Suspect Women: The Politics of Exclusion in the French Camp of Rieucros, 1939-1942

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The internment camp of Rieucros operated from January 1939 to February 1942 in the department of Lozère. At the foot of a steep, forested hill, below the camp’s wooden barracks and barbed wire, ran a small river called the Rieucros d’Abaïsse. It flowed into the Lot River in the nearest town of Mende, an ancient and “compact, dove-coloured place of grey spires and slated roofs.”¹ Internees under guard arrived at the train station in Mende from elsewhere in France.² As they made their way to the camp on the outskirts of town, they entered a legal zone of exclusion from both the social body and the judicial processes that governed other types of carceral spaces. The first internees of Rieucros were men of the International Brigades fleeing Spain, along with a small number of other foreign men accused of petty crimes.³ After the European outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, foreign women took the men’s place. Rieucros continued to confine hundreds of “suspicious,” “dangerous,” and “undesirable” women until its closure in February 1942.⁴

The catalyst for the creation of Rieucros came in the first months of 1939 as the Spanish Civil War came to a close. Soon-to-be dictator Francisco Franco’s armies pressed north through Catalonia in January, driving roughly 500,000 exiles to the French border. The prospect of the remnants of a defeated army of leftists, especially anti-capitalist and revolutionary leftists, entering the country amplified French anxieties to a fever pitch. Newspapers gave voice to widespread xenophobia and anti-refugee attitudes. State responses to newcomers shifted from

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2 Sandrine Peyrac, Claire Martin, and Jean-Christophe Labadie, Le camp d'internement de Rieucros, 1939-1942: L'internement, de la République à l'État français (Mende: Archives départementales de la Lozère, Service éducatif, 2008), 48.
3 Ibid, 14.
unwelcoming to punitive. Soon there were 15,000 French troops massed at the border, and newly minted special police forces to monitor the migrant situation. When legislation designed to discourage immigration and efforts to control entry at the border did not succeed, the Third Republic established a network of camps to isolate unwanted newcomers. Rieucros was the first of these camps.

The camp of Rieucros confined and excluded “undesirables” near the apogee of administrative internment in twentieth-century France. Rieucros marked an important shift in the way the state understood political danger. It was a site where French anxieties about leftism, foreignness, and gender—and the admixture of the three that represented a particular threat for pronatalism—crystallized in halting stages in the turbulent 1930s. During the interwar period, the state began to reformulate these categories in relation to changing conceptions of women’s and foreigners’ impact on national security. This generated novel forms of gendered criminalization and punishment. The key turning point came with the creation of an entire category of women that did not have to be accused of a specific crime to pose a political threat to the nation, and an infrastructure to ensure their exclusion from French society. This did not guarantee repression or long-term confinement for all women in these categories, but created the conditions of possibility for a new iteration of social exclusion.

No published scholarly works in the historiography of French internment provide a detailed examination of how Rieucros developed as a legal space that targeted women. Setting aside memoires and historical fiction, there are two published monographs on Rieucros: the first focuses on women’s daily lives in the camp, and the second is a primary source collection and teaching guide. Works that contextualize the camps in terms of men’s internment, even those that briefly discuss Rieucros, should not be assumed to explain the spectrum of gendered preoccupations that guided the transformation of the slippery category of danger during this time, nor the implications of these developments for women. Rieucros was a departure from previous state responses to unruly

6 While Brigitte Maurin Farelle’s 2014 article is one of the first to make use of rich archival sources on Rieucros to probe the broader political implications of the camp, it primarily focuses on the imaginary of a former internee and an artist, not legal structures. Brigitte Maurin Farelle, “L’étrange voyage de Teresa Noce à Rieucros: Regards croisés sur l’enfermement et l’exclusion,” Italies 17/18 (2014): 245-284.
8 Peyrac, et al, Le camp d’internement de Rieucros.
9 For example: Denis Peschanski, La France des camps: L’internement, 1938-1946 (Paris: Gallimard, 2002); Eduardo Pons Prades, Republicanos españoles en la Segunda Guerra
women and an innovation in the gendered dimension of Republican France’s long history of circumscribed legal space. The ideologies at work in Rieucros prefigured the transition to Vichy, and the camp infrastructure itself was seamlessly assimilated as a tool in Petain’s National Revolution.

**From Judicial Incarceration to Administrative Internment**

Notions of feminine danger and punishment underwent important changes during the Third Republic. The ideologies that guided this process manifested in the reasons women were targeted for repression, the method and goals of punishment, and the types of carceral space for women. From the beginning of the Third Republic women were tried and punished for political reasons, as in Rieucros, but not through a pre-emptive, categorical, and administrative process. By the end of the 1930s, however, the figure of the foreigner, which eventually included the foreign woman, came to be seen as a special threat to public order and national security. At this time, the space of the camp emerged as a semi-permanent institution to neutralize this perceived danger.

Foreign and French women of the Paris Commune of 1871 faced sentences for political crimes, ranging from expressing positive views of the Commune, to denouncing policemen loyal to the Versailles government, to participating in the armed insurrection. Sentences included death, hard labor, deportation to the island penal colony of New Caledonia, exile, prison, parole, and fines.

These cases of both French and foreign women’s confrontations with the state challenged gendered notions of political participation in France. Panic over *petroleuses* helped embed the notion that women not only eroded national foundations through morally corrupting acts, but could also burn down sites of power. The state tried Communards for their alleged crimes, rather than persecuting them based on some criminalized aspect of the women’s identity as would later transpire. The accused faced a judicial, rather than administrative, process to determine guilt, even if it sometimes came in the form of a military tribunal.

In the decades following the Commune, France expanded its prison system for women. This system was characterized by a syncretic blend of religious ideals of redemption, traditional notions of rehabilitation through reinforcing domestic femininity, and emergent psycho-medical discourses. These institutions’ modern, gendered theories of incarceration provide helpful reference

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points regarding the ways in which France imagined and dealt with feminine danger. Saint-Lazare, operated by the Sœurs de Marie-Joseph from 1850 until the prison's demolition in the interwar period, became one of France's most infamous prisons for women. The secularizing impetus of the Third Republic did not extend to criminalized women. In addition to having nuns as wardens, the physical space of women's confinement was structured around a central chapel. Seating in the chapel itself was designed to separate the incarcerated by types of crime for ostensibly rehabilitative religious services. The religious character of incarceration groomed women for their role as non-rational, sentimental auxiliaries to male citizens in the gender hierarchy of Third Republican society.

Some vestiges of religious rehabilitation persisted side-by-side with emergent medical discourses on feminine criminality in the Salpêtrière école de réforme, in the period from 1891 to 1916. Salpêtrière was tellingly located in the largest medical complex for women in Paris and directed by its senior doctor, Jules Voisin. Voisin sought to rehabilitate delinquent or disobedient women by combining psychiatry and placement "in appropriate positions as domestics in the city and the countryside." Religion assumed secondary importance to mandatory gendered tasks such as sewing, cleaning, and embroidery, which women performed with strictly scheduled regularity throughout the week. Although it seems that women were not required to attend weekly Mass, their Sunday ritual involved knitting while staff read them a sermon. These theories of redemption and rehabilitation rested on the assumption that the incarcerated would eventually re-enter French society. By the late 1930s, however, large populations of European foreigners arrived in France that the state considered to be inassimilable, requiring a different type of legal space.

The mass internment of so-called undesirables, rather than incarceration, emerged in the broader context of French reactions to mass displacement across Europe in the aftermath of World War I. In the early interwar period, European immigrants were generally welcome in France. The death toll in the First World War had led to a severe labor shortage, so immigrants were critical to keep

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14 Ibid, 276.
industry and agriculture running. Sectors of the pronatalist movement welcomed foreign women whom they considered both assimilable and unlikely to control their births, particularly those from Catholic countries that pronatalists considered as culturally similar. The idea that French women, along with certain privileged newcomers, had a duty to make up for demographic losses to preserve national identity and security had wide purchase, and would later resonate in Pétain’s widely-accepted diagnosis of “too few children, too few arms, too few allies,” after the catastrophic Battle of France. Although French promotion of motherhood was nothing new, during this time women’s reproductive choices took on a more sharply defined political dimension directly related to national security.

Soon after the beginning of France’s economic depression in 1931, attitudes toward foreigners began to shift. Historian Mary Dewhurst Lewis documents patterns of denying residency status to single women presumed to be in search of work during this time in Lyon. French ideals about gender complementarity placed women in the position of dependents, to which many immigrant women could not adhere and meet their basic needs. Resentment over foreign labor competition became entangled with fears of foreign radical agitators as the economic factors that drove immigration in the 1920s were eclipsed by mass exile for political reasons. Furthermore, the leftist, Jewish, and anticlerical women who fled Europe’s rising dictatorships, unlike the previous decade’s wave of economic refugees, perhaps represented a greater threat to the pronatalist goals of producing culturally similar citizens and reproducing normative French gender roles. The demographic and social impact of exiles

19 Camiscioli discusses pronatalists’ promotion of the concept of gender complementarity, which emphasized biological difference and barred full political participation for women. I argue that her evidence also shows an increasing attachment of reproduction to national security that began to regard women as political actors even as they were denied full citizenship rights. Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, 150-159.
21 Lewis shows French anxieties regarding the political activities of foreigners in the 1920s as well, however this became more pronounced in the 1930s. Lewis, *The Boundaries of the Republic*, 43-52, 111-113; Mandel, *In the Aftermath of Genocide*, 41-42.
arriving in France who were targeted for repression by increasingly powerful dictatorships was tremendous and included tens of thousands of women. The Third Republic responded to waves of migration with increasing restrictions on legal residence, made by increasingly extraparliamentary methods.

Xenophobia was prominent in the press, gaining momentum throughout the 1930s. Headlines from the right-wing newspapers characterized the Spanish exile as a “[r]efugee invasion,” and the exiles as an undifferentiated, dangerous mass: “the remains of the Red Army,” “the enormous anarcho-Marxist maw,” “carnivorous beasts of the International,” and “the dregs of the bottom reaches of the prisons.” The French weekly *Gringoire*, associated with the Catholic integral nationalist group *Action française*, proclaimed, “The Army of Crime is in France: What Are You Going to Do About It?” Even the more centrist papers, such as *La Dépêche*, considered the exiles to be dangerous. These attitudes, once at the margins of political discourse, moved to the center of policy and military priorities as the refugee crisis deepened.

Despite the widespread anti-refugee attitudes during this time, the constellation of camps was founded on decree laws, not legislative consensus. Daladier bypassed Parliament with executive decree laws with increasing frequency in the late 1930s. His decrees related to the European exiles were tightly enmeshed with French anxieties that the exiles might be the harbingers of social revolution or plagues, as well as economic scapegoating and deeply rooted xenophobia. Perhaps above all, authorities feared that acceptance of refugees from Europe’s dictatorships would not only jeopardize appeasement efforts, but, as historian Maud Mandel noted, that “the refugees, together with their alleged communist allies, were seeking to drag France into war against Hitler merely to satisfy their personal lust for revenge.” Shaped by these fears regarding the exile question, the twilight years of the Republic were punctuated

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25 Quoted in Stein, *Beyond Death and Exile*, 42.
26 Ibid, 33.
28 Stein, *Beyond Death and Exile*, 45.
30 Mandel, *In the Aftermath of Genocide*, 42.
by accommodation of the expansionist aims or repressive programs of European dictators, and increasingly harsh immigration restrictions on the victims.\textsuperscript{31} France’s reputation shifted from that of a country of asylum to a country of transit.

Denis Peschanski called the twentieth century “the century of camps,” challenging the designation of internment camps as a Vichy phenomenon by exploring their Third Republican roots.\textsuperscript{32} The late 1930s and 1940s saw the proliferation of the camp as a form of exclusion in the Hexagon, with some two hundred sites interning large and small populations deemed undesirable or suspect by the state. However, recent scholarship, such as Miranda Spieler’s study of non-jurors and ex-citizens in French Guiana from 1789 to 1870, demonstrates a long history of circumscribed legal spaces for simultaneous exclusion and confinement on French soil.\textsuperscript{33} Rieucros, like its eighteenth and nineteenth century antecedents in the empire, “did not lie outside the domestic legal order but instead comprised a region of state marked by the suspension of domestic constitutional law.”\textsuperscript{34} These special regions of state proved to be a durable form of boundary enforcement between insiders and outsiders in France.\textsuperscript{35} Rieucros falls within this long, ongoing legal tradition that produced the civilly dead, but marks an important shift in the way the state constituted feminine danger.

\textbf{Three Years in Rieucros}

Daladier established Rieucros by decree on 21 January 1939 to intern men of the International Brigades who sought safety in France, as well as a smaller number of foreign men accused of common law crimes. Residents of Mende were neither informed in advance, nor were they pleased about the construction of the first camp for undesirable foreigners on their doorstep. \textit{Le Temps} of 22 February 1939 reported:

The presence of these suspicious characters at the gates of Mende causes a deep sense of unease amongst the peaceful population who fears the worst harmful effects. There were protests from all

\textsuperscript{31} Maga, "Closing the Door," 424-442.
\textsuperscript{32} Peschanski, \textit{La France des camps}, 17.
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Ibid}, 15.
sides, and elected officials of the township addressed the Prefect in a public letter, protesting an experiment of this kind in a department devoid of police resources and without their prior notice.36

This protest did not reject the camp’s creation on humanitarian grounds. Instead, it built on the watchwords of “danger” and “suspicion,” a different take on the same ill-defined motivations for internment in the first place.

In October 1939 authorities designated Rieucros a women’s camp and transferred the men to the punishment camp of Le Vernet. Although camp conditions differed substantially, Rieucros was to be Vernet’s double for women; the two were under the auspices of the Interior Ministry of the Third Republic while other camps remained under military authority until after the fall of France.37 About a month earlier, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact ignited fears that the anticapitalist left had dubious loyalty to France. These fears that were nourished by backlash against the Popular Front, and further exacerbated by worries that social revolution and civil war would follow the exiles across the Spanish border. The day Germany invaded Poland and two days before France declared war, Parisian police began a concerted effort to round up foreign women, mostly German and Austrian Communists who could be identified as a threat due to their nationality and now, after the Pact, their political orientation. Officials temporarily held these women in La Petite Roquette, a panopticon-inspired prison that housed youth offenders from the 1830s until its conversion into a women’s prison in 1935.38 On 18 September, the Interior Ministry instructed departmental prefects to arrest suspect or dangerous foreign women based on another decree-law presented in terms of national defense in times of war.39 These arrests were administrative and were not subject to normal judicial review, thus providing prefects with tremendous executive power to rid their departments of women they deemed disorderly or threatening based on suspicions alone.

In the middle of the night on 18 October, the first convoy of women left La Petite Roquette for Rieucros. In this same period, officials released members of the extreme right Cagoule to rejoin their military units.40 Together these actions provide another point of reference in the hierarchy of perceived political danger in the late Third Republic. The state demonstrated that it considered the French extreme right and fascist sympathizers, even those tried and convicted of violent

36 “Un camp de concentration en Lozère,” Le Temps, 22 February 1939, 3.
37 Peschanski, La France des camps, 208, 214.
38 Gilzmer, Camps de femmes, 30.
39 Peyrac, et al, Le camp d’internement de Rieucros, 141.
illegal activity, to be more desirable allies than foreign leftists accused of no crime but of dubious national loyalty.

There was a disconnection between how certain sectors of police and civil society assessed the new genre of threat Rieucros would now address. *Le Croix du Lozère*, a conservative, Catholic newspaper that opposed the creation of the camp, reported nonchalantly on Rieucros’ transformation to a women’s camp:

The undesirables of the Rieucros concentration camp have fortunately left us...

They will be replaced in the Rieucros Camp, on the same premises that have been expanded with new barracks, by hundreds of German women who lived in France and were interned because of the war.41

The tone of relief in this article is revealing. According to the author, the state exchanged a relatively small group of foreign Republican men fresh from battle against dictatorship for hundreds of foreign women who might betray France in its war against Germany. The article insinuates that these women were not credible threats to the department like the former internees. It signals a lack of consensus in France about exactly what kind of danger, if any, politically engaged foreign women represented.

On the other hand, some departmental prefects charged with defining the nebulous boundaries of this new notion of danger seemed to enthusiastically carry out their orders to intern “foreign women who were dangerous in terms of public order or suspected threats to national security.”42 The prefects of the Seine and eight southern departments were particularly active during the *drôle de guerre*: Peschanski calculated that before the armistice, 56% of the camp’s population came from these nine departments.43

The language of prefectural correspondence during this period collapsed foreign women into a flat category. Official documents made no distinctions between women from nations with which France was at war, and those from neutral or occupied countries. In the month following the initial national circular, the prefect of Var planned to send as many as 35 suspect foreign women, and wrote to the prefect of Lozère to organize their transportation to Rieucros.44 The prefect of Meuse only sent one Austrian woman,45 the prefect of Deux-Sevres

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41 “À Rieucros,” *La Croix de la Lozère*, 22 October 1939, Archives Départementales de la Lozère, 1 PER 212 1939.
42 “Internment measures,” Reel 1, M11215, page 22. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), RG-43.104M.
44 “Internment measures,” Reel 1, M11215, page 22. USHMM, RG-43.104M.
sent two women, one German and one Spanish, and the prefect of Loiret sent four foreign women of unnamed national origin in Rieucros’ first days as a women’s camp. Departmental prefects characterized all of these women as “suspicious” or a “suspected threat to national security.” The prefect of Somme added the appellation “undesirable” to describe the Austrian woman he sent to Rieucros as a “suspected threat to national security.” Prefects interned women based on notions of “danger” and “suspicion,” but specific dangers or qualified suspicions did not need to be articulated. Those two words, and their cognates, were a touchstone to ideas about European newcomers to France that gained momentum throughout the 1930s.

Other prefects’ patterns of enforcement constructed feminine danger in a different way. The prefect of Ille-et-Vilaine targeted foreign women who had been previously arrested for common law crimes like theft or corruption of a minor and who had violated their prewar deportation orders. The prefect of Dordogne seized the opportunity to transfer three Spanish women from an improvised “refuge” in his department to the camp, writing that they were “undesirable for their bad conduct and indiscipline.” It is a testament to the upper limits of prefects’ executive power to define and intern outsiders that this prefect made no effort to construct “bad conduct and indiscipline” as lawbreaking, or a danger to national security. As a result of differential application, the category of dangerous or suspicious foreign woman encompassed a range of signifiers that included illegal economic activity (often resulting from legal avenues being closed to them), perceived ungovernability, and criminalized left anticapitalist engagement. The lowest common denominator for internment was foreignness and femininity: departmental prefects politicized petty crime and criminalized political engagement as subsets of the disorderly, dangerous étrangère indésirable who was constituted as a threat to national security.

When Nazi armies invaded France, the Third Republic accelerated the rate of internment of women in Rieucros, rather than abandoning the project to redirect prefectural energy toward the country’s rapidly crumbling infrastructures. In the chaotic six weeks of dislocation during the German

46 Ibid, 11.
48 Ibid, 11, 17, 22, 23.
49 Ibid, 18.
50 “Internment measures,” Reel 1, M11215, page 9. USHMM, RG-43.104M.
51 Ibid, 36.
52 Ibid, 61.
53 “Internment measures,” Reel 1, M11215, pages 53, 66. USHMM, RG-43.104M.
54 Ibid, 31, 61.
55 Ibid, 15; “The Rieucros camp: internment measures,” Reel 2, 2W2604, pages 750, 805. USHMM, RG-43.104M.
offensive, from 10 May to 25 June 1940, prefects sent over one hundred women to
Rieucros, and their children under the age of seventeen appear in the documents
as internees for the first time (although there were likely a few children in the
camp earlier). Commenting on what was likely the final convoy under the
Republic before the camp fell under Vichy’s purview, the camp director noted
that 81 women and 41 children were sent to Rieucros for “unknown reasons.”
The presence of these internees with no recorded motive for their arrest upon
their arrival during the mass displacement, fuel shortages, and overfull trains of
the military debacle speaks volumes about some prefects’ prioritization of the
program of exclusion of undesirable foreign women.

Notably absent from surviving documentation of the Republican period
are traces of actual fascist internees. I have only located two cases, of the
hundreds who passed through the gates of the camp, that document the motive
of internment as suspected pro-Hitler sympathies. The first, Liselotte Gottschalk,
was sent in the initial convoy of 18 October 1939 following her arrest “in
connection with Hitlerian militants and a suspected threat to national security.”
Gottschalk seems an unlikely Nazi sympathizer. She was a German-born Jewish
exile who, likely due to the paper trail her internment in Rieucros and subsequent
release to a forced residence created, would later be interned in Drancy, deported,
and killed in Auschwitz. The second woman was the Polish widow Caroline
Lippel née Lange, arrested and interned for “rallying for the Nazi regime” on the
eve of the French defeat. The only available documentation was her secret
transfer record dated 15 June 1940, the day after German forces arrived in Paris,
which seems like futile timing for preventative internment to protect national
security and public order. Furthermore, when the German Kundt Commission
visited the camp on 6 August 1940, after the fall of France, they identified only
three German women eligible for release out of a camp population approaching

USHMM, RG-43.104M.
58 “The Rieucros camp: correspondence, 1950-1957,” Reel 2, 2W1298, page 859. USHMM,
RG-43.104M.
59 “Victime: Madame Liselotte Gottschalk,” Online Archives of the Mémorial de la Shoah,
Paris, accessed 1 September 2016,
http://bdi.memorialdelashoah.org/internet/jsp/core/MmsRedirector.jsp?id=17185&type=VI
CTIM#.
60 “The Rieucros camp: internment measures,” Reel 2, 2W2604, page 808. USHMM, RG-
43.104M.
61 Peyrac, et al, Le camp d'internement de Rieucros, 43.
For a camp supposedly built to neutralize threats to national security in times of war, few, if any, women were friends of the Republic’s fascist enemies. In July 1940, the Third Republic delivered the women and children of Rieucros to the control of Vichy authorities at the peak of the camp’s population: 569 women and 41 children. Under Vichy, authorities began to confine French women for crimes such as theft, prostitution, and black market dealings in increasing numbers. Eventually, French and foreign women were arrested and interned for resistance activities. An early example is Angelita Bettini, a French Communist teenager who police caught distributing anti-Vichy tracts in Toulouse in November 1940. Jeanne Lyotard, another French resistance militant and propagandist, arrived at the camp in the last week of January 1941. The weekly camp report affirmed Lyotard’s capability as a political agitator in comparison to her Italian Communist husband, noting, “she is just as dangerous as him.” Polish resister Dora Kurth arrived the same week as Lyotard, accused of distributing Communist propaganda, pretending to be a doctor, failing to demonstrate a legal livelihood, and having a dubious moral character. The justification for Kurth’s internment reveals the range of criteria that could mark a woman as undesirable. This new configuration of dangerous women revealed a slippage between foreignness, anti-collaboration politics, and perceived moral failings as constituting threats to national security in the context of Petain’s National Revolution. Whereas at the outset of camp operations the primary targets were foreign women, including many on the anticapitalist left, under the Vichy rubric of the “anti-France” common crime took on political overtones and resistance activities set both natives and foreigners in opposition to true Frenchness.

A second significant shift under Vichy was the acceleration of repatriations. Officials organized the first mass repatriations by national group. Twenty-four Spanish women and one child were the first group to be repatriated to Franco’s Spain on 19 August 1940. Five days later, thirteen women and one child from Luxembourg were repatriated and fifty-nine internees were

62 “The Rieucros camp: internment measures, 1939-1944,” Reel 2, 2W2603, page 89. USHMM, RG-43.104M.
63 “The Rieucros camp: internment measures, 1939-1944,” Reel 2, 2W2603, page 84. USHMM, RG-43.104M.
64 Peyrac, et al, Le camp d’internement de Rieucros, 42.
66 “The Rieucros camp: internment measures, 1939-1944,” Reel 2, 2W2603, page 176. USHMM, RG-43.104M.
67 Ibid, 176.
68 Ibid, 176.
69 “The Rieucros camp: internment measures, 1939-1944,” Reel 2, 2W2603, page 90. USHMM, RG-43.104M.
“reclaimed” by German authorities, signaling a different fate than the three said to be “liberated” at the beginning of the month.\textsuperscript{70} Prefects under Vichy continued to send new women and their children to Rieucros almost every week to remove them from French society, while those leaving the camp often faced repatriation, forced residence, or release conditional upon their immigration to another country.\textsuperscript{71} The camp population hovered around 400 women for the remaining year and a half.\textsuperscript{72} Thus, although the camp records show relatively short periods of internment on average, the post-internment trajectories of former internees tell a story of bureaucratic entanglement and repression that extended well beyond the barbed wire of Rieucros.\textsuperscript{73}

This unsettling state of affairs, with new arrivals and departures every week, persisted until officials transferred the entire population to the Brens Camp in February 1942,\textsuperscript{74} citing the disrepair of Rieucros’ facilities.\textsuperscript{75} The decision to move the inmates came at a time when the French State was streamlining its detention facilities and legal codes to more efficiently eliminate undesirables. The closure of Rieucros marked the end of an era of repression through banishment from society and the beginning of Vichy France’s collaboration with the Third Reich’s exterminatory program. Peschanski documents at least 45 Rieucros women who were deported from Brens to the Third Reich’s camps in the east.\textsuperscript{76} This figure indicates a new magnitude of suffering for women whose journey began in Rieucros. No figures are available to calculate the additional number of former internees who were rounded up from forced residences, like Liselotte Gottschalk, or those whose deportation to their dictatorial home countries may have resulted in their imprisonment, starvation, or execution.\textsuperscript{77}

Conclusion

Rieucros connected the Third Republic to the French State through overlapping notions of danger and the development of a circumscribed legal space to isolate suspects through administrative, rather than judicial, channels. The camp’s punitive focus was the criminalized nexus of political engagement,

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid, 91.
\textsuperscript{71} Peschanski, \textit{La France des camps}, 393-394.
\textsuperscript{72} Weekly reports show the camp’s average population during this time, for example: “The Rieucros camp: internment measures, 1939-1944,” Reel 2, 2W2603, pages 107, 124, 145, 165, 224. USHMM, RG-43.104M.
\textsuperscript{73} Peschanski, \textit{La France des camps}, 394-395, 398, 400.
\textsuperscript{74} Located in the department of Tarn, near Toulouse, Brens operated from autumn 1939 to summer 1945.
\textsuperscript{75} “Material related to the creation of the Rieucros camp on 21 January 1939,” Reel 3, 2W2805, pages 46, 49. USHMM, RG-43.104M; See also: Peschanski, \textit{La France des camps}, 391-392.
\textsuperscript{76} Peschanski, \textit{La France des camps}, 394.
\textsuperscript{77} Resina, “Allez Allez!” 133-148.
femininity, and foreignness. In the Third Republic, the state appeared to devote more resources to suppressing fascism’s “first opponents and first victims” than the specter of a fascist Fifth Column. Under Vichy, the idea of “foreignness” was expanded and articulated as the “Anti-France,” which included French women who the state wished to exclude from the national community.

The boundaries of state notions of feminine danger during the lifecycle of Rieucros were rough, complicated, and sometimes haphazard. However, Rieucros reveals a trend towards a xenophobic definition of insiders and outsiders that criminalized foreign leftist women and later “foreignized” French criminal women and résistantes. This subtle move in the legal discourse resonated with the logic of earlier liminal spaces that elided the undesirable categories of foreigner, criminal, and political agitator and made them into “nonpersons” subject to deportation and confinement in Algeria and French Guiana. In order for this legal logic to work, the camp’s repressive measures began to treat some women as independent political actors who posed a threat to national security. This discourse took shape in the administrative channels of the prefects, running counter to the juridical codes at the time that denied women full civic participation. Rieucros provides valuable clues about how new articulations of feminine danger took shape in the interwar and World War II eras, and offers a haunting reminder that the infrastructure of exclusion should be understood as a loaded weapon for future regimes.

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