Propaganda within a "Research Workshop": Refashioning the Society for Modern History, 1918-1939

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As demonstrated by the recent golden anniversary meeting of the Society for French Historical Studies in Paris, international collaboration and cosmopolitan learning have long been a cornerstone of our profession. Historians from David Pinkney to Keith Baker have identified transatlantic exchange as a metric to gauge a "path of professionalization" in the American study of French history.1 Despite the general postmodernist critique of classical erudition and scientific authority in the writing of history, scholars still tend to view "internationalism" as an inherently progressive counterweight to nationalism and narrowly conceived academic discourse. Recent attention in French scholarship to "the historian and society" reflects a similar conceptual linkage between the propagation of

academic universalism and the modernization of academic history during the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{2} During the Third Republic this nexus of internationalism and professionalization met most explicitly, both in research and institutional interaction, within the country's professional historical organization open to general membership, the Society for Modern History (Société d'histoire moderne).

Between the world wars, the Society functioned as a singular "clearing house" of historical exchange in France through its monthly assemblies and Bulletin, its sponsored conferences, and a quarterly Revue.\textsuperscript{3} The interwar years were indeed a "golden era" of international expansion for the Society, which defended ideals of democratic liberalism and scientific objectivity, even as the interwar political climate endured increasing radicalization. The evolution of the Society between the world wars is thus an opportunity to investigate how a unique organizational power of French historical practice wedded academic internationalism with a firm dedication to the interests of the constructed homeland. It can suggest whether international cooperation


\textsuperscript{3} Addressing the history of the Society is complicated by the loss of its institutional papers and those of its two interwar historian-administrators: the general secretary Léon Cahen (1874-1945), and Joseph Letaconnoux, who served as adjunct-secretary (1920-1926) and editor of its Bulletin.
within academic history has acted as an inherent milestone of common professional progress or whether internationalism functions as a neutral mechanism, available to political agendas applicable to the state.

As European governments accepted responsibility for public education and the training of instructors before 1914, professional historians affiliated with universities, state archives, and research centers offered their political fealty to their respective state interests. To invest these national characteristics with the legitimizing power of public authority, French savants enrobed their professional identity through an epistemological ideal of objective truth and progressive science. If the "Republic of Merit" rested on universal ideas of male civic equality, then historical science had to fashion a national historical past while declaring a loyalty to neutral detachment and intellectual if not gendered diversity. Thus academic historians by the First World War tended to historicize the French nation as a symbol of consensual republicanism, concerned with the latent threat of German power and increasingly worried

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about the relative diminution of its traditional global power status.\(^5\)

This identification of science in service of the nation made French scholars vulnerable to unrestrained germanophobia during the Great War. Historians are divided about how wartime experiences determined the wider social self-perception of French professional historians after the war, however. One branch of this research basically agrees that interwar French historians, reflecting the political polarization of the Republic after 1919, departed from ideals of intellectual objectivity in a retrenchment of national chauvinism. This national commitment was embedded in hidebound political historiography, a postwar German menace, and the longer-term loss of individual autonomy by professors in modern mass culture, even among a younger generation of sociocultural scholars.\(^6\) Historians who concentrate primarily on


\(^{6}\) See Michael Jeismann, Das Vaterland der Feinde. Studien zum national Feindbegriff und Selbstverständnis in Deutschland und Frankreich 1792-1918 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992), 364-73; Sergio Luzzatto, L’impôt du sang. La gauche française à l’épreuve de la guerre mondiale 1900-1945, trans. Simone Carpentari Messina (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1992), 105-9; Franziska Wein, Deutschlands Strom-Frankreichs Grenze: Geschichte und Propaganda.
historiography propose in contrast that French scholars redoubled their sponsorship of scientific neutrality and became notably skeptical of participation in public interest associations. French professors defended their corporate autonomy from intensifying political and methodological crises through a "taboo of engagement" with politics and a turn toward "disarmed history."7 "Neither dominating nor conquering," they rallied around the myth of the *Union sacrée*, sought a peaceful resolution to interwar differences, and offered a critique of Italian and German fascism during the 1930s. Such different interpretations tend to reflect how intellectual history and biography, usually based on published works, often derive conclusions from the relative selection of represented historians or texts, as well as

shifting definitions of public "engagement." Unfortunately no scholar has yet addressed how French historians could have preserved even a reputation for objectivity if they served the Republic's program for cultural internationalism as part of a political agenda of national foreign policy.8

Unlike international projects such as the early Annales movement, the pursuit of internationalism in the Society was not linked to explicit methodological experimentation. From its birth in 1899 within the halls of the Sorbonne, the Society was to gather scholars from across all of the departments into a single "research workshop" (atelier de recherches) with an orientation toward exclusively "scientific and rational" research.9 It would support the study of modern history in France to demonstrate that the country's heritage of political democracy was a "natural" development of national unity since the Reformation. Academic historians who supported the Republic wanted the new society to act as an ideological counterweight to popular royalist writers in the Action Française or the conservative Catholic members of the Society for Contemporary History. Impartiality would distinguish them from royalist historians and their professional nemeses east of the Rhine. Assuming that members shared a consensus about "reasoned" research and implicit political loyalty, the


association's emphasis on collective labor, the production of disciplinary reference tools, and a justification of modern history all would foster a spirit of democratic professionalism.  

Before 1914 internationalism was at best a secondary concern of the Society. Membership was limited almost completely to Paris and the provinces. International contact only occurred to reinforce domestic status, usually with an occasional symbolic "homage" bestowed to an eminent honorary member. The tiny prewar contingent of foreign members reflected a broadening of professionalization more than international political affinity. The 159 prewar members of the society included only five Germans, two Americans, and ten other European participants from beyond France. No foreign scholars published in the Revue up to 1908. Its contents were limited to domestic topics.  

10 The desire to be the predominant national research organization and an ally of the Third Republic made the nature of its membership rather obscure. Officially the Society was to be open only to "erudites and savants who apply the rules of historical methodology to the study of the past." Although the official membership included clergymen, non-academic historians, and even some conservative representatives, its manifesto declared that only university-trained scholars could be recognized as objective scientists, as opposed to amateur authors whose work was "of no scientific value." See Albert Mathiez's report from the meeting of July 1901 in the Revue internationale de l'enseignement 42 (1901): 238. The manifesto of Pierre Caron and Philippe Sagnac attacked conservative notables such as Franz Funck-Brentano and Albert Sorel: L'État actuel des études d'histoire moderne en France (Paris: Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, 1902), 5-6, 23-24, 34, 39-40, 89.  


12 See the list of members in Caron, Société d'histoire moderne, 5-8.  

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Just before the onset of the First World War, however, the Society began to accelerate a new program of professional internationalism. The archivist-historian Charles Schmidt proposed a bibliography in collaboration with the Alliance Française that focused on France's influence on foreign peoples. A joint historical studies committee with the Alliance was established in May 1914 to plan a catalogue of "the expansion of the French culture, ideas and language principally since the sixteenth century." This catalogue threatened to reify historical research into a national paradigm that precluded foreign influence on the construction of "French culture." The program was abandoned in its planning stage at the outbreak of the war, but it reflected an awareness of the possible use of an ideal of national cultural achievement as a political basis for academic exchange.

The First World War forced a fundamental revision of the Society's singular, domestic orientation. Its long-serving general secretary, Professor Léon Samuel Cahen, was most instrumental in promoting its postwar activities. After receiving his doctorate in 1904, Cahen spent his

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13 The project was eventually to include a series of monographs and archival references. See the minutes for the meeting of 10 May 1914 in the Bulletin, 3d ser., 28 (1914): 316-17 and the circular printed in the next issue, pp. 341-43. For the politics of C. Schmidt (1872-1956), a graduate of the Ecole des Chartes who directed research collections at the Archives de Yonne and the Archives Nationales, see Wein, 38-39.

14 Cahen's death in 1945 (from natural causes) during the chaos of the liberation seems to have hindered a proper necrology. An assimilated Jew, he was forced to flee Paris and abandon the Society's office, which German authorities apparently then seized and destroyed. The author has interviewed his surviving granddaughter, Mme Michel de Boissieu. Mme J. Izumo from the Lycée Condorcet kindly provided biographical information from his personal dossier.
career at the Lycées Condorcet and Lakanal, a training school for students entering the grandes écoles, while he served as general secretary and director of the Revue d'histoire moderne from 1909 until 1939. A student of Ernest Lavisse and Charles Seignobos, Cahen was a likable democrat who had eclectic interests in intellectual, institutional, and economic history. He valued "solidity and probity" in historical works of "nuance and of impartiality" that respected popular democracy and recognized "a common trait of a free and modern spirit."¹⁵ Cahen took little notice of American history or the state of Franco-American relations before the war, but after 1918 he maintained friendships with reformers such as Marc Bloch and praised the "New History" in America.¹⁶ His wartime embrace of transatlantic cooperation in new research fields would symbolize the direction and motives of a new internationalism in the Society.

By 1915 Cahen's concern over the possibility of American intervention against the Allied powers prompted him to pen an important survey of German political and cultural influence in the United States. He ruefully contrasted the lack of an ethnically French voting bloc in America against the fact that "twenty million people, or one-quarter of the population, has German blood in its veins."¹⁷ In order to understand the strategic potentialities


¹⁶ See Cahen's review of Arthur Schlesinger's The Rise of the City in Revue d'histoire moderne 10 (1935): 73. Autographed books from Bloch may have reflected Cahen's role as director of the Revue.

¹⁷ Evaluating "Germaness" in America demanded consideration of regional diversity, distinguishing political ideology from pseudo-racial affinities, and appreciating political culture within a modern state. Léon
of overseas opinion, he urged French historians to use ethno-sociological studies of emigration and national culture in a more robust attention to contemporary history. Cahen's treatment of social-cultural emigration history built upon a range of prewar studies of population and public culture that focused on the industrializing society of the United States. Its real importance, however, was to salve fears in Paris about the international isolation of France vis-à-vis a powerful and aggressive German neighbor. 18

To secure a permanent anti-German entente, French political and academic leaders considered American sympathy to be crucial, especially if sponsorship emanated from the cultural elites of the Northeastern establishment. 19 The wartime propaganda effort also established a clear precedent for seeking intellectual cooperation across the Atlantic as the leaders of the Society sought to reconstruct their postwar association. The immediate challenges were formidable. Wartime inflation had dramatically increased the cost of operating the society and publishing its Bulletin. The Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, suspended


18 As one of the most prolific long-term contributors to the Society's Revue and Bulletin, the topical record of Cahen's publication is notable. Prior to 1914, all fourteen of his articles focused on France, almost exclusively during the "age of absolutism" between 1650 and 1790. After 1918, the majority of his contributions addressed modern foreign affairs and scholarship, with special attention to Britain. See the list of authors in Jules Conan, Études d'histoire moderne et contemporaine (Paris: Librairie Hatier, 1952), 11-12.

in 1914, could not be resurrected without the financial approval of its publisher, Rieder and Company.\textsuperscript{20} The collapse of the academic market in 1919, aggravated by wartime losses of younger scholars and senior leaders, left the viability of the Society in doubt.

Cahen responded to the crisis by urging the Society to dedicate itself to a new international basis, especially with Anglo-American scholars who expressed interest in French history and appreciated its republican tradition. As the Society reconvened in June 1919, he argued that although the Ministry of Public Instruction had provided some financial assistance, it was hardly adequate to cover postwar costs.\textsuperscript{21} Indeed, state subventions before 1945 rarely reached ten percent of its operating budget. Cahen claimed that given the inadequate national membership, ministry funds would only arrive through a new range of public activities. He proposed to address this purpose with foreign recruitment "in order to make our Society a center of historical studies and un cercle interallié."\textsuperscript{22}

With the exception of the Marxist historian Albert Mathiez, who desired to maintain the Society's tradition as a small organization of personal debate and critique, Cahen's motion received strong support. At the end of 1919

\textsuperscript{20} Until 1914 its publisher, F. Rieder & Company, and individual directors were responsible for the ownership, operation, and budget of the \textit{Revue}. See Albert Mathiez in the minutes of the meeting for April 1925, \textit{Bulletin}, 5th ser., 4 (1925): 105.

\textsuperscript{21} From 1928 to 1939, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs contributed sums ranging from two to three thousand francs, often designated for international conferences hosted by the Society. The Society reported the highest grant from the Quay d'Orsay in 1929, and it was steadily reduced in the 1930s.

\textsuperscript{22} See the budget reports by the treasurer Albert Girard in the \textit{Bulletin}, 3d ser., 30 (1919): 1 and Cahen's discussion in the \textit{Bulletin}, 4th ser., 1 & 8 (1921 & 1922): 2-3, 141-42.
the Society reported its first "encouraging results" from the capital cities of political allies in Geneva, Warsaw, and Prague, as well as its prewar American members.\textsuperscript{23} Contacts with North America were at first most impressive. Already by 1920, proceedings had turned to contemporary international relations and works on American history.\textsuperscript{24} However, as the communications by the American specialist and future Vichy collaborator Bernard Faÿ demonstrate, French historians were fixated on the foreign receptivity to their own national culture and prestige or on American public perception of the Treaty of Versailles, debt, and war guilt.\textsuperscript{25} Though this Atlantic focus opened new research fields, such as the study of the modern press, the Society viewed experimentation as an ambassador of domestic state concerns.

After Waldo Leland, the Carnegie representative for France and former secretary of the American Historical Association, became a member in 1922, promotion of the Society in the United States rapidly increased. Clearly the Society benefited from the expansion of European history in the United States after the war and the shift of young Americans to the institutional and intellectual history of


France, combined with the inexpensiveness of travel during years of European currency devaluation. By February 1924, Leland's appointment to the Society's governing council seemed to reinforce American prominence and a genuine French interest in the United States.\textsuperscript{26} By 1926, foreign membership rose to a quarter of the total, of which over sixty percent was American.\textsuperscript{27} Except for Belgium, recruitment met little success in Britain and on the Continent. No effort was made to contact professors in

\textsuperscript{26} For Leland's role in the council, see his letter to the University of Chicago historian John U. Nef, Dec. 9, 1946, in Box 3, Folder 4, Nef Papers, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. Leland also reported that the Society had agreed to establish an annual review of American historical writing in the \textit{Bulletin} under the direction of Leland's good friend Georges Weill, of the University of Caen, and Bernard Faÿ, then chargé de cours at Clermont-Ferrand. See Waldo Leland to Albert Girard, 26 Feb. 1924, Box 105, "Société d'histoire moderne," Leland Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. Membership by 1925 was only ten francs (one dollar) or twice that amount to include a subscription of the \textit{Revue}. By 1926, the dollar had risen to 32.25 francs, making the cost of membership literally pocket change.

\textsuperscript{27} As Letaconnoux reported, by 1925 twenty percent of the society's membership was foreign (55:278), seventy percent of whom were American (38:55). See his Annual Report, \textit{Bulletin}, 5th ser., 1 (1925): 4-5. Letaconnoux concluded that the rapid increase in numbers and receipts that far exceeded annual costs reflected "our foreign propaganda and above all to the United States and that we have forced ourselves to interest the European historians in our society." Letaconnoux provided figures for 1926 in the \textit{Bulletin}, 5th ser., 9 (1926): 212. The 319 members now broke down into 149 from the Parisian environs, 94 from the provinces, and 76 foreigners, of whom 46 were American. Membership stabilized in the mid-40s for the rest of the decade due to Leland's self-imposed desire not to overwhelm the Society with new American candidates, as reported to Cahen on 6 March and 27 July 1925, Box 105, Leland Papers. See also his membership list with 43 names in Box 32, "1928."
Germany. Nonetheless, the expanding number of foreign associates was vital to the Society's recovery during the difficult economic conditions of the 1920s.

Internationalization similarly influenced the decision to renew the publication of the society's *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, which held to a narrow national focus before the war. When reborn in 1926 as the *Revue d'histoire moderne*, it claimed to be "a scholarly instance of international collaboration."\(^{28}\) Cahen strove to include the widest range of foreign participants, especially among sympathetic American historians. As late as 1937, the Society worried that the *Revue*, though "well-stocked" with French contributions, remained "insufficient" in its foreign contributions and book reviews. By 1939, the governing council agreed to expand its size from thirty to thirty-six members by adding six positions for foreign scholars. Entire volumes were devoted to the state of historical research in the United States, Britain, and Belgium.\(^{29}\) The

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\(^{29}\) See the *Bulletin*, 8th ser., 15 (1937): 209 and 9th ser., 13 (1939): 2. Issues 32 and 33 of 1938 were dedicated to *Études sur l'histoire de l'Angleterre*; issue 39 of 1939 addressed *Études sur l'histoire de l'expansion portugaise dans le monde*; numbers 42 and 43 in 1940 comprised *Études sur l'histoire de la Belgique*. The final volume was dedicated to Belgian history and Franco-Belgian amity, expressed through a laudatory message by Paul Hymans, minister of the University of Brussels: "Hommage à Henri Pirenne," *Revue d'histoire moderne* 15 (1940): 7-12.
Revue also opened its pages to left-leaning German refugees, and the Society became a site for presentations by the original Annales circle. American contributors, self-described as "old-fashioned Liberals," sought to expand the journal's scope through studies of education, finance, technology, and nationality movements. However, this brand of socio-economic and cultural history remained centered on elites and public policy. Flexibly conceived, it avoided social theory or a "history from below" of common life that challenged mainstream historiography.

The key test of academic objectivity for the Society was its promotion of international conferences. From 1926 until the outbreak of the Second World War, its members sponsored a series of bilateral historical conferences with their counterparts from Italy, Belgium, and Britain. Cahen worked with Alfred Coville, a medievalist who presided

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30 Participants included Hedwig Hintze, G. F. W. Hallgarten, Marc Bloch, Georges Lefebvre, and Camille-Ernest Labrousse. Though a member, Lucien Febvre confided to Georges Espinas that "I have never stepped foot in it [to attend], because the mode of thought and concerns of its directors, Seignobos, Bourgeois, etc. is alien to me – and also because I don't like a certain mediocrity of thought with which it is sometimes too easily content." Febvre to Espinas, 8 July 1934, Papers of Georges Espinas, Archives of the École Normale Supérieure, Bibliothèque des Lettres, Paris.

over the Comité Français des Sciences Historiques, (CFSH), to establish colloquia with partners from the wartime Entente.\textsuperscript{32} Emphasizing the centrality of French academic historians within the western European university community, these events superimposed ideals of cultural-political unity through uncritical assessments of nineteenth-century European liberalism, such as the Franco-Belgian centenary commemoration of the Revolution of 1830.\textsuperscript{33} Aimed at sanctifying cultural and scientific commonality, Franco-Belgian collaboration began in 1926 when the University of Liège invited the historian and rector of the University of Strasbourg, Sébastien Charléty, to mark the "reconquest of Alsace" and to symbolize the brotherhood of "those who spilled their blood for the defense of Law and Liberty." In return, the Society appointed the Belgian medievalist Henri Pirenne as honorary president to validate the post-Armistice participation of over forty Belgian members and to affirm Belgium's "fidelity, strength, and

\textsuperscript{32} The new CFSH was the first society to group historians from all fields in France, although its congresses also included Waldo Leland. See the committee's statutes and list of communications for the inaugural meeting of 21-23 April 1927 in HS III, Box "1922-1927," François Ganshof Papers, University of Ghent Archives; and Olivier Dumoulin, "La Professionnalisation de l'histoire en France (1919-1939)," in Historiens et sociologues aujourd'hui (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1986), 54-55.

\textsuperscript{33} Coville and Cahen planned "an event of an international character" to demonstrate how the revolt in Paris sparked a tide of national movements in Belgium and Poland. See Cahen in Bulletin, 6th ser., 17 (1930): 28 and a memo explaining the conference goals in the dossier "Journée 1830-1930," papers of the CFSH, AJ70/159, Archives nationales, Paris [hereafter AN]. The suppression of the Polish uprising in 1830 by Russian and Prussian troops made the participation of Polish dignitaries a further priority.
tenacity, that today we are able to come together to cherish our common culture.”

As evidenced by its support for an international commission to study means of limiting nationalist propaganda in European textbooks, the Society supported the formal autonomy of historians from state authorities to "assure the respect for scientific truth." Yet because broad political compatibility was essential for arranging the international colloquia, these occasions became problematic when competition replaced mutual esteem between former allies. Coville and Michel Lhéritier, the secretary of the CFSH, were pleased to report that the two Franco-Italian conventions held in 1926 were not "weighed down" by politics or any anti-French sentiment among the Italian hosts. Ten years later, Pierre Renouvin and Coville reported that since the first Italian meeting, the only further contact had been one gathering on Franco-Italian intellectual relations during the Renaissance and the nineteenth century. "The turn of political events" then obliged a deferment of the project until more favorable

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35 See Cahen's comments in the ICHS to study the degree of nationalist rhetoric in European textbooks and the goals to reduce the politicization of historical instruction in the Report of the Assemblée Générale (AG) of 29 Oct. 1932, Papers of the CFSH, AJ70/160, AN.

36 Michel Lhéritier and Alfred Coville, AG Report, 26 Oct. 1926, AJ70/160 AN.
circumstances could arise.\textsuperscript{37} As fascism and communism seemed to gather strength, French historians were less likely to portray their duty as the promotion of international understanding. As Renouvin sadly noted,

As opposed to the foreign orientations of certain countries, we will continue to contribute historical work and follow traditions that are ours: freedom of research, independence of spirit, impartiality. We have had to defend them before, and it is necessary to consider that we will have to defend them again. Certainly, each of us dedicates ourselves, in our sphere of personal action; but it is indispensable that we stand together and are able, each time that it is necessary, to affirm in common our conception of history, not by a doctrinal treatment, but by our example. I believe it is this, more than anything, that justifies, if it was ever necessary, the existence of the Comité français des sciences historiques.\textsuperscript{38}

Throughout the 1930s Cahen and the Society devoted substantial attention to the institutionalization of conferences with British historians and the establishment of more permanent ties to the United States. Attempts to increase the Society's presence in Britain, however, met with meager success. Regular bilateral exchanges with Britain only occurred in 1933.\textsuperscript{39} Meetings suffered from a mutual leeriness, which grew from a wider souring of public relations over issues such as war debt and "Anglo-Saxon" suspicions of French desires for strategic dominance of the Continent. In some cases, residual Burkean interpretations of French republicanism as


revolutionary insurrection and Napoleonic aggression clashed with impressions of Britain as a symbol of rampant commercialism, economic Darwinism, and with residual "anti-Latin"/anti-Catholic antipathy.\textsuperscript{40} While claiming "that historians should widen their outlook by mutual interchanges of opinion and by friendly discussion of related problems," Coville concluded that Franco-British exchange must concentrate on documents, "findings," and critical source evaluation in order to cement the political goal of "friendship, truth, and peace."\textsuperscript{41} By 1936, Renouvín admitted that although sections on modern history were often lively and productive, institutional and political topics of medieval history were rather torpid and "had been weighed down by the need to turn to an interpreter."\textsuperscript{42} Only with the later participation of Bloch, Labrousse, and


\textsuperscript{41} The list of French representatives reflected attention to traditional political history. See Coville, "Avant Propos," \textit{Studies in Anglo-French History during the Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Centuries}, eds. A. Coville and Harold Temperley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), xi-xiv. For example, the 1936 meeting at Oxford was a notable disappointment. Because it drew only twelve British scholars, largely from the LSE and University of London, French attendees perceived a lack of interest among the most powerful dons of Oxford and Cambridge. AG Report, 29 Oct. 1935, AJ70/160 AN.

\textsuperscript{42} See the remarks of Renouvín in his AG Report, 27 Oct. 1936, AJ70/160 AN.
Lefebvre did the conferences become more open to newer studies of social and economic problems. By the Cambridge meeting of 1939, half of the sessions were dedicated to social and economic problems, with the remainder addressing parliamentary and colonial topics as common ground for the two imperial democracies.43

The greatest prize of academic influence, however, was the United States. Based on the previous success with bilateral conferences, Cahen especially hoped for a permanent organizational tie between historians of the two republics. In 1935 he privately raised the possibly of forming a "branch association" of the Society in the United States. Although the plan appears to have been lost with the Cahen papers, Leland's negative response indicates that he considered it inexpedient and believed that Americans would prefer direct relations with the Society itself.44 Instead, Leland offered to aid Cahen by writing the preface for the 1939 volume dedicated to the study of American history in France. He explained the overseas relevance of American history by framing the United States as a product of itinerant Europeans who then created an original civilization, new political forms, and new experiences of socio-economic life. Europeans could employ American history to solve problems of interest on their continent, while European research would interest American historians willing to consider their home country from "other angles of the globe." The Society's program for

43 Even Renouvin praised the CFHS' decision to organize the national conference of 1937 around economic history "to try to reconstitute the average life of the past – the life of peasants, of the bourgeoisie, of workers – this framework where the material interests and forces intertwine, consciously or not, into moral or religious life."
See the AG Report, 27 Oct. 1936 AN.
44 Leland to Cahen, 22 April 1935, Box 105, Leland Papers.
internationalism thus could "eliminate the false [information] in the selection and interpretation of data" and promote intellectual liberty through collaborative research of similar problems by historians drawn from different national backgrounds.\textsuperscript{45}

The Second World War saw the departure of key academic leaders associated with the society: Coville died in 1942, Cahen in 1945, and Leland resigned as Carnegie representative, disheartened by the collapse of community among European scholars. After 1945 socio-economic historians in the Society such as Labrousse and François Crouzet led the efforts to modernize French historical study though international cooperation. Foreign membership soon crested to one-quarter of its complement.\textsuperscript{46} Cosmopolitan historians such as Beatrice Hyslop or Jacques Godechot also continued to promote the progressive character of transatlantic exchange and academic objectivity.

Yet the evidence of the Society's activities seems to suggest that national politics rested at the very core of interwar internationalism. Rather than conceiving of international exchange as a guarantee of disciplinary autonomy, the Society redefined itself as a multinational body in order to promote a general political ideal of the endangered republic. To a certain extent this succeeded. Foreign subscriptions, American scholarship, and ministry subventions invigorated the interwar Society and its journal, even as institutional and intellectual sclerosis marked much of the French historical profession. Yet the


\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Bulletin}, 10th ser., 14 (1949): 2. Of the 539 members by January of 1949, nearly fifty percent were from Paris and only sixteen percent were from the provinces. American representation reached forty, a tepid total considering the overall growth of European and French history in the 1930s and 1940s.

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uneven record of its international agenda suggests that studies of the academic sciences today need to reconsider the relationship of academia and the national paradigm. International exchange is a mere bridge of communication, one that can promote narrow state interests as easily as it can counteract them. The case of the Society appears to suggest instead that the Western professionalization project in history actually employed internationalism to translate scholarship into a strategy for the creation of national alliances.