as well as in the most recent military history. On the diachronic level, the combats do not arise *ex nihilo*. Indeed, great attention is paid to the politico-military substratum of the 1930s, but also to the sequence of the immediate post-defeat period; all within the European space of the conflict. For example, the works dedicated to the evolution of military doctrines are put into perspective with the air engagements of 1940 -whether it be bombing aviation, air-land or naval aviation considerations. Although it does not claim to be exhaustive, the dossier is intended to shed light on certain blind spots in the historiography -in particular, by proposing a multinational approach through the study of foreign combatants.
- 23 The articles that make up this dossier are divided into four main thematic sections; the first of which is dedicated to the leaders of the *armée de l'Air* and to the training of its cadres within a new military

force in search of its own identity at the crossroads of various ideologies and doctrines, and on the road to a major conflict. The second part focuses on the identity of foreign fighters in the "Battle of France", as well as the relationship between air forces and international relations in a European conflict situation. The third part is dedicated to preparations for the fighting, the fighting itself, and this will be considered from an inter-allied, inter-army, operational and technical perspective. The fourth and last part focuses on the aftermath of the defeat; what impact did it have on the French Resistance and what consequences did it have on the reconstruction of the *armée de l'Air* at the end of the Second World War? What lessons did the belligerents learn from the air campaign in regards to the continuation of military operations? Finally, this dossier contains an article dedicated to the written accounts of the fighting in May-June 1940 and raises the question of the link between the construction of memory and the evolution of the historiography connected to this issue.

## NOTES

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- 1 J. Bracher (ed.), *Riom 1942. Le procès* (Paris: Omnibus, 2012).
- 2 C. D'Abzac-Epezy, *L'Armée de l'Air des années noires. Vichy 1940-1944* (Paris: Economica, 1998), 34-35 and 38-47.
- 3 C. D'Abzac-Epezy, "Le secrétariat d'État à l'Aviation et la politique d'exclusion des Juifs", *Archives Juives*, 41 (2008/1), 75-89. It is all about excluding from the derogations the family members of jewish servicemen who died for France.
- 4 *Service Historique de la Défense* (Vincennes), Air, 3D 382, « Un bilan de la bataille aérienne sur le front français du 10 mai au 10 juin 1940 » (note 151 3/0/IGAA signée Joseph Vuillemin, 29 juillet 1940).
- 5 For more on this subject, see D. Accoulon, "The Construction of an Image in Aviation: the Case of René Fonck and the French Press (1917-1926)", *Nacelles. Passé et présent de l'aéronautique et du spatial*, 5 (autumn 2018) [online: <http://revues.univ-tlse2.fr/pum/nacelles/index.php?id=654>].
- 6 See for example R. Chambe, *Équipages dans la fournaise* (Paris: Flammarion, 1945). Of the four chapters, one is dedicated to combat aviation and another dedicated to bombing.

- 7 J.-M. Accart, *On s'est battu dans le ciel* (Grenoble/Paris: B. Arthaud, 1942).
- 8 P. Clostermann, *Le grand cirque : mémoires d'un pilote de chasse FFL dans la RAF* (Paris: Flammarion, first edition 1948).
- 9 A. de Saint-Exupéry, *Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Pilote de guerre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972, first edition 1942).
- 10 C. D'Abzac-Epezy, *op. cit.*, 23.
- 11 P. Paquier, *Trois de l'aviation* (Toulouse: Didier, 1943).
- 12 See F. de Ruffray, "L'image du héros dans le choix de la carrière d'aviateur à travers les archives orales du Service historique de la Défense", in C. d'Abzac-Epezy and J. Martinant de Préneuf (dir.), *Héros militaire, culture et société (xix<sup>e</sup>-xx<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: IRHiS/IRSEM, 2012), online: <https://books.openedition.org/irhis/246>.
- 13 F. d'Astier de La Vigerie, *Le Ciel n'était pas vide, 1940* (Paris: R. Julliard, 1952).
- 14 See P. Garraud, "La contribution des données chiffrées à l'élaboration d'un mythe. L'armée de l'Air 'invaincue' en 1940", *Histoire & Mesure*, XXV (2010/2), 3-23.
- 15 See C. d'Abzac-Epezy, "Mémoire militaire et histoire. L'exemple de l'armée de l'Air", in J.-P. Barrière and M. Ferrière Le Vayer (dir.), *Aéronautique, marchés, entreprises. Mélanges en l'honneur d'Emmanuel Chadeau* (Paris: Pagine Editions, 2004), 308-310.
- 16 See P. Laborie, *Penser l'événement. 1940-1945* (Paris: Gallimard, 2019), 105-106.
- 17 H. Stanley et alii, *À la recherche de la France* (Paris: Seuil, 1963).
- 18 See P. Nord, *France 1940. Défendre la République* (Paris: Perrin, 2017), 11-12.
- 19 R. Paxton, *Parades and Politics at Vichy: the French Officer Corps under Marshall Pétain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).
- 20 See especially P. Facon, *L'armée de l'Air dans la tourmente : la bataille de France, 1939-1940* (Paris: Economica, 2005, first edition 1997).
- 21 The *Service Historique de l'Armée de l'Air* was founded in 1939 and integrated into the *Service Historique de la Défense* (SHD) in 2005. See S. Champonnois, "Le Service historique de l'armée de l'Air et son écriture de l'histoire des forces aériennes françaises (1934-2004)", in H. Drévilion and

D. Guillemin (dir.), *Histoire des opérations militaires. Sources, objets, méthodes* (Vincennes: Service Historique de la Défense, 2018), 177-188.

22 See C. d'Abzac-Epezy, *L'armée de l'Air des années noires...*, *op. cit.*, with a preface by the General of the Army Maurice Schmitt (Chief of the Defence Force from 1987 to 1991), as well as P. Facon, *Histoire de l'armée de l'Air* (Paris: La Documentation française, 2009), with a preface by the General of the Air Force Stéphane Abrial (Chief of the Air Force from 2006 to 2009).

23 The concept of *air power* is not new –it began to be theorized just after the Second World War, and resumed in light of the experience acquired throughout operations, and the theories that were elaborated pre-war on the air battle. See in particular: A. Tedder, *Air Power in War* (London: Hodder and Soughton, 1947).

24 This is borne out by the publication of a series entitled *Stratégie aérospatiale* produced by the *Centre d'études stratégiques aérospatiales* (CESA).

25 I. Sand, "29 septembre 1940. La première unité parachutiste de la France Libre", *Air Actualités*, 732 (August–September 2020), 58-61. The air infantry was also honoured the previous year (I. Sand, "Les groupes d'infanterie de l'air. Aux origines des unités parachutistes françaises", *Air Actualités*, 718 (February 2019), 58-61).

26 J. de Lespinois (dir.), *Histoire de l'armée de l'Air et de l'Espace* (Paris: Pierre de Taillac, 2021, to be published).

27 See T. W. Laqueur, *Le travail des morts. Une histoire culturelle des dépouilles mortelles* (Paris: Gallimard, 2018), 502-510.

28 See J. de Lespinois, "La surprise technique : matrice de la guerre aérienne ?", *Stratégique*, 106 (2014/2), 61-71.

29 P. Facon, *Histoire de l'armée de l'Air* (Paris: La documentation française, 2009), 558 pages.

30 T. Vivier, *La politique aéronautique militaire de la France, janvier 1933-septembre 1939* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), 649 pages.

31 See B. Colom Y Canals, *Le renseignement aérien en France (1945-1994)* (PhD, directed by Olivier Forcade, Université Paris 4), 2016.

32 See M. Aubout, *Les bases de la puissance aérienne. 1909-2012* (Paris: La documentation française, 2015), 452 pages.

33 See P. Venesson, *Les chevaliers de l'air : aviation et conflits au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Presses de Sciences politiques & Fondation pour les études de défense, 1997).

34 See W. Murray, "The *Luftwaffe* Experience, 1939-1941", in B. F. Cooling (dir.), *Case Studies in Close Air Support* (Washington DC: Office of Air Force History, 1990), 71-115 and M. J. Chandler, *Gen Otto P. Weyland, USAF. Close Air Support in the Korean War*, "Chapter 2. History and Evolution of Close Air Support. World War I to the Korean War" (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 2007), 5-14.

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36 P. Cot, *L'armée de l'Air 1936-1938* (Paris: Grasset, 1939), 243 [translated by the author].

37 J.-B. Manchon, *L'aéronautique militaire française outre-mer. 1911-1939* (Paris: PUPS, 2013).

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Introduction. Victories in Defeat? The Writing of Air Forces' History in the "Battle of France" (1940-2020)

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