



## *In The Darkest of Nights*

*The last Natzweiler-Struthof camp survivors*

This film is part of the collection "***The last survivors of the Resistance and Deportation***" that was designed to save, shed light on, and to transmit the words of men and women who were thrown into the heart of the events.

They all refused the idea of a France dominated by nazis and the Vichy regime. The price they paid was all too high.

They have accepted to describe what they experienced, but to also share their thoughts and feelings.

In accepting to open up, they are making an irreplaceable contribution to memory work and to writing history.

## *The Eight Survivors*

Jean BOUDIAS born 13 December 1925

Arrested 23 April 1943 in Chalon-sur-Saône (Saône-et-Loire)



**Deported to Natzweiler 19 November 1943, identification number: 6181**

Transferred to the Wohlau prison and its kommandos, to KL Gross-Rosen and to Neubrandenburg (Ravenbrück kommando).

Liberated by the Russian army in Torgelow after being evacuated from the Neubrandenburg camp 1 May 1945

Alex LAPRAYE born 2 October 1927

Arrested 28 December 1943 in Paray-le-Monial (Saône-et-Loire)



**Deported to Natzweiler 24 March 1943, identification number: 8623**

Transferred to KL Dachau.

Liberated from Dachau 29 April 1945

Henri MOSSON born 5 January 1924

Arrested in May 1943 in Boux-sous-Salmaise (Côte-d'Or)



**Deported to Natzweiler 26 November 1943, identification number : 6290**

Transferred to Erzingen (KL Natzweiler kommando ) and to Allach (KL Dachau kommando)

Liberated from Allach 30 April 1945.

Max NEVERS born 2 March 1920 \* Died 11 November 2009

Arrested 23 November 1942 in Dijon (Côte-d'Or)



**Deported to Natzweiler 15 July 1943, identification number : 4585**

Transferred to KL Dachau, KL Auschwitz-Birkenau (tattoo identification number : 200102), and back to Dachau.

Liberated from Dachau 29 April 1945



Pierre ROLINET born 4 June 1922  
Arrested 29 November 1943 in Glay (Doubs)  
**Deported to Natzweiler 14 April 1944, identification number :11902**  
Transferred to KL Dachau and to the Allach kommando.  
Liberated from Allach 30 April 1945.



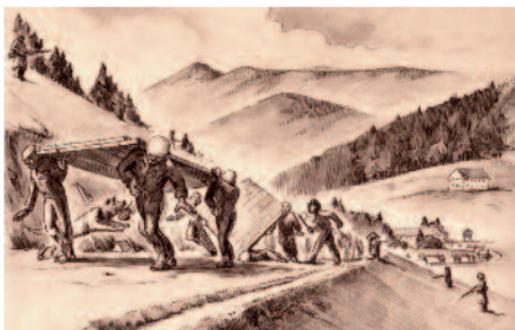
Robert SALOMON born 16 May 1925  
Arrested 29 November 1943 in Roche-lès-Blamont (Doubs)  
**Deported to Natzweiler 14 April 1944, identification number : 11908**  
Transferred to Erzingen (KL Natzweiler kommando) and to Allach (KL Dachau kommando).  
Liberated from Allach 30 April 1945.



René SANTOT born 15 August 1924 \* Died 13 August 2008  
Arrested in February 1944 in Chalon-sur-Saône (Saône-et-Loire)  
**Deported to Natzweiler 23 August 1944, identification number : 23272**  
Transferred to KL Dachau and then to KL Mauthausen and Ebensee (Mauthausen kommando)  
Liberated from Ebensee 6 May 1945.



Jean VILLERET born 11 December 1922  
Arrested 31 January 1944 in Créteil (Val-de-Marne)  
**Deported to Natzweiler 10 July 1944, identification number : 19410**  
Transferred to KL Dachau and to the Allach kommando.  
Liberated in Dachau 29 April 1945.



*Drawing by H. Gayot, camp survivor*

## *KL Natzweiler*

### *The Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp*

On 21 April 1941, near the village of Struthof, the nazis opened a concentration camp, KL-Natzweiler. The central camp was located in the then annexed Alsace département. Its annexes, scattered over the 2 sides of the Rhine, made up a network of nearly 70 camps, of more or less large-scale. Of the nearly 52,000 detainees of KL-Natzweiler, approximately 35,000 never passed through the central camp.

The deportees of KL-Natzweiler arrived from countries throughout Europe and came from different horizons. The major part of them were political deportees, of which there were the NN (Night and Fog), but also Jews, Gypsies and homosexuals. They all discovered a universe in which they were mere numbers and subhuman.

Close to thirty different nationalities were deported to KL-Natzweiler or to the annexed camps. Poles were the most numerous followed by Soviets and French (whom a quarter were Alsaciens-Mosellans), then Belgians, Norwegians, Luxembourgish, but also Germans, Greeks, Yugoslavs, Czechs, Austrians, Lithuanians, Dutch, Italians, Slovenians, etc.

A labour camp supporting the nazi war industry was also used for medical experiments by nazi professors from the Reich University of Strasbourg.

On 23 November 1944, the Allies discovered the site that had been evacuated by the nazis in September. Some deportees from the annexed camp suffered from the "Death Marches" until spring of 1945.

From 1941 to 1945, the KL-Natzweiler was one of the most murderous camps of the Nazi system. Nearly 22,000 deportees died there which represents a 40% mortality rate.



## *The European Centre of Deported Resistance Members*

A place of culture and remembrance, the European Centre of Deported Resistance Members is a large, concrete, streamlined building covered with dark stones. Designed by Pierre-Louis Faloci, it welcomes visitors to the site of the former Natzweiler concentration camp.

On 3 November 2005 the French President inaugurated the CERD, which pays homage to those who fought against oppression throughout Europe. It is the vector of the history and memory of the European Resistance movements and deportation.

The European Centre of Deported Resistance Members is designed as a place of information, reflection and encounters, and its 2,000m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space is an introduction to the visit of the camp itself. The CERD was built above the Kartoffelkeller, a reinforced concrete cellar built by the deportees.

The European Centre presents the history of Resistance movements that rose up against fascist and nazi oppression throughout Europe.

### EUROPEAN CENTER OF DEPORTED RESISTANCE MEMBERS

Site de l'ancien camp de Natzweiler

ONACVG Alsace

Route départementale 130

67130 Natzwiller - France

+ 33 (0)3 88 47 44 67 [www.struthof.fr](http://www.struthof.fr)

*Photo CERD : droits réservés, collection CERD Struthof*

## Chronological References... Chronological References...

→ **30 January 1933** Hitler is appointed Chancellor of the Republic of Weimar. **March 1933**, first concentration camps are opened (Oranienburg, Dachau, Bredow, etc.) in order to intern political opponents.

→ **Summer 1937**, detainees are regrouped in 4 main camps: Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald and Lichtenberg.

→ **12 March 1938**, Anschluss (annexation). **8 August 1938**, Mauthausen concentration camp is opened. **29 September 1938**, Munich Accords by which France and The UK allow Hitler to annex parts of Czechoslovakia. **9/10 november 1938**, Crystal night (massive pogrom against German Jews).

→ **1938/1940**, Flossenbürg, Ravensbrück, Stutthog, Auschwitz, etc. camps are opened and there are more international detainees (Czechs and Austrians in 1938, Poles in 1939 and from 1940 Dutch, Belgians, French, etc.; a total of 22 nationalities. **24 August 1939**, German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact. **1<sup>er</sup> september 1939**, Poland is invaded. **3 september 1939**, Great Britain and France declare war against the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reich without helping Poland.

**3 september/10 may 1940**, "Phoney War".

→ **10 may 1940**, Germans launch offensive against The Netherlands, Luxemburg, Belgium and then against France. **17 june 1940**, marshal Pétain gives speech announcing, "the time has come to stop fighting.". **18 june 1940**, De Gaulle makes appeal speech to pursue fighting. **22 june 1940**, Franco-German armistice is signed in Rethondes (dividing French territory into an occupied and unoccupied zone, separated by a line of demarcation). **29 june 1940**, the French government sets up in Vichy. **10 juillet 1940**, the French Parliament gives marshal Pétain full constitutional powers. **11 july 1940**, the

French Republic is replaced by the French State which implements the National Revolution. **3 october 1940**, Vichy government promulgates Jewish status.

**24 october 1940**, , Hitler and Pétain are seen shaking hands in Montoire (affirming political collaboration).

→ **22 june 1941**, Germany attacks USSR. **11 December 1941**, Hitler declares war on the United States. **7 June 1942**, Jews in the occupied zone have to wear yellow stars. **16 and 17 July 1942**, Vel' d'hiv raid in Paris. 13,000 Jews are arrested and deported. **4 September 1942**, Vichy government promulgates law on "the use and guidance of the workforce". **8 September 1942**, allied landing in North Africa. **11 November 1942**, Germans enter non-occupied zone.

→ **2 February 1943**, Germans surrender in Stalingrad. **16 February 1943**, Vichy government implements Obligatory Work Service (STO). **27 may 1943**, 1<sup>st</sup> National Resistance Council meeting is held, run by Jean Moulin (unification of the interior Resistance). **september 1943** allied landing in the Italian peninsula.

→ **6 june 1944**, allied landing in Normandy. **15 August 1944**, allied landing in Provence. **25 August 1944**, Paris is liberated.

**23 november 1944**, Strasbourg is liberated.

→ **27 January 1945**, Soviet troops liberate Auschwitz camp. **4/11 February 1945**, Yalta Conference. **April/May 1945**, concentration camps are liberated (by the Russians, Sachsenhausen 22 April and Ravenbrück 30 April; by the British, Bergen-Belsen 14 April, Flossenbürg 23 April, Dachau 29 April, Neuengamme 4 May, Mauthausen 5 May) **7 and 8 May 1945**, Germans surrendered in Reims followed by Berlin.

## Chronological References... Chronological References...

### **KL Natzweiler**

Outline chronology

[www.struthof.fr/en/the-kl-natzweiler/outline-chronology/](http://www.struthof.fr/en/the-kl-natzweiler/outline-chronology/)

## *Glossary*

**Appellplatz** : roll call square.

**Arbeitslager** : labour camp.

**Block** : detainee barracks most often built out of boards.

**Concentration camp (nazi)**: detention centres initially created by the 3rd Reich starting in 1933 to intern, eliminate political opponents to the nazi regime as well as Gypsies, Jews, Jehovah Witnesses, homosexuals and asocial elements (criminals, hobos, etc.) and exploit their labour. The camps were also used to detain resistants and opponents in all of occupied Europe and to use them as servile laborers. Everything was aimed at dehumanising the detainees and leading them to a quick death.

**Extermination camp** : specially created camps to implement the “final solution” as well as to eliminate the Gypsies and Slavic people.

**Goumi** : rubber Billy club.

**Kapo** : detainees (often common law criminals) responsible for managing the camp prisoners, a block or a commando.

**KL** : Konzentrationslager (concentration camp).

**KL-Na** : Natzweiler concentration camp

**Kommando** : annex camp from original camp- work camp- group of detainees assigned to a specific job.

**Lager** : a camp

**Los ! Los schnell !** : order given to go more quickly, often given with physical blows.

Death march : with allied troops approaching, the SS had camps evacuated. These transfers of prisoners, weakened by work, hardships and diseases, and often carried out in appalling conditions, resulted in numerous deaths.

**NN** : Nacht und Nebel (Night and Fog). Referred to deportees who were destined to, ‘disappear’. The “NN” decrees of December 1941 aimed at intensifying repression against opponents in Western Europe. The objective was to completely eliminate them by erasing all trace of their existence and deaths, like silhouettes pulled into the night and fog.

**Revier** : infirmary.

**Schlague** : Billy club, club

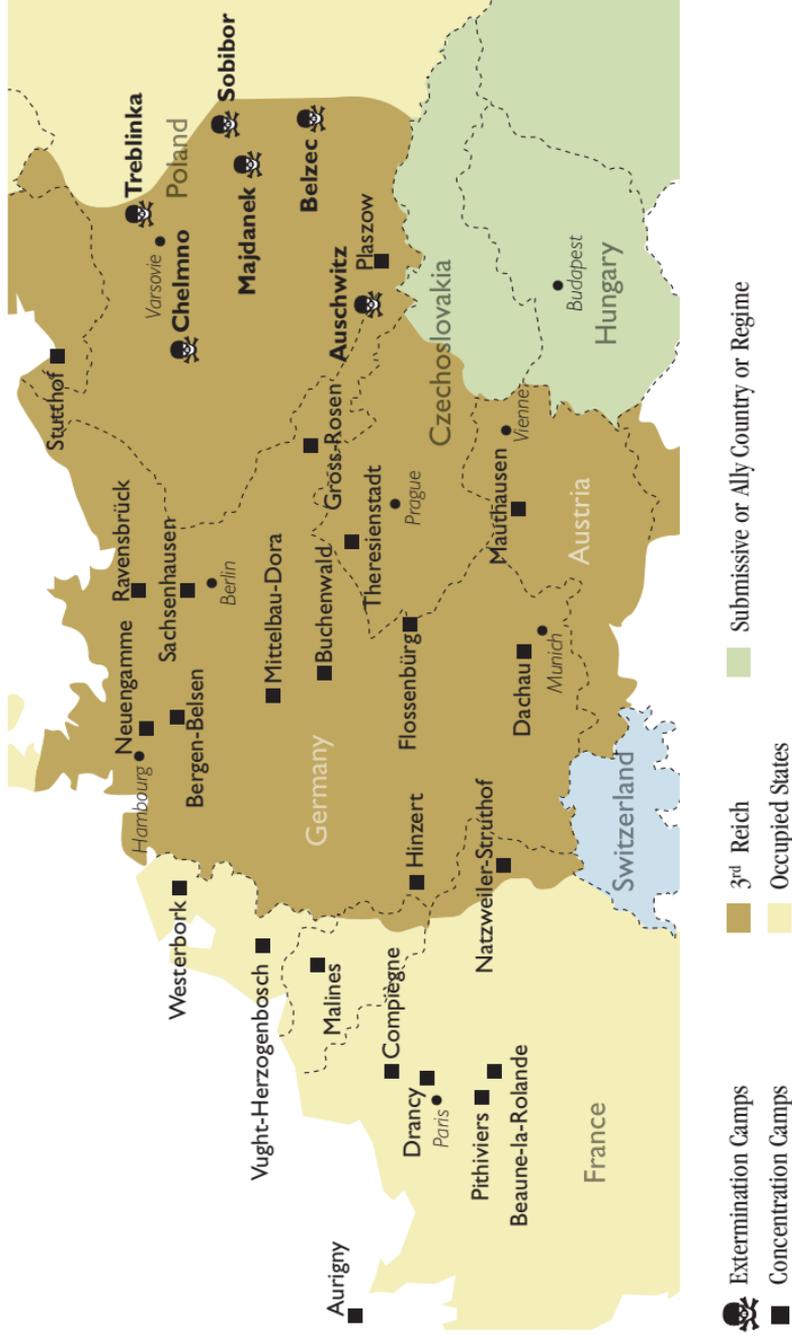
Final solution : nazi code name for the programmed extermination of Jews in Europe.

**SS** : Schutzstaffeln (protection squadrons). Among their diverse missions, the SS organised the repressive element of the nazi regime with concentration and extermination camps. The “Totenkopf” SS (“skull-crossbones”) were camp guards.

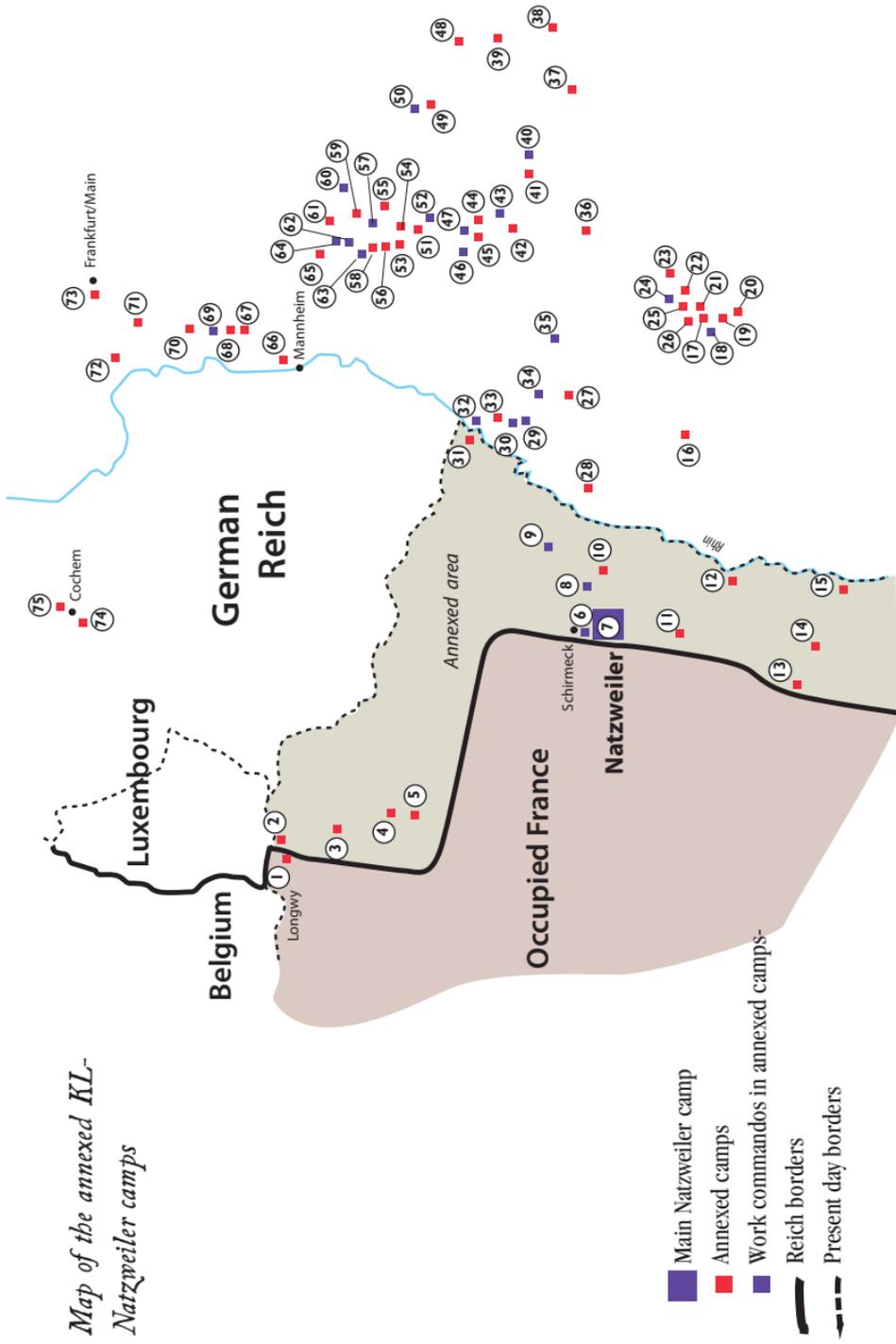
**Stück** : piece, part, accounting term used to designate the detainees.

**Typhus fever** : epidemic disease transmitted by body lice.

# Main concentration camps within the nazi system and occupied France



*Map of the annexed KL-Natzweiler camps*



- Main Natzweiler camp
- Annexed camps
- Work commandos in annexed camps-
- Reich borders
- Present day borders

- 1 • Thil  
 2 • Audun-le-Tiche  
 3 • Hayange  
 4 • Metz  
 5 • Peltre  
 6 • Rothau  
 7 • **Natzweiler**  
 8 • Dorlisheim  
 9 • Strasbourg  
 10 • Obernai  
 11 • Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines  
 12 • Colmar  
 13 • Urbès  
 14 • Gernay  
 15 • Mulhouse  
 16 • Haslach  
 17 • Schömberg  
 18 • Zepfenhahn  
 19 • Schörzingen  
 20 • Spaichingen  
 21 • Dormettingen  
 22 • Frommern  
 23 • Bisingen  
 24 • Balingen  
 25 • Erzingen  
 26 • Dautmergen  
 27 • Calw  
 28 • Offenburg  
 29 • Baden Oos  
 30 • Sandweiler  
 31 • Schwindratzheim  
 32 • Rastatt  
 33 • Iffezheim  
 34 • Baden Baden  
 35 • Taifingen  
 36 • Hailfingen  
 37 • Geislingen a.d. Steige  
 38 • Heidenheim  
 39 • Wasseralfingen  
 40 • Bernhausen  
 41 • Echterdingen  
 42 • Leonberg  
 43 • Zuffenhausen  
 44 • Unterriexingen  
 45 • Vaihingen  
 46 • Ensing  
 47 • Gross-Sachsenheim  
 48 • Ellwangen  
 49 • Hesselental  
 50 • Schwäbisch Hall  
 51 • Neckargartach  
 52 • Heilbronn  
 53 • Bad Rappenau  
 54 • Kochendorf  
 55 • Neckarzimmern  
 56 • Neckarbischofsheim  
 57 • Obrigheim  
 58 • Asbach  
 59 • Neckarelz 1& Neckarelz 2  
 60 • Mosbach  
 61 • Neckargerach  
 62 • Binau  
 63 • Daudenzell  
 64 • Guttenbach  
 65 • Neunkirchen  
 66 • Sandhofen  
 67 • Heppenheim  
 68 • Bensheim  
 69 • Auerbach  
 70 • Darmstadt  
 71 • Walldorf  
 72 • Geisenheim  
 73 • Katzbach-Frankfurt  
 74 • Bruttig-Cochem  
 75 • Treis-Cochem

# *Remembrance Days*

Chenôve's Remembrance Days were co-jointly organised on 22 and 23 October 2010 by the city of Chenôve and the Amicale Nationale des Déportés et familles de disparus de Natzweiler-Struthof. Participants included several of the survivors who are in the film, "In the Darkest of Nights" as well as journalist Ivan Levai. The Remembrance Days were sponsored by a committee whose members include Marie-José Chombart de Lauwe, Robert Badinter, Edgar Morin and Yves Guéna.

More than 600 people from all generations came together to view the film. On the screen and in the room alike, the last survivors deeply moved the audience by their courage and the power of their commitment. Middle and secondary school pupils were equally taken aback during their respective viewings.

Yet, the aim is to take the emotion one step further. Indeed, it's necessary to help people become aware, to think and to understand themselves individually and collectively. This was the frame work of the roundtable with historians, (see extracts below), the debates and the commemorative ceremonies that followed the film's viewing.



From left to right : Yves Boudias, Henri Mosson, Ivan Levai, Pierre Rolinet, Jean Villeret and Jean Esmonin, Mayor of Chenôve, during the debate that followed the viewing

# *Resistance, Deportation Memory*

Extracts from the roundtable organised in Chenôve Saturday 23 October 2010 within  
the framework of “Chenôve’s Remembrance Days”

Preceded by the official presentation of the film, “In the Darkest of Nights”

With

**Valérie Drechsler,**

*Director of the European Centre of the Deported Resistance,*

**Yves Lescure,**

*Director of the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Déportation,*

**François Marcot,**

*University Lecturer Emeritus*

*Author of “Dictionnaire historique de la Résistance”,*

**Robert Steegmann,**

*Associate Lecturer*

*Author of “Le Camp de Natzweiler-Struthof”,*

**Serge Wolikow and Jean Vigreux,**

*University lecturers*

*Authors of*

*“Les Combats de la Mémoire : la FNDIRP de 1945 à nos jours”.*



## *Memory and History*

What can be said about the memory of the events of World War Two at a time when it's starting to become part history from the distant past? When you speak to a 15 year old today about these events, it's like you're talking about Vercingétorix. There is no longer the notion of graveness, nor the origin of the events, the tragedy, the horrors and the consequences. The role of the survivors is essential. But it is also very important to have the input from historians. If you take the example of a cathedral, the historian is the buttress. It's necessary to weave history and memory together again. The issue at hand is not only to interest young people and not only to create a link between the 80 year old plus survivors and the youth. It's also about creating a link with the entire population. It's important to say that a history class isn't only about bringing pupils to Struthof.

**Valérie Drechsler**

To be brief, I'd say that memory is loyalty and history is the search of the truth, meaning the historical sequence of events and the explanations of the facts. Individual memory translates how the events were experienced; this is personal to each person which can never be substituted. (...) This memory is indispensable. (...) As director of the Foundation, I'm confronted with the eternal debate between history and memory and especially the use of testimonials. (...). At the Foundation, we strive to contemplate the link between history and memory, to highlight the underlying themes that analyse the how and why the events happened. If we don't understand what happened and why it happened, we leave behind the analysis of a phenomenon that was one of the major tragedies of the 20th century. Memory would therefore no longer serve a purpose.

**Yves Lescure**

## *Collective Memory*

Maurice Halbwachs, renowned sociologist and lecturer at the Collège de France who died in the camps put forth the following concerning collective memory: there is the idea that the collective memory of a people included all of the memory work transmitted by individual and collective actors, but after it is also passed onto and looked after by cultural and teaching institutions, by historians but also by pedagogy. There is a collective memory for the French revolution. There are no living survivors from this revolution. One of today's stakes is to know what place the phenomenon of deportation and the resistance will have in education and the forming of the new generations. The stake is of extreme importance. Researchers' work, that of museums, cultural institutions, school programmes is all about this history-memory relationship. In other words, we are the bookkeepers of what collective memory in our country is and it's important to not put the responsibility solely on the survivors. I don't want to imply that we shouldn't use them: this responsibility, they have it and they are ready to assume it. But also need to collectively take care of it, but in our way, notably in our historian way.

**Serge Wolikow**

## *The Duty of Being Exact*

Quoting the very old definition of from Saint Augustin, memory is the “past in the present”, meaning, the way in which the past is present in our society, and the way we conjugate it in the present. We are all aware of the filters, forgotten aspects, but also reconstructions. Consequently, there are present day stakes that are repeats of the past. Historians have to sort it all out. (...) Our truth isn't a singular truth that we saw in the film (“In the Darkest of Nights”). Our truth isn't that of philosophy, our truth isn't that of justice that defines good and bad (...). The truth of historians strives to show the past by insisting on explaining it. As such, historians' work is not only working with testimonials but also archives. We have to cross reference sources, rework chronology and be take special careful of being exact.

**Jean Vigreux**

## *The Complexity of the Notion of Resistance*

From 1940 to 1942, the Resistance gave hope to the French population and subsequently showed that we didn't accept what was happening. Showing that we refused to follow the new order, not only by thought but also by acts, even if the first actions were often more symbolic than effective. All of this changed at the end of 1942 and the beginning of 1943 when the stake was to save Jews and stop people from being sent into forced labour in Germany. Yet, the Resistance, through its visibly effective actions, was perceived completely differently by the population. People did have to give up the idea that all the French workers who didn't leave for Germany did so because they adhered to the Resistance. Indeed, it's much more complicated: many workers who refused to work in Germany didn't do so out of patriotism but did it for personal reasons or because they were afraid to die in bombings and shelling. However, in its collective dimension, people's refusal, was largely supported by the population and was given a patriotic value. It was quickly perceived (as being done with the Resistance's support (as being done as part of the Resistance) and resulted in the emergence a new reality: people saw the Resistance as legitimate. This underscores the necessity to talk about the complexity of things when looking at this period, as regards both chronological complexity and that in the way we think. We must therefore see the Resistance as one of many behaviours: withdrawal, adaptation to the oppressive measures, survival or opportunistic... The Resistance wasn't a monastery order in which people entered or left for a secular life. Resistants were beings who lived and survived in the society of their times with its possibilities and constraints.

**François Marcot**

## *The Complexity of the Natzweiler Camp*

I'd like to talk about the camp's history. First of all, I want to insist on the fact that it wasn't a nazi concentration camp on French territory, but a nazi concentration camp in Germany. Indeed, Alsace at that time was German (...). This camp was called Natzweiler and not Struthof. It is located in a place that is called Struthof, by that's all. Natzweiler extends 200 kilometres around this small point. This camp continued to run when the main camp no longer existed. We are therefore dealing with something that is very complex which is presently located on both sides of the Rhin River. There is also another complication: Natzweiler was a concentration camp but there was a gas chamber, and at the same time, there was a 3rd complex aspect: in the valley below, 8 kilometres away, there was another nazi camp that was a reformatory camp. So, there were 2 camps in the same place that were completely different, that didn't have the same administration and that didn't have the same objectives (...). The camp at the bottom of the valley was the camp for Alsaciens. They'd go there for 2 or 3 months, sometimes longer, when they didn't understand quickly. It was a hard camp, but it had absolutely nothing to do with the concentration camp. Nothing. (...) It's important to know that detainees at Natzweiler were for the most part Poles and Soviets. (...) But for a long time, the camp's history was only seen from and developed through one angle: the French angle. Yet, other histories existed: that of the Dutch, the Luxembourgish, the Belgians, etc.; several fractioned histories as opposed to one global history. The camp waited 60 years to have one history. Up until then, there had been memories of the camp, but there wasn't a history of the camp.

**Robert Steegmann**

## *The Resistance, a Social Movement*

As Pierre Nora said, memory simplifies and history complicates. I'd like to say that history respects the complexity or tries to respect the complexity of realities and behaviours. (...) In my point of view, historians mustn't accept the all too well known phrase: there were three categories of French under the Occupation, the resistants, the collaborators and those who 'waited to see'. It's far more complicated. The main question is about the "others" and we can't deal with them as if they were an undefined, immobile and uncommitted mass. (...) I think that we better understand the reality of the Resistance by defining it as a social movement, without limiting it only to the organised Resistance and by taking into account the attitudes of a given population in a given place. What counted for the survival of the maquis? Was it the number of combatants? Not really. It wasn't important if there were 100 or 300 of them. The leader's ability to lead? Most certainly. Their weapons? Absolutely. But there was something even more important: the way society acted. If villagers denounced the maquis – whose presence may not have been known – the maquis was sure to lose. Indeed, members of the Resistance didn't fight every day, but they were there and had to eat every day: would the farmers give them food or not? Would the baker supply bread? Would the French police warn of an imminent maquis attack? These were all crucial aspects! The way the population acted conditioned the survival and effectiveness of a Resistance. This is why it's impossible to measure the extent of the Resistance by simply counting the number of members in its organisations. A baker who supplied bread once was not a resistent. But if he delivered bread to the maquis every day, the risk he ran was as serious as the members of the Resistance and his role was more important than that of the 100th Resistance recruit. **François Marcot**

## *Night and Fog*

To put the film (“In the Darkest of Nights”) in its general context, it’s important to know that the Natzweiler camp opened 21 May 1941; Dachau had opened 8 years before. The camps weren’t opened for Resistants, but were an integral part of a system. They were first opened for German resistants which is a fundamental aspect. There was a German resistance, there was a German opposition and it was broken up. The system then spread throughout Europe in relation to the war. Then there was the main change at Natzweiler in 1943 which is the consequence of the famous Keitel decree that dated back to 1941 and was made more exhaustive in 1942 as regards the creation of the NN category. This was a key factor because there weren’t many examples of this very particular category within the whole of the concentration camp system and it had two distinct realities: there was a real NN who was referred to as “procedure” for whom the Keitel decree was truly applied. They were there to be tried later, who had to be tried in Germany in order to follow certain procedures and legal form, knowing full well that the NNs were really deportees from Western Europe because Slavic people didn’t even deserve the NN category, they didn’t exist. Then the second category of NN was that of convenience for the SS: people were put into this category because their entire beings would be broken. The major change at Natzweiler came with these NN prisoners. The first were Norwegian. The first group of French arrived 9 July 1943. From specific memories (I’ve worked with deportee survivor testimonials which were given immediately after leaving the camps), no other category was treated in the same way as the NN. From the beginning, it brought the French group closer together within Natzweiler and it still gives this group of resistants strength to this day.

**Robert Steegmann**

## *Giving Meaning*

It’s important not to forget that when Wehrmacht arrived in France in 1940, after the French army’s debacle, the different ethnic groups were sorted. I insist on the word : Wehrmacht ‘ethnically sorted’ the French army. In different places infantrymen of Senegalese, Algerian, etc. origins were killed because they were men of colour, “subhuman” who were soldiers not worthy of being beaten by the German army. The only Prefect who refused this tragedy was Jean Moulin in Chartres (...). This is one of many memories that resurface. This also leads us to question the automation of memory (...) and its different scales. 8 May 1945 that we all rightly commemorate as the end of Hitlerism, the end of Nazism, is at the same time the date as Sétif and Guelma (1). Are we really able to confront everything ?

**Jean Vigreux**

(1) *Bloody repressions of Algerian national riots in the Constantine department in French Algeria. There were 102 “European” deaths and an estimated 8,000-15,000 “indigenous” deaths.*

At present time, the trend is to valorise the victim in the resistant. There is indeed a reason why Guy Môquet's letter is of interest: because he was a victim, he was young and because of the nature of his last letter in and of itself. The text is obviously deeply moving, but its register is strictly sentimental and doesn't put forth any values of the Resistance while other letters of those executed reveal the true sense of commitment of Resistants; these letters are not made compulsory to read, nor is the programme of the National Resistance Committee.

**François Marcot**

The analysis of what happened highlights the unfathomable mechanism that sparks the instinct of domination. Nazism was in essence a dominating regime. As such, it was scornful for the whole of humanity. This contempt led to what can be called social and racial hygiene. Through this mechanism we can analyse present day society and warn against dominating ideologies and the principle of creating new humans. It's an illusion. We cannot recreate humans. Humanity is what it is. We can evolve within civilization, make society reflect and evolve, but we cannot create new humans, it's an illusion. And yet the nazis wanted to create new humans based on deceit and on a misleading ideology which is that of the superior race, and on the negation of all the values of human freedom. Through connecting this memory, and everything it includes, with historical events, we can see base lines which allow each of us to find our bearings in our existence.

**Yves Lescure**

### *Commemorating*

When I think of the word commemorate, I see marking memory together. What sense will this have in ten years without the work of yesterday's historians, without what they are doing today and without what, I hope, they will be doing tomorrow? Tomorrow is still uncertain, at least for the future of historians in France (...). What meaning will this word have, what meaning will these signs and these signs of commemoration have if we no longer know about what we are talking, of whom we are talking, why we are talking about this specific place, why this particular person acted and how this person, this individual is part of a whole? How does this person, this individual citizen join the whole, becomes part of society. It's my belief that there is a lot of work to be done together to redefine the word 'politics' and the notion of the way in which society must be organised.

**Valérie Drechsler**

## *Responsabilisation*

Commemorating the deportation and extermination of young Jewish children by putting up plaques in schools is good but it makes youth of today carry the weight of this history. I believe that introducing modules that foster reflection about this period of history within the Ecole Nationale d'Administration, in the French police would be a more positive alternative to study the behaviour of these entities at the critical moment in France. This is where responsabilisation begins.

**Yves Lescure**

In Germany, the country that is at the centre of the history of WW2 and deportation, there is something that exists in no other country and I'm waiting for it to exist in France: civic and political youth training offices in all of the länders. It's not a question of instilling a political ideology but rather of forming a political life and society, meaning everyone interacting; here, history has a place. And as long as we continue to minimalise the teaching of history in France, errors will continue to be made. Not only errors, but we will continue making a grave mistake.

**Robert Steegmann**

(...) One of marshal Pétain's expressions was, "Think French, Think Pétain", which meant: "Be Quiet, This Isn't Your Field of Expertise!". One of the messages that the Resistance has passed down to us could be formulated as follows: "citizens and resisters alike, get involved in State affairs, think for yourself, remember how you were during Vichy, the political and economic leaders, the experts and technocrats were wrong and mistaken". In fact, this is indeed what is bothersome in the Resistance legacy.

**François Marcot**

## *Memory Work and the Duty of History*

Commemorations are useful as are memory plaques dedicated to the victims, but they very often make our youth or today's society carry the burden of everything that happened before in the attempt to be repentant or emotional or sentimental...No! We have to give meaning to it, to explain it. This is why I deeply thank Jean-Marc Bordet for his film and his mention of how it is part of "memory work". It's more precise and it avoids using the expression "duty of memory", there is no obligation. Memory work and would say duty of History, here yes, I would use the word duty. We need to give it meaning, to explain and compare. Compare situations. France was one situation but there were others in Ukraine, Poland, Italy, Bulgaria, etc. (...).

**Jean Vigreux**

## *Legacy*

Resistants had the very strong idea that renewal meant a new way of running the country by new political elite. This explains the major rifts within the organisation and political and personal lives. This is very important when we speak about legacy because the resistance does not only leave an ensemble of ideals: the assessment of the resistance is precisely the liberation conditions and reconstruction where the ideas of the CNR (National Resistance Centre), whether they concern social protection or education, including the reflection on retirement, came into play. Over the past several year, we can that there is discussion on how to look at this legacy in contemporary France. No one owns this legacy, yet we must feel somehow collectively called by this question. The role of historians is to work, to remind us of a certain number of elements which are fundamentally complicated. People say that they are concerned about this legacy today (...) because they think there is a fundamental reassessment of it. Yet, in the name of morality and of the duty of memory the authentic values of the Resistance are progressively being eliminated. This is what makes historians nervous at times as regards the question of the duty of memory: we work with emotion : it is said that every child is made to feel the bearer of the memory of each dead child (which is unbearable for me) and at the same time, it's a means to dissimulate an entire part of the social legacy left by the Resistance. So the question of the legacy of the Resistance is very much current. It's not only current in terms of moral commitment and individual values, but rather through the collective experience of the Resistance that led to a collective work: that of the liberation and the reconstruction of a new France which is the France of democracy.

France not as a welfare state, but a conception which was that of political democracy, found again liberty, but also a certain conception of social democracy.

Quite frankly, this is part of our common legacy to which I remain attached.

**Serge Wolikow**

## *Intellectual Weapon*

Within the Resistance, like in the daily lives of the deportees, there was a fundamental experience: social ties, fraternity and solidarity. In a society such as ours, which is continually more individualistic, these words are often seen as "behind the times", like those who aspire to social justice are called archaic and those who dare contest the experts are deemed as the enemies of modernity (...). If we recognise the social dimension of the Resistance, we give it different content and its legacy is no longer a burden for us. It becomes an intellectual weapon, a reference that gives meaning to the world in which we live. For me, this is how we can see the legacy of the Resistance.

**François Marcot**

## **Bibliography**

[www.struthof.fr/en/media-library/bibliography/](http://www.struthof.fr/en/media-library/bibliography/)

Links

Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Déportation - [www.fmd.asso.fr](http://www.fmd.asso.fr)

Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah - [www.fondationshoah.org](http://www.fondationshoah.org)