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## **A powerful political platform: françoise giroud and *l'express* in a cold war climate**

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### **Abstract**

Founded in 1953 by Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber and Françoise Giroud, *L'Express* was a politically committed outlet predominantly led by Giroud's strong editorial direction until its rebranding in 1964 along the lines of *Time* magazine. Its goals were clear: to encourage modernization in French cultural and economic life, to support Pierre Mendès France and to oppose the war in Indochina. This article investigates Giroud's vision of the press, her politics and her journalistic dialogue with other significant actors at a complex and pivotal juncture in French Cold War history. Giroud opened up the columns of *L'Express* to a diverse range of leading writers and intellectuals, even to those in disagreement with the publication, as the case study of Jean-Paul Sartre highlighted here shows. In so doing, Giroud's *L'Express* constituted a singularly powerful press platform in Cold War France.

For Kristin Ross, the “ideal couple” of Giroud and Servan-Schreiber at the helm of *L'Express* echoed the pairing of Sartre and Beauvoir;<sup>1</sup> yet Giroud and Servan-Schreiber were a duo with a different outlook, focused on economic development and the modernization of French society along American lines. The self-styled ‘gens de maintenant’<sup>2</sup> therefore used *L'Express* as a platform to wake up ‘la France [qui] dort’<sup>3</sup> and press their programme of liberal, capitalist modernization and decolonization and, as Pierre Mendès France was the politician connected with these two aims, they channelled their energies into his election as Président du Conseil.

As Edward Welch notes, it was Giroud’s view that *L'Express* constituted ‘a groupe de gens qui voulaient de toutes leurs forces faire “décoller” la France’<sup>4</sup>. This is a direct reference to the US Cold War economics of W. W. Rostow,<sup>5</sup> with ‘décoller’ equating to ‘take off’ which was a key term in Rostow’s theory of a five-stage process of modernization, then highly popular among advocates of liberal capitalist development. *L'Express* placed their hopes in Mendès France as a means to deliver their desired goal of an opened-up liberal market economy. *L'Express* settled on Mendès France as he was broadly sympathetic to a the creation of a mass consumer economy even if he was at heart a believer in state regulation and planning and in fact at some distance from the liberal economics espoused by Rostow and other Anglo-American economists. This was a paradox highlighted by Giroud herself, deeming him to be a ‘planificateur, mais partisan résolu de l’économie de marché, autoritaire

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<sup>1</sup> K. Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), 144.

<sup>2</sup> The front cover of the second anniversary issue incorporated a quotation by Molière, ‘Les anciens, monsieur, sont les anciens, et nous sommes les gens de maintenant’, *L'Express*, 14 May 1955, 1.

<sup>3</sup> The phrase used on the front cover on 30 April 1955.

<sup>4</sup> Giroud, *Si je mens*, 142 cited by E. Welch in ‘Commitment, Commercialism and the Dawning of Image Culture: The First Years of *L'Express*’, *Web Journal of French Media Studies*, 4 (2001).  
<http://wjfms.ncl.ac.uk/express.htm>

<sup>5</sup> See W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (New York, 1991 [1960]), 12.

mais démocrate, libéral et fermement attaché aux formes parlementaires dont il eût aimé qu'elles fonctionnent à l'anglaise, vigoureusement hostile au communisme'.<sup>6</sup>

The desire to see Mendès France succeed in these two interrelated goals of economic modernization and decolonization galvanized Françoise Giroud at *L'Express*. Complex and at times contradictory, she cuts a polemical figure<sup>7</sup> whose editorial policy and writings played an important role in securing greater rights for others in the context of her contribution to Cold War French cultural life, an era which Luc Boltanski has identified as 'somewhat forgotten or repressed, the period from the Liberation to the beginning of the 1960s'.<sup>8</sup> Giroud started life as France Gourджи in Switzerland in 1916, later reworking her Turkish father's surname. Brought up in France, Giroud experienced a difficult adolescence and left school at fourteen to enter secretarial college.<sup>9</sup> Collaborative scriptwriting provided Giroud with the initial impetus for her writing career and she worked in a scriptwriter capacity with film directors on a number of films including *La Grande Illusion* with Jean Renoir. Giroud then had fiction published in regional newspapers during the Second World War. *France-Dimanche* published a series of her society portraits, the idea for which was inspired by *The New Yorker* magazine. As a result of the success of these works, Giroud was invited to contribute to the new women's magazine *Elle* with Hélène and Philippe Lazareff in the immediate post-war period and soon became its editor.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 159.

<sup>7</sup> Françoise Giroud courted controversy by rejecting the notion that she was a feminist, a statement likely to attract opprobrium as Secrétaire d'état à la condition féminine. See F. Giroud, *Si je mens* (Paris, 1972), 72.

<sup>3</sup> L. Boltanski, 'Visions of American Management in Post-War France', *Theory and Society*, 12 (1983), 375-403, 375.

<sup>9</sup> C. Ockrent states that Giroud was born in Geneva in *Françoise Giroud: Une ambition française* (Paris, 2003), 40 while L. Adler gives her birthplace as Lausanne in *Françoise* (Paris, 2011), 24. Giroud's sister was deported and Giroud herself was arrested by the Nazis in 1944. For more on Giroud's wartime experiences see R.L. Ramsay, 'Françoise Giroud: Rewriting Maternal Legacies and Paternal Authority', in *French Women in Politics: Writing Power, Paternal Legitimization and Maternal Legacies* (Oxford, 2003), 225-251, 236. As Emmanuelle Ménage's 2015 television documentary *Un jour, un destin* contends, Giroud was reluctant to explore her Jewish origins.

It was while at *Elle* that she wrote a series of articles on women's issues, including an exhortation to French women to exercise their newly acquired right to vote.<sup>10</sup> In 1953, she left the security of *Elle* Magazine to co-found the political weekly *L'Express* with Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber with whom, although he was married to writer Madeleine Chapsal, Giroud also established a romantic relationship. Giroud remained almost continuously for twenty years at *L'Express* save for a brief hiatus starting on 12 May 1960, when the non-professional relationship between Giroud and Servan-Schreiber broke down, until her return on 8 June 1961.<sup>11</sup> She finally ended her link with *L'Express* in 1974 when, in an extension of the commitment she had exhibited in its pages, she entered the mainstream political arena.

Throughout her career as editor and author of over a thousand articles, Giroud had made her commitment to advancing the position of women in French society apparent; she had advocated women's gaining independence from men economically via their professional development and had promoted the right of women to determine the fate of their own bodies in matters of contraception and abortion. Taking the opportunity to further women's position in French society, Giroud accepted President Giscard d'Estaing's invitation to become the first minister for women's rights as Secrétaire d'état à la condition féminine despite her political allegiance to the defeated Socialist candidate, François Mitterrand. She departed her post in 1976 for the more influential, better resourced position as Ministre de la culture which she left a year later. Although she subsequently became involved in Servan-Schreiber's Radical party, acting at its vice-president from 1977-1979,<sup>12</sup> Giroud realized that she was at her most effective when using her pen as her principal way of speaking out as she had done at *L'Express*.

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<sup>10</sup> See C. Duchon, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France 1944-1968* (London, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> See J. Duquesne, *Françoise Giroud: une plume engagée à L'Express* (Paris, 2013), 60-61.

<sup>12</sup> For more on Giroud's political career see R.L. Ramsay, *French Women in Politics*, 225-251.

Giroud's editorials often reflected the voice of a younger generation epitomized by the *nouvelle vague* phenomenon, an epithet coined via the *L'Express* survey<sup>13</sup> which sought the opinions of this new generation. By tuning into the zeitgeist in this way, Giroud undoubtedly became a key actor in the post-war cultural landscape of France; evidence of the recognition of her role can be found in her presence in Jacques Julliard and Michel Winock's *Dictionnaire des intellectuels*, where she is one of the few women (only around forty of the thousand entries are women) and her involvement at *L'Express* is seen by the editors of this intellectual Who's Who as a significant factor in her inclusion,<sup>14</sup> pointing toward a growing acceptance of a specific form of a more popular, magazine journalism as a legitimate mechanism by which to intervene in public affairs and, tellingly, to a changing perception of the identity of the intellectual her/himself whereby professional journalists could come to fulfil these same functions as moral guide and arbiter of public debate.

The key role played by *L'Express* in Cold War France points to the changing nature of the channels open to public intellectuals in a post-war climate, calling to mind the analysis offered by Régis Debray in *Le Pouvoir intellectuel en France*.<sup>15</sup> In this text Debray identified a three phase evolution from the academic milieu to the journal (with key examples being *Les Temps modernes*<sup>16</sup> or Emmanuel Mounier's *Esprit*<sup>17</sup>), finally followed by the domination of the media cycle in the age of radio, television and, by extension, to which we can now add the internet and social media. Although Niilo Kauppi critiques this approach as an 'overly simplistic and polemical vision of these changes',<sup>18</sup> Debray's proposal is still useful

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<sup>13</sup> The initial 24 questions in association with l'I.F.O.P. were launched on 3 Oct 1957, 18-1. Interim findings were published such as "Nouvelle Vague" Français, Que voulez-vous? 17 Oct., 9-11 and 'Les Femmes parlent', 24 Oct., 29-31 regularly until Christmas 1957 when the survey was brought to a close. Giroud took a personal interest in these individual testimonies because 'c'est au coeur que les réponses frappent d'abord', *L'Express*, 24 October, 1957, 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Dictionnaire des intellectuels*, ed. J. Julliard and M. Winock, (Paris, 1996), 648.

<sup>15</sup> R. Debray, *Le Pouvoir intellectuel en France* (Paris, 1979).

<sup>16</sup> Julliard and Winock, *Dictionnaire des intellectuels*, 1100-1102.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 448-450.

<sup>18</sup> N. Kauppi, *French Intellectual Nobility: Institutional and Symbolic Transformations in the Post-Sartrean Era* (Albany, 1996), 175.

inasmuch as he draws our attention to the transformation of the methods available to writers and intellectuals to make interventions in the public sphere in the twentieth century.

Aware of this evolution, both Giroud and Sartre in their own ways recognised the growing importance of the journalist and accord artistic value to journalistic production, pointing to an increased valorisation in the literary qualities of the written press. Indeed, Giroud endorses Sartre's view announced in *Les Temps modernes* of 1945 that 'le reportage fait partie des genres littéraires et qu'il peut devenir un des plus importants d'entre eux'.<sup>19</sup> In his well-known defence of 'littérature engagée', *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*,<sup>20</sup> Sartre emphasises the importance of journalism and criticises the abstract poet for denying the fundamental human condition, reminding us that, put simply, a writer is a speaker: 'Un écrivain c'est un parleur, il désigne, démontre, ordonne, refuse, interpelle, supplie, insulte, persuade, insinue.'<sup>21</sup> Through his insistence on the equation between words and action ('parler c'est agir'),<sup>22</sup> Sartre's view on the functionality of language resembles Giroud's pronouncements: she too values plain, concise prose, and its potential to make an impact in the real world noting: 'L'écriture m'a été une arme de combat.'<sup>23</sup> This was true of writing in *L'Express*, where, under Giroud's inclusive editorial policy, established writers and journalists such as Mauriac, Malraux and Camus, as well as Sartre, came together in its columns to speak out on pressing issues of the day, embodying a range of positions from conservative Gaullism to several hues of Socialism.

## II

*L'Express* came into being principally because Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber was keen to establish his own vehicle to set out plainly his support for the Radical Party and its leader, Mendès France, as a way to bring about modernization and decolonization and had already

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<sup>19</sup> J-P Sartre in *Les Temps modernes*, 1 Oct 1945, quoted in Giroud, *Profession journaliste*, (Paris, 2001), 113.

<sup>20</sup> J-P Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature* (Paris, 1948).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

sampled journalism through his political editorials in *Le Monde* in 1948 and subsequently at *Paris-Presse*. Indeed, Servan-Schreiber came from journalistic stock as his father and uncle, Emile and Robert, were involved in a family concern, *Les Echos*, born in 1903, ‘un journal destiné aux exportateurs’,<sup>24</sup> according to Siritzky and Roth. Securing funding for Servan-Schreiber’s own outlet was fraught with difficulties and, after a series of disappointments, he decided to turn to his family for assistance which allowed the birth of *L’Express* in the form of a regular weekend supplement to *Les Echos* in February 1953. Following the success of the fledgling *L’Express*, by 16<sup>th</sup> May the same year, it went on to become a separate entity in its own right. By this point Giroud had grown frustrated at the limits of her portraits of the ‘tout-Paris’ and records her relish at the opportunity to join Servan-Schreiber’s enterprise and ‘fonder l’hebdomadaire que je voudrais lire si j’étais acheteur’<sup>25</sup>, swapping the documenting of the exploits of stars and celebrities such as the actress Line Renaud and the actor and singer Tino Rossi in favour of reflecting on the merits of politicians such as Pierre Mendès France and François Mitterrand. Along with rédacteur en chef Pierre Viansson-Ponté, Giroud was converted to the Mendès France cause by Servan-Schreiber and soon agreed that there was a need for a paper which backed his objectives, perceiving on the part of the mainstream press, as Eric Roussel puts it, ‘un silence absolu sur les propos de Mendès France qui lui ont paru si percutants et audacieux’.<sup>26</sup>

*L’Express* became the standard-bearer for Mendès France who had become France’s youngest député at the age of twenty-five in 1932 before going on to serve in Léon Blum’s second government in 1938 and encompassing a brief spell in De Gaulle’s immediate post-war administration in 1945. A marginal figure in many ways, Mendès France took on the inauspicious task of regenerating the fortunes of the Radical Party created in 1901 which

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<sup>23</sup> Giroud, *Profession journaliste*, 69.

<sup>24</sup> S. Siritzky and F. Roth, *Le Roman de l’Express 1953-1978*, (Paris, 1979), 11.

<sup>25</sup> F. Giroud, *Histoire d’une femme libre*, (Paris, 2013), 158.

<sup>26</sup> E. Roussel, *La Politique soumise à l’intelligence. Correspondances croisées (1953-1981)*, (Paris, 2011), 15.

foundered as did many others in the events of the Second World War. Not radical in any revolutionary sense, the party instead encompassed a loose coalition of disparate socialists, centrists and liberals, but whose importance was indisputable because, as Francis de Tarr notes, ‘radicals headed ten of the twenty-one governments that were formed during the Fourth Republic; they participated in all of them.’<sup>27</sup> Unsurprisingly then, Mendès France attracted support from a varied group including those, as Vincent Duclert delineates, such as: ‘Des intellectuels catholiques d’*Esprit* et de *Témoignage chrétien*, des syndicalistes de la CFTC, des membres de Jeune République, les fondateurs de *L’Express*’<sup>28</sup> because ‘la reprise du main du parti radical, le choix de l’alliance à gauche et le crédit personnel de Mendès-France dans l’opinion font de ce dernier l’homme clé du Front Républicain qui se constitue avec la SFIO de Guy Mollet, l’UDSR de François Mitterrand et les Républicains sociaux de Jacques Chaban-Delmas’.<sup>29</sup>

*L’Express* then became the natural home for these political tendencies because as Giroud states: ‘[L]e journal a été le premier à allier ce qu’on pourrait appeler une doctrine, si ce mot n’évoquait pas quelque chose de trop rigide, à la technique journaliste pour la rendre vivante et sensible, et à l’homme politique qui pouvait alors l’incarner’.<sup>30</sup> This backing can be seen by the first issue which included a lengthy interview with their champion, ‘La France peut supporter la vérité’<sup>31</sup> where Mendès France argued that the ‘vérité fondamentale’<sup>32</sup> meant acknowledging France’s inability to finance an empire and should instead embrace decolonization in order to begin economic reconstruction: ‘c’est seulement après un redressement intérieur vigoureux, un emploi nouveau et efficace de nos propres ressources

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<sup>27</sup> F. de Tarr, *The French Radical Party: from Herriot to Mendès-France* (London, 1961), xiii. De Tarr underscores the heterogeneity of the Radical Party by distinguishing five strands under its umbrella: radicaux classiques, radicaux de gauche, néo-radicaux, radicaux de gestion and mendésistes, xv.

<sup>28</sup> V. Duclert, ‘Les mendésistes’ in *Histoire des gauches en France*, ed. G. Candar and J.J. Becker, (Paris, 2004), 161-178, 161.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 167.

<sup>30</sup> F. Giroud, *Histoire d’une femme libre*, 194.

<sup>31</sup> *L’Express*, 16 May 1953, 6.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*.



que la France retrouvera une position internationale. CE N'EST PAS SUR DES CONFERENCES DIPLOMATIQUES, MAIS SUR LA VIGUEUR ECONOMIQUE QUE L'ON FAIT UNE GRANDE NATION.'<sup>33</sup>

Echoing these sentiments, the first issue of *L'Express* spelled out the philosophy and political position in the turbulent times of the Fourth Republic by way of a mini-manifesto offering 'plus de remèdes de détail'.<sup>34</sup> First and foremost is the emphasis placed on the economy: 'notre redressement économique n'est possible qu'avec une politique étrangère cohérente. Notre influence internationale dépendra de notre puissance économique. Tout se tient'.<sup>35</sup> The imperative to call time on military operations in Indochina figures next as 'la situation là-bas est moins mauvaise qu'elle ne le sera l'année prochaine'<sup>36</sup> and goes hand in hand with the next point on the *L'Express* manifesto: 'réduire le budget militaire'. Lastly, *L'Express* delineates three key goals for France: 'modernisation de l'industrie, logements nouveaux, investissements massifs en Afrique.'<sup>37</sup> *L'Express* was a timely creation, a weekly which would lend support to Mendès France and in the process give voice to outspoken influential intellectuals such as Sartre, Camus and Mauriac, thereby drawing upon a long-established tradition of denunciation epitomized by the Dreyfus Affair, as the first editorial confirms: 'Ainsi nous avons commencé à dénoncer les mensonges officiels sur l'Indochine et à remuer un peu le marécage qui se cache derrière.'<sup>38</sup>

Giroud's modernizing vision also applied to her discussions of the roles of women in French society. She undoubtedly thought of *L'Express* as the 'véhicule d'un combat',<sup>39</sup> a modernizing, anti-colonial combat in contrast to *Elle*. Inspired by American developments, *Elle* was in many ways an inherently conservative periodical, despite its emphasis on

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid (original emphasis).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

modernity and new technologies, in terms of its outlook on the role of women in the home, as Susan Weiner outlines: ‘But within the cheeriness and self-sufficiency of female modernity lay an Eternal Feminine, in which woman only existed in that she could be relationally defined.’<sup>40</sup> *Elle* was then an important step in promoting women in the public sphere through the workplace but all the while remained located firmly in a traditional paradigm of marriage and household. At *Elle*, Giroud’s imperatives ranged from enjoining women to bathe regularly and cook economically to entreating them to vote.<sup>41</sup> Her experience in this domain was subsequently carried over to *L’Express* through her introduction there of a ‘page au féminin, Madame’ on 20 March 1954<sup>42</sup> which, written by Servan-Schrieber’s sister and *L’Express* staffer, Christiane Collange,<sup>43</sup> similarly offered counsel on practical matters, urging women for example that ‘même une faible femme a la force de réparer un interrupteur’.<sup>44</sup> Likewise, its regular recipe section offered up timesaving ways of concocting wholesome favourites such as ‘les potages express’, given that ‘les potages en sachets sont une innovation bien commode pour celles qui n’ont pas le temps d’éplucher des légumes, ou qui rentrent trop tard du bureau pour entreprendre de faire de la cuisine’.<sup>45</sup>

Yet Giroud also used *L’Express* as a means to tackle more wide ranging existential questions affecting women. Always keen to embrace innovative practices, the early *L’Express* marked itself out by the inclusion of a forum, ‘une nouvelle rubrique dans la presse

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<sup>39</sup> Giroud, *Leçons particulières*, 79.

<sup>40</sup> S. Weiner, ‘Two Modernities: From *Elle* to *Mademoiselle*. Women’s Magazines in Postwar France’, *Contemporary European History*, 8 (1999), 395-409, 398.

<sup>41</sup> ‘J’avais quelques idées fixes, comme d’encourager les femmes à se laver’ in *Profession journaliste*, 52. See Weiner op.cit., 396-9 and M. Allison, ‘*Elle* Magazine: From Post-war Utopias to Those of the New Millennium’ in *Impossible Space. Explorations of Utopia in French Writing*, ed. A. Kershaw, H. Stafford and P. Moores (Glasgow, 2004), 237-64.

<sup>42</sup> In view of the success of this innovation, the space given over to its *féminin* section increased to two pages in the following issue on 27 March 1954, 14-5 and men were not neglected either. The following year saw the birth of the weekly ‘page au masculin’ with features on topics such as motoring and regular adverts for made to measure suits and the trouser press. See *L’Express*, 7 May 1955, 17 for example.

<sup>43</sup> See Duquesne, *Françoise Giroud: une plume engagée à L’Express*, 41.

<sup>44</sup> *L’Express*, 22 Jan. 1955, 11.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. For further analysis of the increasing commercialism of *L’Express* and its women’s pages see E. Welch, op.cit.

française'<sup>46</sup> on 20 March 1954 whereby readers sent in questions on a number of subjects such as 'La France peut-elle avoir une bombe A ?'<sup>47</sup> for consideration by the *Express* team and their invited guests, usually politicians in the Mendès France camp. In response to a query submitted by a Marie Moureil from Le Havre in January 1955, 'Les femmes ont-elles le droit d'être libres?',<sup>48</sup> Giroud uses the format to investigate the place of women in contemporary French society. Via her response, Giroud engages with Simone de Beauvoir's writings, deeming them 'explosifs', because 'la femme peut n'accorder pas plus de place dans sa vie aux hommes que les hommes n'en accordent aux femmes, qu'elle peut construire sa vie non pas en fonction des hommes mais avec les hommes.'<sup>49</sup> While Giroud warns against a simplistic reading which accords undue emphasis on the 'liberté de disposer de son corps',<sup>50</sup> she foresees a positive outlook, where 'un temps viendra où les hommes ne seront plus misogynes, où les femmes ne seront plus condamnées à l'agressivité'.<sup>51</sup> Demonstrating her 'equality' as opposed to 'difference' feminism, Giroud insists on the need to avoid alienating men from the debates on equality between the sexes warning that breaking free from mythologies will not be possible 'sans l'adhésion des hommes'.<sup>52</sup>

Giroud's transition to the political pages of *L'Express* thus marks an important turning point, both for her personally and for women in journalism more generally. Feminist writer and intellectual Benoîte Groult<sup>53</sup> makes the point that Giroud served as a model for many, standing out in an industry and intellectual milieu largely dominated by men: 'Alors Françoise Giroud siégeait avec moi au prix *Femina*. Elle a été une des premières à fonder un

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<sup>46</sup> *L'Express*, 20 March, 1954, 6.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* A question answered affirmatively and negatively by André Monteil and Gaston Defferre respectively.

<sup>48</sup> *L'Express*, 15 Jan. 1955, 3.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* Giroud also tackles the conundrum 'La Beauté est-elle un mythe?' in *L'Express*, 5 Feb 1955, 4.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *L'Express*, 15 Jan. 1955, 3.

<sup>53</sup> For more on Benoîte Groult see, 'In the Eye of the Storm: Women and Polemics in the Public Space' in I. Long, *Women Intellectuals in Post-68 France: Petitions and Polemics*, (Basingstoke, 2013), 30-50.

journal, *L'Express*, à être une femme qui faisait du cinéma, de la littérature. Nous n'avions pas de modèles avant, dans les siècles passés, parce qu'elles sont oubliées par l'histoire.<sup>54</sup>

In 1956 Giroud took complete control of editorial policy of *L'Express*, action precipitated by the conscription of Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber into military service to Algeria,<sup>55</sup> and was a move made somewhat apprehensively, as she discloses:

Or la politique, même si j'étais politisée, c'était pour moi comme une langue étrangère. Je la comprenais mais je ne savais pas la parler. Je n'avais jamais pensé écrire sur la politique; Jean-Jacques y suffisait largement. Il a donc bien fallu que je le fasse. L'équipe - Mauriac, Viansson, Jean Daniel - a été très amicale, très coopérative. Mendès, après mon premier éditorial, m'a dit: "C'est très bien." Vous imaginez combien cela a pu me soulager et me rendre heureuse. J'ai dû aussi m'occuper, à cette époque, de la gestion du journal.<sup>56</sup>

Giroud worried that this step beyond the world of women's magazines would expose her lack of political experience: 'Je savais comment on conçoit, on fabrique un magazine féminin, et j'allais risquer de démontrer que j'étais incapable de concevoir, de fabriquer, de mener un journal politique.'<sup>57</sup> It transpired that her doubts were unfounded, so much so that her leadership was crucial in the development of *L'Express* as a site for frank exchange and free expression.

*L'Express* in the 1950s constituted an integral component of the independent left press,<sup>58</sup> overtaking *Combat*, *Franc-Tireur* and *France-Observateur* in terms of sales. Its

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 47.

<sup>55</sup>J-J. Servan-Schreiber, *Lieutenant en Algérie* (Paris, 1957).

<sup>56</sup><[http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/nous-voulions-un-journal-pour-dire-ce-que-nous-pensions\\_497083.html](http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/nous-voulions-un-journal-pour-dire-ce-que-nous-pensions_497083.html)>

<sup>57</sup>Giroud, *Histoire d'une femme libre*, 163.

<sup>58</sup>See I. H. Birchill, *Sartre Against Stalinism* (New York, Oxford, 2004), 6.

circulation increased exponentially from 45,000 in 1953 to 170,000 in 1955.<sup>59</sup> Its inaugural issue sets out its manifesto ‘l’homme qui nous lira’ for which Giroud later claimed sole responsibility<sup>60</sup> even though *L’Express* initially adopted a policy of unsigned articles: ‘[N]ous avons décidé ensemble que l’équipe, solidaire, prendrait la responsabilité de tout ce qui est écrit dans ces pages et que les articles ne seront pas signés. La responsabilité collective permet de n’être ni aimable ni susceptible.’<sup>61</sup> Giroud evokes an imaginary construct of an archetypal reader, suggesting that: ‘Notre lecteur ne se prétend pas plus intelligent que les autres, mais plus conscient de sa responsabilité.’<sup>62</sup> By deploying the term responsibility, the weekly demonstrates its familiarity with the existentialist vocabulary much in vogue in the aftermath of the war, in a country now firmly mired in the Cold War, exacerbated by the withdrawal of the communists from government which effectively ended the system of *tripartisme*.<sup>63</sup>

The early days of *L’Express* show just how clearly the Cold War loomed large in the minds of the editors and, by extension, the readers and country. For example, the forum of 10 April 1954 was given over to the question of ‘Quelle est la conséquence de la bombe H ?’<sup>64</sup>, the most popular subject of all the questions emanating from the readership according to the editors.<sup>65</sup> Even if *L’Express* was troubled by McCarthyism, as a cartoon from 20

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<sup>59</sup> Figures cited in E. Tourniaire, ‘*L’Express* et le phénomène mendésiste’ in *Pierre Mendès France et le mendésisme*, ed. F. Bérida and J.P. Rioux (Paris, 1985) 195-203, 197, 201. See also Welch, op.cit. Giroud recounted that *L’Express*’s circulation grew markedly as a result of the notoriety acquired by its seizing in 1954: ‘René Pleven nous avait rendu un immense service. Une saisie, c’était alors un événement sans précédent en pays démocratique. La presse, française et étrangère, la radio en firent grand bruit. La vente de *L’Express* doubla en un mois.’, *Histoire d’une femme libre*, 183.

<sup>60</sup> ‘Je ne ferai plus d’articles signés de mon nom puisque nous avons décidé, pour donner d’emblée une physionomie originale au journal – et aussi pour garder la faculté de réécrire nous-mêmes le matériel fourni par nos amateurs jusqu’à ce qu’ils prennent un peu d’expérience – d’éliminer toute signature de *L’Express*’, *Histoire d’une femme libre*, 169.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Dans la course’, *L’Express*, 16 May 1953, 7.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> See D. L. Hanley, A. P. Kerr, and N.H. Vaites, *Contemporary France: Politics and Society since 1945*, (London, 2005 (1979)), 6.

<sup>64</sup> *L’Express*, 10 April 1954, 7. A question tackled by Mendès France, Robert Lacoste, André Monteil, Robert Schuman, Jacques Soustelle and François Mitterrand.

<sup>65</sup> *L’Express*, 16 Jan. 1954, 12.

March 1954 shows,<sup>66</sup> printed Adlai Stevenson's condemnation of 'L'Amérique de McCarthy'<sup>67</sup> and was wary of US enthusiasm for a united Europe,<sup>68</sup> *L'Express* was always firmly rooted on the side of the US in the Cold War. Intriguingly, the *Express* of 13 March 1954 carries an advert for the work of Arthur Koestler featuring in the 'revue mensuelle littéraire et politique', *Preuves*, an outlet funded by the Congress for Cultural Freedom.<sup>69</sup> This advert underscores the fact those responsible for the marketing of *Preuves* deemed *L'Express* readers likely to be sympathetic to its anti-communist and pro-American ideas even if *L'Express* also carried adverts for *Les Temps modernes*, the very journal that *Preuves* was supposed to counteract.<sup>70</sup>

The *Express* team admired the dynamism of America and recognised US inspiration in the detail of Mendès France's programme, which was, as G.L. Arnold put it on 16 January 1954, 'une sorte de New Deal'.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, Servan-Schreiber was a longstanding avowed admirer of John F. Kennedy, coincidentally bearing more than a passing resemblance to the Bostonian himself according to Richard Kuisel,<sup>72</sup> and Servan-Schreiber would later write the best-selling *Le Défi américain*,<sup>73</sup> which called for France to adopt US business models in order to counter domination by the US.<sup>74</sup> Alluding to the fear and suspicion of the early 1950s, which was characterized by bouts of what Irwin Wall dubbed 'collective hysteria',<sup>75</sup> *L'Express*'s editorial team hypothesizes that these times of McCarthyism, conflicts in Korea and Indochina, and the superpowers' nuclear arms race will be of concern to their new reader

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<sup>66</sup> A cartoon depicts steadily increasing US support for the anti-communist policies of Senator McCarthy, a figure which reached 50% in January 1951, 'La cote de McCarthy selon Gallup', *L'Express*, 20 March 1954, 4.

<sup>67</sup> *L'Express*, 13 March 1954, 12.

<sup>68</sup> A cartoon based on Russian economist Varga's 'prévisions' outlines how 'L'Amérique veut unifier l'Europe continentale pour pouvoir facilement dominer ses marchés', *L'Express*, 16 Jan. 1954, 7.

<sup>69</sup> F. Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London, 1999), 101.

<sup>70</sup> As Stonor Saunder notes, *Preuves* was intended to be a 'a journal which could compete with *Les Temps modernes* and encourage defections from Sartre's stronghold'. Ibid. See *L'Express*, 11 June, 1955, 5.

<sup>71</sup> G. L. Arnold, 'La France aura son "New Deal"', *L'Express*, 16 Jan. 1954, 12.

<sup>72</sup> See R. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: the Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley, 1993), 178.

<sup>73</sup> J.J. Servan-Schreiber, *Le Défi américain* (Paris, 1967).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 178-180.

as they will know that if ‘le monde se met à jouer au ping-pong avec des bombes atomiques, il servira de filet s’il n’a plus la force de servir d’arbitre. Alors, au lieu d’attendre le début du match, il croit que l’on pourrait tenter de convaincre les adversaires de le remettre aux calendes chinoises.’<sup>76</sup>

The typical purchaser of *L’Express* is construed therefore as politically informed, a reader whose personal persuasions will most likely reflect those of the management: supportive of modernization and sympathetic to Mendès France, and most certainly not a paid up member of the communist party even if there were ‘des jours où il prétend qu’il en a envie. Ce ne sont pas les jours d’élection. Ce sont les soirs où il entend, dans un dîner, une dame s’écrier, par exemple, à propos d’une grève: “Avec les allocations familiales, ces gens-là vivent comme des princes.”’<sup>77</sup> In this way, when in January 1954 reader Bernard Vernery from Lyon writes in to enquire whether the publication sees itself as a ‘hebdomadaire conservateur’, ‘journal bourgeois’ or ‘organe paracomuniste’, the editors are clear: ‘Nous suggérons à M. Vernery que cette gamme d’étiquettes contradictoires est peut-être la preuve de notre indépendance de jugement. L’équipe de *L’Express* revendique le droit de ne pas militer dans une optique partisane.’<sup>78</sup>

This declaration of impartiality can once again be seen in the major cultural Cold War event of 1954, La Comédie française’s tour to Moscow as the editors contend that both sides risk exaggeration in their portrayal of the Soviet Union: ‘Les caricatures de l’U.R.S.S que certains dirigeants occidentaux se sont crus obligés de peindre pour inciter leurs peuples à soutenir leur politique vont être déchirées, crevées par l’évidente honnêteté de quelques journalistes sans passion. Ce qui est bon. Mais ce qui risque aussi de porter l’opinion vers l’excès inverse, de l’amener à oublier que, très simplement, le régime russe est communiste,

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<sup>75</sup> I. M. Wall, *French Communism in the Era of Stalin: The Quest for Unity and Integration 1945-1962* (Westport, 1983), 135.

<sup>76</sup> *L’Express*, 16 May 1953, 7.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

ce qui implique quelques règles de prudence élémentaire dans les rapports que nous pouvons - et devons – entretenir avec lui.’<sup>79</sup>

While *L’Express* may have professed its even-handedness in its representations of the Soviet Union and claimed a non-partisan line, it never deviated from its primary aim of propelling Mendès France to power. Ironically it was when this ambition was fulfilled and Mendès France formed a government from June 1954 to February 1955, following the collapse of the Laniel administration in the wake of the resounding military defeat at Dien Bien Phu, that the magazine found it the most difficult to give him full backing and endorse all of his initiatives.<sup>80</sup> Support from *L’Express* began to waver as impatience grew with his handling of economic affairs, and his attempts, as Tony Judt puts it, ‘to set left-wing economic policy on a better footing’.<sup>81</sup> Concerns were raised at his inclusion of ministers associated with previous regimes, such as finance minister Edgar Faure, who, as Roussel notes, ‘a commis l’erreur impardonnable aux yeux de Françoise Giroud et de Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber de siéger dans le gouvernement Laniel’.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, Richard Vinen deems Mendès France ‘highly liberal on economic matters’<sup>83</sup> and thus closer to the economic ideas of conservative politician Antoine Pinay.<sup>84</sup>

Nevertheless, *L’Express* would continue to endorse Mendès France, going as far as to move to daily production on 13 October 1955<sup>85</sup> and giving him a regular spot as editorialist in order to push for his re-election after the fall of his government at the end of January 1955.<sup>86</sup> The *Express* editorial team also used the new format to promote policy change with respect to

<sup>78</sup> *L’Express*, 2 Jan. 1954, 2.

<sup>79</sup> ‘La Comédie française à Moscou’, *L’Express*, 17 April 1954, 6.

<sup>80</sup> See J. Duquesne, *Françoise Giroud: une plume engagée à L’Express*, 44.

<sup>81</sup> T. Judt, *Marxism and the French Left 1945-1975* (Oxford, 1986), 183.

<sup>82</sup> E. Roussel, *La Politique soumise à l’intelligence*, 32.

<sup>83</sup> R. Vinen, *Bourgeois Politics in France 1945-1951* (Cambridge, 1995), 146.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* See also S. Guillaume, ‘Antoine Pinay et Pierre Mendès France’ in *Pierre Mendès France et le mendésisme*, ed. F. Bérída and J.P. Rioux, 183-193.

<sup>85</sup> See Julliard and Winock, *Dictionnaire des intellectuels*, 549-550.

<sup>86</sup> See for his example his regular column ‘L’Opinion de Mendès France’ of 14 October 1955 which deals with Algeria entitled ‘Les mots et la réalité’, 3.



France's relationship with North Africa, evinced by the prominent part played by Mendès France in France's move towards independence for Tunisia in June 1954 and Morocco in November 1955.<sup>87</sup> Beset by financial and logistical problems, the daily experiment was wound up in a matter of months and weekly production resumed on 8 March 1956.<sup>88</sup> Mendès France's time in office had arguably come too soon and was hampered by the outbreak of events in Algeria in November 1954, part way through his tenure, leading *L'Express* to regret in response to a reader's letter that 'PMF représentait sur plusieurs plans un espoir de changement radical, disons révolutionnaire. Il s'est trouvé subitement – plus tôt qu'il n'était raisonnable de le prévoir sans masses politiques organisées, sans cadres administratifs préparés, sans majorité parlementaire cohérente, et une équipe réduite au minimum.'<sup>89</sup>

Although an undoubted advocate of decolonization in Indochina, and instrumental in Tunisian and Moroccan independence, Mendès France was to find the Algerian question impossible to resolve. He and *Ministre de l'Intérieur François Mitterrand* were initially committed to keeping Algeria French, focusing instead on reforms. *Ministre sans portefeuille* in *Guy Mollet's* administration in May 1956, Mendès France was later compelled to resign in protest at the increasingly repressive handling of events by the non-Communist left. Now sidelined, Mendès France was unable to influence governmental policy.

By 1958 the country was deep in crisis. Although De Gaulle's return was feted by many as offering a way out, *L'Express*, always insistent on France's need to innovate and embrace change, made clear its lack of enthusiasm for De Gaulle's return, viewing his authoritarian and traditional political style as a backward step for post-war France and anathema to their modernizing mission. The creation of the Fifth Republic presented a particular flashpoint for the weekly; its panoply of intellectuals stood divided on the issue. In

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<sup>87</sup> For more detail on his views on this matter see P. Mendès-France, 'Espoir au Maroc', *L'Express*, 18 June 1955, 3.

<sup>88</sup> See J. Botherel, *Celui qui voulait tout changer. Les Années JJSS* (Paris, 2005), 209-232.

<sup>89</sup> *L'Express*, 29 Jan. 1955, 2.

the pages of *L'Express*, Malraux had earlier declared 'je n'envisage pas de participer ni à un « regroupement » ni à un nouveau parti. Je ne suis ni mendésiste [sic], ni néo-quoi-que-soit : je suis gaulliste. Pour les raisons que l'on sait et que le ton des mémoires du général de Gaulle a rendues claires pour tout le monde.'<sup>90</sup> Mauriac backed Mendès France during the Fourth Republic because, as he put it, 'P.M.F incarne encore l'espérance'<sup>91</sup> for peace in North Africa. But Mauriac had retained an abiding loyalty to de Gaulle since the Second World War and once de Gaulle became a possible leader, Mauriac naturally supported him. Concerned by what he saw as *L'Express's* anti-de Gaulle rhetoric, he ceased to collaborate there in 1961.<sup>92</sup> Throughout this and other crises, Giroud's faith in the ongoing relevance of the public intellectual informed the policy of opening up *L'Express's* columns to leading intellectuals who shared broadly the political vision and aspirations of those who were the driving force behind the publication and even to those who did not, such as Sartre.

### III

As Michael Scriven affirms in *Sartre and the Media*,<sup>93</sup> Sartre refrained from enduring involvement with any one outlet but he had contributed a series of articles on the Liberation to *Combat* in 1944 and reflections on his US tour to *Le Figaro* in early 1945. Sartre was prepared to adopt a pragmatic approach towards the type of press with which he cooperated, extending to *Vogue* in July 1945<sup>94</sup> and even *Playboy* in 1965.<sup>95</sup> He made no secret of the

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<sup>90</sup> 'L'Entretien avec André Malraux: La gauche peut réussir', *L'Express*, 29 Jan. 1955, 8-10, 8.

<sup>91</sup> 'Le Bloc-notes de François Mauriac', *L'Express*, 2 Jan. 1955, 15.

<sup>92</sup> E. Welch, *François Mauriac: The Making of an Intellectual* (Amsterdam and New York, 2006).

<sup>93</sup> M. Scriven, *Sartre and the Media* (Basingstoke, 1993), 24.

<sup>94</sup> Interview as part of the article 'New Writing in France: The Resistance "taught that literature is no fancy activity independent of politics"', *Vogue*, July 1945, 84-5. See M. Contat and M. Rybalka, *Les Ecrits de Sartre: chronologie, bibliographie commentée* (Paris, 1970), 124.

<sup>95</sup> 'A Candid Conversation with the Charismatic Fountainhead of Existentialism and Rejector of the Nobel Prize', *Playboy*, May 1965, 69-76. See Contat and Rybalka, *Les Ecrits de Sartre*, 415.

fact that he considered *L'Express* an essentially bourgeois publication, as Giroud recorded à propos of a conversation, where she noted: 'Il fut « charmant » comme à l'accoutumée mais me dit de sa voix douce que Mendès France était un politicien bourgeois, Mauriac un écrivain détestable, *L'Express* un organe idéaliste et Merleau-Ponty un zozo puisqu'il jugeait bon d'y collaborer régulièrement. « Un traître à la cause du peuple », avait dit Simone de Beauvoir à propos de cette collaboration.'<sup>96</sup>

Although clearly in a different camp from Sartre, *L'Express* would admire his refusal to join the Communist Party, even if, as he outlined in *Les Communistes et la paix*,<sup>97</sup> his agreement with the PCF on certain party principles. In March 1954 the pages of *L'Express* applauded his decision to remain aloof: 'Cette attitude solitaire et résolue aujourd'hui devient rare, c'est pourquoi elle déconcerte',<sup>98</sup> and saw in Sartre the embodiment of 'l'effort sans illusion d'une pensée humaniste qui refuse de renoncer à peser dès aujourd'hui sur le destin social de son époque'.<sup>99</sup> During this time, Giroud cemented her editorial position and, with her growing influence, began to contribute articles across all sections of *L'Express*, including the cultural section, taking over from Madeleine Chapsal who had initially written the arts reviews.<sup>100</sup> The ideological differences between the Mendésistes and Sartre were crystallised through Giroud's review of Sartre's 1955 *Nekrassov*, the four hour long comic play where Sartre 'poked fun' at the press and lampooned perceived perversions of communism on the Left and anti-communism on the Right.<sup>101</sup>

In his play Sartre scripted eight 'tableaux' in which a petty criminal, Georges de Valera, dissuaded from suicide, is persuaded to impersonate a Russian minister of the

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<sup>96</sup> F. Giroud, 'Sartre et *L'Express*' in *Témoins de Sartre* (Paris, 2005), 220-226, 221.

<sup>97</sup> A series of articles published in *Les Temps modernes* spanning July 1952 to April 1954. See J.-P. Sartre, *Situations VI* (Paris, 1964).

<sup>98</sup> 'Jean-Paul Sartre Homme Libre', *L'Express*, 27 March 1954, 13.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> See J.J. Servan-Schreiber, *Passions*, (Paris, 1993), 200.

<sup>101</sup> A. van den Hoven, 'Nekrassov: Anticommunist Capers in a Pièce à clefs: Sartre takes aim at Beckett and Camus, rivals the Marx Brothers and the Keystone Cops and pokes fun at his own philosophy', *Sartre Studies International*, 13 (2007), 126-137

interior, Nekrassov, who it would seem has fled the communist regime 'in search of freedom'.<sup>102</sup> This new incarnation of Nekrassov discloses telling inside information detailing the grim realities of life behind the Iron Curtain to the French press who revel in disseminating these revelations. In Sartre's farce the imposter de Valera/Nekrassov sums up the climate of suspicion and mistrust that is key to the era of McCarthyism when he duplicitously warns: 'Je lèverai les voiles un à un et vous verrez le monde comme il est. Quand vous vous méfieriez de votre fils, de votre femme, de votre père ; quand vous irez vous regarder dans la glace en vous demandant si vous n'êtes pas communiste à votre insu, vous commencerez à entrevoir la vérité. Prenez place, Messieurs, et travaillons: nous n'avons pas trop de temps si nous voulons sauver la France.'<sup>103</sup>

Through the character of Nekrassov, Sartre no doubt alludes to the case of Kravchenko, a dissenter forced to flee Communist Russia, who came to prominence with the publication of the memoir *I Chose Freedom* in 1947.<sup>104</sup> The Kravchenko affair and others like it give some flavour of the polarized times in French society and although Giroud views the play as largely a piece of communist agitprop, Christian Delacampagne argues that the play can be better understood as an avowal of pacifism, explaining that Sartre suspected the US of belligerence and deemed the Soviet regime more desirous to avert conflict and so represented a better bet for ensuring world peace.<sup>105</sup> In fact, Sartre ribs both anti-communists and communists alike in this humorous sendup of contemporary politics and is less concerned

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<sup>102</sup> M. Scriven, 'Myth versus Satire: The Dramatized Politics of Sartre's Nekrassov' in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Politics and Culture in Post-War France* (Basingstoke, 1999), 97-112, 103. Giroud affirms that the version performed at the Théâtre Antoine directed by Jean Meyer contained seven tableaux, F. Giroud, 'Sartre à la une', *L'Express*, 11 June 1955, 9.

<sup>103</sup> J.P. Sartre, *Nekrassov* (Paris, 1973 [1956]), 172.

<sup>104</sup> Kravchenko's account was the third best-selling book in the ten year period following the end of the war according to *L'Express* with a circulation of 503,000, 16 April, 1955, 18. Interestingly, Kravchenko refers to nineteenth century Russian writer Nekrasov as one of his grandmother's favourite writers: 'By the flickering dimness of a "smoker" I used to read aloud to *babushka*. She loved Nekrasov, Tolstoy and Tugeniev (original emphasis)' V. Kravchenko, *I Chose Freedom* (London, 1947), 22. For more on the Kravchenko case see I.M. Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France 1945-1954* (Cambridge, 1991), 151-54 and Birchill, *Sartre Against Stalinism*, 112.

<sup>105</sup> C. Delacampagne, 'Retour sur Nekrassov', *MLN*, 121 (2006), 936-945, 939.

with promoting the tenets of communism than with highlighting the manoeuvring of public opinion by a powerful press lobby.<sup>106</sup>

The play met with an unfavourable reception from most of France's critics,<sup>107</sup> primarily because they perceived it to be, as Neal Oxenhandler asserts, an infelicitous combination of 'bad comedy and bad politics'.<sup>108</sup> Giroud judged the play to be 'confuse, laborieuse, interminable'.<sup>109</sup> On attending the play in its first week in June 1955, she summed up the experience of the performance by stating that 'de cette longue soirée on émerge consterné, consterné d'abord devant ce travail bâclé'.<sup>110</sup> In particular she condemned Sartre's comedy which for her falls flat because 'tout cela est vif, parfois drôle, rarement percutant parce qu'il fallait charger jusqu'à la véritable farce, ou respecter une apparence de vérité.'<sup>111</sup> In this way, Giroud, in the words of Annie Cohen-Solal, 'éreintra personnellement la pièce'<sup>112</sup> and her review echoed those generally levelled at Sartre's portrayal of the milieu of the press. As Michael Scriven contends, Sartre 'stands accused of having produced a play which is neither sufficiently hard-hitting to make for good satire, nor sufficiently light-hearted to make for good farce.'<sup>113</sup>

Giroud cited a lack of credibility in this dramatized representation of the world of the press, symbolised by Sartre's imaginary daily, *Soir à Paris*, as one of the play's central failings, presenting a profession populated by 'journalistes qui ne sauraient s'asseoir sans mettre leurs pieds sur les tables'.<sup>114</sup> She also noted disapprovingly that the character of Jules Palolin, director of a pro-establishment paper, corresponded to a satirized portrayal of Pierre Lazareff, founder of *Le Journal du dimanche*, and her former employer at *Elle*, whose

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<sup>106</sup> Scriven, *Politics and Culture in Postwar France*, 112.

<sup>107</sup> R. Wilcocks, *Jean-Paul Sartre: A Bibliography of International Criticism* (Edmonton, 1975), 261-270. See also B. O' Donohoe, *Sartre's Theatre: Acts for Life* (Oxford, Bern, 2004), 191-194.

<sup>108</sup> N. Oxenhandler, 'Nekrassov and the Critics', *Yale French Studies*, 16 (1955), 8-12, 9.

<sup>109</sup> F. Giroud, 'Sartre à la une'.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> A. Cohen-Solal, *Sartre: Une Vie*, (Paris, 1985), 596.

<sup>113</sup> M. Scriven, *Jean-Paul Sartre: Politics and Culture in Postwar France* (Basingstoke, 1999), 106.

mannerisms were caricatured from ‘les gestes, [...] la tête’,<sup>115</sup> right down to the ‘bretelles’.<sup>116</sup> Giroud rounded off by deploring what she saw overall as a hastily conceived and executed work from France’s foremost intellectual: ‘le premier philosophe français, qui est aussi l’homme de théâtre le plus doué, livre enfin au public une satire de la société contemporaine et il propose ce brouillon mal raturé et bourré de fautes d’orthographe ? Ce n’est pas sérieux.’<sup>117</sup> Acknowledging these criticisms, Sartre later recalled in 1960 that it was ‘une pièce à demi manquée’,<sup>118</sup> adding that ‘Il aurait fallu centrer sur le journal et non sur l’escroc qui n’est pas intéressant en soi. Il aurait mieux valu le montrer pris dans l’engrenage du journal. Mais ce n’est pas seulement pour cela que la critique a jugé la pièce mauvaise. J’attaquais la presse, la presse a contre-attaqué.’<sup>119</sup>

Despite Giroud’s negative review, between 1956 and 1961 *L’Express* published work by Sartre on some seven occasions,<sup>120</sup> beginning with his reaction to the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, an episode which had a profound effect on Sartre’s relationship to the Communist party. Stunned by these events, he published his response to this development in *L’Express*<sup>121</sup> in recognition of its wider readership. This marked the beginning of an uneasy partnership.<sup>122</sup> This tension was underlined by Sartre’s insistence that this first text should be accompanied by a disclaimer, proclaiming that: ‘pour cette rentrée en scène, Jean-Paul Sartre a choisi *L’Express*. Il tient à marquer nettement que ce choix n’a aucune signification

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<sup>114</sup> F. Giroud, ‘Sartre à la une’, *L’Express*.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. For more on the parody of Pierre Lazareff in *Nekrassov*, see A. van den Hoven, ‘Nekrassov: Anticomunist Capers in a Pièce à clefs: Sartre takes aim at Beckett and Camus, rivals the Marx Brothers and the Keystone Cops and pokes fun at his own philosophy’, *Sartre Studies International*, 13 (2007), 126-137, 129-30.

<sup>117</sup> F. Giroud, ‘Sartre à la une’, *L’Express*. The play’s 100th performance is however advertised on 18 October 1955, 9 along with James Stewart’s film *Strategic Air Command* and the Folies Bergère.

<sup>118</sup> ‘Sartre 1960 – Entretien avec Jean-Paul Sartre par Jacques-Alain Miller’ in *Les Cahiers libres de la jeunesse*, 15 February 1960, 2-4 quoted in Contat and Rybalka, *Les Ecrits de Sartre*, 283.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Scriven, *Sartre and the Media*, 44-48. These included articles on Henri Alleg’s proscribed account of his experiences of torture in Algeria, *La Question*, the referendum on De Gaulle’s return in 1958 and in 1961 his view of Fidel Castro in ‘L’assaut contre Castro’, *L’Express*, 20 April 1961, 8-10.

<sup>121</sup> ‘Après Budapest, Sartre parle’, *L’Express* 9 Nov. 1956.

<sup>122</sup> See Servan-Schrieber, *Passions*, 208-212.

politique : il s'affirme en effet en désaccord avec les positions du journal sur de nombreux points.<sup>123</sup>

Sartre's collaboration with *L'Express* reached its most dramatic point with his response to Henri Alleg's uncompromising account of torture in Algeria, *La Question*. To prevent knowledge of the book from spreading, the authorities raided *L'Express*' premises and seizing all copies of the offending edition. Although *L'Express* had a long history of clashes with the authorities, having encountered censorship some ten times according to Giroud,<sup>124</sup> the clampdown on Sartre's piece constituted what Raymond Kuhn deems the 'most infamous use of government censorship during the Algerian war'.<sup>125</sup> Sartre may have purposefully elected to increase public awareness of Alleg's banned book by publishing with *L'Express* who in turn showed considerable courage in communicating his review.

Sartre's cooperation with *L'Express* proved short-lived. In response to an editorial in March 1960, Sartre wrote to Servan-Schreiber declaring, 'Après l'article de Mme Françoise Giroud sur l'affaire du réseau du soutien au FLN, je pense qu'il vaut mieux écrire n'importe où qu'à *L'Express*.'<sup>126</sup> To add insult to injury, Sartre concluded, 'Ce qui rend aujourd'hui *L'Express* compromettant ou nuisible, c'est qu'il prétend être un journal de gauche.'<sup>127</sup> Giroud was incensed. She accused Sartre of hopeless naivety: 'mon domaine à moi, ce n'est pas le génie. C'est la vie. Vous en avez entendu parler ?'<sup>128</sup>

Ever pragmatic, in the early 1960s Sartre's commitment to Cuba would see him once more write for *L'Express*. He even reported on the situation for Pierre Lazareff's *France-Soir*, proof that journalism was, above all else, as Giroud put it, 'un genre qu'il aimait et

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<sup>123</sup> F. Giroud, 'Sartre et *L'Express*', 221.

<sup>124</sup> See F. Giroud, *Si je mens*, 238.

<sup>125</sup> R. Kuhn, *The Media in France*, (London, 1995), 63. The journal also practised self-censorship on occasion as its withholding of its readers' letters shows in the edition published 17 Sep. 1955.

<sup>126</sup> J. Botherel, *Celui qui voulait tout changer. Les années JJSS*, quoted in J. Duquesne, *Françoise Giroud: Une plume engagée à L'Express*, 58.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. Scriven, *Sartre and the Media*, 48-53.

pratiquait'.<sup>129</sup> Above all, the interaction between Giroud and Sartre reveals Giroud's willingness to engage with those whose views diverged considerably from *L'Express's* editorial line, revealing the plurality of opinions on the spectrum of the political Left.

#### IV

The Cold War *L'Express* operated in a time of intense political conflict, military action and profound change and acted as a bridge between two worlds: between the erudite discussion of *Les Temps modernes* and the cut and thrust of the popular press.<sup>130</sup> Giroud's articles display the same commitment to the investigation of political realities as those of the more intellectually prestigious *Les Temps modernes* and so *L'Express* is important for its transmission of ideas as she remarked: '[C]'était une aventure assez originale en ceci qu'elle réunissait une poignée de véritables journalistes [...] des gens capables de mettre des idées en forme de façon qu'elles soient claires et frappantes, de les simplifier, de les diffuser'.<sup>131</sup>

Despite her dismissal of *Nekrassov* and her disapproval of Sartre's politics, Giroud recognized their commonalities and respected him, for his 'sa fabuleuse force vitale'<sup>132</sup> and his faith in journalism, both as a literary genre and as an effective vehicle for engagement and action. The constitutional crisis of 1958 made Sartre and Giroud unlikely, if albeit brief, allies. For such was the sustained antipathy to de Gaulle articulated in the columns of *L'Express*, Giroud herself maintained that by 1963, *L'Express* had come to be viewed as 'l'ennemi n° 1 par d' "éminents personnages du régime "'<sup>133</sup> and so was for a time as anti-establishment as Sartre.

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<sup>129</sup> F. Giroud, *Profession journaliste*, 113.

<sup>130</sup> See E. Welch, op.cit.

<sup>131</sup> F. Giroud, *Si je mens*, 157 cited by Welch in 'Commitment, Commercialism and the Dawning of Image Culture'.

<sup>132</sup> F. Giroud, *Profession journaliste*, 117.

<sup>133</sup> <[http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/du-g-eacute-n-eacute-ral-au-particulier\\_479516.html](http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/du-g-eacute-n-eacute-ral-au-particulier_479516.html)>



Giroud also agreed with him that a worthwhile publication must have its battles to fight: ‘il n’y a pas de journal sans cause. Je ne doutais pas que nous en trouverions de bonnes à défendre.’<sup>134</sup> As the key conflicts of decolonisation in Indochina and Algeria came to a close *L’Express*’s commitment faltered, leading to what Pierre Albert terms ‘la désaffection du public après la fin de guerre d’Algérie’.<sup>135</sup> To counteract this malaise Giroud recounts how the two discrete entities of ‘le premier *Express*’ and ‘le second *Express*’<sup>136</sup> were formed, corresponding to the periods pre and post-1964. Giroud notes ‘il n’y avait plus de combats de même genre’<sup>137</sup> because ‘le nouveau combat c’était la construction de la France industrielle’,<sup>138</sup> even if Rostow’s ‘take-off’ was by the early 1960s already well under way in fact. This is the fundamental difference between Sartre and Giroud – their conceptions of France’s future lay in divergent directions: the revolutionary politics of the far left for Sartre and liberal economics on American lines for Giroud, leading Ross to term *L’Express* as the ‘supreme vehicle for capitalist modernization in France’.<sup>139</sup> Yet the fact that on the fortieth anniversary of *L’Express* in 1993 Giroud lamented the dearth of publications which were as ‘polémique et agressive’<sup>140</sup> as *L’Express* was in its early days is revealing, finding little to motivate her in the new *L’Express*:

Beaucoup de gens ont effectivement souffert de ce changement, qui nous éloignait du journalisme d’opinion. Il y avait une nostalgie du premier *Express*. Moi la première, je n’étais pas très heureuse de cette transformation, même si je la trouvais nécessaire.

[...] Par rapport à ce que nous avons vécu, je me suis un peu ennuyée dans ce nouvel

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<sup>134</sup> <[http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/nous-voulions-un-journal-pour-dire-ce-que-nous-pensions\\_497083.html](http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/nous-voulions-un-journal-pour-dire-ce-que-nous-pensions_497083.html)>

<sup>135</sup> P. Albert, *La Presse française* (Paris, 1990), 131.

<sup>136</sup> INA Interview with Christine Ockrent on France 3, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NHYk6jcIg8>>

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> K. Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*, 144.

<sup>140</sup> <[http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/nous-voulions-un-journal-pour-dire-ce-que-nous-pensions\\_497083.html](http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/nous-voulions-un-journal-pour-dire-ce-que-nous-pensions_497083.html)>

*Express*, surtout autour de 1970, même si nous avons fait beaucoup de choses et innové.<sup>141</sup>

For Giroud, the Cold War *L'Express* then epitomized the politically committed weekly and it saw success in achieving some of its goals if not all. After a long painful process, decolonization eventually became a reality but although the French economy was transformed in the *trente glorieuses*, it did not fully embrace liberal capitalist free-market theories to the extent propounded by Anglo-American economists such as Rostow and held dear by the *L'Express* management. *L'Express* also failed in its mission to see Mendès France dominate French politics. He would not lead the country again after 1955. Eclipsed by De Gaulle, there was no place for the charismatic politician as head of state. Disillusioned by the fading Radical Party, he would formally link up with the Socialist Party (PSU) in 1960. Here he was never really at home and would increasingly be in the shadow of the younger François Mitterrand.<sup>142</sup> Giroud's articles reflect these political realities. But despite these setbacks, she demonstrated at *L'Express* a far-reaching desire to engender cultural, political and broader societal change including advancing women's rights. Her innovative approach to intellectual debates was founded on her capacity to challenge and critique and in the process engage with others, political friends or foes, signalling a rare quest for inclusivity in French Cold War journalism.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid. Giroud here no doubt alludes to the weekly's identity crisis of the late 1960s and the departure of Claude Imbert and others in 1971 who left to found *Le Point*. See Siritisky and Roth, *Le Roman de l'Express*, 472. *L'Express* was sold by Servan-Schreiber in 1977.

<sup>142</sup> Chatriot, *Pierre Mendès France, Pour une République moderne*, 180-201.