



Valérie Devon

Presents

# Philippe Henriot

End 1943 Speech

*At the end of 1943, Philippe Henriot, Propaganda and Information Secretary of State in Lilles, France had a public speech.*

Mr. Regional Governor, Mr. Mayor, Ladies, Gentlemen, My dear friends.

I hope that is it not a Minister that you came to greet today, with so warm and moving sympathy, or at least I hope (...) I would have wanted with all my soul that today's meeting was a complete meeting of French unit.

I regret certain absences.

I regret that some have felt obliged to interpret this event as a political event. I do not represent here any party.

Mandated by both the Chief of State and the Head of Government, I have the honor and pride to represent the official thought of France I regret that some, in other circumstances didn't have the same scrupulousness felt obliged to refrain coming here today, because they do not do politics. (...)

(...) The day he sent his representative to Marshal Petain and no one else, he showed where was the legitimate government of the country.

Always comparing the fate he would have done to whom he would like and always forgetting to compare it with that which would be theirs if this government wasn't there. We just greeted the Marshal, If you have had to defend yourselves, my French compatriots, in the aftermath of a defeat in which everyone had lost his mind, you who have secretly, or openly stood against the government policy and against the man who was for a long time, not only your friend, but your spokesman, and I am telling you, let's see, so, who today would detain the truth, since I am, as the member of the government, a kind of traitor and a sold out? To whom should we speak to think the way one must think? To whom do you turn to yourselves?

But the men we fought together, the men that for so many years we have denounced as if preparing France to disaster, men who have indeed prepared it, and accomplished it. By what kind of incredible spell did they become today your teachers and masters? And you, you imagine, that treason would thus have changed camp.

But, look over their names.

Remember: Pierre Toth Vincent Auriol, Pierre Bloch, André Marty, Fernand Grenier. Here are the men who are now in Alger, these are the men who are now your patriotism teachers. These are the men to whom you hang up to, these are the men from whom you expect salvation, while you dare pretend, that those since three years desperately attempting to defend you, and to save you in spite of yourselves, and against you, became it seems, traitors to the French national cause.

On what is it based? The two French propaganda pillars are two words: one of which, is from the Chief of State and the other from the Chief of Government, That from the Chief of State, that I certainly quoted to you last year because I carry it on me like a last rites, There was far too little correspondence, between French public opinion, and instructions of Chiefs of government and of the State is that the habits of French democracy had taught in favor of corrupted electoral practices that the supreme ability and the supreme caution it's to never take part. It's that the French had lost even the courage to choose that has never been more essential to the present time and that it is brought into contact with a need to choose, they were guided not on the high grounds of national interest, but based on low probability calculations.

To that, do you imagine they give me the change, the Gaullists, the Anglophiles, the Americanophilia? But, if there is suddenly a brilliant German victory and we will have to refuse people.

The French who took position thought they were being asked to play poker or to play racing. They said to themselves: *"Attention, before foolishly choosing a side let's choose well the winner's camp"*

There are people that never end wars in the camp where they started, unless having time to betray at least twice.

And we will see yet further returns Take sides boldly some French understood it, some young French understood it, who voluntarily left everything behind, and abandoned everything. to go serve on distant fronts a cause more sacred for them than their tranquility, their life, and I could not read without being overwhelmed with emotion (...)

(...) It happened to me sometimes, to assist during a somewhat familiar conversation, to the question that some visitors asked him, it suffice to obey to your sensitivity reflexes your pride was bleeding, you thought it was your patriotism, your vanity was hurt, you thought it was your dignity, to come and offer expiation of defeat you thought this man was doing this by an indescribable feeling of personal interests, calculations or to fulfill some sort of extravagant ambition, but don't you think that it's enough to make that judgment to condemn yourselves, for you to realize that you've reasoned in reverse common sense?

But, look what is going on everywhere, look at the Polish-Soviet conflict, this seems far but it is an ordeal, and it is a permanent ordeal that is before your eyes. Why did we go to war?

Why Mr. Biddle in Warsaw and Mr. Bullitt in Paris did they precipitated, with both of their shoulders one in Poland, and in the other France, in an absurd conflict that was lost in advance as stated by the Marshal?

Why that? Because one shouldn't have, in the name of law, in the name of equity, touched the borders of 1939 in Poland.

And today, today, that Mr. Stalin declares: *"1939 borders? Don't know. What a question! I do not like it to be discussed during international conferences It's a problem which concerns myself only."*

And this week in the House of Municipalities, a Conservative Member of Parliament asked: *"But where are we, us English, in our commitments? Commitments taken by Churchill on September 3, 1940; Commitments renewed by Mr. Eden on July 30, 1941; Commitments renewed with General [Wladyslaw] Sikorski. What is our position now?"* And Mr. Eden greatly embarrassed said: *"On behalf of Mr. Winston Churchill I declare that, our position has not changed."*

How come it didn't changed? Why since Tehran, Mr. Churchill has not yet dared to speak? How come the Soviets answered to Mr. Roosevelt, who was offering his mediation: *"The question is not yet ripe."* When will it be ripe?!

I will tell you: It will be ripe when the communist polish government that Mr. Stalin prepares in Moscow, will be invested by its new duties.

If there was some compromise or an Allied victory you would be, WE would be all, reduced to the most awful slavery. You have one hope left, I know, to not have to surrender, it is to wait a *"compromise peace"*, as you say it.

You say: *"Yes, I see it like this, I feel like... it's gone be over,"* Then, depending on the information you have, it will be a compromise peace between Hitler and Stalin or else between Hitler and Roosevelt, or between Hitler and Churchill, Finally, you have on this a certain amount of combinations, interchangeable.

You know what is a *"compromise peace"*?

It is one in which two opponents tired of fighting realize that after all they could perhaps work out without not take anything to each other and by paying themselves only on countries that are already on the ground.

As for us, we had what the winner left us at the request of the Marshal. We had our colonies, we had our fleet, we had an army, If we have nothing left on all of this, Are you gonna blame the winner for ti? Is it him who robbed it from us?

But you have delivered from your own hands to people who saw you as allies and liberators, everything you had left, so now, no need to go look at yourself in the mirror when you wake up to find yourself beautiful and intelligent. Because, you will just see the face of Sganarelle or George Dandin. Because, you will suddenly realize that you have exactly played the role of this good bourgeois Dorgon, which remained the Tartüff in his home until the day the latter told him: *"The house is mine, this is for you to leave."* And you will notice like I may have

told you in April, but it's just in case you forgot the message, that there is nothing more dangerous to act like coquettes, when one no longer have endows. (...)

(...) to tell you, I was with you in the glory days, but, I stay with you in the dark days, and it's him that you abandoned.

We carry the weight of defeat, why not wear it? With satisfaction to say to ourselves that at least we are paying our ransom. Are we going constantly rely on others? Are we just going to watch for the foreigner? You told us, I repeat it to you, I said it in Lilles I beg you to remember, to anchor my formula in your minds, and in your hearts, we are being told that we are not patriots because we accept the policy of collaboration with Germany, because we think that there is there an indispensable European cooperation, we are told that we are not patriots, we who accept the fact of defeat, who have our heart bruised as well, and as tore as yours! And intend to start from there bravely, to make the necessary efforts, and climb up with french methods, under French leadership, to insure a French renewal, and it's YOU who say that we are not patriots?! You who have lost so much faith in your homeland, that you only rely on the foreigner to bring back what it has lost. (...)

(...) That if you have been until now slow, you can no longer delay, to make that choice that the Marshal told you about. You must understand that life is not neutral. You must understand that we must get out from ones torpor.

The Marshal one day said: with a melancholy smile in my presence: *"The French reproach me to swallow snakes, it's true that I swallowed a lot, and I do not even have the consolation myself to explain, that every time I resolve myself to it, it's to spare them greatest evils. That I do not even have the opportunity to tell them, then judge better, judge more properly."*

In a devastated France, but where so many resurrection signs occur, the very difficulty of your task gives value to the least of your efforts Don't be spectators, be really actors in all actions of your life by the courage with which you accept the ordeal as a ransom.

Do you recall this French Knight, that the English captured, and whom it was said that there was not a women in France who didn't spun his distaff, to pay her ransom. It's France that is captive today. Who among you my dear friends, would leave to others the task of spinning his distaff to pay its ransom?