

Jean Moulin, 1899–1943

Jean Moulin, 1899–1943

The French Resistance and the Republic

Alan Clinton

palgrave



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Contents

<i>List of Plates</i>	viii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>A Note Added in Proof</i>	xii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xiii
1 The Resistance in the Pantheon	1
2 A Republican Upbringing, 1899–1919	10
3 A Jacobin in the Prefectures, 1919–34	19
Left and right in inter-war France	19
Administration and politics after the war, 1919–21	21
Prefects in France – their role and history	22
The ladder of preferment, 1920–5	23
Marriage and divorce, 1926–8	24
The youngest sub-prefect: Albertville, November 1925–January 1930	27
A sub-prefect in Brittany and Paris, February 1930– June 1933	30
Thonon, and Paris, June 1933–June 1934	36
4 Fascism and Anti-Fascism, 1934–6	39
The 6th of February	39
After the storm, February–July 1934	43
Secretary-general of the Somme, Amiens, July 1934–June 1936	45
5 The Popular Front, 1936–8	49
Pacifism and war in France in the 1930s	50
The Popular Front – class conflict and the exercise of power	51
Moulin and the Spanish War	53
The Air Ministry and French rearmament, 1936–40	57
<i>Aviation populaire</i> – flying for all	59
The end of the Popular Front, 1937–8	61

6	The Youngest Prefect, 1938–9	64
	The prefect of Aveyron, April 1938–January 1939	65
	A prefect at Chartres in the shadow of war, February 1939–June 1940	69
7	War and the First Resistance, 1939–40	76
	Living through the phoney war	77
	The fall of France, 10 May–22 June 1940	81
	The invasion seen from Chartres, 10 May–14 June	82
	Confronting the invaders, 15–18 June 1940	86
	A prefect under occupation, June–November 1940	92
8	From Resister to Resistance, 1940–1	100
	‘Doing something’, September 1940–October 1941	101
	The French resistance in the autumn of 1941	106
	The ‘Free French’ before October 1941	109
	Jean Moulin in England, 20 October–31 December 1941	113
	The impact and mission of Monsieur Mercier	121
9	Mission Rex, 1942–3	123
	Falling to earth, 2 January 1942	125
	Meeting the resisters	126
	Creating the institutions of resistance	131
	Broadening the base, April–August 1942	135
	‘Operation Torch’ and its consequences	144
	War and resistance after 11 November 1942	147
10	The National Resistance Council, May 1943	151
	Politics and resistance, December 1942–February 1943	151
	Moulin in London, 14 February–20 March 1943	158
	Compulsory labour and the <i>maquis</i> , 1942–3	161
	Moulin versus Brossolette – a battle for the soul of the resistance	163
	The final steps to unity, March–May 1943	168
	The day of the CNR, 27 May 1943	173
	After 27 May	175
11	The Tragedy of Caluire – and After	177
	The road to Caluire	178
	21 June 1943	182
	Calvary	184
	The resistance after Moulin	186
	A world that might have been, 1944–79?	189

12 A Contested Legacy, 1943–2000	192
One martyr amongst many, 1943–58	193
Moulin as republican icon, 1958–64: Socialist or Gaullist?	196
From resistance leader to national icon, 1963–99	198
Frenay against Moulin – and Daniel Cordier	199
Klaus Barbie, Jacques Vergès and the ‘betrayals’ of the resistance	203
Communist ‘conspiracy’ and the ‘great recruitment’, 1988–93	204
The ‘Vichy syndrome’ and Moulin after sixty years	208
<i>Notes</i>	213
<i>Bibliography</i>	237
<i>Index</i>	255

List of Plates

- 1 Photograph of Jean Moulin, taken by Marcel Bernard, probably in January 1940
- 2 Moulin's father, Antoine (known as 'Antonin') Moulin (1857–1938)
- 3 Moulin's mother, Blanche Pègue (1867–1947)
- 4 Moulin at the age of 9 at Béziers
- 5 Moulin in his uniform as a member of the French army (April 1918)
- 6 Moulin at Valras-plage (1920)
- 7 Moulin with a group of fellow students at Montpellier University (1920)
- 8 Moulin and Pierre Cot at Megève (1935)
- 9 Café life in Montmartre in the 1930s – a sketch by Romanin (alias Jean Moulin)
- 10 A sketch representing unemployment and hunger during the Depression years – by 'Romanin'
- 11 Studio portrait of Moulin (1938)
- 12 Moulin's identity card (September 1939)
- 13 Moulin with his sister Laure in 1939
- 14 Moulin with Colonel von Gütlingen, 27 September 1940
- 15 The verdict at René Hardy's acquittal (8 May 1950)
- 16 Pierre de Bénouville defending Hardy at the second trial in 1950
- 17 The oration of André Malraux, de Gaulle's Minister of Culture, on 19 December 1964, outside the Panthéon before the transfer of Moulin's ashes

All photographs courtesy of Keystone/Corbis/Sygma.

Preface

This book aims to provide a full account in English of the life of Jean Moulin, republican prefect and martyr of the French resistance. I have been convinced of the need for such a work by the great interest, in the English-speaking world, in the French resistance, and the enormous literature in France which is little known beyond its borders. No individual life is easily summarised, and there are special difficulties in constructing the biography of someone who has assumed the status of a secular saint. This was a life and death that has provoked myth-making and controversy, but there is also a necessary story to tell. I have attempted to explain Moulin's background and motivation, and to set out his activities before and during the resistance as clearly and coherently as possible. I am less interested in Moulin's private life than in his public and resistance activities, which I have tried to place in their ideological and political context. This has made it necessary to devote some attention to the history of his reputation, and at times to refer to the more outlandish of the theories about his political attitudes, even where serious scholars have refuted them. I have sketched the pre-history and origins of the resistance, and have generally looked at the 'high politics' of the resistance in which Moulin was involved, rather than to the day-to-day actions of thousands of militants.

I have tried to produce a comprehensive account incorporating the main secondary sources, which have rarely been summarised in this way, even in French. I am grateful to the British Library for providing most of these, and to the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the library of the Institut Français in London for providing more, as well as for the useful reference and periodical materials in the Institute of Historical Research. There are many printed sources and numerous secondary works, including several biographies, some hagiographic, others highly tendentious, on which it is possible to base a straightforward narrative. In addition to these publications, I have also made use of primary sources of various kinds.

It may seem surprising that a study of resistance can be based on public archives, but I have found much of value in a number of major collections. This has included documents from Moulin's life collected by his sister and deposited in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France as the Fonds Laure Moulin. I have also studied materials in the Archives

Nationales, especially the archives of BCRA, and the AJ 72 series collected initially by the body now known as the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent. I have also benefited from the helpful librarians of the Institut, as well as from those at the Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation in Lyons, at the Centre National de Jean Moulin in Bordeaux and at the Memorial Museum in Caen. I am grateful for the help I received from all these institutions, and also at the Public Record Office in London. It is here that I feel I have been able to add something to the numerous French works by studying records little used before for this purpose. Only Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac in his excellent study of *La France Libre* was able to utilise what was then available. I have been able to add to this from the HS series of SOE files, some released as recently as 1999, which tell something of Moulin, the British and the Free French. I am most grateful to Duncan Stuart, the SOE historical adviser at the Foreign Office, for providing me with the bulk of the SOE Personal File on Jean Moulin, and for helping me to locate relevant files in the Public Record Office. There are some private papers, as well as sources on the various positions held by Moulin throughout France, which I did not feel needed additional study. This is because Daniel Cordier extensively reproduces them in his mammoth, though still uncompleted, multi-volume biography, which presents printed versions of every document of any significance up to the end of 1941, and many subsequently, often still in private hands.

In this work I have obtained very limited subvention from any of the academic institutions for which I worked while doing it. I have, however, received help and support from academic colleagues and friends. Professor Rod Kedward was most encouraging about the project, and turned me in the right direction. Dr Martin Thomas gave me the benefit of his knowledge of some important issues, and I also profited from discussion with Professor Douglas Johnson and Dr Hanna Diamond. I received helpful comments when I read a paper on Moulin to the Society for the Study of French History at the University of York in April 1998, especially from Dr Maire Cross of the University of Sheffield. I was also grateful for the hospitality of the Sherborne branch of the Historical Association in October 1998 when I presented another paper.

I was particularly fortunate to meet all the leading historians and witnesses at the *Colloque Jean Moulin* held in the Salle Lamartine of the French National Assembly in June 1999. I am most grateful to the redoubtable Daniel Cordier for answering my questions. His personal knowledge and careful study of everything to do with Jean Moulin is

even more impressive in person than in the pages of his encyclopaedic publications. I was also encouraged by Jean-Pierre Azéma, now the leading French authority on the wartime period, and honoured to meet Madame Brossolette who spoke to me most forcibly about her father. Madame Denise Vernay of the Association Nationale des Anciennes Déportées et Internées de la Résistance also recalled for me much of interest. It was moving to hear members of Moulin's family recall a smiling uncle and cousin, and to listen to Robert Chambeiron and Stéphane Hessel, who still carry with them the echoes of many past battles. It was valuable to hear from a new generation of resistance historians, notably Alya Aglan, Guillaume Piketty and Robert Belot, and I am especially grateful to Sabine Jansen who most helpfully discussed with me her ongoing work on Pierre Cot.

I would also like to thank Jean-Marie Guillon of the Université de Provence for putting me right on some bibliographical issues and for telling me of another *Colloque* held in Béziers in October 1999. The papers were subsequently published in 2000 jointly by the Ville de Béziers and the Presses Universitaires de Perpignan as *Jean Moulin et Son Temps (1899–1943)*, edited by Jean Sagnes. I am also grateful to Christine Levisse-Touzé, Director of the Jean Moulin Museum in Paris for telling me something of Moulin's family papers, to which few people have had access. Valery Rose has also been most helpful in seeing this book through production.

Many others, especially personal friends, have participated in this enterprise over the years. Carol Clinton came with me to many of the Moulin *lieux de memoires* in Saint-Andiol and elsewhere in the French Midi. B. B. Walker was most helpful during visits to Paris, and commented on much of the text. Peter Catto kept me up to date with the literature, and Gillian Brear tracked down an illusive reference. Others have been burdened with the task of reading or commenting on numerous drafts, and helping in other ways. They include Jon Amsden, Alison Appleby, Angela Cornforth, Tom Hawkins, Peter Murray, Sheila Tremlett and Pete Willsman. I am grateful to them all, and though I have accepted the advice of every one, I remain entirely responsible for all remaining errors and interpretations.

Islington, London

Alan Clinton

A Note Added in Proof

While this book was in the press, the papers of the 1999 *Colloque* have been published by Flammarion in 2000 as *Jean Moulin face l'Histoire*, edited by Jean Pierre Azéma. There has also appeared in 2001 an excellent general account based on all the recent literature of the resistance, including its 'high politics', by Julian Jackson in *France: The Dark Years, 1940–44* (Oxford University Press).

List of Abbreviations

(Full details of books and archives are given in the bibliography.)

AJ 72	Second World War papers in the Archives Nationales in Paris
AN	Archives Nationales
BCRA	Bureau Central de Renseignement et d'Action (militaire) – general name for the Free French intelligence and secret action organisation from 1940, though with various other titles
BIP	Bureau d'Information et de Presse (Press and Information Bureau)
CI, CII, CIII	Daniel Cordier (1989–93), <i>Jean Moulin: L'Inconnu au Panthéon</i> , volumes 1, 2 and 3
CAB	Cabinet Papers, Public Record Office
CB	Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac (1996), <i>La France Libre</i>
CC	Daniel Cordier (1999), <i>Jean Moulin: La République des Catacombes</i>
CDL	Ceux de la Libération (People of the Liberation) – northern resistance group
CDR	Ceux de la Résistance (Those who Resist) – northern resistance group
CFTC	Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens (Christian Trade Union Confederation)
CGE	Conseil Général d'Études (General Studies Committee), Resistance think-tank and organiser of post-liberation administration set up by Moulin in October 1942
CGT	Confédération Générale du Travail (Trade Union Confederation)
CND	Confrérie Notre-Dame (Confraternity of Our Lady) – northern resistance network
CNR	Conseil National de Résistance (National Resistance Council), set up in May 1943, though not known by that name until a few months later
COMAC	Comité d'Action Militaire (Military Action Committee of the CNR)
D&M	Charles de Gaulle, <i>Discours et Messages, 1940–1949</i>
FGDS	Fédération de Gauche Démocratique et Socialiste

FLM	Fonds Laure Moulin, collection in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
FNC	French National Committee (September 1941–June 1943) – London-based proto-government led by Charles de Gaulle
FO	Foreign Office papers in the PRO
IHTP	Institut d’Histoire du Temps Présent (Contemporary History Institute), Paris
HS	Special Operations Executive papers, Public Record Office
LM	Laure Moulin (1969), <i>Jean Moulin</i>
LNC	Charles de Gaulle, <i>Lettres, Notes et Carnets, 1905–1970</i>
MIS	British internal intelligence organisation
MI6	British external intelligence organisation
MUR	Mouvements Unis de la Résistance (United Resistance Movements) – grouping of southern resistance organisations from January 1943
NAP	Noyautage des administrations publiques (Public administration network), Resistance organisation of public servants set up by Moulin in October 1942
OCM	Organisation Civile et Militaire (Military and Civilian Organisation) – northern resistance group
PC	Jean Moulin (1947), <i>Premier Combat</i> (Éditions de Minuit)
PF	Jean Moulin’s Personal File supplied by the SOE advisor Mr Duncan Stuart
PCF	Parti Communiste Française (French Communist Party)
PREM	Prime Minister’s papers in the Public Record Office
PRO	Public Record Office, London
RUP	Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix (Universal Assembly for Peace), 1936–9
SFIO	Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière (French Socialist Party), 1906–71
SOE	Special Operations Executive (1940–46) – secret British organisation to co-ordinate sabotage in Europe. Section F was the ‘country section’ for France and Section RF worked with the Free French.
STO	Service de Travail Obligatoire (Compulsory Labour Service), introduced by the Vichy authorities in late 1942 to force people to work in Germany
3AG 2	Archives of BCRA in the Archives Nationales

Note on pseudonyms and noms de guerre

I have generally used real names, whatever the resistance or cover names in the sources. Thus I have written Jean Moulin, rather than Joseph Mercier or Max, even where the record gives something else. Similarly, I have given Frenay rather than Chavence, Delestraint rather than Vidal and so forth. I have made an exception in cases where the given names are generally forgotten, such as for Passy and Lucie and Raymond Aubrac.