



FACE TO FACE WITH THE ENEMY:  
THE REACTIONS OF YOUNG GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN  
TO THE NAZI OCCUPATION OF FRANCE

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on the experiences of young girls, who were aged between four and twenty-one when the Occupation began, growing up in Occupied France during World War II. Although youth and gender have been researched independently, this has been in terms of the policies that were implemented by the Vichy regime. Similarly studies on public opinion focus on the population as a whole rather than on a specific category of people. Using archival documents and published testimonies, my research explores the complexities surrounding the formation of opinions towards the Germans in young girls' minds and how these opinions reflect their age and gender. An important factor in this interplay is that the Germans were often not much older than these young girls so in peacetime the two would have belonged to similar peer groups. In contrast to adults who could make conscious decisions about how to behave towards the enemy, young girls tended to react more naturally and instinctively. The thesis therefore argues that their accounts provide a deeper and more nuanced insight into public opinion at this time.

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## INTRODUCTION

Childhood and adolescence are distinct stages in a person's development, and both are considered pivotal. Defining childhood as encompassing the period between three and twelve years of age, it is typically a time when a person is carefree and able to experience a sense of freedom and innocence that is lost once the child grows up and enters the adult world full of constraints and responsibilities. Most children experience a sense of security, safety even, provided by the adults who care for them. Although childhood is most often accompanied by a focus on the self, on the individual, this does not mean that they are immune from the effects of their environment. As Maria Carrier wrote in the preface to her book *Maréchal, nous voilà...1940-1944: Souvenirs d'enfances sous l'Occupation*: 'A cette époque, le monde des adultes et celui des enfants étaient séparés, et, pourtant, les petits avaient des yeux pour voir et les oreilles pour entendre.'<sup>1</sup> This quotation is used to refer to the context of wartime France and emphasises the specificity of the period. In the 1940s the world of children was more separated from the world of adults than it is now. However, children were still able to perceive the significance of contemporary events. Although they were rarely asked for their opinions, this does not mean that they did not have them, an aspect which is evident from their literary responses to the period.

Adolescence is defined by different characteristics. In his study of youth culture from the nineteenth century to 1945, Jon Savage states that the term 'teenager' was coined in America in 1944 to refer to those aged between fourteen and eighteen and was initially used as a marketing term by advertisers. He writes: 'The fact that, for the first time, youth had become

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<sup>1</sup> *Maréchal, nous voilà...1940-1944: Souvenirs d'enfances sous l'Occupation*, ed. Maria Carrier (Paris: Autrement, 2006), p. 6.

its own target market also meant that it had become a discrete age group with its own rituals, rights and demands.<sup>2</sup> Categorised as a specific period in a young person's development, usually between the ages of twelve and twenty-one, adolescence is when both physical and emotional changes take place. It defines the transition from childhood to adulthood and is often characterised by the adolescent gaining a greater sense of self-awareness but also an awareness of what is going on in society. It is also a time when a young person begins to form their own opinions, which can result in rebellion towards those in charge.

Youth and gender were important concepts in World War II France. The policies implemented by Vichy towards these two categories have been well documented by established scholars such as W.D. Halls, Pierre Giolitto, and Miranda Pollard. Halls' pioneering study<sup>3</sup> on the youth of Vichy France examined the ways in which the Vichy regime sought to indoctrinate young people with its ideology and principles by assessing the impact, but ultimate failure, of its education policies and youth groups. He concluded that Vichy's aims were never fully realised due to the diverse political views of its ministers which resulted in there never being a single youth policy but several. Similarly, Giolitto's study<sup>4</sup> emphasises how, from birth, Vichy set out to impose specific gender roles on children by means of the toys with which they were encouraged to play and he focuses on how the National Revolution sought to form *l'homme nouveau* for the benefit of French society. He shows how these policies were largely unsuccessful due to a void between the principles of Vichy's policies and the ways in which they were applied. Jean-William Dereyomez<sup>5</sup> explores the diverse everyday experiences of those aged twenty-five or under during the war years. He

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<sup>2</sup> Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture* (London: Viking Penguin, 2007), p. xv.

<sup>3</sup> W.D. Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> Pierre Giolitto, *Histoire de la jeunesse sous Vichy* (Paris: Perrin, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> *Etre jeune en France (1939-1945)*, ed. Jean-William Dereyomez (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001).



provides a thorough summary of Vichy's youth policies and youth groups before exploring young people's involvement in the Resistance and with communism. As Vichy's concept of youth was synonymous with young males, it is not surprising that these studies focus predominantly on boys and young men. My research develops Halls' and Giolitto's findings further as, whereas they looked at Vichy's attitude to youth in the aftermath of defeat, I examine how young people themselves responded to this defeat. Furthermore, the defeat did not just have an impact on males, young girls were also affected but their opinions have largely been ignored. One of the most recent studies on youth is a journal article by Sophie B. Roberts<sup>6</sup> which looks at the involvement of the Zazous in the yellow star protest in June 1942. She argues that their action was a form of dissidence to demonstrate their rejection of the Occupation rather than a form of resistance. My research develops her findings further by looking at the different forms of protest in which young girls participated and their reasons for doing so.

Studies on gender focus on the dual aspects of continuity and change in different contexts. A collection of essays entitled *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* asserts that although war is traditionally considered a male domain, the act of war, by means of propaganda and the media, in fact imposes gender distinctions on all members of society regardless of whether they are involved in armed combat.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, if women do manage to take on new roles, it is only for a specific time period as society reverts back to normal once the crisis has passed. In this way, war, in fact, seeks to reinforce pre-existing gender roles by emphasising that men's roles will always be more important and that society is still

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<sup>6</sup> Sophie B. Roberts, 'A case for dissidence in Occupied Paris: the Zazous, youth dissidence and the yellow star campaign in Occupied Paris, 1942', *French History*, 24:1 (2010), pp. 82-103.

<sup>7</sup> Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz, 'Introduction', in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, eds. Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 5.

very much based on patriarchal values. The Vichy regime was keen to promote the traditional role of women, as Miranda Pollard<sup>8</sup> shows how its policies favoured married mothers above all other women and encouraged pro-natalism, whilst banning abortion, to emphasise that the family was of primordial importance. Similarly H el ene Eck states that although the Interwar period had witnessed young girls acquire more freedom by wearing shorts and exploring the countryside on their bicycles<sup>9</sup>, Vichy encouraged women to rediscover their feminine qualities.<sup>10</sup> C elia Bertin's *Femmes sous l'Occupation* combines a historical, factual account of the period with personal testimonies, including her own as she was in her late teens when the Occupation began and worked for the Resistance. She notes when referring to Vichy that although the regime was keen to protect women and indoctrinate youth, nothing was put in place to mould young girls.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, she felt young girls were encouraged to keep their opinions to themselves.<sup>12</sup> My research therefore counters these perceptions as it explicitly seeks to bring young girls' experiences to the fore and explain their opinions and attitudes by according them a more prominent role in the historiography of the Occupation period.

To a certain extent, the upholding of traditional gender roles was present in the outlook of resisters. Rayna Kline<sup>13</sup> emphasises that although women held diverse and varied roles within Resistance groups, their experiences of this period are very similar to women in general. Women took on more prominent roles within French society, whether working for the Resistance or becoming the head of the family due to an absent husband. However, post-war

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<sup>8</sup> Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: mobilizing gender in Vichy France* (London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> H el ene Eck, 'Les Fran aises sous Vichy', in *Histoire des femmes. Le XXe Si cle*, eds. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot (Paris: Plon, 1992), p. 193.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>11</sup> C elia Bertin, *Femmes sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Stock, 1993), pp. 79-80.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>13</sup> Rayna Kline, 'Partisans, Godmothers, Bicyclists and other terrorists: women in the French Resistance and under Vichy', *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History*, (1977), pp. 375-383.

attitudes were very much a continuation of what had gone before with the government showing little desire to acknowledge their role or accord them more rights in society. A desire to marginalise women's involvement is also underlined by Paula Schwartz, who assesses the roles of women in the Resistance and argues that the very limited definition of what constitutes 'resistance' leads to an incomplete picture of their involvement.<sup>14</sup> Historiography and French society in the immediate post-war period only focused on those who held prominent roles within organisations but in the 1970s the focus shifted in order to emphasise the ordinary nature of women in the Resistance.<sup>15</sup> One potential reason for the lack of distinction between male and female involvement is put forward by Claire Andrieu<sup>16</sup>, who suggests that to do so would be to undermine the spirit of Resistance – its universalism. Furthermore, existing research on women is predominantly based on oral testimony, with the interviewees reluctant to focus on the role of women being separate to that of men and refusing to ask for any form of recognition of their involvement. Indeed, Schwartz emphasises how women speak about male and female resisters taking the same risks, except where armed combat is concerned as that was perceived as a male role.<sup>17</sup> However, she does acknowledge that the fact that women were not considered to be politically active at the beginning of the Occupation accorded them a certain invisibility with regards to the Police.<sup>18</sup> My research takes these findings further in several ways: it uses a much broader definition of resistance, as explained in Chapter Five, and also uses written personal testimonies and archival sources to

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<sup>14</sup> Paula Schwartz, 'Redefining Resistance: Women's Activism in Wartime France', in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, eds. Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 142.

<sup>15</sup> Paula Schwartz, 'Résistance et différences des sexes: bilan et perspectives', *Résistance et Libérations: France 1940-45. CLIO. Histoire, femmes et sociétés* [online], 1 (1995).

<sup>16</sup> Claire Andrieu, 'Women in the French Resistance', *French Politics, Culture and Society*, 18:1 (Spring 2000), pp. 13-27.

<sup>17</sup> Paula Schwartz, 'Partisanes and Gender Politics in Vichy France', *French Historical Studies*, 16:1 (Spring 1989), p. 129.

<sup>18</sup> Paula Schwartz, 'La répression des femmes communistes', *Identités féminines et violences politiques (1936-1946). Cahiers de l'IHTP No.31*, eds. François Rouquet and Danièle Voldman (Paris: IHTP, 1995).

see how young girls sought to justify their behaviour at the time. Furthermore, it also emphasises how combining youth and gender could provide more advantages for the resistance than gender alone.

In terms of the existing research on women and collaboration, Françoise Leclerc and Michèle Weindling discuss how when references to female collaboration are made, the reader instinctively thinks of sexual collaboration which was punished by head shaving. However, female collaboration in fact incorporated acts such as denunciation and punishments such as imprisonment.<sup>19</sup> Out of the total number of women incarcerated, the reason for 54% was given as collaboration.<sup>20</sup> Luc Capdevila<sup>21</sup> states that where female collaboration is concerned, it is not just the act itself that is the problem; women lose their French identity as sexuality is associated with morality, national identity and active collaboration. In the Lorient, the focus of his study, more than 60% were under 26 and 14% were minors. As young girls were unlikely to want to denounce others for their behaviour, my research examines their romantic involvement with the Germans, their involvement in sexual collaboration and their reasons for doing so. Again, the fact that the majority of young girls considered in this thesis were teenagers going through puberty means that their reasons for associating with Germans would vary significantly from older women.

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<sup>19</sup> Françoise Leclerc and Michèle Weindling, 'La répression des femmes coupables d'avoir collaboré pendant l'Occupation', *Résistance et Libérations: France 1940-45, CLIO. Histoire, Femmes et Sociétés* [online], 1 (1995).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Luc Capdevila, 'La "collaboration sentimentale": antipatriotisme ou sexualité hors normes', in *Identités féminines et violences politiques (1936-1946). Cahiers de l'IHTP No.31*, eds. François Rouquet and Danièle Voldman (Paris: IHTP, 1995).

Studies on public opinion have also been carried out such as John Sweets on Clermont-Ferrand.<sup>22</sup> The most significant study on this topic is Pierre Laborie's *L'opinion française sous Vichy*. His study is predominantly based on prefects' reports and postal interceptions, both of which sought to pick up on the mood of the times and find out what the population was really thinking. As young girls were unlikely to interest prefects or reveal their thoughts if and when communicating with relatives via post, these sources would be of little use to this project. Instead, as we shall see later, diaries are more likely to provide an insight into young girls' views at this time, as for some a journal was their closest confidante. Similarly archival sources contain testimonies given by young girls at the time, which again provides a deeper insight into what they were actually thinking. In this respect, my research can also contribute to the field of public opinion by providing the views of young girls towards the Occupation. I do not claim that their thoughts are representative of the whole population but merely provide an insight into the views of a specific category of people.

The aim of this project is therefore to combine the concepts of youth, gender and public opinion to assess what it was like to grow up and spend one's formative years under a foreign occupation. Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton state: 'In fact, the study of a military occupation may tell one as much about the occupied as about the conquerors'<sup>23</sup> and this is very much the aim of this project. As the age of majority in World War II France was twenty-one, the sources used have been selected to include girls who were born after June 1919. Occasionally older girls have been incorporated for comparative purposes or if an incident was particularly worthy of being mentioned. Whereas young males have traditionally been

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<sup>22</sup> John Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: The French under Nazi Occupation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>23</sup> Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), p. xvi.

brought up knowing that they could be required to fight for their country, this option was not available to young girls. This does not mean that they did not have views about the prospect of coming face to face with the Germans, who had long been enemies of France. It is for this reason that the interplay between young girls and the German occupiers is the main focus of this thesis. Although the views of young girls under twelve are considered, the majority of sources focus on adolescents. Teenage girls were at a stage in their lives when they were forming strong opinions and becoming attracted to the opposite sex for the first time which meant they were particularly susceptible to having views about the Germans at this time. This was reinforced by the fact that many Germans in France were not much older than the girls themselves and so if the two parties had met under different circumstances, they would have effectively belonged to a similar peer group. This thesis therefore seeks to respond to several research questions: In what ways was the experience of the Occupation specific for young girls? What factors contributed to their views of the Germans? What did they privately think about the Germans? And how did they reveal their views on the public stage? The term 'reaction' is being used to incorporate their thoughts and opinions of the Germans and also their overt behaviour towards the Germans themselves.

The primary sources used in this thesis are published diaries, memoirs and a biography and archival documents. This sample was selected to include as many personal testimonies as I could locate and only a couple of memoirs by Jewish girls were rejected on the basis that they were very young at the time and they chose to focus on the experience of being Jewish rather than on the Occupation itself. There are sixteen published primary sources: four diaries, eleven memoirs and one biography. The authors of these diaries vary in age, the oldest was born in 1920 and the youngest in 1927. The diaries are Denise Domenach-Lallich's *Demain il*

*fera beau: journal d'une adolescente (novembre 1939-septembre 1944)* (Lyon: Editions BGA Permezel, 2001), Micheline Bood's *Les Années doubles: Journal d'une lycéenne sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1974), Christiane Peugeot's *Libérez Peugeot! Journal de jeunesse, 1944* (Paris: AkR, 2006), and Benoîte and Flora Groult's *Journal à quatre mains* (Paris: Denoël, 1962). Benoîte Groult was born in 1920, Denise Domenach-Lallich and Flora Groult in 1924, Micheline Bood in 1926, and Christiane Peugeot in 1927. The subjects of the memoirs were born between 1924 and 1936. The memoirs are Antonia Hunt's *Little Resistance: A Teenage English Girl's Adventures in Occupied France* (London: Leo Cooper/Secker and Warburg, 1982), Micheline Larès-Yoël's *France 40-44: Expérience d'une persécution* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996), Charlotte Schapira's *Il faudra que je me souviene: La déportation des enfants de l'Union Générale des Israélites de France* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994), Martine Rouchaud's *Journal d'une petite fille 1940-1944* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), Nicole Roux's *C'est la guerre, LES ENFANTS!* (Cherbourg-Octeville: Editions Isoète, 2007), Madeleine Riffaud's *On l'appelait Rainer* (Paris: Julliard, 1994), Elisabeth Sevier's *Resistance Fighter: A Teenage Girl in World War II France* (Kansas: Sunflower University Press, 1998), Renée Roth-Hano's *Touch Wood: A Girlhood in Occupied France* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), Maroussia Naïtchenko's *Une jeune fille en guerre: La lutte antifasciste d'une génération* (Paris: Editions Imago, 2003), and Colette Coste Fléchelle's *Jumelles dans la tourmente 1939-1945* (Paris: Editions de l'Officine, 2007). Dominique-Martin Le Trividic's *Une héroïne de la Résistance: Marie-Thérèse Le Calvez du réseau Shelburn* (Rennes: Editions Ouest-France, 2002) is a new edition of the memoirs of Marie-Thérèse Le Calvez. Stacy Cretzmeyer's *Tu t'appelles Renée: Paroles d'une Enfant cachée dans la France de Vichy (1940-1944)* (Pennsylvania: Beach Lloyd, 2005) is a biography and describes the childhood of Ruth Kapp with input from her relatives. Maroussia

Naïtchenko was born in 1923, Marie-Thérèse Le Calvez and Madeleine Riffaud in 1924, Antonia Hunt in 1925, Micheline Larès-Yoël and Charlotte Schapira in 1926, Elisabeth Sevier in 1927, Martine Rouchaud in 1928, Renée Roth-Hano and Colette Coste Fléchelle in 1931, Nicole Roux in 1934, and Ruth Kapp in 1936. These girls were thus aged between four and twenty when France was defeated by the Germans.

Although all of the girls were still in education, financially dependent on their parents as none of the authors were married, in relationships or had children of their own at the time, their backgrounds are very diverse. Of the seventeen writers, ten are French. These are Micheline Bood, Denise Domenach-Lallich, Christiane Peugeot, Martine Rouchaud, Benoîte and Flora Groult, Colette Coste Fléchelle, Marie-Thérèse Le Calvez, Nicole Roux and Madeleine Riffaud. Two have Polish roots, as Charlotte Schapira's parents were both Polish whilst Renée Roth-Hano's parents were Polish and Hungarian. Two authors have Russian connections: Maroussia Naïtchenko was born to an aristocratic French mother and Russian father and Elisabeth Sevier's, née Kapelian, grandparents grew up in Russia but moved to France following the Russian Revolution. Antonia Hunt, née Lyon-Smith, was born in Canada to English and Canadian parents. Ruth Kapp Hartz's parents were German and Micheline Larès-Yoël's parents were Portuguese. Micheline Bood, Denise Domenach-Lallich, Christiane Peugeot, Martine Rouchaud, Benoîte and Flora Groult, Nicole Roux, Colette Coste Fléchelle, Madeleine Riffaud and Elisabeth Sevier all originated from bourgeois families. Seven of these girls had relatives who were members of the military. The fathers of Colette Coste Fléchelle and Elisabeth Sevier were called into the French army, whilst Micheline Bood's father was an *officier de réserve* and her brother was an RAF pilot. Marie-Thérèse Le Calvez's father was in the Merchant Navy and her five brothers were all involved with the



military. Antonia Hunt's father was a member of the Royal Horse Artillery and Ruth Kapp's father and uncle joined the Foreign Legion. The religious backgrounds of these girls vary considerably. Nine girls had Catholic backgrounds: Micheline Bood, Denise Domenach-Lallich, Nicole Roux, Colette Coste Fléchelle, Benoîte and Flora Groult and Madeleine Riffaud belonged to Catholic families whilst Elisabeth Sevier attended a Catholic boarding school. Catholicism could be used to hide girls' Jewish roots as Renée Roth-Hano converted to Catholicism when she was sent to a Catholic boarding school and Ruth Kapp Hartz was sent to a Catholic convent. Four have Jewish connections: Renée Roth-Hano, Charlotte Schapira, Micheline-Larès-Yoël and Ruth Kapp Hartz. Christiane Peugeot's family were protestant and Maroussia Naïtchenko received a secular upbringing. The only girl who was politically active prior to World War II was Maroussia Naïtchenko who was involved with the Communist Party. However, Madeleine Riffaud became involved with the Communist Resistance during the war as it was the easiest way for her to become involved with the Resistance rather than for her political views. Fifteen girls were based in Occupied France and two in the Free Zone. Ten of these writers had connections to Paris. Micheline Larès-Yoël, Micheline Bood, Martine Rouchaud, Charlotte Schapira, and Benoîte and Flora Groult were all born in Paris. Maroussia Naïtchenko and Elisabeth Sevier grew up in Paris whilst Renée Roth-Hano's family lived in Mulhouse but moved to Paris in August 1940 following the defeat of France. Madeleine Riffaud moved to Paris in order to become involved with the Resistance. The other girls lived in various locations throughout France: Marie-Thérèse Le Calvez in Plouha (Côtes-du-Nord), Nicole Roux in Picardie (Nord), Christiane Peugeot in Hérimoncourt (Franche-Comté), Antonia Hunt in Concarneau (Brittany), Colette Coste Fléchelle in Bouttencourt (Normandy), Denise Domenach-Lallich in Lyon and Ruth Kapp Hartz in Toulouse. The various backgrounds of these girls mean that their viewpoints of the

Occupation differed. Girls who had a Jewish heritage had more to fear and faced different constraints to those who were French. Although sixteen of the seventeen girls lived in France, Antonia Hunt, being English, did not. From the ages of ten to twelve, Antonia and her nanny had lived in Concarneau in Brittany with her mother's niece, Diana, and her French family. Antonia's father was a member of the Royal Horse Artillery and when war was declared in September 1939, his regiment was sent to France with the British Expeditionary Force. Due to this, Diana invited Antonia and her mother to spend the war in France, an offer which they accepted. Shortly after the German offensive, they found out that Antonia's father was back in England and it was decided that her mother would return to Britain but that it would be safer for Antonia to stay in France. They genuinely believed the Germans would not reach Brittany and that, as Antonia was under sixteen, she would be protected by the Geneva Convention. Her perspective of the war is different to the others, as it was not her homeland which had been defeated and occupied. Admittedly she was very fond of France but her reactions to the scenes that she witnessed are more concerned with her own behaviour than to how it would affect France.

Although these testimonies refer to the author's childhood experiences, some of these women are renowned for other aspects of their lives. Benoîte Groult is very well-known in France as a novelist and feminist. Although her first three works were co-authored by her sister Flora, she went on to become a well-known author in her own right. As her surname suggests, Christiane Peugeot belonged to the family of one of the most famous manufacturers in France. During the Second World War, her father was in charge of the Peugeot factory at Valentigney in the Jura. Micheline Bood was a descendant of Louise Collet, who was closely associated with Hugo and Flaubert and fought for the emancipation of women. Martine Rouchaud is

better known as the award-winning actress Martine Sarcey. Madeleine Riffaud became a journalist after the war and is best known for her reports on the Algerian War and Vietnam War.

The titles of these diaries and memoirs are significant as they draw attention to the fact that the authors were young when they wrote them or experienced the events which they recall. Ten out of the sixteen titles contain the words 'adolescente' or 'teenage girl', 'lyc enne', 'petite fille', 'jeune fille', 'girlhood', 'enfant' or 'enfants', and 'jeunesse'. The authors appear to want to emphasise that the Second World War took place during their childhood, during their formative years and that this would have a profound impact on their experiences. They were innocents, who were not old enough to fully understand what was happening, yet their lives were about to change forever.

Although the majority of these diaries and memoirs are written in the first person, two are not: Madeleine Riffaud's *On l'appelait Rainer* and Micheline Lar s-Yo l's *France 40-44: Exp rience d'une pers cution*. The titles of these two memoirs are also significant as the former is written in the impersonal third person narrative style whilst the latter sounds like a work of general history rather than a memoir. Madeleine Riffaud's memoir focuses on the experiences of students and young people during the Occupation but includes specific examples from Madeleine Riffaud's own life. When her own experiences are mentioned she refers to herself in the third person as Rainer, the pseudonym that she assumed when her resistance activities began. The identity of Rainer was chosen as she was fond of the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke, who was born in Prague but wrote in German. It would seem that in her own mind there is a dislocation between Rainer and Madeleine. In order to focalise the

attention of her readership Micheline Larès-Yoël's memoir is written using the formal second person 'vous', inviting the reader to be an actor rather than a spectator to events as they unfold. Furthermore this technique places the reader at the heart of the action, which enables them to better empathise with those who lived the war. She makes the reader live the events that she experienced, so that they can feel what she felt. It is important to note that the writings of these two girls take the form of memoirs rather than diaries, which could explain their choice of narrative style. As they are writing after the event, it could be that they do not want to go through a traumatic experience again, that they have moved on and so do not want to feel an emotional attachment to what happened. By distancing themselves from the action, the protagonist is not who they are now but a different person, whether it be an assumed name or the person reading their testimony. Both of these memoirs were published seventy years after the girls were born, Madeleine's in 1994 and Micheline's in 1996.

The testimony of Ruth Kapp Hartz is written as a first person narrative but is technically a biography. Ruth Kapp Hartz or 'Madame Renée Hartz' as she was known then was a French teacher in a secondary school in Philadelphia and Stacey Cretzmeyer was one of her students. Stacey had always wanted to be a writer so when she went to university she was keen to write a book about what happened to Jewish children in France during the Occupation. This was during the 1980s when details about the extent of French and German collaboration were beginning to enter the public eye as a result of the high profile trials of leading Nazis. As Stacey wanted some guidance about how to find people who were Jewish children in France, she contacted her former French teacher to ask for some assistance. Stacey did not know at that point that Ruth was a German Jew who had been one of the children that she was interested in. When Ruth asked about her motivations for working on this topic, Stacey

revealed that as a child she had heard a Catholic woman talk about her experiences of sheltering Jewish children and that she and her husband had been tortured by the Germans before her husband was eventually killed by them. When Ruth revealed her own past to Stacey, she asked her former student to write about her own life instead. Her motivations for this request were that she wanted her past to be documented in written form in order that she could pass it on to her husband and children. She also felt it would enable her to confront some of the more tragic experiences that occurred when she was young which would in turn help her to come to terms with her true identity: that of Ruth Kapp Hartz instead of Renée Hartz. She felt Stacey would be better placed to do this as English was her first language whereas it was not Ruth's own mother tongue. The testimony is written in the style of a young child as Stacey felt that this would add to the impact of the account. It is not a case of someone looking back at their life with retrospect but more a case of recalling the difficulties of being Jewish through the eyes of a very young child. In order to make it as accurate as possible, extensive interviews were carried out with Ruth herself but also her relatives and those who helped to protect her during the war years.

In addition to Ruth Kapp Hartz, five other authors explain their motivations for writing about their experiences. Martine Rouchaud reveals how it was at her mother's request that the memoir was written. As she felt that her daughter had not completed enough schoolwork during the year, she issued Martine with the task of writing a diary to keep her occupied during the summer vacation of 1944. She told Martine to remember everything that had happened since they took part in the exodus and to write it in diary form. Martine was thus required to write twenty pages a week so that her father, who spent the war in the United States of America, would be able to see what happened to them in his absence. Antonia Hunt

decided to write her memoir after reading *Die Rote Kappelle (The Red Orchestra)* by Giles Perrault in which the activities of Leopold Trepper, leader of the Communist Underground Movement throughout Europe, were revealed. She had unknowingly been working for him during the war and was mentioned on several occasions in his book. Denise Domenach-Lallich and Micheline Bood wrote their diaries as a means of coping with the situation believing it to be cathartic and helping them to understand their emotions and relationships with other family members. Micheline Larès-Yoël wrote her memoir twenty years after the war had ended. She appeared to struggle to come to terms with her past and this memoir was a means for her to acknowledge that she will never be able to extract herself from her past. After having the constraints of being Jewish placed on her during the war, she wanted to experience the freedom of having a choice about whether to reveal what she went through. However, she eventually realised that the only way for others to find out about her experiences was for her to write about them. The memoir was published thirty years later.

Whereas nine of these testimonies were published by Parisian publishers, others took the form of regional publications. The location of these publishing houses is significant as those which were situated in Paris would be able to reach a larger and more diverse audience than the regional publishing houses. However, it seems logical that those of Ruth Kapp Hartz, Elisabeth Sevier and Renée Roth-Hano were published in America as they all moved there after the war. Similarly Antonia Hunt moved back to England after the war which is where hers was published. Interestingly, some of these accounts have been published by more than one publishing house. Denise Domenach's diary was originally published by BGA Permezel in Lyon in 2001 but a new edition which featured the original diary plus an interview with the author to explain certain features appeared in 2005 published by Les Arènes in Paris.

Similarly Marie-Thérèse Le Calvez's memoir *Une femme du réseau Shelburn: l'histoire de Marie-Thérèse Le Calvez, de Plouha en Bretagne* was published by Editions Le Cercle d'Or in Les Sables-d'Olonne in 1979 but was republished in 2002 by Edilarge S.A.-Editions Ouest-France in Rennes. This was after it had been out of print for a considerable amount of time. However this was due to Geneviève Anthonioz-de-Gaulle only discovering the account in 1999, thirteen years after the death of Marie-Thérèse, and she asked for it to be republished in order that it could be aimed at young people and thus reach a new audience. Benoîte and Flora Groult's *Journal à quatre mains* has been published by Denoël, Gallimard, Folio, Poche, French and European Publications and most recently Le Livre de Poche in 2008. Four of these testimonies have appeared in French and English: Stacey Cretzmeyer's *Your name is Renée: Ruth Kapp Hartz's Story as a Hidden Child in Nazi-Occupied France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) and *Tu t'appelles Renée: Paroles d'une Enfant cachée dans la France de Vichy (1940-1944)* (Pennsylvania: Beach Lloyd Publishers, 2005), Renée Roth-Hano's *Touch Wood: A Girlhood in Occupied France* (New York: Macmillan, 1988) and *Touchons du bois!* (Paris: Castor Poche Flammarion, 1999), Martine Rouchaud's *Journal d'une petite fille, 1940-1944* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945) and *The Time of Our Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1946) and Benoîte and Flora Groult's *Journal à quatre mains* (Paris: Denoël, 1958) and *Diary in Duo* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1962). From the publication dates, it is evident that the French language edition of Martine Rouchaud's memoir and Benoîte and Flora Groult's diary appeared before the English translation but that Ruth Kapp's biography and Renée Roth-Hano's memoir were originally published in English. The dates of publication are interesting as only four of these works were published before Henry Rousso's *Le Syndrome de Vichy (1944-198...)* in 1987: Martine Rouchaud's memoir in 1945, Benoîte and Flora Groult's diary in 1958, Micheline Bood's diary in 1974 and Antonia Hunt's memoir

in 1982. An influencing factor in the date of publication for Micheline Bood's diary is mentioned in the preface. In 1972, the exercise books in which the diary was written came to the attention of Jacques Labib who worked for a publishing house. Micheline's diary had only been returned to her in 1969, as it had been confiscated by her mother more than twenty-five years before. Interestingly, she had never reread it since its creation. Initially, she did not believe that it would interest anybody but nevertheless agreed to have extracts from the diary published. Even after seeing letters from readers showing interest in what they had read she refused to have the entire diary published. However, she changed her mind after Marcel Ophuls' film *Le Chagrin et la pitié* presented testimonies from people who had lived through the Occupation which gave the (false) impression that young people were indifferent to the Occupation.

The archival documents used are from two sources: the *Archives nationales* and the *Archives de la Préfecture de Police*, both of which are located in Paris. The amount of information contained in the various files varies considerably. Documents held by the *Préfecture de Police* focus on individuals who were brought to the attention of the authorities either because they were involved in an accident or because they were considered to be committing a type of offence at the time. These documents usually include the name and address of the person implicated, their date of birth and why they had attracted the attention of the police. In some cases, where offences had taken place, they also include a brief statement from the culprit who sought to defend their behaviour. These documents are usually reported in a neutral, matter-of-fact manner with very little insight into the opinions of the author. Documents held at the *Archives nationales* are less consistent. They do not always include the full name of the person involved, and they also often omit their age. However when the sources refer to 'la



jeune fille’ or ‘la fillette’, these terms usually refer to girls who fall within the age limits of this project. This is clear from certain documents which use these terms and where the age is also included. Furthermore, the style in which the document is written sometimes provides an insight into the views of the author, particularly where it has been written by the prefect of a particular region. The archives included in this thesis originate from documents belonging to the *Ministère de l’Intérieur*, the *Académie de Paris*, the *Comité d’Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale* and the *organismes issus de l’Armistice de 1940*. It also uses the personal archives of Marie Granet, a former resister turned historian and papers belonging to Jean Vidalenc that he collected for his study on the exodus. The focus of the archival sources are on accidents and incidents which involved a young girl and a German, files relating to girls being punished for sexual collaboration in the Charente, files relating to girls protesting in Paris and girls who were involved in the Resistance.

These two sources help us to answer different research questions in order to provide a complete account of the topic – diaries and memoirs respond to the questions ‘What were young girls’ personal opinions of the Germans in the private domain?’ and ‘What themes recur in their personal testimonies?’ Archival documents, however, provide a brief snapshot into young girls’ behaviour at a given moment. They respond to the questions ‘How did young girls respond to the Germans on the public stage?’, ‘How did they defend their actions at the time?’ and ‘Were there trends in their behaviour?’

Although using a combination of personal testimony and archival documents provides a valuable insight into the interplay between young girls and German soldiers at this time, the two sources are not without their limitations. By using archives which focus on incidents

which took place in schools, we are only taking into consideration those young girls who remained in the education system. Similarly by assessing how young girls came to harm at the hands of the Germans, we can only draw conclusions based on the incidents which were actually reported. It is also difficult to establish numbers for those young girls who showed their opposition to the Germans, as documents only exist for those who were actually caught in the act.

Existing research on personal testimony in written form demonstrates why this particular source is useful for this topic. A study of young bourgeois girls who kept diaries during the nineteenth century, conducted by Philippe Lejeune, found that they began writing after finishing their education at the age of fourteen or fifteen and stopped writing on the eve of their impending marriage at the age of twenty. He concluded: 'entre quinze et vingt ans, elles sont au carrefour de leur vie, s'interrogent sur la voie à suivre, accepter le mariage ou tenter une autre route vers une existence plus personnelle.'<sup>24</sup> Lejeune also conducted another study in 1988, which focused on the age that a person begins their diary, their reasons for doing so and the subjects that they tended to write about. He found that girls were twice as likely to keep a diary as boys and they write the most between the ages of twelve and eighteen. He also found that 'On écrit pour surmonter une crise. Pour aider sa mémoire. Pour guider sa vie [...] On écrit aussi parfois pour écrire, pour essayer ses idées, jouer avec les mots et les émotions.'<sup>25</sup> This aspect of experimenting with freedom of expression to overcome a crisis is confirmed by David Boal who notes that although the twentieth century was marked by several totalitarian regimes, keeping a diary could be seen as anti-totalitarian as it is a means to resist the control exerted by the regimes in power by providing the writer with an outlet

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<sup>24</sup> Philippe Lejeune, *Le Moi des demoiselles: Enquête sur le journal de jeune fille* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Philippe Lejeune, '*Cher Cahier...*' *Témoignages sur le journal personnel* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), p. 11.

through which to express their views.<sup>26</sup> Claire Gorrara takes this point further by arguing that it is gender-specific. She states that female historians believe the diary form to be ‘well suited to expressing women’s experiences of alienation and exclusion at times of political and personal crisis.’<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Gorrara argues that this style was used as a coping strategy towards events in society to the extent that the diary form itself was a means of resistance to the constraints of wartime society.<sup>28</sup> Lorna Martens adds that ‘The middle-class woman with time on her hands can console and amuse herself by keeping a diary, and confiding in a diary offers a prudent substitute for potentially dangerous confidences made to a friend. Diary keeping is the modern form of the Catholic confessional and Protestant self-scrutiny.’<sup>29</sup> From these findings, we can see that diaries are most often written by young girls to deal with a crisis which means that they are of great importance to this research topic. The fact that they were written at the time means that we get an insight into the instinctive and emotive ways in which young girls reacted to events as they were happening. However, these sources often incur criticism from historians who doubt their accuracy and their authenticity. Firstly, Martens details how the diary form was adopted for fictional novels in the early twentieth century<sup>30</sup>, which means historians need to show caution when using this source. Any testimonies which implied that they may be fictional or contain fictional elements were rejected for this thesis on this basis. Another problem is raised by Béatrice Didier who states that there is always the temptation to rewrite a diary numerous times which would lead the reader to question whether it is truly an accurate version of events.<sup>31</sup> A further issue is raised

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<sup>26</sup> David Boal, *Journaux intimes sous l’Occupation* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1993), p. 204.

<sup>27</sup> Claire Gorrara, *Women’s Representations of the Occupation in Post-’68 France* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 53.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>29</sup> Lorna Martens, *The Diary Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 173.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Béatrice Didier, *Le journal intime* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976), p. 11.

by Henry Rousso in *Le Syndrome de Vichy*<sup>32</sup>, as he states that the debates which were raised in French society in the postwar period were often the subject of personal testimonies. Indeed the Aubrac Affair of 1997 focused on whether the published memoir entitled *Ils partiront dans l'ivresse*<sup>33</sup> of one of the most famous and respected resisters, Lucie Aubrac, contained fictional episodes. Doubt was raised just before the release of the second film based on Lucie's memoirs. Gérard Chauvy published a book which claimed that Lucie and Raymond had been responsible for betraying Jean Moulin to the Gestapo which ultimately resulted in his death. Furthermore, he noted inconsistencies in the depositions that Raymond Aubrac had made between 1944 and 1990 about his arrests.<sup>34</sup> This cast a shadow of doubt both on their reputations and on the authenticity of their version of events. Although they sued for libel and won, Lucie did admit that some aspects of her memoirs were based on a plausible version of events rather than on absolute truth.<sup>35</sup> Lejeune confirms that this problem is implicit in the autobiography genre. He states that although the reader demands truth from this source, it would also be naive to believe that it provides the whole truth: 'c'est que ce qui nous intéresse dans l'autobiographie, c'est la perspective dans laquelle, arrivé à un certain âge, un homme envisage le déroulement et le *sens* de sa vie.'<sup>36</sup> Although diaries and memoirs are one of the main sources used throughout this thesis, it is not being claimed that everything the authors have written has been taken as fact. The fact that memoirs have been written after the event means that there is the potential that an individual has sought to portray herself in a constructed, positive way. In addition, the passage of time means that memories can fade or become distorted which means that even if a person does not set out to intentionally deceive

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<sup>32</sup> Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy (1944-198...)* (Paris: Seuil, 1987).

<sup>33</sup> Lucie Aubrac, *Ils partiront dans l'ivresse: Lyon, mai 1943, Londres, février 1944* (Paris: Seuil, 1984).

<sup>34</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 45.

<sup>35</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, 'History, Heroism, and Narrative Desire: The "Aubrac Affair" and National Memory of the French Resistance', *South Central Review*, 21:1 (Spring 2004), pp. 69-71.

<sup>36</sup> Philippe Lejeune, *L'autobiographie en France* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1998), p. 19.

her audience, there may still be unintentional inaccuracies. Bearing these aspects in mind, what is of interest for the purposes of this thesis is identifying the key themes which recur in these documents. Furthermore, these themes help us to answer several research questions to which we are unable to find responses in other sources, namely what were the private, internal thoughts of a young girl when she saw the Germans for the first time? What do their testimonies reveal about their personal relationships with individual Germans? Do they confess to carrying out any forms of resistance on an individual basis? This type of source therefore enables us to look at individual experiences to see how they varied from person to person and how they sought to justify their views.

The main focus of this research project is therefore to consider the range of reactions exhibited by young girls to the Germans themselves and the foreign occupation of their country, rather than to provide a definitive number for those who behaved in a particular way. It also considers how reactions differed according to age. Whilst the concentration of Germans varied considerably from region to region, this aspect is not considered within the parameters of the thesis as I am more concerned with the interplay between the two categories of people in general rather than how behaviours differed throughout France. Although some of the authors of the primary texts are Jewish, I am more concerned with their generic reaction to the Germans rather than the specific experience of being Jewish during the Occupation as this subject has already been studied extensively by renowned scholars such as Michael Marrus, Robert Paxton and Serge Klarsfeld. The nature of the period and the fact that schooling was not compulsory after the age of thirteen means that those who kept diaries tended to be middle-class but this aspect will be considered with reference to archival documents.

Taking all of these aspects into account, this thesis begins by assessing the impact of the First World War on the Second World War. World War I witnessed the French at war with the Germans which impacted in particular on those areas of northern France which were occupied but also on the country as a whole. Chapter One considers how the physical and emotional legacy of the Great War was transmitted both orally and visually to young girls which contributed to them forming biased opinions of the enemy before the two sides had even met.

As the defeat in 1940 was totally unexpected, and humiliating, it brought panic to a country already in turmoil, and young girls realised that they were about to find out whether the myths they had heard about the enemy during the Interwar period were true. They faced the prospect of leaving their homes and familiar surroundings for the first time in their young lives and this was met with diverse opinions. Chapter Two examines the ways in which they reacted to both the prospect and reality of this experience. Although this took place prior to the Occupation, its inclusion is necessary as for many young girls, this was their first experience of the disruption and destruction that war could cause and this influenced their opinions of the Germans.

Once the sense of panic brought on by the defeat had begun to subside, people began to return home in order to regain a sense of normality. However, everything was not the same as when they had left, as young girls realised that the Germans were here to stay. For those living in occupied regions, it was not a matter of if they would meet the Germans but when. Chapter Three explores the range of reactions exhibited by young girls to seeing the Germans in France for the first time.

Although these reactions were based on a fleeting encounter with the Germans from a certain distance, young girls had varying degrees of contact with the occupiers throughout the Occupation, with mixed results. Chapter Four focuses on the incidents that took place between the two groups of people on a daily basis before considering the experiences of those girls who had more sustained contact with the Germans either as friends or who became romantically involved with them. It also considers the consequences of *collaboration sentimentale*.

Not all girls were willing to accept the fact that the Germans were controlling France, or even the visible German presence: they were unwilling to abide by German regulations. Chapter Five examines how young girls sought to show their opposition and demonstrate a profound anti-German stance by protesting in public places. This could take the form of street protests or even wearing subtle signs to show their 'Frenchness'.

However, this was not considered sufficient for some girls who actively sought to do something productive to ensure that the German Occupation was merely a temporary situation. They located other like-minded individuals with whom they could work towards liberating France. Chapter Six explores the significance of youth and gender in the organised Resistance.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **THE LEGACY OF THE PAST**

The Second World War was not an isolated period in history; France and Germany had a long, tempestuous history going back hundreds of years. It was also not the first time that France had had to deal with the arduous task of being occupied by its traditional enemy, the Germans, as parts of northern France had been occupied during the First World War. Given these circumstances, it is necessary to consider the impact that events such as the Franco-Prussian War and the First World War had on families living in France at this time. Although young girls would not have been born when these events took place and so would have no first-hand memories of what life was like, their opinions were influenced by three factors: the memories of their mothers and grandmothers, children's literature and propaganda, and war memorials and the physical traces of previous wars. This chapter therefore seeks to find out how the Germans were portrayed in the aftermath of previous wars and argues that young girls' opinions of the occupiers were not necessarily formed by World War II but were instead created in the Interwar period and strengthened during World War II.

#### **The transmission of memory by older generations**

Whereas girls were too young to have experienced previous global conflicts, some of their relatives were not. In many cases, older generations living in their towns and villages would have memories of the previous wars that they had lived through, and girls' own mothers and grandmothers would have their personal tales to tell about their experiences and memories of living through a conflict. An individual's memories are comprised of episodic and autobiographical memories. The psychologist Christoph Hoerl notes that



as a first approximation, we can perhaps say that a memory is episodic in so far as it is concerned with a particular past event or set of circumstances; by contrast, a memory is autobiographical in so far as it involves a particular sort of reference to the self or personal significance.<sup>37</sup>

In the examples discussed in this chapter, autobiographical memories are the most prevalent. According to Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, autobiographical memories leave very dense memory traces in the brain and are the most perpetual type of memory.<sup>38</sup> Memory recall is facilitated if it is associated with a particular time and place. Furthermore if a memory trace is associated with a specific smell or sound, it is even easier to recall. This type of memory is said to be dependent on an extrinsic context. Thus if a person had been fearful when bombings took place during the First World War, the sound of bombings during the Second World War could trigger the same emotion. This method is particularly pertinent to traumatic memories.

One of the most effective ways for people who have lived through a conflict to deal with their experiences is to communicate them to others: 'We learn through story-telling and its echoes in our own lives.'<sup>39</sup> The people communicating these stories do so in order to deal with their grief, pay homage to the dead or to simply pass on their experiences. If this communication takes place between family members, the information is often passed on to generations born after the war. The way a story is told is as important as the content of that story. In their study on how story-telling shapes memory, Ian McGregor and John G. Holmes found that the way a

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<sup>37</sup> Christoph Hoerl, 'Episodic Memory, Autobiographical Memory, Narrative: On Three Key Notions in Current Approaches to Memory Development', *Philosophical Psychology*, 20:5 (2007), p. 623.

<sup>38</sup> Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, 'Setting the framework', in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 12.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

story is told influences what is remembered at a later date. Although specific details were forgotten, the 'gist' or 'story skeleton' was remembered.<sup>40</sup>

The gender of those involved in the story-telling process is a contributory factor to how much information is retained. In her study of gender differences in autobiographical memory, Penelope J. Davis states how, when talking to their children, parents use an *elaborative* or *pragmatic* style of speech. However Davis also states that 'though parents use both narrative styles when talking about past events with their young children, a growing body of evidence reveals that parents are more elaborative with their daughters than with their sons.'<sup>41</sup> The results of her study also revealed that females expressed more intense emotions more frequently than men and their ability to recall specific details was better: 'Of particular importance, further analysis revealed that the enhanced recall of females was specific to autobiographical memories of events associated with emotion, with no gender difference apparent in the number of non-emotional events recollected.'<sup>42</sup> These studies support Winter and Sivan's claim that 'The advantage of survivor networks is that their 'social learning' may be passed on to later generations. These younger people, uninitiated into the actual experience, carry emotion-laden stories very effectively. For some, carrying a survivor's narrative can approximate survivorship itself.'<sup>43</sup> For these reasons, we can suppose that girls' views of the Germans were not produced in a vacuum; they were comprised of other people's experiences and as such could even be a mosaic of elements from the past.

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<sup>40</sup> Ian McGregor and John G. Holmes, 'How Storytelling Shapes Memory and Impressions of Relationship Events Over Time', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76:3 (1999), p. 405.

<sup>41</sup> Penelope J. Davis, 'Gender Differences in Autobiographical Memory for Childhood Emotional Experiences', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76:3 (1999), pp. 498-499.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 506.

<sup>43</sup> Winter and Sivan, p. 18.

When news spread of France's defeat and the exodus of people from Belgium and northern France began, many older people were reluctant to leave their homes to flee south. The French population had been indoctrinated with the concept of the Maginot Line being infallible and so had confidence which turned out to be unfounded, that the enemy would be kept at bay. As the German advance had failed to even reach the Marne during the First World War, the older generation were expecting the same to happen during the Second World War and were prepared to ride out the storm rather than join the fleeing mass of people. Nicole Roux, a young girl living in Picardie at the time of the German invasion, suggested that this was the reason for some of the inhabitants' behaviour in her home region: 'Nous rejoignons les habitants du village qui fuient la Picardie, comme leurs parents en 14, et leurs grands-parents en 70. Des vieux ont refusé de partir; ils préfèrent vivre dans leur cave pendant quelques semaines, le temps que tout s'apaise.'<sup>44</sup>

Madeleine Riffaud, whose parents were primary school teachers in the Somme, was sixteen in 1940. In her memoir, she describes the legacy of the past as having had a generic effect on everyone. She infers that once a person has lived through such a traumatic event as a war, the memory stays with them for eternity. She explains: 'Chacun ici gardait le souvenir de l'invasion, des batailles, des morts innombrables dont la litanie des noms était inscrite sur les monuments érigés dans chaque village.'<sup>45</sup> This point is reinforced by Christiane Peugeot, who explained how the older generation often referred to their experiences of the previous wars that they had lived through:

Dans la région, quelques très vieux radotent encore des épisodes de cette avant-dernière guerre franco-germanique, la bonne femme disant aux envahisseurs: 'Nicht fouillir dans le plaquir, les francirs y z'ont

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<sup>44</sup> Nicole Roux, *C'est la guerre, LES ENFANTS!* (Cherbourg-Octeville: Editions Isoète, 2007), p. 10.

<sup>45</sup> Madeleine Riffaud, *On l'appelait Rainer* (Paris: Julliard, 1994), p. 19.

tout manger (sic) puis, se tournant satisfaite vers ses compatriotes, avec son fort accent franc-comtois: 'On est ben aise de savoir quelques mots d'allemand!'<sup>46</sup>

Nicole Roux's grandmother had a low opinion of the Germans, and had retained some of the habits that she had developed from her youth when the impact of the Franco-Prussian War could still be felt. For example, she made anti-German statements immediately after finishing a family meal, such as 'C'est toujours ça que les Prussiens n'auront pas!'<sup>47</sup> In the eyes of the older generation, their opinions of their Germans would not evolve, they were forever associated with a particular event or time in their life. Girls were therefore inculcated with the belief that although a war can take place over a relatively short period of time, its effects and impact are everlasting.

Whereas some of the above examples are almost, unintentionally, humorous, other accounts focus on the trauma that living through a war could produce. Madeleine Riffaud's father fought in the First World War as a volunteer and was injured. She describes how 'Quoiqu'il en parlât peu, sauf pour dire, comme Jacques Prévert: "Quelle connerie, la guerre!" il avait élevé sa fille unique dans l'horreur de la guerre et ce n'est pas de gaieté de cœur qu'il voyait revenir les temps noirs.'<sup>48</sup> As another war approached, those who had lived through previous wars feared what was to come. It brought back memories that they would have rather forgotten. In many cases, the older generation were suspicious and wary of the Germans, especially where their granddaughters were concerned. Anne-Marie Ardoin's grandmother's house was directly opposite the *Kommandantur* on whose steps she liked to play even though her grandmother was reluctant to let her do so. 'Ma grand-mère n'aimait pas que l'on joue à cet endroit. Elle ne voulait pas que l'on parle à ces soldats, ni que l'on accepte les bonbons

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<sup>46</sup> Christiane Peugeot, *Libérez Peugeot! Journal de jeunesse, 1944* (Paris: AkR, 2006), p. 55.

<sup>47</sup> Roux, p. 29.

<sup>48</sup> Riffaud, pp. 19-20.

qu'ils nous tendaient. Elle disait qu'ils étaient empoisonnés.<sup>49</sup> The idea of the Germans trying to poison children had also been prevalent during the First World War: 'In south-central France, the story that foreigners were distributing poisoned cakes or sweets to children ran through three departments.'<sup>50</sup> Whereas Anne-Marie's grandmother simply did not trust the Germans, the grandmother of Renée Desmaison exuded a profound fear of the occupiers:

Une fois, par exemple, j'étais en train de soigner les lapins avec ma grand-mère. Les Allemands sont passés dans la rue. Elle m'a serré contre son tablier, en attendant qu'ils soient partis. Nous avions peur. On ne savait jamais comment les choses pouvaient retourner.<sup>51</sup>

Similarly, Christiane Peugeot's mother was fearful during the air raids which became increasingly frequent during the latter years of the war. The traumatic memories of her childhood during the First World War manifested themselves in her behaviour during the Second World War. In July 1943, Christiane recalled: 'Nous descendons tous, à demi habillés. A mon avis, nous aurions mieux fait de rester couchés. Maman est terriblement nerveuse, elle affole les petits, Jean-François et Viviane, ils tremblent.'<sup>52</sup> Rather than being able to settle, her mother seemed restless and agitated: 'Chaque fois que nous bougeons, maman nous secoue, répétant qu'il faut faire attention, être prudent. Elle rabâche ses souvenirs de quand elle était petite, en 14-18.'<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Paule Juventy, who was nineteen when the Occupation began, recalled how older people had been conditioned by their memories of the First World War to the extent that 'A cause des réminiscences de la guerre de 14-18, le mot "bombardement" évoquait pour les personnes âgées les tirs d'artillerie lourde qui annonçaient que le "front" se rapprochait.'<sup>54</sup> An anonymous girl referred to by the initials

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<sup>49</sup> Anne-Marie Ardoin cited in Carrier, p. 16.

<sup>50</sup> John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A history of denial* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 115.

<sup>51</sup> Renée Desmaison cited in Carrier, p. 104.

<sup>52</sup> Peugeot, p. 19.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Paule Juventy cited in *Nous avions 15 ans en 1940*, ed. Evelyne Sullerot (Paris: Fayard, 2010), p. 96.

B.M.D., who was fourteen in 1940, also recalled how she sensed that the adults around her were struggling to come to terms with the situation but her age meant that she did not fully comprehend what was happening: ‘Les adultes autour de nous évoquent les horreurs de la guerre de 14-18. Ils sont nerveux, sombres, inquiets. Arrive jusqu’à moi une masse informe de choses certes entendues, mais pas comprises.’<sup>55</sup> A sense of fear amongst those who had lived during the First World War was not just confined to France, as Charlotte Schapira’s mother, who had grown up in Poland, was anxious due to what she had heard about the enemy: ‘Les Cosaques occupaient la région où elle vivait avec ses parents. Il était très dangereux pour une jeune fille, pour une femme de sortir, car les Cosaques violaient les femmes.’<sup>56</sup> Her mother remembered how all sections of the population were targeted by Cossack soldiers, but that violence was considered a lesser evil to rape. Due to this, young girls would take certain precautions to avoid exposing themselves to this danger.

Leur plaisir également était d’empaler les gens ou de les embrocher avec leur longue pique du haut de leurs chevaux. Maman nous disait, alors qu’elle était jeune, quand il lui arrivait de sortir, c’était emmitouflée de la tête aux pieds, penchée comme une petite vieille, car les gens âgés les Cosaques se contentaient de les bousculer, de les renverser, parfois de leur taper dessus, de les faire courir... ce qui était un moindre mal...<sup>57</sup>

Not all women were overtly fearful about the Germans, as some such as Elisabeth Sevier’s mother internalised her fear as she found it too painful to remember and she wanted to protect her daughter. At one stage in her memoir Elisabeth reflects on the attitudes of Parisians towards the German presence:

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<sup>55</sup> B.D.M. cited in Sullerot, p. 112.

<sup>56</sup> Charlotte Schapira, *Il faudra que je me souviene: La déportation des enfants de l’Union Générale des Israélites de France* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1994), pp. 9-10.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Several million people lived in Paris, but only a very few actively participated in Resistance activities. The vast majority, it seemed to me, “adjusted” to the German occupation... I thought they were like ostriches that buried their heads in the sand. If they did not look, they could not see anything wrong.<sup>58</sup>

Elisabeth often clashed with her mother about their different ways of dealing with the Occupation, as her mother fell into the category of those who behaved like ‘ostriches’. However, she later found out that her mother’s past was an underlying factor in her decision to get along as best she could: ‘I didn’t know then that Maman had survived an Armenian refugee camp during and after World War I, where she lost a son and her first husband and endured much cruelty at the hands of her captors.’<sup>59</sup>

Although the past had instilled a sense of fear in those who had lived through it, some young girls during the Second World War used what had happened in the past as a motivating factor to resist the weight of the occupiers. Margaret L. Rossiter’s *Women in the Resistance* looked at the motivations of women who chose to join the Resistance. Although numerous factors such as the ideology of Nazism and the presence of German troops on French soil influenced their decision, she also suggested that more personal reasons inspired them to do so: ‘Many women remembered that German armies had destroyed their family homes or those of relatives in World War I, or even in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Since childhood, they had heard the stories of German cruelties.’<sup>60</sup> In contrast to her mother, Elisabeth Sevier chose to resist the Germans as it was something that she felt strongly about. Rather than being indifferent, she took inspiration from the victors of previous wars. She believed the only way to end France’s ordeal was to actively do something to help, like people had done in the past:

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<sup>58</sup> Elisabeth Sevier, *Resistance Fighter: A Teenage Girl in World War II France* (Kansas: Sunflower University Press, 1998), p. xviii.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xix.

<sup>60</sup> Margaret L. Rossiter, *Women in the Resistance* (New York: Praeger, 1986), p. 17.

We could stand up and fight, like the French army did at the Marne in 1914 when the Germans were stopped just outside Paris. We must fight like the French did during the One Hundred Years War, when Jeanne d'Arc led us to victory against the English.<sup>61</sup>

The evidence presented above suggests that one of the most prevalent effects of the transmission of memory at this time was that it inculcated young girls with a sense of fear of the Germans. The fearful reactions of their mothers and grandmothers were contagious which unsettled young girls and made them apprehensive about what would happen during this war. Rather than being reassured by their relatives, young girls found themselves providing reassurance, even looking after their mothers and grandmothers, thus the roles were reversed. Another effect of this mentality was that young girls were more careful, reluctant even, to play in the vicinity of the Germans even when there was no direct threat posed. In some cases, the behaviour displayed by the Germans in previous wars provided a source of motivation for young girls as it made them want to fight to free France from the grip of the enemy. Rather than being intimidated, they actively sought to do something productive by joining the Resistance. The experiences of girls' mothers and grandmothers who had lived through previous wars sometimes provoked conflict between the different generations. Older women preferred to focus on their own family's lives and not draw attention to themselves whereas young girls were not prepared to stand by and do nothing.

### **Anti-Germanism in Propaganda**

Girls' perceptions of the Germans could be moulded via two written sources; children's literature and propaganda. *La Semaine de Suzette* was a weekly magazine aimed at well-to-do young girls aged from eight to fourteen. The character of Bécassine, a Breton housemaid who

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<sup>61</sup> Sevier, p. xx.



worked for the bourgeois Madame la marquise de Grand-Air and her family, appeared in the first edition of *La Semaine de Suzette* in 1905. The *Bécassine* stories were published by Gautier-Languereau, written by Caumery, pseudonym of Jules Léon Maurice Languereau, and illustrated by Joseph Porphyre Pinchon. Both Gautier and Languereau had military backgrounds. Henri Gautier was born in 1855 in Paris and joined the army after finishing secondary school at the age of eighteen. Rather than signing up for the obligatory five-year military service, he elected to join for one year and pay 1500 francs for his upkeep under the *engagement conditionnel* scheme. This route was for those who had gained the *baccalauréat* and wanted to become officers. Although he was discharged in 1875, and transferred to the *Réserve de l'Armée active* four years later, he continued to attend the compulsory military drills which led to him becoming *Chef de Bataillon de l'Armée Territoriale d'Infanterie dans la 9me Région*. Maurice Languereau, Gautier's nephew, was drafted into the army during the First World War, but eventually enlisted as a volunteer after failing medical tests. He was given responsibility for the administration of a military hospital.<sup>62</sup> Due to the overwhelming success of the character, who became the first female heroine of the French *bande dessinée*, entire albums were devoted to her adventures between 1913 and 1939. Three of these albums focus on the First World War: *Bécassine pendant la guerre* (later renamed *Bécassine pendant la Grande Guerre*), *Bécassine chez les Alliés* and *Bécassine mobilisée*. These albums sought to teach young girls certain qualities and ideas, which were deemed important not only for their own future but also for that of France.

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<sup>62</sup> [www.bibliothequedesuzette.com/gautierstory.htm](http://www.bibliothequedesuzette.com/gautierstory.htm) (accessed 2 January 2011).

One of the most important qualities to have was patriotism, which is depicted through images and text. In referring to *La Semaine de Suzette* in her study of girls' literature, Marie-Anne Couderc writes:

Fort logiquement, et après s'être appuyé sur une 'supériorité française' que l'hebdomadaire tout à la fois considère comme évidente et s'applique cependant inlassablement à démontrer, le sentiment national trouve un aliment de choix dans les périodes d'hostilité qu'ont dû vivre successivement deux générations de lectrices.<sup>63</sup>

On the front cover of *Bécassine pendant la Grande Guerre* is a framed portrait of Bécassine accompanied by a young girl and a young boy both wearing the traditional costume of Alsace. Both children are carrying red, white and blue flowers and the frame in which their image is situated is wrapped in red, white and blue ribbon. On the front cover of *Bécassine chez les Alliés* is an image of Bécassine with a man dressed in a kilt and tartan socks but with a military cap and jacket standing next to a plane featuring the British flag. Framing the picture is a long red, white and blue ribbon from which flags are hung in the top right-hand corner. Amongst others can be seen the French, British and American flags. Patriotism is conveyed through the text of *Bécassine pendant la Grande Guerre* by a conversation which takes place between Bécassine and Madame la marquise de Grand-Air. The story commences in the middle of July 1914, when France was anticipating going to war with Germany. When Bécassine notices that Madame de Grand-Air appears worried and asks her what is wrong, she replies: 'Il faudrait ne pas être Française pour ne pas se sentir inquiète en ce moment.'<sup>64</sup> When she asks the butler, Zidore, about her employer's concerns she finds out that a war may be about to start, but she is unsure of who the enemy is. Zidore explains: 'Avec tous les Boches

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<sup>63</sup> Marie-Anne Couderc, *La Semaine de Suzette: Histoires de filles* (Paris: CNRS, 2005), p. 56.

<sup>64</sup> Caumery and J.P. Pinchon, *Bécassine pendant la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1991), p. 1.

de la Bochie!’<sup>65</sup> Bécassine, unsure of the meaning of war and of an enemy of which she has never heard, looks for the country of ‘la Bochie’ in an atlas but of course cannot find it.

When the war begins, she finds out that Madame de Grand-Air’s nephew Bertrand is leaving the next day as he has been mobilised and Zidore announces that he is going to sign up as well. In an attempt to reassure her employer, Bécassine naively announces that there is nothing to worry about as ‘la Bochie’ does not exist therefore there is nobody to fight. Madame de Grand-Air corrects Bécassine by informing her that ‘la Bochie’ is Germany and France will be fighting the Germans. Bécassine responds by bursting into tears. When Zidore and Bertrand are hospitalised due to injuries sustained on the battlefield, *Bécassine chez les Alliés* explains how their injuries are still causing them discomfort:

Paraît que leurs blessures les faisaient encore souffrir. Et puis les Boches ont lancé leur sale pharmacie de gaz. Ça les a un peu *incoliqués* (je ne suis pas sûre que c’est tout à fait ce mot-là qu’à dit M. Bertrand).<sup>66</sup>

This implies that the effects of war are long-lasting but that it is a necessary sacrifice which is needed to prove one’s patriotism.

The stories of *Bécassine pendant la Grande Guerre* and *Bécassine chez les Alliés* present the Germans in a negative way, showing the enemy to be devious, dangerous and underhand. They are perceived as being able to infiltrate French society without being noticed in order that they can take advantage of the vulnerable and innocent French people. Zidore the butler, taking advantage of Bécassine’s naivety, recounts: ‘C’té sale vermine d’espions boches, [...], ça se faufile dans tous les coins. Y en a partout, Mam’zelle Bécassine, p’t-être ben ici

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Caumery and J.P. Pinchon, *Bécassine chez les Alliés* (Paris: Gautier-Languereau, 1974), p. 8.

même.<sup>67</sup> Taking what he says literally, Bécassine conducts a thorough search of the house, looking under furniture, in cupboards, and even in the breadbin. The Germans infiltrating the intimate sphere of the home has dual connotations. In addition to the suggestion that nowhere was safe from the German presence, it also suggests that it was women and young girls who were particularly at risk from German brutality. In her study of girls' education in modern French primary schools, which goes as far back as the nineteenth century, Linda L. Clark emphasises how the traditional image of woman as mother and home keeper had evolved very little since that time. Textbooks emphasised how '[w]oman was destined for home and motherhood, and her appropriate personality traits were "gentleness" and "tenderness," traits useful for comforting children or a spouse exhausted by his daily toils.'<sup>68</sup> If and when the Germans entered the home, their intended target would most certainly be the females of the house as they were the only ones likely to be there. The theme of the Germans infiltrating the home is also a feature of girls' diaries and memoirs which will be considered in Chapter Three.

When Zidore tells her that smoke can be a signal being sent from one German to another, she extinguishes a garden-waste fire of a former soldier of the Franco-Prussian war. On seeing lights in the old soldier's house, and persuaded by Zidore that this can also be a form of communication between the Germans, she follows his advice: 'Aux fenêtres, elle suspend de gros lampions orange, vestiges de la fête du pays, les allume, et, persuadée d'avoir ainsi déjoué de dangereuses menées, elle redescend sans bruit dans sa chambre.'<sup>69</sup> Feeling that her actions are insufficient, she even replaces the oil in the old soldier's lamp with water. When

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<sup>67</sup> Caumery and Pinchon, *Bécassine pendant la Grande Guerre*, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Linda L. Clark, *Schooling the Daughters of Marianne: textbooks and the socialization of girls in modern French primary schools* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 86.

<sup>69</sup> Caumery and Pinchon, *Bécassine pendant la Grande Guerre*, p. 6.

the family leave their house, to get as far away from the Germans as possible, Bécassine takes measures to try to prevent the house being pillaged in their absence. In the cellar, she makes a sign saying that all the wine is poisoned, she drains the pond and removes the fish so that the Germans will not be able to consume them and even places a sign on a well saying ‘Un traïson et cachai ô fond (sic)’. Although she acknowledges that it is a very bad thing to do, she reasons ‘Tant pis pour eux, [...], ils sont trop méchants. Faut les punir.’<sup>70</sup> The story even describes what Bécassine envisages will happen to the Germans or ‘nos ennemis’ as the story refers to them; that they will climb down the well and then not be able to get out again. Although Bécassine’s behaviour is often extreme, the story makes it clear that she is doing it for one reason: ‘de sauver la patrie en danger’ and to prevent the Germans from strengthening their grip on France and the French people. She wants to limit their power so that they will lose the war. The desire to not be submissive and to fight against the Germans is portrayed by Bécassine’s attitude to cleaning the house. When Madame de Grand-Air hears Bécassine exclaim ‘Tiens, sale Boche! Voilà pour toi, sale Boche! En veux-tu encore, sale Boche?’<sup>71</sup>, she enters the room to investigate what is happening. Bécassine explains ‘Voilà, Madame, c’est le tapis et les fauteuils que j’appelle sales Boches... Ça me donne du courage pour taper dessus.’<sup>72</sup> In these examples, the story focuses on the ability of the French to outwit the Germans as a means of self-preservation. Furthermore the mere thought of being in close proximity to the Germans arouses a sense of fear but also of anger.

The Grand-Air household are keen to prevent the younger members from coming into contact with the Germans, who are referred to as ‘uhlans’. When Madame de Grand-Air hears that the enemy is in the vicinity, she takes the decision that the family should leave as she does not

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>71</sup> Caumery and Pinchon, *Bécassine chez les Alliés*, p. 5.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

want her young niece, Yvonne, to encounter the Germans although this is not explained further. Bécassine's reaction is 'Ma Doué! [...], paraît que ces sauvages-là, c'est méchant comme des croquemitaines.'<sup>73</sup> The extent of German brutality is revealed in *Bécassine chez les Alliés* when a soldier, at Zidore's request, arrives with a German dog. He explains the reasons for the dog's name: 'Nous l'avons appelé "Hindenburg", à cause qu'il ressemble à leur fameux maréchal. Même qu'il a un clou comme ceux qu'ils plantent dans sa statue de bois.'<sup>74</sup> The dog can even do a military salute. Due to the dog's origins and name, Bécassine is angered that it has been brought into the house. However she soon changes her mind after hearing how the dog came to be in their possession. In order to trick the Germans, a soldier friend of Zidore had produced a mannequin in military uniform and placed it just above their trench. Believing it to be a member of the French army, the Germans had wasted ammunition by firing at it. Once they realised what was happening, the Germans had sought revenge. They placed a fake soldier above their own trench but shortly after taking aim Zidore realised that it was not a mannequin like theirs but a dog: 'Et ça montre une fois de plus la férocité de ces bandits de Boches. Nous, on fait des farces drôles et pas méchantes; la leur de farce, c'était de faire tuer ou blesser une pauvre bête inoffensive.'<sup>75</sup> After this incident, the dog had escaped from the Germans, ran over to the French trench and greeted the people who had saved his life. They theorised that the dog knew that the Germans had endangered its life and so had adopted an anti-German stance:

Probable que la conduite de ses anciens patrons l'a dégoûté: il est enragé contre eux. Quand nous prenons un prisonnier, il se jette sur lui et lui mord les mollets. D'autres fois, il grimpe sur le parapet et il aboie comme un furieux vers les Boches.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Caumery and Pinchon, *Bécassine pendant la Grande Guerre*, p. 8.

<sup>74</sup> Caumery and Pinchon, *Bécassine chez les Alliés*, p. 35.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

Although the young girl reading the story is not the intended target of the Germans, the story makes it clear that nobody is immune from German brutality.

In addition to being anti-German, Bécassine is supportive of the Allies. When she comes across an Allied airfield she announces enthusiastically ‘Oh! que c’est beau!... On dirait des oiseaux!... Ce qu’ils vont prendre, les Boches!... Vivent les aviateurs!... Vive la France!... Vive l’Angleterre!... Vivent les Alliés!’<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, she finds herself actively helping the allied cause, when she is recruited to photograph trenches behind enemy lines. Bécassine is also unwittingly involved in the production of an allied propaganda film. Mistaking actors for real members of the military, she sees a scene unfold whereby a general is sitting down planning the next day’s operations when a German sneaks up behind him brandishing a dagger. Unable to stand by and do nothing, Bécassine immediately intervenes. She explains ‘j’ai sauté sur lui, je lui ai arraché son poignard, j’ai roulé l’homme par terre et j’ai mis le pied sur son dos comme j’ai vu une fois un dompteur faire à un tigre méchant.’<sup>78</sup>

The stories of Bécassine therefore specifically seek to educate young girls about patriotism whilst shaping their views of the Germans. The use of red, white and blue on the front covers of the albums emphasise Frenchness, whilst the texts aim to leave young girls in no doubt as to the identity of the enemy. The Germans are perceived as being immoral, as they will pillage abandoned houses and risk the life of a living creature in order to get revenge on the French. The negative language used to describe the Germans, along with the strong feelings of anger that they arouse, contrast sharply with the positive, enthusiastic way in which the Allies are depicted. The character of Bécassine is a devout patriot who is prepared to do

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

whatever is necessary to prevent France from being taken over by the Germans; she will even help the Allies to gain the upper hand over the Germans by taking photographs behind enemy lines. It is important to note that both the publisher and author had military backgrounds and thus Bécassine could be a way of communicating their own stance on the war and their perceptions of the enemy.

Whereas the above examples feature in a work of fiction, which had the purpose of informing young girls about the First World War whilst entertaining them, propaganda during the First World War and Interwar period sought to indoctrinate French people with a certain idea of what the Germans were capable of: sheer brutality. As Omer Bartov states,

In speaking about France of the *entre-deux-guerres*, it is therefore impossible to understand any of the major political, cultural, military or popular trends and attitudes without realizing that visions of war, memories of past massacres and fears of their recurrence dominated the minds of the French.<sup>79</sup>

One of the most recurrent themes involved young girls who had had their hands amputated by the Germans. John Horne refers to an article called *Prière d'une petite fille aux mains coupées* which appeared in *La Semaine religieuse* in Ille-et-Vilaine in February 1915. This article focused on a six-year-old girl who in her prayer to God, was describing how a German soldier had cut off her hands because only German children had the right to keep their hands as they knew what it was like to suffer; French and Belgian children did not. Her mother subsequently went mad and her father was taken away by the Germans. Horne concludes that this text was symbolic on numerous levels; it was testimony to the barbaric image of the Germans and also to the idea that the German race was superior to all others. 'L'enfant est le symbole même de la famille violée et dispersée, et donc de l'innocence et de la vulnérabilité

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<sup>79</sup> Omer Bartov, 'Martyrs' Vengeance: Memory, Trauma, and Fear of War in France, 1918-40', *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, 22:1 (Winter 1996), p. 49.



de la population et du pays devant l'invasion.'<sup>80</sup> Caricatures depicting the theme of little girls minus their hands were also prevalent at the time. According to Horne and Kramer, 'Poulbot, well known for his sentimental images of children, showed an infant martyr, a little girl with her wrist bandaged, kneeling at the tomb of her own hand!'<sup>81</sup>

Different categories of people claimed to have seen young girls who had had their hands cut off, but in the main it was refugees and Allied soldiers who were the most susceptible. One such person was Marguerite Maumert, an eighteen-year-old refugee who, when fleeing the Ardennes, had met "une fillette (qui) avaient les mains enveloppées de bandages" et dont d'autres personnes disaient qu'elle était la victime d'une mutilation par les Allemands.'<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, in some cases, members of the public claimed to have seen German soldiers being searched by Gendarmes who found hands belonging to young children in the Germans' pockets. Many of these claims were unsubstantiated however, and supposition seems to have played a large part in the attribution of culpability. These sorts of incidents were attributed to myths created by Allied propaganda in the interwar years.

The evidence presented above suggests that the written word sought to inculcate young girls with a certain view of the Germans. *Bécassine pendant la Grande Guerre* and *Bécassine chez les Alliés* sought to portray an extremely patriotic anti-German/pro-Allied viewpoint. The Germans were presented as a force not to be trusted and emphasised the need to punish them for their brutality. They aroused anger and distrust amongst the French population. The explicit use of the term 'nos ennemis' left young girls in no doubt as to the relationship

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<sup>80</sup> John Horne, 'Les Mains coupées: "atrocités allemandes" et opinion française en 1914', *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 171 (Juillet 1993), p. 30.

<sup>81</sup> Horne and Kramer, pp. 209-10.

<sup>82</sup> Horne, p. 36.

between the two countries. The extreme lengths to which Bécassine was prepared to go shows the severity of the situation and the need both to protect one's family and one's country from the Germans. These stories encourage young girls to be vigilant and to be on their guard as one never knew where the enemy could be hiding. It also teaches them to do what is necessary for the greater good, as the Germans neither respected people, animals or material goods. As an entirely different kind of source, propaganda sought to exploit the vulnerability of the French nation in the aftermath of the war by playing on the fear and anxiety of the French people. By using examples of adult males disfiguring young girls, the Germans were presented as barbaric and immoral. Propaganda aimed to show that nobody was safe from German violence, as they were even prepared to target children in their quest for domination. This created a climate of fear and apprehension as the next war approached, as it had left an imprint on the collective memory.

### **Memories of World War I conveyed by the physical environment**

Whereas transmitted memory and propaganda are oral and written means of communicating certain messages, war memorials transmit visual, unspoken messages from beyond the grave. This section will consider the ways in which features of the physical environment could influence girls' opinions. It looks at the physical scars left by the First World War on the French landscape, the cultural significance of war memorials and the visual impact of those who were disfigured during warfare.

Traces of the First World War could still be found in the French landscape in the post-war period. Several girls mention the signs of the past which could be located in the vicinity of

their family homes. Nicole Roux's father discovered a connection to the past in their family garden in Picardie:

Il creusait une tranchée dans le sol de la cave pour enfouir ses endives; et tout d'un coup la paroi s'est effondrée à côté de lui. Au-delà, il a vu un souterrain qui s'arrêtait un peu plus loin, bouché par un éboulement.<sup>83</sup>

Naturally the whole family were curious about its origins, including where it led and what its purpose was. Living in a village, her father was able to enquire amongst the older residents for information about his find:

Les plus vieux lui ont dit que, pendant la Grande Guerre, les Allemands avaient aménagé un hôpital souterrain; ils y avaient amené tout le nécessaire. Ils y jouaient même du piano. On ne savait plus exactement où il se trouvait. Maintenant, on sait: il est sous notre jardin, et l'entrée était peut-être dans notre cave.<sup>84</sup>

Nicole's father was unhappy about what he had found out so took the decision to seal the entrance, fearing that without such action the Germans would be tempted to use it again thus putting his family in danger. However by doing this he was removing the evidence of the past and making it inaccessible.

Whereas the family of Nicole Roux did not want the Germans to find out about the piece of history in the garden, Christiane Peugeot was curious about whether the Germans had noticed the physical scars of the First World War on entering Bannot:

Il y a aussi des pièces d'artillerie au Bannot, pas loin de chez mes grands-parents. Les Allemands ont-ils remarqué les 'tranchées', vestiges de 14-18, que la génération précédente avait creusé dans le jardin du Bannot pour le cas où l'ennemi (l'Allemand comme en 1870) déferlerait sur la région?<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Roux, p. 34.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Peugeot, pp. 58-59.

In addition to referring to the past, she also reflects on what the future holds for the evolution of warfare. ‘A chaque conflit son originalité! A nos parents, les assassinats passifs, les tombes-tranchées creusées d’avance, à nous les meurtres actifs avions, tanks, bunkers, V1, V2. Quelles guerres auront nos enfants? Nos arrière-petits-enfants?’<sup>86</sup> She recognised that although there were inevitably similarities between wars that had taken place years apart, each society had evolved and so no two battles would be the same.

Whereas the above examples focus on the living aspects of war, such as fighting in the trenches and caring for the sick and injured, Madeleine Riffaud mentioned the other side of war: death. She described how her parents’ birthplace, the Haute-Vienne, was full of reminders of the First World War, in particular military cemeteries: ‘Les cimetières militaires faisaient partie du paysage. Les charrues, à la saison des labours, souvent ramenaient au jour des obus, des bombes, avec lesquels des enfants imprudents jouaient, à leurs dépens, ce qui donnaient une suite à la guerre.’<sup>87</sup> Madeleine had first-hand experience of the latter as she states: ‘Elle était encore enfant quand deux de ses petits camarades furent ainsi victimes de la manipulation d’un obus dont ils voulaient récupérer le cuivre pour le vendre.’<sup>88</sup> One incident proved to have a traumatic effect on the young girl; on 11 November, with her father and godmother, she visited a battlefield which had been transformed into a cemetery. Her godmother was searching for her husband’s grave, as he had been killed at war but his body had not been found. Whilst wandering amongst the graves she heard a disturbing story which would have a lasting impact on her:

Rainer restait sur le bord de la route avec son père qu’elle entendit, une fois, discuter avec un homme qui, lui, se souvenait de ce soldat tombé près de lui et qui prétendait l’avoir vu ‘les tripes à l’air’ à tel point

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>87</sup> Riffaud, p. 19.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

qu'il n'avait rien eu de mieux à faire que de mettre, sur sa demande, fin à ses souffrances (cela était un secret que jamais Rainer ne révélerait jusqu'à ce jour).<sup>89</sup>

Her behaviour during World War II could be attributed to this incident as she explains 'Voilà qui nourrissait en l'adolescente la haine de la guerre.'<sup>90</sup>

One of the most devastating and lasting consequences of war surrounds those who were killed fighting for a cause in which they believed. Rather than forgetting these men, French society sought to reintegrate them back into the community with the aid of *monuments aux morts*. As Jay Winter notes, 'In France, a visitor to any major town or village will encounter a *monument aux morts*. This funereal term locates French war memorials within a tradition of suffering and sacrifice.'<sup>91</sup> Although these monuments appear to focus on death, their positioning is significant. Annette Becker has described how these monuments could be found in prominent places, in the heart of a community even, thus amalgamating the two distinct spheres of life and death: 'Les monuments plus sophistiqués que les obélisques funéraires ont été généralement placés au centre des villes, loin des champs de bataille et des cimetières. Le choix conscient est de passer de la mort à la vie, de l'écart au centre.'<sup>92</sup> This point is reinforced by Antoine Prost, who states that these monuments are often accorded prominent positions within a community such as near to a school or town hall. Prost also emphasises how there is a distinct lack of regionalism evident when looking at the language used on *monuments aux morts* throughout France, with the exceptions of the Basque country and Brittany. However, the mere fact that *monuments aux morts* feature in the various communes throughout France, shows the desire of a nation to represent their dead on both a local and

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Canto, 1998), p. 78.

<sup>92</sup> Annette Becker, 'Monuments aux morts après la guerre de sécession et la guerre de 1870-1871: un legs de la guerre nationale?', *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 167 (Juillet 1992), p. 31.

national scale; they were members of an individual region but were fighting for their country as a whole.<sup>93</sup> Therefore young girls were very likely to come into contact with them on a daily basis. Annette Becker draws attention to the different terminologies which are employed by various countries when referring to the war dead. For example, the phrase *monuments aux morts* is employed by the French, whereas the English utilise the term *war memorial*. In this respect, the English term is more inclusive, as it refers to those who sacrificed their lives in addition to the event itself and its consequences. The French on the other hand is exclusively concerned with honouring fallen soldiers, as it emphasises the sacrifice that these men made to their country.

One of the best known examples of a *monument aux morts* can be found in the French capital: the Arc de Triomphe with the tomb of the Unknown Soldier lying underneath and the eternal flame. It is a sign of the lasting impact that war can have, not just for war veterans and the relatives who are left behind, but also for a nation as a whole. It is symbolic of the many men who died fighting for their country and their justification for doing so; the tomb is inscribed with the words ‘ICI REPOSE UN SOLDAT FRANÇAIS MORT POUR LA PATRIE’. Although the war is over, the memory of it lives on and ensures that those who lost their lives will not be forgotten, according a sense of immortality to them. However, the tomb of the Unknown Soldier is not unique to France; it is a common feature of numerous countries that chose to commemorate their dead in this way in the aftermath of the First World War. For example, other tombs can be located in London, Berlin and Washington. Being located in capital cities, the tombs became memorials on a national rather than local scale. ‘The

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<sup>93</sup> Antoine Prost, ‘Mémoires locales et mémoires nationales: les monuments de 1914-1918 en France’, *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 192 (Décembre 1998), pp. 41-50.

Unknown was understood to represent all his dead comrades, but especially the Missing, the huge numbers of men blown to pieces or rotted in mud or otherwise unrecognisable.’<sup>94</sup>

In addition to being a *monument aux morts* the Arc de Triomphe is also a focal point for commemorative events. Masses of people congregate there or on the *Champs-Élysées* for patriotic occasions such as Armistice Day and Bastille Day. Pictorial representations of these scenes which took place during the late 1930s can be found in *Dessins d’Exode*, a collection of drawings by fourteen to sixteen-year-old girls at the *cours complémentaire de la rue de Patay* in Paris. A drawing by R. Martin entitled *Cérémonie de l’Armistice à l’Arc de triomphe, 11 novembre 1936*<sup>95</sup> shows the word ‘Armistice’ in red, white and blue lettering with a large French flag hanging down the left-hand side of the page. Behind the French flag is the Arc de Triomphe with a young man dressed in black bending down next to the eternal flame. There are several wreaths lying on the floor and military personnel looking on. Another drawing by Mlle Expert entitled *Défilé civil du 11 novembre 1938*<sup>96</sup> *autour de l’Arc de Triomphe* shows the French flag hanging below the Arc de Triomphe. The roundabout on which the Arc de Triomphe is situated is surrounded by crowds of people, the majority of whom are dressed in black which suggests the solemnity of the occasion. A third drawing by P. Archambeau entitled *Défilé militaire du 11 novembre 1938: la cérémonie de l’Arc de Triomphe*<sup>97</sup> also has a French flag hanging below the Arc de Triomphe and the words ‘11 Novembre’ are written in red, white and blue lettering. Parading around the Arc de Triomphe are members of the Navy. An anonymous drawing entitled *Cérémonie des flambeaux à l’Arc de Triomphe* shows a close-up of a ceremony taking place under the Arc de Triomphe. A

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<sup>94</sup> K.S. Inglis, ‘War Memorials: Ten questions for historians’, *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 167 (Juillet 1992), p. 12.

<sup>95</sup> Yves Gaulupeau and Antoine Prost, *Dessins d’exode* (Paris: Tallandier Editions, 2003), p.24.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35.

group of men dressed in black are standing holding torches with their backs to the reader whilst four men are standing in a line holding lowered French flags underneath the Arc. The perspective of the image is that the men are paying homage to the eternal flame. However, rather than drawing the flame, the artist has replaced it with a huge French flag in the shape of a flame. Its reflection can also be seen on the ground, next to which are a couple of white crosses. This image is symbolic as the war dead and those who are still living are joined together with the French flag, representing both the country and *la patrie*. The fact that the flame burns eternally means that these different elements will be forever linked. All of these images feature the same elements of the Arc de Triomphe and the French flag but the proportion of these objects is significant. The flag, in most cases, appears out of proportion to the size of the Arc de Triomphe and the other features of the drawing. In fact it appears to be just under half the size of the monument. The fact that numerous girls have drawn those watching the ceremony in black shows that France is still mourning for its war dead and that these ceremonies are a time for commemoration and reflection.

In addition to commemorating the dead and ensuring that they will never be forgotten, Becker makes the point that *monuments aux morts* became a source of inspiration, encouraging people to continue the struggle against the enemy: ‘La mort, nous disent ces mémoriaux, crée la patrie, comme la patrie justifie ces morts.’<sup>98</sup> Maroussia Naïtchenko, a young communist girl, supports this argument as she felt a mixture of emotions when she came into contact with a war memorial. During an excursion of like-minded individuals to Garches, via *la Défense*, she sees a monument in memory of those who died defending Paris in 1870:

Nous posâmes pied à terre pour examiner cette statue composée d’un grand nombre de personnages, hérissée de drapeaux, d’un style grandiloquent, bien peu esthétique, me sembla-t-il. Mais il s’agissait de

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<sup>98</sup> Becker, p. 25.



saluer le courage de ceux qui avaient, eux, défendu Paris, et ne l'avaient pas livré, comme nous, à l'ennemi!<sup>99</sup>

She holds these deceased people in high regard and also shows a degree of empathy towards them:

Si peu patriotes que nous nous sentions, nous étions pleins de respect et d'admiration pour ces défenseurs de la liberté. Quelle peine de subir la botte de l'ennemi sur nos trottoirs, quelle humiliation, quelle colère nous habitaient à voir défiler son armée sur notre sol.<sup>100</sup>

One important link to the past in the interwar years was the *gueules cassées*, former soldiers who had been disfigured during combat in the First World War. The introduction of more modern, violent trench warfare involving the use of grenades and shellfire added together with the sheer length of the war reversed the trend of previous wars which had seen more men struck down with illness than actually killed on the battlefield. In the case of the First World War, 86 % were killed on the battlefield compared to 14% who were struck down by illness.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, Sophie Delaporte estimates that around 40% of men received at least one injury, with half receiving two injuries and 100,000 receiving three or four: 'L'armée française fournit là encore un exemple caractéristique: 2 800 000 hommes furent blessés, sur huit millions de mobilisés. Les combats terminés, la guerre a laissés 300 000 mutilés, et deux millions d'hommes souffrant d'une invalidité d'au moins 10%.'<sup>102</sup> Between 11% and 14% received facial injuries. Although facial injuries were not a new consequence of warfare, the sheer numbers that were disfigured differentiated the First World War from previous conflicts. Some men were seriously disfigured to the point of being virtually unrecognisable;

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<sup>99</sup> Maroussia Naïtchenko, *Une jeune fille en guerre: La lutte antifasciste d'une génération* (Paris: Editions Imago, 2003), p. 173.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Sophie Delaporte, *Gueules cassées de la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Agnès Viénot Editions, 2004), p. 17.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

they lost eyes, noses, ears, jaws or in some cases half of their faces. Plastic surgery at the time was not advanced enough to be able to restore the face and prosthetics often emphasised the disfigurement instead of improving it. One girl, a young nurse at the time, was deeply affected by the sight that greeted her on entering a ward of disfigured men for the first time:

La jeune femme s'était ainsi retrouvée projetée 'en face de... de ce que j'ai vu de plus atroce de ma vie!, écrit-elle. Une vingtaine de "blessés de la face", une vingtaine de monstres, d'hommes qui n'ont presque plus rien d'humain, de corps portant des débris mutilés de visages.'<sup>103</sup>

Naturally it was a long process to gain acceptance of their altered image from their family, friends, the community or even themselves. They received a variety of reactions ranging from sympathy to fear or even disgust. However, their wounds were testament to a variety of qualities that they possessed:

Leur blessure, qui rappelait aussi la brutalité de la guerre, plaidait pour leur bravoure, pour leur conduite héroïque. Dans le contexte de l'immédiat après-guerre, l'horrible mutilation pouvait leur procurer un certain sentiment de fierté, et il n'est guère discutable que celle-ci pouvait avoir un aspect valorisant.<sup>104</sup>

In addition, the facial disfigurement bore witness to the fact that these men had made the ultimate sacrifice; 'un complet don de soi pour la patrie. Le don de son identité.'<sup>105</sup> In general, women felt sympathy towards the *gueules cassées* whereas children were scared of them. Some injured men returned to their families and tried to reintegrate into society, whereas others wanted to live in an environment with other men who were experiencing the same difficulties as themselves. A *Maison des gueules cassées* was inaugurated in 1927 to accommodate the latter either on a temporary or permanent basis.

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<sup>103</sup> Henriette Rémi, *Hommes sans visage* (S.P.E.S., Lausanne, 1942), 110p. cited in Delaporte, pp. 163-164.

<sup>104</sup> Delaporte, p. 176.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

Due to the sheer number of men who became *gueules cassées*, it is very likely that young girls would have come into contact with them during the Interwar period, whether it was members of their own family or men that they saw in the street. From the descriptions given, the image of a mutilated man would not be an easy thing to forget and yet in the girls' diaries and memoirs that have been consulted, there is no mention of disfigurement whatsoever. The only girl to refer to those injured during the First World War is P. Archambeau in her drawing *Défilé militaire du 11 Novembre 1938: la cérémonie de l'Arc de triomphe*. In the Armistice Day ceremony can be seen some disabled people in wheelchairs positioned on the roundabout on which the Arc de Triomphe is situated. Sophie Delaporte emphasised that although testament to the brutality of war, disfigurement was absent from the collective memory. Thus it is possible that mutilation was so much of a taboo subject that none of the girls thought, or were able, to raise it.

It is evident from the information presented above that the physical traces of the First World War had a direct influence on girls' views during the Second World War. Seeing the evidence of previous wars such as trenches and military hospitals provoked excitement and intrigue amongst young girls, as they were curious about what had taken place in them. Whereas adults wanted to erase the visible signs of the past to avoid history repeating itself, and in particular to avoid attracting German attention, young girls wanted to preserve it. The past did not just arouse curiosity in young girls, however, as it could also evoke the trauma of war. Visiting military cemeteries was testament to the painful reality of war and its lasting consequences. *Monuments aux morts* were prominent features of most French towns and villages. In addition to commemorating the dead, they were also focal points for patriotic occasions. Girls' pictorial representations of these occasions show that they consider the

monument and the French flag, thus the war dead and *la patrie* to be forever linked. People may have been killed, but their memory and the cause for which they died will always be remembered. In addition to being a scene of commemoration, they could also be a source of inspiration, giving courage and motivation to those who want to fight for a cause in which they believed. Those injured or disfigured during the First World War gave girls an awareness of the sheer brutality of warfare. Even if men were not killed during the war, it could still have a devastating impact on their own lives plus that of their families.

## **Conclusion**

The legacy of the past had a direct bearing on girls' opinions as the Second World War approached. The experiences of their mothers and grandmothers during previous wars inculcated young girls with a sense of fear of the Germans which made them more cautious around the enemy. Rather than being looked after, in some cases young girls were required to provide reassurance towards their mothers and grandmothers thus the traditional roles were reversed. However, having no prior knowledge of living through a previous conflict and hearing about the trauma inflicted on their families provided a source of motivation for some young girls who decided to actively do something to fight the German Occupation of France by joining the Resistance. These findings support the arguments of psychological studies on the effects of youth and gender on memory such as Penelope Davis' 'Gender Differences in Autobiographical Memory for Childhood Emotional Experiences' and especially Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan's claim in their study *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* that young people carry survivor narratives.

The written word was a powerful tool which could shape the perceptions of young girls from an early age. The adventures of Bécassine during the First World War inculcated young girls with qualities deemed important for the future of France, in particular patriotism and an anti-German attitude. It also taught young girls to be vigilant and wary of the enemy and to be aware that they may come into contact with the Germans without realising it. The story conveyed the severity of the situation and the need to actively do something to protect the country from *nos ennemis*. Propaganda sought to instil in the French a hatred of the enemy by presenting the Germans as being so brutal that they would target young girls and cut off their hands. According to this type of discourse, nobody was safe from German atrocities. These conclusions contribute to the existing research on German atrocities carried out by John Horne and Alan Kramer in their study *German Atrocities, 1914: A history of denial* as the examples taken from *Bécassine* show how these tales were adapted for children. They also contribute to the existing literature on *Bécassine* such as Marie-Anne Couderc's *La Semaine de Suzette: Histoires de filles* by showing how a negative impression of the Germans recurred in several albums. Furthermore, it complements the findings of Linda L. Clark's study *Schooling the Daughters of Marianne: textbooks and the socialization of girls in modern French primary schools* on the ways in which women and the Germans were depicted in textbooks aimed at children.

The physical environment served as a constant reminder to what had happened in the past. It aroused intrigue, verging on excitement, in young girls who wanted to explore these forgotten aspects which had been lived by their ancestors. It also provoked a sense of trauma when girls were presented with the brutal fact that war causes death or disfigurement. Death did not have to be final, however, as patriotic ceremonies at *monuments aux morts* combined the living

with the dead but most importantly both were united for the sake of *la patrie*. This contributes to the existing research on memory and monuments such as Annette Becker's 'Monuments aux morts après la guerre de sécession et la guerre de 1870-1871: un legs de la guerre nationale?' and Antoine Prost's 'Mémoires locales et mémoires nationales: les monuments de 1914-1918 en France' and shows that these monuments served their purpose by infiltrating the minds of young girls on a subconscious level.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE EXODUS**

The crushing defeat of France in less than six weeks came as a shock to the French population who had believed the Maginot Line to be impenetrable. Given that France and Germany were traditional enemies, with the two countries having fought each other during the Franco-Prussian War and First World War, many people were fearful about how the Germans would behave during this war. After the defeat in June 1940, memories of German brutality during the First World War were one factor which motivated people to leave their homes in an attempt to flee the rapidly advancing German army. As a third of France's male population, over six million men, between the ages of twenty and forty-five had been mobilised in the French army, the masses of fleeing inhabitants were predominantly comprised of women, children and the elderly. Due to the progress of the invasion, the first to flee were those from Belgium, Luxembourg and Northern France. These victims all had their own story to tell, and given the circumstances, these personal narratives spread at a rapid pace, increasing the sense of fear, panic and anxiety amongst the French population. In order to assess the impact of the exodus on girls, this chapter will begin by establishing the numbers involved. It will examine the key themes which feature in their writings of the exodus, their emotional responses to leaving their homes, and will consider the dangers and challenges that they faced, focusing on separation, sexual exploitation and bombings. This chapter asks how certain aspects of the exodus, such as bombings, contributed to forming young girls' opinions of the Germans. It argues that the exodus could be a positive experience for young girls which offered them the chance to experience new things but that the thought of the Germans advancing into France was never far from their minds.

## Statistics

Establishing figures for the number of girls who participated in the exodus is extremely difficult. It appears that, in the majority of cases, whole families, rather than independent individuals, took to the roads. When families arrived at their intended destinations, the ways in which figures were recorded varied from region to region. Furthermore in some cases, lists were only recorded of those who sought financial assistance.

The most comprehensive statistics available relate to the region of Brittany. Using these statistics, an estimate of the number of refugees who arrived there can be established. In Redon, for example, the figures are broken down into seven different, albeit mixed sex, age groups. The largest of these covers those aged one month to fifteen years, which represents 408 people or 26% of the total number of refugees. Those aged between sixteen and nineteen years number 113 or 7% of the total number of refugees. Thus out of 1156 people listed, 521, or 33%, of the refugees were aged below twenty at the time of their arrival in July 1940. The report specifies that of the 1156 refugees, some 62% were women or young girls.<sup>106</sup>

More detailed information is provided in the records of the commune of La Bosse in Ille-et-Vilaine. Statistics show that forty-six refugees arrived there. Out of these forty-six, thirty-one, or 67%, were female. Of those aged between one and fifteen years, seven were girls, compared with three boys. Thus 23% of the females who arrived in La Bosse were younger than fifteen. This represented 15% of the total number of refugees. In contrast to this, of the six people aged between fifteen and twenty years, two were female compared with four male. Thus 6% of the females who arrived in La Bosse were aged between fifteen and twenty,

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<sup>106</sup> AN 72AJ 623 'Les Réfugiés à Redon par l'abbé Mothay', undated.



which represented 4% of the total number of refugees. Combining these statistics shows that 30% of the total number of females who arrived in La Bosse were younger than twenty, which represents 35% of the total number of refugees.<sup>107</sup>

A total of 2090 people sought refuge in the commune of Quimperlé. Of these 2090, 1397 were female, representing 69% of the total number of refugees. These statistics are broken down into smaller age groups than is the case for other communes, providing more detailed information. Of those aged below three, seventy-six were girls, which represented 4% of the total number of refugees. Girls aged between three and ten years numbered 148 or 7% of the total number of refugees. 191 females were aged between ten and twenty, representing 9% of the total number of refugees. To put this in a wider context, 224 refugees were female and aged below ten years, which represented 11% of the total number of arrivals. Furthermore, 415 refugees were female and aged below twenty years which represented 20% of the total number. Taking just the female presence into account, 5% were younger than three, 11% were aged between three and ten years, and 14% were aged between ten and twenty. Overall, 30% of the females who arrived in Quimperlé were younger than twenty.<sup>108</sup>

The commune of Bourg-des-Comptes in Ille-et-Vilaine experienced an influx of 441 refugees. Of these, 258, or 59%, were female. Thirteen refugees were girls aged between one and five years, which represented 3% of the total number of arrivals. Thirty-seven were females aged between five and fifteen years, that is 8% of the total number of refugees. Twenty-three were female and aged between fifteen and twenty-five years, which represented 5% of the total number of refugees. Taking just the female presence into account, 5% were aged between one

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<sup>107</sup> AN 72AJ 623 'Les évacuations de population. Commune de La Bosse – Ille et Vilaine par Madame Louise', undated.

<sup>108</sup> AN 72AJ 623 'Les évacuations de populations par J. Jaffrennou', undated.

and five years, 14% were aged between five and fifteen years and 9% were aged between fifteen and twenty-five years. Combining these figures shows that 28% of the females who arrived in Bourg-des-Comptes were younger than twenty-five, which represents 17% of the total number of refugees.<sup>109</sup>

The commune of St Séglin witnessed the arrival of eighty-two refugees. Of these eighty-two, thirty-one were female and twenty-five were children. Unfortunately the sex of the children is not specified, with the exception of a twelve-year-old *écolière* from the Meuse, so only fairly general information can be deduced from the figures. Included in the thirty-one females were two sixteen-year-olds, one a student from the Seine and the other a *domestique* from the Seine-et-Marne, and three seventeen-year-olds; a *servante d'hôtel* from the Meuse, a student from the Nord and a *couturière* also from the Nord. Thus 16% of the females who arrived in St Séglin were in their mid-teens which represents 6% of the total number of refugees.<sup>110</sup>

If these examples are taken as indicative of the state of affairs throughout northern France, the evidence from the communes of La Bosse, Quimperlé and Bourg-des-Comptes would suggest that 65% of the total number of people who took to the roads were female. If those aged below fifteen are considered, the statistics indicate that 69% were female. Considering just the female presence suggests that 23% were younger than fifteen which represented 15% of the total number of refugees. Taking an average of the figures presented above suggests that 51% of those aged below twenty were female. If just the female presence is considered, 29% were younger than twenty which represented 19% of the total number of refugees. Of the significant number of women who took to the roads, nearly two-thirds of the total number,

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<sup>109</sup> AN 72AJ 623 'Commune de Bourg-des-Comptes (Ille-et-Vilaine), Les évacuations de populations par Josette Lallemand', 23 August 1940.

<sup>110</sup> AN 72AJ 623 'Statistique de réfugiés, Commune de St-Séglin par Le Maire', 10 December 1940.

just under a third were aged below twenty, thus it is important to study the experiences of these young girls.

## **Emotional responses to the Exodus**

Whereas emotions surrounding the exodus were unanimously negative for adults, the same cannot be said for young girls. For adults, the exodus would bring chaos and disruption to their own life and to that of their family. It was necessary for them to try to envisage their future, including where to travel to, what they would need to take with them, how they were going to get there and, most importantly, how they were going to protect their children. This was just the beginning of difficult times.

In contrast to this, girls' reactions to the prospect of leaving were not unanimous. The ambiguity of the period of the exodus for children is demonstrated by Martine Rouchaud, who, upon hearing that her family was to leave the hamlet of Le Marais, stated 'Nous ne savons pas exactement s'il faut pleurer ou si nous devons nous abandonner à notre démangeaison de voir du nouveau.'<sup>111</sup> This uncertainty appears again when the family set off on their journey into the unknown, as she states 'Quelques larmes nous brouillent les yeux, mais vite elles disparaissent, et nous pensons déjà à la vie exodique que nous allons mener dans des contrées de la France qui nous sont étrangères.'<sup>112</sup> When reflecting on her experiences of the war, D.R.O who was fourteen at the time of the exodus stated:

Je vivais cent ans que je n'oublierais pas l'Exode. Je ne me rappelle plus les dates, mais pour moi c'est l'Exode. Quelle aventure! Ou plutôt: que d'aventures! car tous les jours, toutes les nuits, toutes les heures un nouveau danger, une nouvelle expérience.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Martine Rouchaud, *Journal d'une petite fille 1940-1944* (New York: Gallimard, 1945), p. 7.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>113</sup> D.R.O. cited in Sullerot, p. 141.

Similarly, fourteen-year-old B.M.D. stated ‘Je ne retrouve, en fait de souvenirs, qu’un sentiment d’inquiétude, mêlé d’excitation.’<sup>114</sup> The excitement of the departure is also expressed by an anonymous eight-year-old girl who embraced the chance to leave Templeuve in the Nord, as she saw it as the beginning of a new life: ‘Pour ma sœur et pour moi, ce départ est une aubaine.’<sup>115</sup>

The scenes that young girls witnessed also proved to be a source of excitement. When access to transport was unavailable, desperation led people to go to extraordinary lengths. Maroussia Naïtchenko described how ‘Cette équipée prenait parfois des allures surréalistes. Maman avait vu passer sous la fenêtre une famille entière en patins à roulettes.’<sup>116</sup> Two sisters found themselves in somewhat unusual company when they got a lift with a circus caravan. The girls enjoyed travelling with the clowns who made an effort to keep them entertained in spite of the difficult circumstances. ‘Une caravane de cirque accepte de nous prendre toutes les quatre jusqu’à Doullens. Nous sommes avec des clowns très gentils. Même ici, ils s’ingénient à nous faire rire.’<sup>117</sup> During another stage of their journey, the same sisters found themselves in a second class train compartment which was meant to hold six people but in which ten were crammed, including six soldiers. ‘Les soldats nous prennent sur leurs genoux, nous font boire du vin et de l’eau dans leur quart sous l’œil horrifié de maman. Nous, nous trouvons cela grisant.’<sup>118</sup> Even seeing enemy planes overhead could provoke a hint of excitement for young girls as it gave them a chance to witness something new. Nicole Ollier quotes the following account of an eight-year-old girl:

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<sup>114</sup> B.M.D. cited in Sullerot, p. 111.

<sup>115</sup> Anonymous cited in Nicole Ollier, *L’Exode: sur les routes de l’an 40* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1969), p. 78.

<sup>116</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 161.

<sup>117</sup> Anonymous cited in Ollier, p. 83.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

Déjà hier soir, nous avons vécu notre premier raid ennemi. Vers 20 h 30, dans un ciel immodérément clair pour la région, vingt appareils à croix noire parfaitement visible passent... Peu de chose en vérité, mais ici, pour tout le monde, c'est un événement. C'était plus d'avions qu'on n'en avait jamais vu depuis le début de la guerre.<sup>119</sup>

These accounts show that the exodus could be a fun and exciting experience for young girls, as it was new and unusual. In fact it could even be quite humorous.

Although there is often a substantial difference between expectation and reality, in some cases girls found that being away from home had certain benefits. In referring to her time staying in an abandoned house, Colette Coste Fléchelle described how '[c]et intermède nouveau, excitant, inhabituel nous enchante.'<sup>120</sup> She was able to see the positive adventurous side of the exodus. For her, the exodus was a time of unexpected excitement, as she says 'Un monde nouveau, attirant et inattendu s'ouvrait à nous les petites jumelles.'<sup>121</sup> Whereas adults did not welcome the disruption to daily life, this was new and exciting for children. Whilst on the roads they could not attend school, do their chores around the house and as such, had no set routine. The exodus provided them with a sense of freedom from routines, constraints and normality. In their eyes, the exodus could be something positive, something new which would take them out of their normal environment and enable them to travel, see new things and meet new people. Instead of viewing the exodus as an attempt to escape from the Germans, young people often saw it as a form of escapism, a holiday even. As Hanna Diamond states:

Young people were perhaps better equipped to take advantage of these experiences as they were more adaptable and prepared to take life at face value and were not haunted by the spectre of what might be the true consequences of losing the war. Children also tended to travel with adults, normally their own parents, and this gave them a strong sense of security which affected their perception of events.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>120</sup> Colette Coste Fléchelle, *Jumelles dans la tourmente 1939-1945* (Paris: Editions de l'Officine, 2007), p. 78.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>122</sup> Hanna Diamond, *Fleeing Hitler: France 1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 60.

Young girls' pictorial representations of the exodus also illustrate the contrast between the outlook of adults and children. A collection of 297 drawings exist which Mademoiselle Adrienne Jouclard, an art teacher at the *cours complémentaire de la rue de Patay et de la rue de Charenton* in Paris, instructed her students, young girls aged between fourteen and sixteen years, to produce. Sixty-three of these drawings, dating from 1941, focus on the exodus from, and the return to, Paris. Although the subject was optional, seventy girls produced drawings and thirty-nine of these drawings appear in a book entitled *Dessins d'exode*. One particularly striking drawing by Régine Laurensou is entitled *L'exode sur la route de Paris à Fontainebleau*.<sup>123</sup> It shows a group of adults, predominantly women, all wearing dark clothing, one of whom is pushing a baby carriage. Accompanying them are one younger girl, wearing a striking red hat, a little girl wearing a red dress and carrying a doll, and a little boy wearing a blue sailersuit. This image suggests that the exodus was a sombre occasion for adults, but not for children: the colourful clothes represent the variety of experiences that the exodus brought into children's lives. Similarly, a drawing by Jeanine Rullier entitled *Halte au bord de la route*<sup>124</sup> shows four well-dressed females and one little boy having a picnic. One female is collecting water from the well, another is holding a baguette, a third is carrying two picnic baskets from a car which is parked in the background, whilst the fourth is cooking food over a fire. Under normal circumstances, this snapshot could quite easily be a family having a day out in the countryside.

Both drawings and texts by children who experienced the exodus suggest that it was not necessarily a traumatic experience for them. However, some sources do indicate their

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<sup>123</sup> Gaulupeau and Prost, pp. 78-79.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

awareness of the negative aspects of the exodus. An anonymous eight-year-old girl who travelled with her mother and sister recalled:

On a peur. Mais il y a un côté curieusement savoureux dans la situation, à cause du beau temps et de la campagne. Et puis on parle beaucoup avec n'importe qui. C'est peut-être ce côté 'bavard' de l'exode qui cause en partie le ralentissement de l'armée.<sup>125</sup>

Colette Coste Fléchelle also acknowledged her fear, and recounted the long periods of time spent in a car which was forced to travel slowly due to the sheer volume of people on the roads, and the fear provoked by bombings. However, the positive aspects outweighed the negative. Living in a house by the sea was a source of great enjoyment for her. Nonetheless, she felt that the experience was somewhat tarnished by the circumstances which had brought them there:

La mer, la plage, la pêche dans les rochers et nos châteaux de sable démolis par la marée montante nous font rire à gorge déployée. [...] Il fait beau et si nous n'avions pas dans l'arrière fond de nos pensées, imprimées, à jamais les images tragiques que nous venons de vivre et qui à cause d'un bruit insolite, d'un rien, nous font courir vers maman le cœur battant, ces vacances imprévues seraient de merveilleuses vacances.<sup>126</sup>

It was difficult to be totally happy when the country and its inhabitants were in such turmoil. This sort of ambivalence is also perceptible in the diary of the renowned feminist writer Benoîte Groult who, at the age of nineteen, lived with her parents and younger sister, Flora, fourteen, in Paris during May 1940. The two bourgeois girls recorded their experiences in separate diaries, which were combined for the purposes of publication in 1962. Although Benoîte would prefer to stay in Paris as she has university exams to take, once the decision is taken to go and stay with their grandparents in Brittany, the girls take something positive from the war. In fact they have to remind themselves that they are not on an extended holiday:

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<sup>125</sup> Anonymous cited in Ollier, p. 82.

<sup>126</sup> Coste Fléchelle, p. 82.

Toujours la même émotion à retrouver la mer, cette personne chère, au bout de l'allée de peupliers. Le chauffeur de grand-mère est venu nous chercher comme d'habitude à Rosporden et je ne parviens pas à me convaincre que ce ne sont pas les vacances qui commencent.<sup>127</sup>

However there is a sense of guilt which accompanies their enjoyment as they cannot be completely at ease when France is experiencing such turmoil:

Journée exquise. C'est la première année que m'est offerte la joie de passer le mois de mai loin de Paris et voilà que je n'en peux profiter qu'avec mauvaise conscience. Par bonheur, je n'ai personne au front ni au cœur qui me soit cher et ma peine est vague et abstraite. Elle donne même un goût amer et excitant aux joies de tous les jours. J'ai l'impression de voler chacun de ces instants heureux à la Guerre.<sup>128</sup>

Although the above examples demonstrate that the exodus could be a time of excitement and new opportunity, this was not always the case. Life away from home could be quite traumatic for some girls. In their study of the psychological effects of the war on French children Marie Helen Mercier and J. Louise Despert, a paediatrician and psychiatrist respectively, discuss how children's reactions to the war were influenced by the attitudes of the adults accompanying them. Mercier studied French children who lived in Paris or the Parisian suburbs or those from the north and east of France who entered the capital as refugees, between 1939 and 1941. One of these was a nine-year-old girl who arrived in a Parisian suburb from the north of France with her mother, grandmother and baby brother on May 19 1940. They remained in the suburb for four days whilst the baby was treated for bronchitis. The family were travelling with a larger group of refugees, and although the car had been packed two days before departure, the girl was only told they were leaving two hours before they set off. Although the girl had been told during the trip about the German advance and the reasons for their departure, she did not overtly display any signs of anxiety, whilst the grandmother was fidgety and complained about minor details. Her behaviour changed however when, before going to sleep one night, she said to her mother, 'Do you think they are

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<sup>127</sup> Benoîte et Flora Groult, *Journal à quatre mains* (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1962), p. 22.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.



certainly going to kill all of us?’<sup>129</sup> Once her brother was better and the family could resume their trip, the girl clung to the medical examiner and said that she did not want to leave, that she wanted to stay with her. She could not understand why they were moving on again. The article concluded that ‘The mother and grandmother, talking openly about their anxiety, were increasing the child’s.’<sup>130</sup> A primary school teacher in the Loire recalled how the exodus was the prime topic of conversation amongst children when they returned to school. She felt that their period of adventure had had lasting traumatic consequences:

Chacun d’eux me faisait le récit de son émigration, de son ‘tour de France’ pour certains. Que de souffrances! Que de fatigues et de privations! Que de vilaines choses vues au cours de ces pérégrinations! Aussi ne tardions-nous pas à constater que ces enfants, déjà gâtés par la présence des soldats qui cantonnaient là avant leur départ n’avaient plus aucune moralité.<sup>131</sup>

Madame Bartet’s testimony suggests that children could become desensitised to what was considered right and wrong during the exodus. Due to the harsh conditions, it was often considered acceptable for families or groups of people to stay in abandoned houses, use the belongings of those who had fled, and steal food. All of these aspects would not have been considered acceptable during peacetime, but the need for survival outweighed the usual laws of morality. The scenes that children witnessed would have left a marked impression on them, as they contrasted sharply with the values and acceptable forms of behaviour that parents and teachers had instilled in them during their childhood. This view is confirmed by one young girl, who reveals that she will never be able to forget the scenes that she witnessed:

Lorsque je suis partie en exode avec mes parents, en arrivant à Mayenne, nous nous sommes arrêtés pour nous reposer, raconte Carmen Gallet. Nous voyions une caravane interminable de voitures; des femmes et des enfants qui pleuraient, tellement ils étaient fatigués. Tout cela est très triste. J’espère de tout mon cœur de ne plus voir cette chose affreuse qui est et restera toujours gravée dans ma mémoire.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Marie Helen Mercier and J. Louise Despert, ‘Psychological Effects of the War on French Children’, *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 5:3 (July/August 1943), p. 267.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> AN 72AJ 623 ‘Renseignements sur l’exode de mi-Juin 1940 par Madame Bartet Institutrice à Pouilly-les-Fleurs’, undated.

<sup>132</sup> Carmen Gallet cited in Gaulupeau and Prost, p. 64.

Scenes such as these were disturbing for young girls, as the reality of what was happening began to take effect.

Some young girls who were perhaps more aware of contemporary events were actually reluctant to flee their homes, and resented the fact that they were being forced to leave against their will. When Madeleine Riffaud's parents moved from the Somme to Caen, they left her with her grandparents in the Limousin, as they believed that the German advance would be stopped before it could reach the south. It was therefore considered to be a safer option for Madeleine to stay with her grandparents until things settled down. Although her grandparents took the decision to take part in the exodus, Madeleine tried to convince them to change their minds. 'Elle, pas plus raisonnable que son aïeul, ajouta son grain de sel et assura qu'elle était prête à les attendre, les Allemands.'<sup>133</sup> Although only sixteen, Madeleine had already formed opinions of her own and was ready to stand firm to her principles. She wanted to stay and was not prepared to be forced out of her own home. She did not view the exodus as an adventure but as a form of personal defeat, perhaps even cowardice. By contrast, as it was often parents, or in particular the mother, who decided that a family would take to the roads, there could be an element of compliance, verging on indifference, in girls' attitudes to leaving. After all, it was out of their control, so they did as they were told. As Eric Alary states, 'Les enfants doivent alors suivre le mouvement migratoire des adultes sans vraiment comprendre ce qui leur arrive.'<sup>134</sup> Maroussia Melnick, whose parents had immigrated to France from the Ukraine a few years prior to the war, was very young during the exodus. Her memories of this period solely revolve around her pet dog, Bob. The idea of leaving her family home and taking to the

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<sup>133</sup> Riffaud, p. 21.

<sup>134</sup> Eric Alary, Bénédicte Vergez-Chaignon and Gilles Gauvin, *Les Français au quotidien 1939-1949* (Paris: Perrin, 2006), pp. 89-90.

roads did not perturb her; she was only concerned about whether she could take the dog with her:

On venait de me le donner, c'était un petit bâtard blanc et noir, marrant comme tout et il me semblait que si je l'avais avec moi rien de grave ne pourrait arriver. Quitter la maison, ça m'était égal pourvu que mon petit Bob soit là.<sup>135</sup>

Having Bob with her was a form of distraction from what was happening and proved to be a reassuring factor. An element of fear, particularly of the unknown, was still present, but it was more connected to the prospect of coming face to face with the Germans than to leaving behind everything they had ever known. One fourteen-year-old girl described her family's motives for leaving Amiens in the following way:

We left because we saw the others leaving and we were afraid of the Germans. My mother had lived through 1914-1918 and was very afraid: 'we can't stay here', 'we can't stay here'. We did not take much, just what we could carry. We just dropped everything and took off. We were so scared. We did not know where to go. We just walked and walked.<sup>136</sup>

Clothilde Rousseau, who was seventeen in 1940, recalled how her parents' decision to leave Paris was due to them fearing for the safety of herself and her brother: 'Nous ne connaissions absolument personne nulle part et fuyions n'importe où, à l'aveuglette, emportés par la terreur de nos parents, terreur de voir leurs enfants tomber aux mains des bourreaux, sans avoir la moindre idée d'un lieu de destination.'<sup>137</sup> As we have seen, the legacy and impact of the memory of the First World War should not be underestimated. As many parents had been children themselves during the Great War, they had their own memories from this period. For example, stories about the Germans trying to poison children by offering them contaminated sweets abounded, whilst propaganda during the First World War and the Interwar period

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<sup>135</sup> Maroussia Melnick cited in Guylaine Guidez, *Femmes dans la guerre 1939-1945* (Panazol: Charles Lavauzelle, 2006), p. 19.

<sup>136</sup> Madame Asquin cited in Diamond, *Fleeing Hitler*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>137</sup> Clothilde Rousseau cited in Maxime Tandonnet, *1940: un autre 11 novembre* (Paris: Tallandier, 2009), p. 31.

sought to draw attention to the brutality of German behaviour, in particular the idea that the Germans raped women and cut off young girls' hands. These myths were often a motivating factor in the parents' decision to leave.

In some cases, fleeing the Germans was not considered a realistic or practical option. As this decision was primarily made by parents or guardians, some young girls resented not being involved in the decision-making process. This was the case for Benoîte Groult who writes: 'On parle de nous expédier à Concarneau comme des plantes fragiles qu'on met dans une serre à l'abri des bottes.'<sup>138</sup> She appears to have felt overprotected and powerless as her parents, with the best of intentions, were excluding her from decisions which directly affected her. Even when this decision was dictated by a particular family situation rather than by choice, it did not provoke a less severe reaction. Elisabeth Sevier was full of anguish and resentment when her mother took the decision not to leave due to Elisabeth's sister's serious illness. These emotions were intensified when she found out that other members of her family were ready to take to the roads. Her aunt's demeanour unsettled the young girl as she recalled how 'Aunt Celine's eyes filled with tears as she told Maman that everyone was saying Hitler intended to destroy Paris.'<sup>139</sup> Seeing her aunt in such an emotional state had a profound impact on Elisabeth, as she recalls:

I was more frightened than ever and felt a real resentment toward my sister, Annick, for being so sick that we could not leave with Uncle Armand and Aunt Celine. I also blamed Maman for placing the interests of Annick above those of the rest of the family.<sup>140</sup>

In this case Elisabeth's sense of fear was compounded by three factors: news of the Germans advancing, the fact that leaving her home was not considered to be a viable

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<sup>138</sup> Groult, p. 19.

<sup>139</sup> Sevier, p. 8.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

option, and the fact that the situation was deemed so serious that other members of her family were intent on fleeing.

When reflecting on the period of the exodus, some girls felt that leaving their homes was synonymous with them leaving behind a part of their childhood. This was the case for Brigitte Camdessus, who was five in 1940. She recalled watching her mother pack just one suitcase for herself, her three children and the baby that she was expecting. This was a turning point for Brigitte, who states: ‘C’est ma façon de découvrir que la guerre détruit un peu le monde où j’ai vécu.’<sup>141</sup> Similarly, Bernadette Aumont, who was fourteen in 1940, recalled looking back at her home as they were leaving and thinking ‘que mon enfance resterait là ensevelie [...]’.<sup>142</sup> Moving to Marseille from Le Havre made a lasting impression on her to the extent that she realised her life would never be the same again: ‘Puis ce fut pour moi une expérience décisive. Je m’ouvrais à un monde que je découvrais différent et je recevais des autres un regard sur moi qui me permit peu à peu une prise de conscience de mes conditionnements.’<sup>143</sup> In contrast to these experiences, fourteen-year-old B.D.M stated: ‘De mai-juin 1940, il ne me reste que des impressions floues, comme si je réprimais ce que je n’avais pas envie de savoir. Au lieu de mûrir, j’ai vécu telle une enfant.’<sup>144</sup> However, the tone of this testimony suggests that she made a conscious decision to fight against the circumstances in order to retain her childhood for as long as she could.

The above examples indicate that young girls’ reactions to the prospect of leaving were not unanimous. Unlike adults, some girls viewed it positively, even exhibiting enthusiasm about

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<sup>141</sup> Brigitte Camdessus cited in Sullerot, p. 59.

<sup>142</sup> Bernadette Aumont cited in Sullerot, p. 23.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>144</sup> B.M.D. cited in Sullerot, p. 113.

the chance to experience new things. The evidence suggests that girls' reactions differed according to their age and personal background. For example, younger girls were more susceptible to experiencing an element of excitement about the prospect of going on an adventure. As Micheline Eude, who was eighteen when she took part in the exodus, noted, 'les enfants très jeunes n'avaient pas conscience du danger qu'ils couraient et considéraient l'exode comme une sorte de randonnée pittoresque et chahuteuse.'<sup>145</sup> This idea is confirmed by Alary, who concludes: 'les plus jeunes acceptent la nouvelle situation comme un jeu sans trop prendre conscience des événements. Souvent, ils n'ont pas gardé la mémoire d'actes de guerre, mais seulement des souvenirs de jeux avec des enfants rencontrés sur les routes.'<sup>146</sup> Maroussia Melnick is a particularly good example of this, as her sole memories of the exodus focus on her pet dog. Although fear was a recurrent emotion for young girls, the fact of having at least one parent or relative with them on their journey was often a reassuring factor. However, this could be a double-edged sword, as negative emotions emanating from the adults around them could often have a negative effect on the young girls themselves. Girls' emotions surrounding the exodus were thus largely dependent on the emotions of the people around them. For older girls, especially those who had a degree of knowledge about contemporary events, the exodus could be seen as a form of defeat, of giving up before the war had even begun. Some girls who wanted to stay and stand their ground were required to leave if their family considered it to be the best course of action, whereas others who were required to stay wanted to leave, as they felt trapped. However, some older girls did relish the opportunities that the displacement caused by the exodus had afforded, albeit with mixed emotions.

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<sup>145</sup> Micheline Eude cited in Guidez, p. 20.

<sup>146</sup> Alary, Vergez-Chaignon and Gauvin, p. 90.

## Sexual exploitation

There is evidence to suggest that the disharmony, uncertainty and unrest created by the exodus suspended the usual conventions of morality. A few accounts exist which imply that lone or small groups of girls who took to the roads were exploited or taken advantage of by males, in particular soldiers. J.P. Lallemand, an *expert comptable*, described how, when he decided to flee the village of Jussy in the Aisne on a motorbike accompanied by a young *institutrice*, they met up with two other motorcyclists en route: ‘Tous les quatre nous avons ramassé deux autres filles comme cela chacune avait la sienne ce qui était plus agréable et a permis de faire rapidement l’éducation par l’exemple des deux qui débutaient dans la vie sentimentale.’<sup>147</sup> Due to the nature of the exodus, it was inevitable that sleeping arrangements produced a potentially promiscuous environment. Monsieur Mortier described how he witnessed the arrival of some soldiers without their superiors in his village of Gipcy in the Allier. His testimony described his discomfort with the sleeping arrangements:

Par exemple, ce qui ne me plaisait pas, c’est la façon dont ils s’arrangeaient: les garçons couchaient avec les filles sans se gêner et, comme ils avaient du ravitaillement et de l’argent, ils ont entraîné des petites qui étaient resté (sic) sérieuses jusqu’à leur arrivée et qui sont parties avec eux après trois jours.<sup>148</sup>

Chief Corporal Bourdet of the 107 RIF fell into the category of people suggested by Monsieur Mortier, as he and another soldier apparently took advantage of three young women who they met on the way to Neufchâteau. As the women had been on the road for two days without supplies, they asked if it would be possible to buy food from the men. Bourdet said that he was surprised at the woman’s polite language, which contrasted with her vagabond appearance: ‘C’est très surprenant de voir une fille qui a l’air d’une romanie s’adresser à un

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<sup>147</sup> AN 72AJ 623 ‘L’exode à Entrains (Nièvre) Notes de J.P. Lallemand’, 1957.

<sup>148</sup> AN 72AJ 623 ‘Note sur les conditions de l’exode à Gipcy (près Bourbon L’Archambault)-Allier’, 1957.

soldat loqueteux en l'appelant monsieur [...].'<sup>149</sup> After explaining that they were aiming to reach the south west, the women decided to accompany the soldiers on their journey. The mood changed that evening, however, after the soldiers managed to acquire civilian clothing and were then forced to hide deep in a wood to change after hearing the sound of motor vehicles. While the girls stood guard, they buried their weapons and concealed their military papers in the girls' bags. To ensure they had control over the girls, who had lost all their money when their possessions were stolen, the men concealed their money in the linings of their ties, apart from five or six hundred francs which remained in their wallets. By his own admission, 'Cela suffit pour faire de nous les maîtres de l'équipe puisque les filles n'ont pas un sou depuis qu'elles se sont fait voler leur valise.'<sup>150</sup> After a couple of days the group arrived in Culmont Chalindrey and it was time for the women to repay the men:

Là, nous passon (sic) deux jours dans une auberge avec les petites, le temps de les faire payer en nature. Deux se sont laissées (sic) faire sans difficulté, bien qu'une fût vierge, la troisième ne voulait pas, mais elle a fini par y passer comme les autres après que Mourgues l'ait menacée de couper les vivres à tout le groupe, mais ces camarades l'ont tenue la première fois.<sup>151</sup>

Jackie de Col, a seventeen-year-old schoolgirl in 1940, mentioned that an unknown man made unwelcome advances towards her during her exodus. Jackie and her mother had come across a house which had been vacated by its owners but was being used by another group of refugees. After entering the house, she was approached by a bearded man who made his intentions towards her very clear:

He said, 'Come with me,' but I said, 'No!' I said that I'd come with my mother to find my grandmother and he said, 'Just come with me. We can live together. It's much better to wait for death while making love.'<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> AN 72AJ 623 'Extrait des notes du Caporal Chef Bourdet du 107 RIF', 1943.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Jackie de Col cited in Nicole Dombrowski, 'Surviving the German Invasion of France: Women's Stories of the Exodus of 1940', in *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted with or without Consent*, ed. Nicole Dombrowski (New York: Garland, 1999), p. 124.



Although she managed to get away from him, and thus nothing physical took place between them, the danger that she was in is evident. She later came across the same man, who had managed to find another more compliant woman who was willing to accompany him.

A soldier, who was based in the Cher, described how his group picked up a group of females from Paris, who were too tired to walk, and took them to the forest of Bigny. They shared what provisions they had with the girls and spent the evening with them. However, this soldier's account alludes to the fact that they had ulterior motives for spending time with these girls. 'Six avaient l'air de connaître la musique, mais les huis (sic) autres étaient aussi pucelles que possible aucune (sic) n'a été vraiment violée, en dépit de l'inconfort des bois ou des camions.'<sup>153</sup> However, this soldier states that the girls had made a conscious and deliberate decision to sleep with French men, as a way of opposing the Germans.

La plus âgée devait avoir 22 ans et elle a expliqué Maupetit qu'elle avait décidé comme ses amies de se donner à des Français parceque (sic) c'était tout ce qu'elles pouvaient faire pour les soldats et que comme ça les Allemands, a'ils (sic) les rattrapaient n'auraient que les restes. Je ne crois pas qu'elles aient pris cette décision en état d'ivresse car elles n'avaient rien mangé ni bu quand nous les avons embarquées [...].<sup>154</sup>

The evidence presented above suggests that young girls were particularly susceptible to being manipulated and sexually exploited by males during the exodus. As lone or small groups of girls tended to find themselves with limited or no resources, men who could provide necessities such as food and money found themselves in a privileged and dominant position. Once these men had allowed girls to share their provisions, girls would have felt obligated to repay them. As men recognised that young girls were dependent on them for survival, their accounts suggest that they knowingly took advantage of this by making them pay using non-

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<sup>153</sup> AN 72AJ 623 'Un aspect de l'exode le 17 juin 1940 dans le Cher par Dominault', 1941.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

financial means. Nicole Dombrowski summarises this element of danger in the following way: ‘These types of strange encounters with other French refugees pepper many exodus narratives. Indeed, the encounters with strangers reinforced the thin line between danger and solidarity within the crowd. One must remember that real danger did exist.’<sup>155</sup> It is important to note that the subject of promiscuity is predominantly raised by males in unpublished sources. The one girl who does refer to it, seventeen-year-old Jackie de Col, only mentions it briefly, preferring to focus on other aspects of her exodus. The fact that girls neglect to mention it in their published diaries and memoirs suggests that it was a taboo subject which they would rather forget or just not draw attention to. After all, France was still a patriarchal country at this time and sexual relations with virtual strangers at a time of crisis would have been considered as both shameful to their families and to their country. The notion of experiencing pleasure at a time when France and the French people were suffering is not something that the majority of French girls would be willing to admit to.

## **Separation**

Being separated from their parents, siblings or other family members was particularly difficult for children and young girls who had often never been apart from those closest to them. Denise Domenach-Lallich found the reality of being separated from certain members of her family a very difficult and isolating experience. When she initially left Lyon to stay with her grandparents, her father had been mobilised in a factory and her brothers were *pensionnaires*. She found this quite traumatic, and she wrote: ‘Je n’étais pas habituée à être séparée d’eux trois et cela fait un grand vide dans la maison car, quoique nous nous disputions souvent, nous

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<sup>155</sup> Dombrowski, p. 12.

nous aimons bien mes frères et moi.’<sup>156</sup> This separation had other consequences apart from emotional ones, as Denise had to take on a more adult role with added responsibility within the household. For example, when one of her brothers was ill and her mother had to go and visit him, she stated ‘A la maison il faut que je m’occupe de tout puisque Maman n’est pas là et ça aussi c’est terrible.’<sup>157</sup> When the family unit became separated, it often had a specific impact on young girls who were required to grow up more quickly. They were often required to carry out the traditional adult female chores such as cooking, cleaning and caring for their siblings. This meant that the war inflicted a premature adulthood on them.

The issue of separation is also raised by Elisabeth Sevier, whose brother, having already completed his mandatory army service, was sent to Marseille to finish his university studies. After learning at boarding school that her father had been conscripted into the army, she was taken to say goodbye to him. The pain of the impending separation had a sobering effect on this eleven-year-old, as the reality of war had begun to impact on her own life: ‘I felt very apprehensive because I had never really thought about how the war would affect my own family.’<sup>158</sup> Saying goodbye to her father was a solemn occasion for the entire family, but this was by no means a unique experience. When they arrived at the train station, it became apparent that they were not the only ones feeling the pain of the war, as the platform was full of uniformed soldiers saying farewell to their families.

Michèle and Germaine Benèche, aged fourteen and twelve respectively in May 1940, left Le Mans with their father, paternal grandmother and two family friends to go to stay with their

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<sup>156</sup> Denise Domenach-Lallich, *Demain il fera beau: journal d’une adolescente (novembre 1939-septembre 1944)* (Lyon: BGA Permezel, 2001), pp. 43-44.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>158</sup> Sevier, p. 3.

aunt in Aurillac. Although their exodus was predominantly uneventful, it was marked by two cases of separation. The first involved the youngest girl, Germaine, leaving her doll in Le Mans. The second involved being separated from their mother for ninety-nine days, as she was required to stay behind in Le Mans for work purposes. According to Alary, ‘[l]a séparation avec la mère provoque une fragilité psychologique et un chagrin très importants.’<sup>159</sup> For around eight weeks, the girls heard nothing from their mother but they still wrote to her regularly, choosing to focus on the most positive elements of their experiences.

Although the above examples concern the separation of families due to circumstances largely beyond their control, there are also cases where parents voluntarily and willingly entrusted their offspring to passing convoys of French soldiers, in an effort to put them in a safer environment. However, problems ensued when it came to reuniting the separated families, as parents often did not know the final destination of the convoy. Even if the destination was known, it could be changed after taking the children, so families were often totally unaware of the whereabouts of their offspring. Their only hope of locating those missing was to appeal for information by placing adverts in newspapers. A. Pioger, who was based in the Aisne, recalled the situation in the following way:

C’est un désordre inexprimable. Les enfants sont séparés de leurs parents, les femmes éloignées de leur mari, et les uns et les autres sont emportés par un courant que rien ne peut arrêter. Je recueille deux petites filles qui ont perdu leur famille, elles m’accompagneront jusqu’à St-Nicolas de la Grave où je les confierai à de braves gens.<sup>160</sup>

Hanna Diamond describes how a massive number of children were thought to have been lost, albeit temporarily, during the exodus of 1940: ‘From 1940 to 1942 the Red Cross tirelessly worked to reunite ninety thousand children with their parents. Parisian children are estimated

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<sup>159</sup> Alary, Vergez-Chaignon and Gauvin, p. 92.

<sup>160</sup> AN 72AJ 623 ‘Quelques notes sur l’exode de 1940 par A. Pioger, ex commandant de la 361<sup>e</sup> Cie du Parc d’Essence et d’Ingrédients R.G. 161’, undated.

to have been about 25 per cent of those who were lost.<sup>161</sup> Even family pets were entrusted to passing convoys: one soldier recalled how ‘Une petite fille de sept ans accompagnée de sa grand-mère et de sa maman porte, dans ses bras depuis Mézières, un petit Saint-Bernard qu’elle me confie parce qu’elle n’en peut plus et que je nommerai “Venizel”.’<sup>162</sup> As we have previously seen, Maroussia Melnick’s pet dog was the sole subject of her memories regarding the exodus as he proved to be a form of distraction for her.

The evidence presented above suggests that young girls found being separated from members of their family, or even in some cases their most prized possession, to be a traumatic experience. As they had generally grown up living within a family unit, they found it strange being apart from loved ones which was emphasised if they had little or no contact with those from whom they were separated. In addition to the emotional impact of separation, it often had more practical consequences, particularly for young girls who found themselves entering a premature adulthood whereby they were required to take on more responsibilities. Being separated from a loved one yet knowing their whereabouts would have been difficult enough to deal with, but there were also those unfortunate ones who had become separated from their relatives whilst on the roads and who it took months, and in some cases years, to reunite.

## **Bombings**

For many young girls, the exodus provided the first, albeit it indirect, contact with the enemy, whether it be the Germans or the Italians. As they had no first-hand memories of living in an occupied country, girls’ views were still in many cases somewhat naive. Many believed that the enemy would not want to inflict pain or even death on innocent, unarmed civilians.

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<sup>161</sup> Diamond, *Fleeing Hitler*, p. 142.

<sup>162</sup> AN 72AJ 623 ‘Quelques notes sur l’exode de 1940 par A. Pioger.’

Although they had heard about the experiences of their mothers and grandmothers during the First World War, as we saw in Chapter One, the strafing of innocent civilians by German and Italian planes still came as a shock to them. Nothing could have really prepared them for the sheer brutality that awaited some of those who took flight from their homes.

The innocence of young girls is demonstrated by the account of Madeleine Riffaud, aged sixteen at the time of the exodus, and who assumed the pseudonym of *Rainer* during the war. She underestimated the lengths to which the Germans would go: ‘Ce drôle de cortège descendant vers le sud fut survolé par les avions à croix gammée, les terribles stukas. “Ils ne vont tout de même pas tirer sur nous, des gens désarmés”, pensa Rainer.’<sup>163</sup> However her trust in the Germans proved to be misplaced and her illusions of the enemy being humane and morally decent were shattered. ‘Mais ils piquèrent, mitraillant cette foule. Et Rainer se retrouva dans le fossé, avec son grand-père couché sur elle. Le vieil homme avait de bons réflexes!’<sup>164</sup> Similarly, Ginette Thomas-Vergez, aged fourteen in 1940, had left Beaune (Côte-d’Or) with around twelve relatives when her group was caught up in the bombings. ‘Croyez-moi, cela fait peur. Les avions piquaient en mitraillant, remontaient, tournaient et recommençaient leur petit manège [...]’<sup>165</sup> Although Madeleine was shocked at the behaviour of the Germans, she recognised that there were people worse off than herself and, furthermore, that this was just the beginning. The worst was yet to come:

Ils n’étaient pas touchés, mais autour d’eux il y avait des morts, il y avait du sang et la jeune fille, pour qui c’était le premier contact réel avec la guerre, comprit que ce n’était que le début de temps difficiles.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Riffaud, p. 21.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ginette Thomas-Vergez cited in Alary, Vergez-Chaignon and Gauvin, p. 91.

<sup>166</sup> Riffaud, pp. 21-22.

These bombings proved to be a turning point in the young girl's mindset. Her naivety was lost and she realised why so many people had taken to the roads ahead of the German advance: 'Ce jour-là, cette première fois-là, j'ai vraiment compris devant l'invasion nazie ce que c'était que l'exode et j'ai su que ça n'allait pas être drôle.'<sup>167</sup>

Some younger girls, such as Maroussia Melnick, were preoccupied with other matters when bombings took place: 'Un jour, nous avons eu un raid au-dessus de notre cortège. Le chien, à ce moment-là, avait disparu. Et tandis que tout le monde se plaquait au sol, moi je courais partout en appelant mon chien.'<sup>168</sup> Although her grandfather tried to call her back so that he could protect her, his words fell on deaf ears. Her age was probably a contributing factor to her behaviour as she did not understand the severity of what was happening.

Je ne comprenais pas ce qui nous arrivait. Je ne savais même pas ce que c'était que la mort. Je ne l'ai su qu'un peu plus tard. Ce jour-là, le mitraillage ne nous a pas atteints, une chance. Ni plus tard d'ailleurs, sinon je ne serais pas là.<sup>169</sup>

Colette Coste Fléchelle, who was older than Maroussia, was also more concerned with matters other than her own safety. She was caught up in a bombing raid when the car in which she was travelling became stuck in a ditch: 'Les avions allemands reviennent, les "*Messerschmitt*," les "*Stukas*" noirs, fracassant, canardant tout sur leur passage. Nous tombons dans les blés, à plat ventre, mais sous moi, pour la protéger, j'avais mis ma poupée.'<sup>170</sup> The attachment to dolls or pets may have been a form of distraction for the young girls, a way of coping with their fear of what was happening.

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>168</sup> Maroussia Melnick cited in Guidez, p. 19.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>170</sup> Coste Fléchelle, p. 77.

Françoise and Denise G., aged sixteen and nineteen respectively, were on the way to visit their aunt at Maisons-Laffitte when they witnessed a bombing raid. They both threw themselves onto the ground, where they stayed until they thought it was safe to move. Denise described the event as follows:

Une fois debout, nous ne reconnaissons plus les choses: plus de pont, ni la femme et sa poussette qui ont été englouties. Sur notre rive, de la maison la plus proche du pont complètement détruite, émergent un homme et une femme nus comme des vers.<sup>171</sup>

Her testimony is very matter-of-fact and does not contain any emotion. Using a detached manner increases the impact of her testimony, however, as she describes such an awful experience in such a factual way, which expresses her total disorientation in the aftermath of the bombings. The girls seem to have accepted that it happened and that there was nothing that could be done about it.

The horror of German bombings features in a drawing in a booklet entitled *Enfantines*, which was published in 1945 and was aimed at children. The subject matter comprises accounts and drawings of the exodus as seen through the eyes of children. It is important to note the date of this booklet: it appeared just after the war had ended and so possibly sought to demonise the enemy in the immediate post-war period. A drawing by Jackie Pelle<sup>172</sup> (Viroflay) shows three lorry-type vehicles full of refugees travelling through hilly terrain with six planes flying very low overhead. The perspective of the image suggests that the sky is full of planes, with the convoy being outnumbered by two to one, giving the impression of the refugees being overpowered by the enemy. This image should be treated with some scepticism, however, as it is possible that the children were influenced about what to draw or given ideas about how to

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<sup>171</sup> Denise G. cited in Ollier, p. 127.

<sup>172</sup> *Enfantines No.106 (La guerre vue et jugée par les enfants – L'Exode)* (Vence: Editions de l'Imprimerie à l'Ecole, Octobre 1945), p. 9.



present the enemy. Images of bombings also feature in *Dessins d'exode*, the collection of drawings created by fourteen to sixteen year old girls at the *cours complémentaire de la rue de Patay* in Paris. A drawing by Mlle Legrand<sup>173</sup> shows her family, two parents and five children walking along an almost empty road with a black plane overhead. At the side of the road are charred bodies of men, women and children. The testimony accompanying a drawing by Mlle Bureau<sup>174</sup> reveals that she witnessed a little boy look on as his mother was killed. When he went over to her to see if there was anything he could do, he was killed as well. This appalling sight must have haunted her and left a marked impression on her memory.

One of the most shocking aspects of these bombings was that they targeted convoys of innocent civilians predominantly comprised of women and children. When the bombs exploded, the adults' first thought was not for themselves but to save the lives of their most precious possessions – their children. For example, a Swiss-born First World War widow named Madame Tellier described how her son, a soldier, witnessed an explosion en route to rejoin his regiment in Angoulême. He witnessed a low-flying plane dropping a bomb in the vicinity of a train full of refugees, another containing English soldiers and a third containing ammunitions which exploded continually from the moment the bomb struck. A woman nearby was solely preoccupied with saving her little girl, and he described how:

une femme réfugiée blessée me mit dans les bras une fillette de deux ans à peine – je vous la donne me dit-elle, emmenez-là, sauvez là je ne puis pas. Madame, lui répondis-je je ne puis faire un mouvement. Ce sont deux soldats anglais qui fuyaient qui emmenèrent la fillette.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Gaulupeau and Prost, p. 85.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>175</sup> AN 72AJ 623 'Au temps des mange-tout. Souvenirs de Mme. Tellier', undated.

This mother believed that due to the bombings, separation from her child was the only way to protect her. However, as we have seen, the notion of separation was particularly difficult for young girls, and it was also difficult to reunite parents with their children at a later date.

When Nicole Roux's family car broke down, the heaving crowds tried to push them into a ditch to clear the road. Naturally Nicole found this quite a frightening experience in itself, but her fear was intensified when aeroplanes were spotted overhead:

Au loin arrivent des avions qui survolent la file des réfugiés. Ils piquent brusquement. Tout le monde se précipite dans les fossés, s'y aplatit. Il n'y a pas d'autre refuge. Nous, nous restons dans la voiture, recroquevillés devant les sièges, le plus bas possible.<sup>176</sup>

However on this occasion they did not pose a threat and their journey was resumed. Further on their journey, they stopped next to a train station and Nicole recalled the scenes that she witnessed. Initially there was nothing really remarkable about what was happening, but the atmosphere changed as events began to unfold:

Brusquement, ils s'abattent sur le sol, comme des quilles. Des avions arrivent, piquent, et mitraillent la gare et les wagons. A nouveau, nous nous recroquevillons sur le plancher de la voiture. D'où je suis, je peux voir le ballet des avions au-dessus de nous. 'Ils' sont partis.<sup>177</sup>

Merely witnessing such traumatic scenes would have had a profound effect on a young girl but the emotional impact was intensified if a loved one was actually killed in this indiscriminate manner. Although Elisabeth Sevier's immediate family did not participate in the exodus, her aunt, uncle and cousins left on what was to be their last journey for three of them. Overhearing a conversation which took place between her uncle and her mother, she found out that

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<sup>176</sup> Roux, p. 11.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

[w]hile on the road to Marseille, he had stopped the car to help an old woman reload a cart that had turned over. Suddenly, German planes appeared, bombing and strafing the people on the road. He looked up and saw his car explode, with Celine and their two sons still inside.<sup>178</sup>

The family later found out through an underground newspaper that the roads had become gridlocked due to the sheer number of people who had tried to flee. As this had hampered the Germans' progress, they resorted to drastic measures and brought in the Luftwaffe to clear the way. The consequences of this were that 'After the first wave of planes passed, nothing remained on the roads except burning vehicles. Hundreds of French refugees died that day under German fire and thousands of others sought safety in ditches and fields.'<sup>179</sup>

The evidence presented above suggests that girls' opinions of the enemy were profoundly influenced by the scenes that they witnessed during bombing raids. They inculcated in them a sense of fear, incomprehension and mistrust for the enemy from that point onwards. Young girls had wanted to believe that the Germans would not hurt or kill unarmed civilians who were trying to flee their homes to a place of safety. However, they were proved wrong, and these bombings shaped their views of the enemy for the rest of the war. Eric Alary concludes that bombings had more of an impact on older children than younger ones. He writes: 'En revanche, les plus âgés sont terrorisés et se souviennent davantage des bombardements avec effroi, ainsi que des courses effrénées pour rejoindre les fossés, pendant un mitraillage de l'aviation allemande ou italienne.'<sup>180</sup> The testimonies of young girls presented above support this theory as younger girls such as Maroussia Melnick and Colette Coste Fléchelle were more concerned about their dog and doll respectively than about their own welfare.

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<sup>178</sup> Sevier, p. 9.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>180</sup> Alary, Vergez-Chaignon and Gauvin, p. 90.

## Conclusion

Due to the number of men conscripted into the French army, the refugees who experienced the exodus in May and June 1940 were mainly comprised of women, children and the elderly. From the statistics that are available it is clear that over 55% of the refugees who took to the roads were female. On average 30% of these females were younger than twenty and they represented around a quarter of the total number of refugees. The exodus provided young girls with a variety of new experiences, both positive and negative. On the positive side, they got to meet new people, see new places and travel around France. On the negative side, they had to adjust to often primitive and communal living conditions and face dangers such as sexual exploitation and bombings, not to mention the trauma of separation. These factors had a lasting impact on young girls, as nine-year-old Colette Coste Fléchelle concluded:

Nous les jumelles, serrées l'une contre l'autre, savions que nous avions tous échappé à la mort par miracle ce qui nous donnait le sentiment d'avoir quitté brusquement la petite enfance, d'avoir grandi, d'avoir mûri, d'être devenues, après ces deux mois terribles, plus raisonnables, responsables.<sup>181</sup>

The exodus appears to have had a sobering effect on girls of all ages, and made them grow up and mature quicker. By their own acknowledgement, leaving their homes often meant leaving a part of their childhood behind.

The reactions of young girls to leaving their family home and taking to the roads varied considerably, influencing factors being their age and social class. Younger girls exhibited signs of excitement and did not always fully understand the significance of the defeat of France by the Germans. For them, the exodus was a source of freedom, which enabled them to travel. The decision to leave was not taken by the girls themselves, but instead by their parents which considerably influenced their outlook on the exodus and offered an element of

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<sup>181</sup> Coste Fléchelle, p. 97.

security. Girls in their mid-teens were more aware of contemporary events and had a better understanding of the true meaning of defeat and its consequences; they recognised that danger loomed. Regardless of whether their reaction veered towards apprehension or excitement, there was unequivocally an element of fear, whether it was of the Germans or just the unknown. Although older girls welcomed the chance to have an unplanned holiday, they still had a sense of guilt, and felt that they should not be enjoying themselves when their country was in turmoil.

Girls who took part in the exodus had to deal with three major issues: separation, promiscuity and bombings. The issue of separation was very real and affected many young girls, whether their father or brother was conscripted into the French army or their families became separated after taking to the roads. Rather than war being a national or international problem, for young girls it was first and foremost a personal problem as it had a direct effect on their own lives. Although life on the roads was undoubtedly difficult for everyone, there were still some people who sought to exploit the unique circumstances, and even to exploit the girls themselves. Girls on the road had a certain vulnerability and innocence which some men tried to take advantage of, in particular by offering them necessities which they were then expected to pay for in ways other than financial. It is a tragic irony that those who took part in the exodus did so as they believed that this course of action would enable them to escape the Germans and thus save their lives, and yet it unfortunately had the opposite effect. German and Italian planes strafing the convoys of refugees gave some girls their first insight into the true meaning of war. They witnessed scenes that no young person should see and were confronted with scenes of death and destruction for the first time. The scenes that they witnessed would shape their perceptions of the enemy for the rest of the war.

These findings contribute to the existing research on the exodus such as Hanna Diamond's *Fleeing Hitler: France 1940*, Nicole Dombrowski's *Women and war in the twentieth century: enlisted with or without consent* and Nicole Ollier's *L'Exode: sur les routes de l'an 40* by emphasising the specificity of the experience for children and young people in general but also for young girls and young women where sexual exploitation is concerned. It also contributes to Marie Helen Mercier and J. Louise Despert's findings on how the war affected children on a psychological level. In particular bombings and the issue of separation would leave a lasting impact on children.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE GERMANS ON FRENCH SOIL**

When the Germans began their occupation of France during June 1940, the French were unsure about what to expect. As people began to return home from their exodus, or even if they chose to remain in their place of refuge, they had to come to terms with the German presence which was now a feature of the French landscape. Young girls' diaries and memoirs reveal that they reacted to this German presence in a variety of ways. This chapter will explore the themes which feature in girls' testimonies of the period: their feelings of shock, hatred and fear at seeing the Germans for the first time, the significance of remaining silent or refusing to see the Germans and their thoughts and feelings about the Germans being *chez nous*. It will then consider what they regarded as being striking about the Germans: their physical appearance in terms of their looks and their uniform and the terminology employed by young girls to refer to the Germans. This chapter therefore asks what girls thought of the Germans in the private domain. It argues that although young girls did not exhibit a universal reaction to the German presence, the fact that a number of girls behaved in a similar way demonstrates that there were trends in their behaviour. Furthermore, as this chapter is based on information contained within diaries and memoirs, it enhances our knowledge of the individual, private and often internalised thoughts and thought processes of a young girl when faced with a foreign occupier for the first time.

## Shock, Hatred and Fear

Coming face to face with the Germans for the first time was a shock for many young girls. The occupiers aroused fear in some girls and hatred in others. These feelings of shock, hatred and fear were instinctive, which is evident from their testimonies.

Although France had been defeated, young girls were not mentally prepared for seeing the Germans on French soil for the first time. The sight of the Germans on Breton soil had a lasting impact on Marie-Thérèse Le Calvez who stated: ‘Je me souviendrai toujours du choc que j’ai reçu en voyant arriver les premiers tanks allemands sur la place de l’église de Plouha.’<sup>182</sup> The memory of seeing the occupiers for the first time seems to have been ingrained in her mind. Similarly Maroussia Naïtchenko stated how when asked to accompany a friend to the *place des Invalides*, ‘[j]e décidai de l’accompagner pour y constater par moi-même l’incroyable, l’impensable, l’indicible: Paris occupé!’<sup>183</sup> The shock of what she saw resulted in Maroussia experiencing a loss of identity, as if this sight had penetrated right to her core and drained her of her soul: ‘J’étais vidée de toute pensée, de tout sentiment, anéantie, dans une sorte de stupeur.’<sup>184</sup> Although phrased in a humorous way, Antonia Hunt’s first response to seeing the Germans was also one of shock: ‘I was horrified. My immediate reaction was: “How undignified to be dressed in shorts when the invasion arrives”.’<sup>185</sup> This quotation also suggests her foreign identity, as the juxtaposition of the seriousness of the Occupation with the trivialness of her clothing is typical of English humour. Once she had overcome the initial shock, Antonia’s attention turned to fear as she began to wonder about

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<sup>182</sup> Dominique-Martin Le Trividic, *Une héroïne de la Résistance: Marie-Thérèse Le Calvez du réseau Shelburn* (Rennes: Editions Ouest-France, 2002), p. 19.

<sup>183</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 163.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Antonia Hunt, *Little Resistance: A Teenage English Girl’s Adventures in Occupied France* (London: Leo Cooper/Secker and Warburg, 1982), p. 16.



more pressing issues. She asked herself ‘Would they take my bike away? Would they take *me* away? As yet no one knew how they would behave.’<sup>186</sup> In this case, Antonia’s English identity places her in more danger as at that point nobody knew what was going to happen to foreign nationals in France. Benoîte Groult also experienced an uneasiness which made her nervous and fearful about the Germans. Seeing the Germans outside her window, she stated: ‘Le cœur bat un peu plus fort... on se rappelle les histoires qui circulent sur la férocité allemande... on n’y croit pas, bien sûr, mais on ne croyait pas non plus à la victoire allemande [...]’<sup>187</sup> As previously seen in Chapters One and Two respectively, stories of German atrocities in the First World War were prevalent during the Interwar period and fear about German behaviour during the Second World War was a motivating factor for people taking part in the exodus. According to Alary:

L’effroi de voir un étranger vainqueur vient autant de la peur de l’inconnu que des rumeurs sur les massacres dont les Prussiens seraient coutumiers depuis la guerre de 1870 et celle de 1914-1918. Les manuels scolaires n’ont pas peu fait pour construire et diffuser des représentations sombres de l’Allemand.<sup>188</sup>

Just as fear defined Benoîte Groult’s identity, this was also the case for Colette Coste Fléchelle who described her experience in the following way: ‘En effet, dissimulées derrière les rideaux de dentelle de la salle à manger, nous vîmes arriver craintives et bouleversées “nos premiers Allemands” [...]’<sup>189</sup> Madeleine Riffaud’s first encounter with the Occupation Army takes place when she returns to *Folies*. When she sees soldiers dressed in foreign uniforms she states ‘Elle eut une peur instinctive, animale.’<sup>190</sup> As she was an attractive young girl, she caught the attention of the soldiers. The author recognises that most of these soldiers’ actions were harmless, as she writes ‘Ils voulaient s’amuser, comme tous les soldats du monde. Ils

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Groult, p. 41.

<sup>188</sup> Alary, Vergez-Chaignon and Gauvin, p. 156.

<sup>189</sup> Coste Fléchelle, p. 86.

<sup>190</sup> Riffaud, p. 23.

plaisantèrent. Ricanèrent. L’apostrophèrent. Ce n’était pas très méchant. L’un tira sur sa jupe. D’autres lui tapèrent sur les fesses. La petite n’en menait pas large.’<sup>191</sup> However what could have been perceived as playful behaviour was taken too far, which provoked a severe reaction from her:

Un officier mit fin à la scène, mais de la façon la plus grossière: un violent coup de pied au derrière. Alors, à cette minute même, moins sous le coup de la douleur que sous celui de l’humiliation, Rainer pensa: ‘Moi, je vais les trouver, ceux qui n’acceptent pas l’occupation, l’humiliation. Je ne sais pas où ils sont, mais je vais les trouver.’<sup>192</sup>

Madeleine’s initial fear is therefore transformed into anger and, eventually, resistance. This anger and resistance resulted from a conflation of two types of humiliation – sexual and national. The defeat and subsequent German presence brought shame on France as the Germans served as a reminder to the fact that France had lost its power. Flora Groult stated: ‘Oh! j’ai honte, j’ai honte d’avoir perdu; j’aurais tant aimé que ma France gagne!’<sup>193</sup> Colette Coste Fléchelle found the whole situation embarrassing: ‘Nous ressentons et nous aussi les jumelles, la pénible, l’humiliante sensation du vaincu.’<sup>194</sup> Elisabeth Sevier also reacted violently to the sight of the occupiers. She recalled how she was lying in bed on June 16 when she heard a loud thunder-like sound. When she went to find out what was happening, she found her family looking out of the window. Rather than passively watching, however, Elisabeth lost control of her emotions. ‘I could not contain my rage. The soldiers were responsible for the disruption of my life and the separation of my family. I cried out: “I hate them! I hate them!”’<sup>195</sup> Shocked at her daughter’s reaction, Elisabeth’s mother slapped her face and told her never to say anything like that again. Although she did as her mother requested, she later became involved with the Resistance. Although Madeleine’s initial fear

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-24.

<sup>193</sup> Groult, p. 43.

<sup>194</sup> Coste Fléchelle, p. 100.

<sup>195</sup> Sevier, p. 9.

evolved into rage and Elisabeth's rage was silenced by her mother, these differing emotions motivated both girls to channel their energy effectively by joining the Resistance.

The evidence presented above suggests that the feelings of shock, hatred and fear that the sight of the Germans on French soil aroused in young girls aged nine to nineteen were so intense and all-consuming that they defined their personal identity and in some cases drained them of emotion. The feeling of shock was so strong in French girls that the memory of the incident is very precise and they refer to the exact location within their region that they saw the Germans for the first time. However, Antonia Hunt's reaction focuses on the danger in which her English identity placed her. This shock was not politically motivated, it was an instinctive reaction, which was possibly strengthened by the fact that nothing had happened during the period of the Phoney War. Due to this, young girls did not foresee or believe that France would be defeated. The sight of the Germans on French soil, therefore, made them realise the severity of the situation as it signified that defeat and occupation were not just abstract terms; the Germans were actual proof of this defeat and young girls felt humiliated. Due to rumours about German behaviour in the past, young girls were fearful about how they were going to behave and about how this behaviour would affect them. This fear and uncertainty sometimes expressed itself in the form of anger, as the Occupation began to impact on their lives, and even resistance. A difference in generational reactions to the Occupation is suggested by the responses of Elisabeth Sevier and her mother. Whereas the young Elisabeth, perhaps unaware of the consequences of expressing her emotions, preferred to react instinctively, people of her mother's generation preferred to show more restraint, regardless of their feelings, perhaps because of their memories of the First World War. The

significance of young girls' choosing to remain silent when faced with the Germans is explored later in this chapter.

## **Silence and Blindness**

Although the Germans had won the Battle of France and were now in power, this did not mean that young girls were willing to be submissive and surrender their ability to make choices. They could, and did, choose whether to acknowledge the German presence. One of the most powerful choices they could make concerned the senses; whether to hear or see the Germans. The archives of the *rectorat de Paris* state how some young girls at the *lycée Jules Ferry* were actively involved in *propagande anglophile*, a topic which will be explored in more detail in Chapter Five, and one of their meetings was devoted to the topic of how to react to the Germans. The report states:

Il existe au lycée Jules Ferry parmi les jeunes filles des classes supérieures (préparation au baccalauréat) une cellule où l'on s'occupe activement de propagande anglophile. Des réunions ont lieu fréquemment (en dehors du lycée); la prochaine a pour sujet 'attitude à observer envers l'armée d'occupation et les germanophiles.'<sup>196</sup>

Three young girls were thought to be the main organisers of this meeting, one of whom was Jewish.

The most famous Resistance novella, Vercors' *Le Silence de la mer*, features a German soldier billeted to the home of a French man and his young niece. Although the German is amiable, loves France and makes an effort to befriend the uncle and niece, they refuse to speak to him. Philippe Burrin states:

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<sup>196</sup> AN AJ16 7117 Note addressed to Monsieur le Commissaire de Police, 10 December 1940.

Le message est double: la dignité du refus, incarnée par la jeune fille en particulier, qui se ferme à tout échange avec un homme incarnant la bonne Allemagne, celle des penseurs et des musiciens. Et l'impossibilité d'une collaboration: l'occupant peut avoir individuellement toutes les qualités, il est un rouage d'un système qui veut la perte de la France.<sup>197</sup>

To withhold speech, therefore, is to refuse collaboration. Silence is an internalized, yet powerful, form of resistance. The notion of silence as resistance is also explored by Jean-Paul Sartre in his essay *La République du silence*. His essay states that instead of taking away a person's freedom, living under an oppressive regime has the opposite effect as it forces people to make a choice about what they believe in and what actions they are going to take in order to act on their beliefs. 'Nous avons perdu tous nos droits et d'abord celui de parler; on nous insultait en face chaque jour et il fallait nous taire [...] Puisque le venin nazi se glissait jusque dans notre pensée, chaque pensée juste était une conquête [...].'<sup>198</sup> The concept of being able to think freely under a veil of silence is raised by Colette Coste Fléchelle who at the sight of the Germans stated: 'Nous nous taisons, ruminant à l'intérieur des pensées amères de vengeance et de mort.'<sup>199</sup> Similarly, when scolded by her mother for expressing an anti-German sentiment, Elisabeth Sevier stated: 'However, I told myself: *Whatever I could not say, I could still think.*'<sup>200</sup> Although the Germans attempted to regulate what was said, they could not control or restrict the ability to think or feel. Several girls revealed how the impact of the sight of the Germans left them lost for words. Antonia Hunt stated: 'We watched silently, sick at heart, as German soldiers marched in an endless goose-step up the Avenue.'<sup>201</sup> Similarly, six-year-old Nicole Roux, whose first contact with the Germans occurs whilst she is in Rennes during her exodus, stated how '[m]a sœur et moi, debout sur le trottoir, nous les regardons défiler, silencieuses. Sur la place du Palais, quelques silhouettes, immobiles et

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<sup>197</sup> Philippe Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande 1940-1944* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1995), p. 200.

<sup>198</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, 'La République du silence', 9 septembre 1944 in *Situations, III*, Jean-Paul Sartre (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), pp. 11-14.

<sup>199</sup> Coste Fléchelle, p. 100.

<sup>200</sup> Sevier, p. 9.

<sup>201</sup> Hunt, pp. 47-48.

muettes comme nous.’<sup>202</sup> Nine-year-old Renée Roth-Hano was overcome by fear when she saw a German for the first time in Paris to such an extent that she lost the power of speech: “‘A *boche!*” I try to say, but the words get stuck in my throat. I am scared to death.’<sup>203</sup> Although these responses of disbelief and being lost for words were instinctive and initially due to incomprehension, they could eventually be transformed into resistance.

Voluntary blindness, or an unwillingness to look at the Germans, was another form of undermining the occupiers and reducing their power. This was evident to such an extent that Julian Jackson states that ‘Paris was christened by the Germans “Stadt ohne Blick”.’<sup>204</sup> Philippe Burrin similarly notes that ‘[d]e cette “ville sans regard”, des occupants éprouvèrent tôt la dure froideur.’<sup>205</sup> Maxime Tandonnet infers that there was a sort of pact amongst young people in Paris in 1940 which stated that the most appropriate way to behave towards the occupiers was to shun them:

Ce mépris, ostensiblement affiché, est le premier signe de refus dans Paris occupé, y compris du côté des lycéens et des étudiants qui semblent s’être passé le mot: ne jamais répondre aux bonjours, même dans une cage d’escalier, aux sourires ni aux clins d’œil de l’occupant.<sup>206</sup>

When walking around Paris, Paul Léautard saw a group of German soldiers arrive to visit the *Panthéon* and noted:

Passe à côté de moi une petite troupe de petites filles, cinq à dix ans, conduites, en tête, par une autre d’une douzaine d’années. Celle-ci, se tournant vers elles, tout en continuant la marche: ‘Ne les regardez pas! Ne les regardez pas!’ Et toutes de gagner le trottoir devant la Bibliothèque, et de continuer leur marche, la tête tournée du côté opposé.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Roux, p. 20.

<sup>203</sup> Renée Roth-Hano, *Touch Wood: A Girlhood in Occupied France* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), p. 44.

<sup>204</sup> Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 285.

<sup>205</sup> Burrin, p. 203.

<sup>206</sup> Tandonnet, p. 36.

<sup>207</sup> Paul Léautard, ‘Journal littéraire’ cited in Burrin, p. 203.

Just as this group of girls were following the example of the older one, Martine Rouchaud asked her mother for advice about how to treat the Germans. She was told ‘Vous ne devez pas les voir, comme s’ils n’existaient pas.’<sup>208</sup> Whereas Martine and the group of girls were following the advice of others, Benoîte Groult considered voluntary blindness as a means to fight the occupiers internally: ‘On s’exerce à ne jamais croiser leur regard, il faut bien se donner l’illusion d’une résistance.’<sup>209</sup> According to Benoîte, making the Germans feel welcome was not an option. The French had a national responsibility to show their disapproval by appearing to resist the Occupation even if this was on a private, individual basis.

The evidence presented above suggests that, rather than inhibiting communication, muteness and blindness were both means to express the anti-German views of young girls at this time. The diaries of young girls bear out the Sartrean view that freedom of choice was a means of resisting the Occupation. Certain predictable age differences can be observed; the silence of younger girls was instinctive whilst older girls were more aware of its potential significance. Although girls aged six and nine watched the Germans silently, this was primarily due to shock and anguish overcoming them which resulted in a loss of speech. However this could also be perceived as a form of pre-resistance. The motivations of the group of girls aged five to twelve not to acknowledge the Germans could also be attributed to a form of pre-resistance, or alternatively, it could have been due to adults instructing them to do so or even to a desire to avoid communication with the enemy. However, the nineteen-year-old girl emphasised the importance of creating the impression of resistance by portraying voluntary blindness. Although Cobb argues that this stance was largely unproductive, he states that it was

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<sup>208</sup> Rouchaud, p. 47.

<sup>209</sup> Groult, p. 54.

predominantly found amongst the middle-classes.<sup>210</sup> The attitudes of young girls conform to this assertion as four out of the five who adopted this viewpoint could be classed as *bourgeoises*.

### ***Chez nous***

Ian Ousby states that ‘the Occupation began by demanding that people accept the fact of presence, the presence of a foreign conqueror in their midst.’<sup>211</sup> However, young girls were unwilling to accept this presence. The arrival of the Germans signified that France was no longer entirely French and its national identity was under threat. Eric Alary describes how

[n]ombre de témoins rencontrés ou lus se rappellent encore aujourd’hui, avec un certain effroi, l’arrivée, puis l’installation de l’occupant allemand ou italien dans un univers qui était le leur, un univers familier autrefois limité aux proches et aux autres membres de la commune et du quartier.<sup>212</sup>

Although there was little that could be done to stop the German presence, young girls’ writings reveal that this territory was disputed as France would always belong to them regardless of the regime in power.

In referring to her motivations for going to England to train as a liaison officer, Sonia Vagliano-Eloy described how: ‘I was revolted and heartsick to see German soldiers walking the streets of Paris as conquerors, as if Paris belonged to them [...] They were there, *chez nous*, and that was unbearable.’<sup>213</sup> Maroussia Naïtchenko looked on in disbelief as German tanks occupied the *esplanade des Invalides*. She stated: ‘C’était imposant et inimaginable, cette force tranquille qui s’installait là, roulant avec un bruit régulier et sourd sur “notre”

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<sup>210</sup> Richard Cobb, *French and Germans, Germans and French: A Personal Interpretation of France under Two Occupations, 1914-1918/1940-1944* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1983), p. 93.

<sup>211</sup> Ian Ousby, *Occupation: The Ordeal of France 1940-1944* (London: Pimlico, 1999), p. 157.

<sup>212</sup> Alary, Vergez-Chaignon and Gauvin, pp. 155-156.

<sup>213</sup> Sonia Vagliano-Eloy cited in Margaret Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance: How Women Fought to Free France, 1940-1945* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1995), p. 166.



bitume.’<sup>214</sup> Elisabeth Sevier was adamant that the Germans should not be in France: ‘I wanted them out of France. They were on *our* land, in *our* city, and they had no right to be.’<sup>215</sup> She added ‘Every day I found new reasons to hate the brutal Germans who ruled my beloved Paris.’<sup>216</sup> Colette Coste Fléchelle described how the Germans not only invaded the country but also individual villages. ‘Sous nos yeux consternés, un régiment entier de la “Wehrmacht” envahissait la place, les rues, les ruelles, prenant possession de ce petit village de France.’<sup>217</sup> Benoîte Groult felt that the Germans wasted no time in treating her country as if it was their home. In referring to how the Germans had requisitioned a hospital for their own injured soldiers, she stated that ‘Ils commencent à mettre les pieds dans nos pantoufles.’<sup>218</sup> As previously seen at the beginning of this chapter, the German presence had such a profound impact on young girls that they experienced a loss of identity. The quotations from Colette and Benoîte emphasise the intimacy of the German presence as they use metaphors suggesting that they had infiltrated individual alleyways and the private sphere of the home to such an extent that they were using their slippers. The concept of the Germans infiltrating the home was a feature of *Bécassine pendant la Grande Guerre*, as was previously seen in Chapter One.

Some girls consider the German presence to have contaminated French soil. Marie-Thérèse Le Calvez stated: ‘Mes seize ans ne pouvaient accepter cette souillure du sol breton.’<sup>219</sup> Maroussia Naïtchenko went one step further by claiming that it was the Nazi ideology which had infiltrated Paris, as she stated ‘Ainsi le nazisme avait gagné et foulait le sol même de mon

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<sup>214</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 163.

<sup>215</sup> Sevier, p. xviii.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>217</sup> Coste Fléchelle, p. 86.

<sup>218</sup> Groult, p. 46.

<sup>219</sup> Le Trividic, p. 19.

enfance, de mon quartier!’<sup>220</sup> The vocabulary used by Marie-Thérèse and Maroussia is significant as they both use the metaphor *sol* to emphasise that it is their home country, their region and their territory that has been affected. Furthermore, they feel that both the German presence and the Nazi ideology have penetrated France to the core to such an extent that their roots and the essence of their being have been contaminated. France was losing its grip on its own people. It was no longer a country in its own right, it was more an extension of Germany. According to Benoîte Groult ‘La France entière semble être en marge de ce qui se passe actuellement chez elle.’<sup>221</sup> For these girls, France was a disputed territory. Just as the Germans had infiltrated France on a national level, they had also done so on a local and even an intimate level. Young girls struggled to adjust to the fact that the home, an intimate place in which they belonged and which belonged to them, now ‘belonged’ to the Germans to such an extent that they even imagined them wearing their slippers.

Young girls found it difficult to adjust not only to the obvious physical German presence but also to the ways in which the scenery of French towns and cities, their familiar *sol*, altered under the Occupation. The Germans wanted to assert themselves in order to leave the French in no doubt to the fact that they were now in charge. This was achieved by Germanizing areas of France. Dominique Veillon states: ‘Les vainqueurs n’ont pas lésiné sur les moyens de prendre possession des lieux de manière significative. La ville a changé de décor.’<sup>222</sup> Ousby describes how

[f]ew regimes in history have been more preoccupied with their own emblems than the Third Reich, and probably none has shown more skill in exploiting the effect of its banners and flags, more determination in imposing them on the territories it conquered.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 163.

<sup>221</sup> Groult, p. 48.

<sup>222</sup> Dominique Veillon, *Vivre et survivre en France 1939-1947* (Paris: Payot, 1995), p. 68.

<sup>223</sup> Ousby, p. 159.

The aspect that the French found particularly difficult to deal with, according to Ousby, was ‘seeing a familiar landscape transformed by the addition of the unfamiliar, living among everyday sights suddenly made bizarre, no longer feeling at home in places they had known all their lives.’<sup>224</sup> The presence of the German flag had the greatest impact on the French. According to Ousby, ‘[t]his is hardly surprising, since flags are deliberate, purpose-made emblems of group or national identity and war always intensified the emotive significance they carry.’<sup>225</sup> Girls living in Paris remarked on the sight of this flag on famous landmarks. Antonia Hunt revealed how ‘It hurt dreadfully, of course, to see the swastika flying from the top of the Eiffel Tower, under the Arc de Triomphe, and outside the doors of the luxury hotels in the Rue de Rivoli and Rue St. Honoré.’<sup>226</sup> Martine Rouchaud’s sentiments about seeing the Place de la Concorde are epitomized in her description: ‘Le Ministère de la Marine est barré par l’affreux drapeau jaune à croix gammée [...] On n’est vraiment pas chez soi!’<sup>227</sup> Furthermore, she felt that the *Champs-Élysées* now had a sinister atmosphere: ‘L’avenue des Champs-Élysées est presque déserte, seules des voitures allemandes la descendent ou la remontent à toute allure, et sur les bâtiments réquisitionnés flotte toujours ce pavillon qui semble dédié à la mort.’<sup>228</sup> Although Benoîte Groult profoundly disliked the Germanization of Paris, she felt uncomfortable with how quickly and easily she became accustomed to the sight of it. In fact she appeared to believe that she was betraying her country by seemingly accepting what she saw as normal: ‘C’est ignoble de s’habituer à voir la croix gammée flotter sur la Chambre des Députés. Pourtant, on s’habitue. Le cauchemar devient parfaitement familier.’<sup>229</sup> In this respect, the feeling of alienation that seeing the Germans *chez nous* and on

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>226</sup> Hunt, p. 48.

<sup>227</sup> Rouchaud, p. 222.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., pp. 222-223.

<sup>229</sup> Groult, p. 54.

their *sol* provoked was short-lived; the Germanized sights became familiar all too quickly. The adjustment from seeing a familiar place become unfamiliar and then familiar again but with a Germanic influence was far easier than Benoîte had anticipated.

The evidence presented above suggests that young girls struggled to adjust to both the physical German presence and the public symbolism of the Nazi regime, especially in Paris. The tone of young girls' testimonies is as indicative of their views as the content. The majority of girls use possessive pronouns to transmit the patriotic message that France was not just any country, it was 'their' country. In addition to evoking possession, young girls use emotive language to express strong reactions such as feeling 'revolted' at seeing the Germans in Paris. The message is clear: the Germans may be in power, have made themselves at home and act like the country belongs to them but the fact remains that it will never truly be their country. They feel that France has been contaminated by both the German presence and Nazi ideology, on a personal, local and national level. The Germanization of France and in particular the use of the swastika flag feature strongly in French memoirs of the Occupation. Ousby states: 'Indeed, such descriptions became what analysts of rhetoric call *topoi*, or stock themes, of Occupation literature. They crystallized the writer's reaction to the whole experience of being defeated and subjugated.'<sup>230</sup> The sight of the German flag in Paris had a powerful effect on young girls as it meant that a once familiar place now appeared foreign. The range of emotions that the flag, or rather the positioning of the flag, evoked included physical pain, hatred, and ostracism. It was as if a nightmare had become reality. The swastika flag not only symbolized that France was under Nazi rule but it also epitomized everything that they disliked about the Germans: that they caused death and destruction to people with

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<sup>230</sup> Ousby, p. 159.

whom they came into contact. The descriptions provided by young girls do not refer to Paris in a generic manner but instead focus on the Germanization of specific, typically Parisian, monuments which suggests that they found this sight particularly difficult to adjust to. The experiences of these girls confirm Ousby's conclusion that

[t]he German presence in France was unnatural; the Germans never belonged. Reduced to these terms, the descriptions convey both the writers' initial shock at the arrival of the victors and their slowly accumulated outrage at the indignities forced on the occupied.<sup>231</sup>

## **Beautiful and Sexy**

Although the Germans were the enemy, young girls' views pertaining to them were much more complex than their initial reactions of shock and disgust might suggest. Regardless of what they felt about their country being defeated and occupied, they could not help but notice the attractiveness of these occupiers. Richard Cobb states:

Indeed, some of the well-educated young men in their late twenties and early thirties who all at once found themselves in positions of limitless authority in July 1940 were often sought out by French teenagers of both sexes, not because they were powerful and could exercise patronage, but because they were good-looking, fair and charming.<sup>232</sup>

Maroussia Naïtchenko appeared so surprised at the youthfulness of the Germans that she struggled to imagine how they had managed to defeat France: 'Jamais on n'aurait pu croire que cette jeunesse blonde qui défilait impassible ait pu se battre pour arriver jusque-là en un mois de temps.'<sup>233</sup> Antonia Hunt's description of the Germans suggests that they were so handsome that she was almost in awe of them. In referring to the sight of German tanks, she described how she saw 'devastatingly good-looking, suntanned, blue-eyed soldiers standing

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>232</sup> Cobb, p. 58.

<sup>233</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 163.

up in them.<sup>234</sup> D.R.O. who was fourteen when she first saw the Germans was also surprised at the handsomeness of the Germans to the amusement of her family: ‘Les Allemands quand je les ai vus pour la première fois, il paraît que j’ai crié: “Mais ils sont beaux!”, et toute la famille s’est moquée de moi.’<sup>235</sup> However, she infers that her reaction was gender-specific as her brothers reacted in a completely different way: ‘Il n’empêche que la première fois qu’on en a vu de près, il n’y a que moi qui étais bien surprise, car mes frères ont eu le réflexe inverse et ils ont cherché à se sauver.’<sup>236</sup> Even young girls who later joined the Resistance commented on the fact that they found the Germans handsome. Geneviève de Gaulle, the niece of Charles de Gaulle, described the first time that she saw the Germans in the following way: ‘The next day, smartly uniformed “young war gods” arrived by motorcycle in the town where we had spent the night, but they did not stop long enough to take prisoners.’<sup>237</sup> Evelyne Sullerot’s account continued this theme:

They seemed to belong to another race. [...] The soldiers were very tall – almost six feet – and dressed entirely in black with skull-and-crossbones insignias. They were superb, like angels of death – completely different from our friends, our comrades, from all that we knew.<sup>238</sup>

Cobb described how ‘[s]o many of these young Germans carried with them the mystery pertaining to foreigners, the physical representatives of a new race of heroes, and the fascination associated with total victory (and total humiliation).’<sup>239</sup> Both Geneviève’s and Evelyne’s terminology support this statement and they imply that for young girls, the Germans appeared as superior beings with special powers. They also draw attention to the youth, vitality and imposing stature of these foreign soldiers. The extent of the physical attractiveness and the power of the Germans is suggested by the use of biblical terminology

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<sup>234</sup> Hunt, p. 16.

<sup>235</sup> D.R.O. cited in Sullerot, p. 147.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Geneviève de Gaulle cited in Weitz, p. 25.

<sup>238</sup> Evelyne Sullerot cited in Weitz, p. 24.

<sup>239</sup> Cobb, p. 58.

such as ‘young war gods’ and ‘angels of death’. Geneviève and Antonia’s descriptions provide the reader with an image of German soldiers which conforms to the stereotypical Nazi ideal of aryans: blue-eyed, blond-haired, innocent and angelic-looking soldiers. The adjectives of ‘superb’ and ‘tall’ that feature in Evelyne’s description suggest the arrival of an angel which always provokes awe in the Bible even when bringing good news. These Angels are renowned for their innocent appearance, for being dressed in white and for protecting people, yet the angels to which Evelyne refers are dressed in black and emblazoned with skull and crossbones. The aim of these angels is apparently to inflict death and destruction on France. The ‘angel of death’ features in the Bible, and is commonly referred to as the ‘Grim Reaper’, the antichrist and even Satan. Evelyne’s description is therefore paradoxical as it combines the conflicting notions and distinct spheres of light and dark, good and evil. Her account thus undercuts the images presented by Geneviève and Antonia due to her use of the paradox.

Benoîte Groult noted that she felt like a young girl when faced with the Germans in a state of undress: ‘Et pourtant, je ne parviens pas à oublier tout à fait que ce sont des hommes et que je suis une femme. Quand ils sont en slip, je me retiens pour ne pas leur sourire.’<sup>240</sup> It appears that the Germans make her aware of her own sexuality, which takes her by surprise. Patrick Buisson notes that this admiration is a recurrent feature of young girls’ writings about the period and suggests that by maintaining their distance from the Germans, they sought to avoid attracting disapproving looks from their compatriots.<sup>241</sup> Although they instinctively found the Germans attractive, they also realised that their feelings could be controversial in the eyes of their fellow citizens and they did not want to draw attention to themselves for the wrong

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<sup>240</sup> Groult, p. 45.

<sup>241</sup> Patrick Buisson, *1940-1945 Années érotiques Vol.1 Vichy ou les infortunes de la vertu* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008), p. 91.

reasons. An attraction can be present between a man and a woman regardless of the participants' nationalities, national identities or political stance because, as Flora Groult noted with surprise the Germans were actually 'tout à fait des hommes normaux. Beaux pour la plupart, avec des nuques droites et des équipements tous pareils, ce qui surprend.'<sup>242</sup> She appears to have expected the Germans to be monsters and was surprised that they were just normal people. The fact that she describes them as normal suggests that there was nothing unique or unusually striking about them. However she does concede that they were good-looking. In contrast to the language used by Geneviève de Gaulle and Evelyne Sullerot, that used by Benoîte and Flora Groult is more subtle. Whereas Geneviève and Evelyne found the Germans to be alluringly beautiful mythical creatures, Benoîte and Flora viewed them as normal, everyday people. The perceived normality of their appearance contrasts sharply with the description provided by Evelyne Sullerot who referred to them as 'angels of death' which suggested that they had destructive satanic powers.

Although young girls recognised the physical beauty of the Germans, there is a dichotomy between girls' perceptions of the Germans' looks and their character. In contrast to the largely positive statements provided above, Elisabeth Sevier stated: 'From the first time I saw the cocky Germans in Paris, I wanted them out of France'<sup>243</sup> and Antonia Hunt recalled how '[i]t had been hateful and galling to witness their arrogance and pride in Paris.'<sup>244</sup> When Elisabeth Sevier was arrested for her Resistance activities, she recalled how 'I shivered with fright as I looked into the arrogant faces of my captors.'<sup>245</sup> The arrogance that is conventionally believed to accompany physical beauty is not something that impressed these girls, because it was a

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>243</sup> Sevier, p. xviii.

<sup>244</sup> Hunt, p. 60.

<sup>245</sup> Sevier, p. 72.



product of the German's invasion of the French space. Although girls were susceptible to feeling admiration for the Germans, they could not forget that their country had been defeated and it was due to their victory that the Germans were feeling proud. However Flora Groult appeared surprised because 'Ils n'avaient pas l'œil arrogant du vainqueur, ils étaient impassibles, à accomplir leur mission.'<sup>246</sup> According to Flora, the Germans were so focused on carrying out their duties that they appeared emotionless.

The evidence presented above demonstrates that young girls aged in their mid to late teens found the Germans attractive, at least in terms of their physical appearance. Regardless of their views on the Occupation, they were drawn to the youthfulness, strength, stature and vitality of the Germans. However, the language used to convey their appearance varies considerably with some girls presenting them as all-powerful, mythic, supernatural beings whilst others consider them to be normal, everyday men. These contrasting perceptions convey the paradox of the Occupation as texts such as *Le Silence de la mer* portrayed how the French found it unsettling when they discovered that the Germans were both war gods and normal men. The former type of language has religious connotations, the references to god and angels representing the German's power and authority to decide the fate of France and the French. Girls' descriptions of the Germans' attitude primarily focus on their arrogance. Whilst the descriptions of their looks infer superiority with positive connotations, the air of superiority insinuated by their personality is profoundly negative.

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<sup>246</sup> Groult, p. 42.

## Uniform, Boots, Tanks and Singing

Symbolism in the public sphere was not just restricted to the swastika flag; the Germans themselves were the embodiment of Nazism. Their distinctive uniforms, boots, language and tanks were constant reminders that a different ideology, nationalism and culture were now in place.

When describing German uniforms, young girls draw attention to the fact that they were foreign, alien even. On arriving at a railway station, Madeleine Riffaud recalled how she saw ‘Tous ces uniformes de soldats étrangers [...]’.<sup>247</sup> When seeing a German for the first time, Renée Roth-Hano states: ‘He wears a military uniform – not the familiar one of the French, but one of a darker color, complete with cape and boots. It is no doubt a German officer, like those in the newsreels.’<sup>248</sup> In her eyes, the Germans conformed to stereotypes. Colette Coste Fléchelle described the Germans as ‘bottés, casqués, vert-de-grisés.’<sup>249</sup> Antonia Hunt’s description of the Germans parading down the *Champs-Élysées* is revealing of her feelings towards this manifestation of Nazism:

I had lived far enough away not to see this performance often, but the sight of their hated uniforms with ‘Got mitt uns’ (sic) on their belts, their endless ‘Heil Hitlers’ and the hundreds of loathsome fluttering swastika flags, made me seethe with anger and hatred.<sup>250</sup>

Antonia did not feel that this sight was natural, as she refers to it as a performance which implies that it was staged. Nazi uniforms could be perceived as being costumes which contributed to the show. When Madeleine Riffaud was arrested for her Resistance activities, a priest visited her whilst she was in Fresnes prison. She described how ‘Dressée comme un

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<sup>247</sup> Riffaud, p. 23.

<sup>248</sup> Roth-Hano, p. 44.

<sup>249</sup> Coste Fléchelle, p. 86.

<sup>250</sup> Hunt, p. 60.

serpent, j'ai injurié cet homme. Son uniforme n'était-il pas pour moi celui du Mal?'<sup>251</sup> As well as the physical presence of German soldiers, the uniform was a metonymy as it came to symbolise the whole concept of the evil of the Occupation. In referring to the same man, she described how the mere sight of the uniform incited her not to believe what he said: 'Comment l'écouter alors qu'il portait l'uniforme des bourreaux?'<sup>252</sup> The effect that this uniform had on young girls was remarked upon by Ernst Jünger, a German soldier in Paris. Burrin states: 'Ernst Jünger, lui, découvre que le regard, quand il ne se dérobe pas, peut être insoutenable. Entrant en uniforme dans une papeterie, il est servi par une jeune fille, qui le fixe "avec une haine prodigieuse".'<sup>253</sup> Although the Germans were undoubtedly good-looking, their uniform became synonymous with the destructive power that they could exercise.

The sound of the Germans' boots is one aspect of the uniform that young girls notice the most, which, according to Cobb, 'in popular memory, long after the departure of the *occupants*, are the very symbol of the strutting, stamping conqueror.'<sup>254</sup> Nicole Roux remarked how '[l]e bruit de leurs bottes résonne dans la rue Victor-Hugo.'<sup>255</sup> Colette Coste Fléchelle's description reveals the effect that this sound had on her: 'Les Allemands marchent au pas de l'oie, en colonne par quatre, et le bruit de leurs bottes nous martèle le cœur.'<sup>256</sup> Similarly Elisabeth Sevier watched as '[h]undreds of German soldiers in green uniforms marched down the street with their exaggerated goose steps. Their boots clattered as they

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<sup>251</sup> Riffaud, p. 213.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>253</sup> Burrin, p. 204.

<sup>254</sup> Cobb, p. 79.

<sup>255</sup> Roux, p. 20.

<sup>256</sup> Coste Fléchelle, p. 101.

struck the pavement and they were singing German songs.’<sup>257</sup> The war machine, especially the tanks, of the Nazis is also commented on by young girls. Colette Coste Fléchelle described how the Germans arrived in Moreilles ‘sur des motos ronflantes, conquérantes et rébarbatives, suivies par les “Panzer”, ces monstres de ferraille à chenilles.’<sup>258</sup> Similarly, Antonia Hunt stated that ‘[t]here along the quayside were massed what appeared to be hundreds upon hundreds of German tanks. They rumbled slowly along in an endless stream with the swastika flag draped over each one, [...].’<sup>259</sup> D.R.O. described one of her most striking images of the Occupation as being the first time that she saw German tanks. She was out walking through fields when in the distance she saw rows and rows of tanks with the swastika emblazoned on them: ‘C’était incroyable! Vous avez vu ça au cinéma ou à la télévision, mais moi, je ne savais même pas ce que c’était que des tanks. C’était comme si je voyais la guerre qui avançait...’<sup>260</sup> Just as the uniform symbolised harm, these German tanks were also a metonymy as they signified the whole of the German army.

The German language also had a profound effect on girls. Evelyne Sullerot recalled how ‘[w]e heard strange noises and voices. [...] So it was that one night I heard that language which I came to hate to such an extent that it is impossible to express.’<sup>261</sup> Antonia Hunt observed the Germans parading down the *Champs-Élysées* in Paris and commented that ‘[t]hey sang, too: ‘*Wir fahren gegen Engelland*’... We are marching on England. They sang so harmoniously; it was an unforgettable, horrific sight which I took care never to witness again.’<sup>262</sup> Descriptions of the Germans seem full of these dualities: Antonia states that the

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<sup>257</sup> Sevier, p. 9.

<sup>258</sup> Coste Fléchelle, p. 86.

<sup>259</sup> Hunt, p. 16.

<sup>260</sup> D.R.O. cited in Sullerot, p. 147.

<sup>261</sup> Evelyne Sullerot cited in Weitz, pp. 23-24.

<sup>262</sup> Hunt, pp. 47-48.

Germans sang ‘harmoniously’ yet she hated the content of what they were singing as they were threatening her homeland. The fact that they were parading as victors along the most famous avenue in the French capital was an illustration of what they were capable of achieving. As previously discussed in this chapter, the Germans themselves were perceived as both attractive yet arrogant, which demonstrates that there is a duality of positive and negative emotions in young girls’ minds. One of the *écoliers de Tournissan* recalled how she hated hearing the Germans singing. Eleven-year-old Francine Délibéros recalled how:

Pendant les heures de classe on entendait leurs cris ennuyeux. Tous les jours ils partaient vers Roche-Trouée faire des manœuvres, ils partaient en chantant et ils revenaient en chantant comme des fous. Ils avaient mis la cuisine dans le passage de l’école, et quand ils venaient prendre le manger ils se mettaient en rang, et tous les jours on entendait leur langage agaçant.<sup>263</sup>

Francine refers to the Germans continually singing *comme des fous* which implies that it was something of an obsession. It was a constant reminder for the French that a foreign force was now occupying their country. Renée Roth-Hano wondered to what extent the German language would take over in France. Although she was too young to really understand what was happening, and had found it difficult moving from her home in Alsace to Paris, she was concerned about the effects that the German Occupation would have on nature, such as birds. Her childhood innocence is reflected in her pondering ‘Will they be forced to sing in German, I wondered, just like the little boy of “The Last Class” did?’<sup>264</sup>

The evidence presented above suggests that the German uniform, boots, tanks and language symbolized the Nazi regime especially for younger girls. According to Cobb, these features remained iconic elements of the Occupation for French people in general long after the Occupation had ended. The uniform and language especially singled out the Germans as

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<sup>263</sup> Rémi Cazals, *Les écoliers de Tournissan 1939-1945: Pendant la guerre et l’occupation les enfants d’un village audois racontent la vie de tous les jours* (Toulouse: F.A.O.L. et Privat, 1978), p. 91.

<sup>264</sup> Roth-Hano, p. 19.

being alien, unfamiliar and above all indicated that they did not belong. The sound of their boots drew attention to their discipline and regimented conformity but the weight of their boots symbolised the authority of the Germans in France and struck girls' emotions just like they struck the ground. Similarly, the descriptions of tanks emphasise the military might of the Nazi regime.

### **Language used to refer to Germans**

The French used certain phrases to refer to the Germans during the Occupation. Some of these terms had historical connections whilst others had particular connotations. The terminology used to refer to the Germans by young girls is not unanimous. Nearly all the girls refer to them quite simply as *Les Allemands* at least once in their accounts and this is the most neutral term that is used, most commonly by younger girls such as Nicole Roux. However it is also widely used by sixteen-year-olds Madeleine Riffaud and Christiane Peugeot. The most common disparaging term used is *boche*. Twelve-year-old Elisabeth Sevier used this term and states 'We called them the Boche, a derogatory word which means "thick heads" or "cabbage heads".'<sup>265</sup> According to Ousby,

[i]n 1940 the common terms had been *les boches* and *les chleuhs*, the French equivalents of the English Huns or Krauts. *Les chleuhs* – taken from 'Shluh' (as the English language spells it), the Berber dialect spoken in Morocco and Mauritania – associated the enemy with barbarism. So did *les Boches*, like Huns a propaganda term from the First World War. Distantly derived from *les alboches*, it lent itself to a simple pun, *les sales boches* (dirty Huns), from which the French could derive apparently endless delight.<sup>266</sup>

Micheline Bood referred to the Germans in this way but preferred to spell it *boch* (sic) as this was the English spelling and she was very pro-English when she commenced her diary. In her mind, the term without the 'e' was stronger and had more of an impact than the French

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<sup>265</sup> Sevier, pp. xviii-xix.

<sup>266</sup> Ousby, p. 167.

spelling. Due to her British nationality, Antonia Hunt used the English translation *huns*. Colette Coste Fléchelle used the stronger term of *les sales boches*, the pun to which Ousby refers. Cobb states that the terms used to refer to the Germans had regional variations:

The Nord was the only part of France in which the Germans were referred to exclusively as *les boches* in the Second World War as well as in the First. Here, no *fridolins*, no *verts-de-gris*, no *chleuhs*, just the old familiar *boches*.<sup>267</sup>

Renée Roth-Hano recalled how some of the children in her class at school called the Germans *fridolins*. When this happened in front of a teacher, the girl in question was told off, although the teacher smiled as she did so. Whereas the teacher implies that referring to the Germans in derogatory terms is unacceptable, Renée believes that the term used by her classmate is not strong enough. She writes ‘Everybody in class laughs, except me. I think that *fridolin* or even *boche* is much too nice a nickname for the Germans. I wish we could come up with something mean and ugly-sounding – as ugly as *youpin*, which means “kike”.’<sup>268</sup> According to Ousby,

*Les Fritz* and *les fridolins*, from the familiar forms of German Christian names, were inoffensive, jocular and almost friendly – in British terms, more like Jerries than Krauts. The French could, in the right circumstances, venture *fritz* and *fridolin* to a German’s face, but never *boche* or *chleuh*.<sup>269</sup>

In addition to *boches*, fifteen-year-old Antonia Hunt described how the Germans were referred to as *haricots verts* due to the green-grey colour of their uniform which, as Ousby states, was not a serious insult:

For most people the typical German – the figure whom the very word *occupant* conjured up in the mind – was the Wehrmacht soldier, and the salient feature of the Wehrmacht soldier was the muddy green colour of his uniform. The occupiers were *haricots verts* (green beans, as Americans would say), which was innocuous in its humour [...].<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Cobb, pp. 41-42.

<sup>268</sup> Roth-Hano, p. 55.

<sup>269</sup> Ousby, p. 168.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

Compared to offensive and insulting terms such as *boches*, *haricots verts* was considered to be harmless and not even likely to irritate the Germans. It was considered a safer option to use as it injected humour into the situation instead of provoking contempt on the part of the Germans. Flora Groult refers to the Germans in an impersonal manner. She writes ‘J’ai été en ville; je *les* ai vus, sur des voitures grisaille, camouflées à l’aide de branches, raides, rouges, immobiles.’<sup>271</sup> As she does not want them to be there, she is unwilling to acknowledge their existence. By refusing to name them, she subtly displays her animosity. Ousby states that the French did not tend to use slang terms to refer to the Germans when talking amongst themselves. Instead,

[p]eople called the occupiers *ils*: they. *Ils* are not us and are different from us and we don’t like them. But they are so ever-present, so powerful a force in our lives that we don’t even need a specific label for them to make it clear who we’re talking about.<sup>272</sup>

As previously seen in this chapter, refusing to hear or see the Germans was considered as a form of resistance; refusing to name them is part of the same strategy of internalised or private resistance.

The vocabulary chosen by Jewish girls to describe the Germans reveals their precarious situation during the war. Some Jewish girls emphasise the power that the Nazis had over the French people at this time. Charlotte Schapira’s phraseology supports the idea of the Germans being superior and in control. She refers to them as *maîtres* and describes how ‘ils étaient partout, on ne voyait qu’eux.’<sup>273</sup> This suggests that their physical presence was a sign of authority but that their numbers also signified their domination. Micheline Larès-Yoël took this concept one step further and used the metaphor of *geôliers* to refer to the Germans:

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<sup>271</sup> Groult, p. 42.

<sup>272</sup> Ousby, p. 170.

<sup>273</sup> Schapira, p. 15.



Vous étiez dans votre propre prison pour quatre ans; et l'extérieur n'en serait qu'annexe de prison, grouillante de geôliers, d'interdits, de dangers, de crimes accomplis dans le secret des couloirs d'immeubles, à l'aube – et dans les gares de Paris.<sup>274</sup>

The perceived safest option for many Jewish people during the Occupation was to stay as far away from the Germans as possible, even if that meant staying behind closed doors. However, this quotation suggests that Micheline felt that nowhere was safe for her to go. As previously discussed in this chapter, the Germans could infiltrate the intimate sphere of the home just like they had already infiltrated French society. Micheline's description thus focuses on the constraints that were placed on her everyday life. The German presence therefore was linked in Jewish girls' minds to being enclosed and shut away from the real world. They became prisoners in their own home, just as Anne Frank did in Amsterdam.

The evidence presented above suggests no unanimous phrase was used to refer to the Germans. The most common term was *boche*, which young girls had perhaps acquired from the stories they had heard in the interwar years from family members. The terms employed vary in strength and meaning and girls perhaps wanted to show their dislike for the Germans without causing trouble. Whereas non-Jewish girls employ the generic terms which were used by the French to refer to the Germans, Jewish girls emphasise that the Germans were not only controlling France but also their own lives. They lost their freedom and felt they had nowhere to turn.

## **Conclusion**

Girls' reactions to the presence of Germans on French soil were not unanimous. As stated in *Hommes et femmes dans la France en guerre (1914-1945)*, '[e]nfin qu'il existât un sentiment

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<sup>274</sup> Micheline Larès-Yoël, *France 40-44: Expérience d'une persécution* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996), p. 10.

même de crainte et d'admiration ne signifiait pas une uniformité des comportements. Bienveillance, curiosité, politesse, indifférence, distance, hostilité: les attitudes individuelles envers l'occupant pouvaient être tout cela.<sup>275</sup> Girls aged nine to nineteen were shocked, fearful and angry at the arrival of the Germans on French soil. They were not expecting the sights which met them and they struggled to contain their emotions. However shock and fear could also appear as muteness, especially amongst younger girls who were literally lost for words. Sartre's argument that silence could be a form of resistance as it was a means of expressing freedom of choice was endorsed by girls aged nine to twelve whilst at the other end of the age spectrum a nineteen-year-old acknowledged that voluntary blindness at least alluded to resistance. Young girls' difficulty in coming to terms with the Occupation appears to stem from the fact that there was no transitional period: France appeared to pass from French to German possession overnight. Although the Germans made themselves at home in France very quickly, young girls' patriotic feelings are evident as they use possessive pronouns to indicate that France belonged to them at least in their hearts. It was not just the country that had been invaded and Germanized, but also their personal space, and they struggled to come to terms with this.

Whereas the foreignness associated with the public symbolism of the Nazis was perceived negatively, the fact that the Germans themselves appeared foreign was described positively. However, these descriptions are mainly provided by girls in their mid to late teens and there is a division in the descriptions, with some girls regarding the Germans as god-like creatures and others viewing them as ordinary and attractive men. The language used to describe the former category is very revealing as it draws attention to their vitality but also their power and

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<sup>275</sup> Luc Capdevila, François Rouquet, Fabrice Virgili and Danièle Voldman, *Hommes et femmes dans la France en guerre (1914-1945)* (Paris: Payot, 2003), p. 25.

authority. These representations suggest that older girls could see past the uniform of Nazism to the real human beings underneath it. The Germans' attitudes on the whole appear less attractive as they are perceived as being arrogant. The German uniform and boots in particular were iconic features of the Occupation and they singled out the Germans as being different and alien. The descriptions provided by younger girls focused on these elements as they did not see them as people but as a foreign force that was controlling their country.

Most general works on the Occupation, such as Julian Jackson's *France: The Dark Years*, Philippe Burrin's *La France à l'heure allemande*, and Ian Ousby's *Occupation: The Ordeal of France* contain a brief discussion of how the population in general reacted to seeing the Germans on French soil. By focusing on the reactions exhibited by young girls, this chapter contributes to our understanding of this topic in terms of one specific and unique category of people - those who were predominantly adolescents and therefore becoming aware of their sexuality for the first time which would in some cases have a strong influence on their opinions of the Germans. Furthermore, the sources used, their diaries and memoirs, also provide a context and background which attempts to justify their reactions which is an aspect that it is not possible to obtain from most archival sources.

## **CHAPTER FOUR FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONS**

Once the shock and fascination of seeing the Germans on French soil for the first time had begun to subside, the French had to come to terms with the reality of living in an occupied country. The German presence was now a feature of their everyday lives, and would continue to be for the next few years, which led some people to wonder about the people inside the uniforms. Alary states: '[i]l faudra vivre avec plusieurs inconnus, dont on ne sait rien des mœurs et encore moins du caractère.'<sup>276</sup> Although this statement was made in reference to those who found themselves living with Germans through requisitioning, the same could also be said for those who shared their home region with the occupiers. This chapter will therefore consider how young girls' experiences of the Germans could influence their opinions of the occupiers. It will detail the attitudes and behaviour exhibited by Germans towards young girls in terms of the incidents which took place between them and will then assess the experiences of those young girls who were befriended by Germans. Finally, it will then consider the topic of sexual collaboration and look at those girls who were punished for this crime. This chapter therefore asks what types of public and private experiences influenced girls' opinions of the Germans and argues that the apparently 'correct' attitude exhibited by the Germans at the beginning of the Occupation was intentional, superficial and short-lived as their behaviour towards some young girls in fact corresponded to the barbaric and violent ways in which they were depicted in propaganda as detailed in Chapter One. Furthermore, it also argues that although interpersonal relationships were instigated between young girls and Germans, these

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<sup>276</sup> Alary, Vergez-Chaignon and Gauvin, p. 156.

were controversial and often deteriorated into a negative experience for the young girl involved.

## Incidents

Historians generally emphasise that the French were pleasantly surprised at German behaviour in France at the beginning of the Occupation. Julian Jackson notes that:

In the first few weeks after the defeat, people responded to the Germans with relief, surprise and curiosity: relief that the fighting was over; surprise at the restrained behaviour of the Germans; curiosity to see these godlike creatures who had triumphed so decisively [...] The word of the moment to describe the conduct of the Germans was ‘correct’.<sup>277</sup>

The justification for this behaviour was to counter the memory of the First World War, in particular the tales of atrocities such as cutting off girls’ hands, as previously discussed in Chapter One. Philippe Burrin notes that the population was reassured, almost comforted, by the correctness of the Germans and this did not go unnoticed amongst the German authorities: ‘Dans leurs premiers rapports, les Allemands notent que la population est “fortement impressionnée par la discipline”.’<sup>278</sup> However Jackson notes that this ‘correctness’ was perhaps somewhat superficial, whilst Burrin adds that the hesitation in people forming concrete opinions about the Germans only lasted until the autumn of 1940.<sup>279</sup> Dominique Veillon refers to the ‘correctness’ exhibited by the occupiers as ‘l’opération séduction’<sup>280</sup> which suggests that it was merely a conscious attempt to win the approval of the French rather than an instinctive, genuine form of behaviour. Furthermore, the beginning of the Occupation meant that ‘La page est tournée, il est grand temps pour “les populations abandonnées de faire confiance aux soldats allemands”’, comme le proclament ces affiches où l’on voit un soldat en

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<sup>277</sup> Jackson, p. 272.

<sup>278</sup> Burrin, p. 29.

<sup>279</sup> Jackson, p. 273; Burrin, p. 186.

<sup>280</sup> Dominique Veillon, *La mode sous l’Occupation* (Paris: Payot, 1990), p. 46.

uniforme entouré d'enfants souriants.<sup>281</sup> Jackson notes that the Germans tried to impose their own rules and regulations on the French from the outset of the Occupation: 'people were fined for not crossing the road at proper crossings, cyclists were stopped for riding three abreast, pedestrians had to step off the pavements to let Germans pass.'<sup>282</sup> However, although the Germans were instructed to be 'correct', it was during autumn/winter 1940 that the first incidents began to occur between the German occupiers and the French people. The term 'incidents' has been attributed by both the *Archives nationales* and *Archives de la Préfecture de Police* to encompass any negative encounters, including genuine accidents, which took place between the German occupiers and the French population during the Occupation.

### **Incidents in the street**

The earliest types of incident recorded by the *Archives de la Préfecture de Police* reveal that this 'correctness' did not extend to the Germans' attitudes to driving, as road traffic accidents which usually involved a German vehicle knocking over a pedestrian comprised the majority of incidents which took place during 1940 and 1941 and they were still taking place in the latter years of the war. Between 14 November 1940 and 11 August 1944, ninety girls aged between five and twenty-four, or two a month, were injured in traffic accidents. Of these ninety, eight were aged between five and twelve, thirty-five were aged between thirteen and nineteen, and forty-nine were aged between twenty and twenty-four. The average age of these girls was nineteen. These statistics are to be expected as younger girls would have been more likely to have been accompanied by a parent or relative who could attempt to protect them whereas older ones would have been able to travel on their own. Thirteen of these girls were killed instantly or later died as a result of their injuries, thirty-six sustained serious injuries,

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<sup>281</sup> Veillon, *Vivre et survivre en France*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>282</sup> Jackson, p. 284.

such as head injuries, which required hospital treatment and forty-one sustained minor injuries such as bruising. Although these were undoubtedly accidents, a few of the reports provide an insight into the behaviour of the Germans. One report states that after having been knocked off her bike by a German car, the four German officers who had been travelling in it took the twenty-year-old injured girl to hospital but she was pronounced dead on arrival.<sup>283</sup> Interestingly, there are only a handful of reports which attempt in any way to exonerate the Germans and portray them as compassionate individuals. Other reports imply that the Germans were reckless and were not driving with due care and attention. A twenty-three-year-old girl was fatally injured when she was hit by a lorry which was being driven by an interpreter who worked for the German authorities and who did not have a driving licence.<sup>284</sup> One witness to an accident in which a German vehicle knocked over a twenty-year-old girl as she was crossing the road on a pedestrian crossing described how the car ‘circulait à une allure excessive’ which resulted in it nearly knocking him over. He added: ‘J’ai sauté vivement en arrière, c’est à ce moment qu’elle a renversé Mlle. Chemin, qui se trouvait derrière moi, au milieu de la chaussée.’<sup>285</sup> A report of an accident which involved two young girls, aged fifteen and twenty-one, being knocked down by a German car which required the former to be admitted to hospital and left the latter with bruising, added ‘L’auto allemande ne s’est pas arrêtée.’<sup>286</sup> A twenty-three-year-old girl was injured as she was walking along the pavement when a collision took place between two cars, one of which belonged to the Germans.<sup>287</sup> It is unclear how she came to be injured. However, a twenty-year-old girl who was also walking along the pavement on a separate occasion was injured when two German

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<sup>283</sup> APP BA 2106 Note dated 19 March 1941.

<sup>284</sup> APP BA 2108 Note dated 24 May 1941.

<sup>285</sup> APP BA 2106 Rapport du Commissaire de Police à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale, ‘Piéton renversé par auto-ambulance Allemande’, 15 November 1940.

<sup>286</sup> APP BA 2106 Note dated 28 March 1941.

<sup>287</sup> APP BA 2107 ‘Principaux faits signalés dans la journée du 17 mars 1942 entre 8 et 15 heures.’

vehicles collided and she was hit by *projection de matériaux*.<sup>288</sup> An eighteen-year-old girl was injured as she crossed the road using a pedestrian crossing but the report adds that the German car ‘n’a pas respecté les signaux lumineux.’<sup>289</sup> A twenty-year-old girl was knocked over by a German car but little compassion or regret was shown as ‘le conducteur s’étant rendu compte de l’accident ne s’est pas arrêté.’<sup>290</sup> In a similar occurrence, a fifteen-year-old girl was knocked off her bike by a German car, but the German soldier who was driving it ‘est parti sans vouloir donner son identité.’<sup>291</sup> Reports of the Germans failing to stop following an accident are more prevalent in the later years of the war. In all of these reports, the facts are reported in a neutral manner and no blame is ever attributed to the young girl involved. Similarly, the attitude of the Germans is reported in a factual manner. In contrast to this, the tone of a report relating to an accident whereby a young girl was fatally injured by German soldiers who knocked her over on their motorbike in Grenoble indicates that the author felt these Germans showed a total disregard for human life which provoked outrage from those who witnessed the incident: ‘Elle a été relevée par des passants: les motocyclistes n’ont pas daigné s’arrêter et ont fait un signe de la main prouvant leur indifférence. Un attroupement s’est formé; l’indignation était grande.’<sup>292</sup> The examples cited suggest that the Germans’ believed that road regulations did not apply to them. They drove in an irresponsible manner, showed little respect for human life and did not care about the consequences of their actions or the young girls involved.

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<sup>288</sup> APP BA 2105 ‘Principaux faits signalés dans la soirée du 12 et dans la nuit du 12 au 13 Septembre 1941.’

<sup>289</sup> APP BA 2106 Note dated 7 December 1940.

<sup>290</sup> APP BA 2106 Note dated 7 April 1941.

<sup>291</sup> APP BA 2106 Note undated.

<sup>292</sup> AN F1a 3781 ‘Informations diverses – Les Allemands et les Italiens, leur agissements, leur moral’, August 1943.



For younger girls, witnessing the death of an animal at the hands of the Germans had a similar effect. Nicole Roux and her friend witnessed their friend's cat killed by a car carrying four Germans moments after they had been stroking it. Her description implies that they feared for their own safety: 'Nous nous plaquons contre le mur pour la laisser passer. Le chat, effrayé, saute en miaulant, se cogne contre la roue avant, passe dessous.'<sup>293</sup> The two girls witnessed a very traumatic sight as Nicole states:

Son corps est projeté très haut en arrière, vole au-dessus de nos têtes et s'écrase sur le sol tout près de nous, inerte et désarticulé. Le sang se répand lentement et dégouline entre les cailloux. Horrifiées, nous restons immobiles un moment. Puis nous nous sauvons en courant.<sup>294</sup>

Naturally the girls were very upset and although Nicole acknowledges that it was an accident, she still feels a certain amount of bitterness towards the Germans.

Assises sur le talus, devant la maison de Madeleine, nous pleurons à gros sanglots. Les Allemands n'ont rien vu, ils n'ont pas fait exprès, ils n'ont pas tué le chat par cruauté. Pourtant je me sens pleine de terreur et de haine.<sup>295</sup>

A report located in the *Préfecture de Police* also supports the concept of the Germans harming children and animals. On 2 July 1944, a drunk man wearing a German army uniform 'a tiré un coup de feu sur un chien, blessant par ricochet une fillette, Denise Fleury, 10 ans.'<sup>296</sup> The culprit fled the scene.

In these examples, the scenarios are similar to those presented by propaganda as seen in Chapter One. As we saw in that chapter, propaganda aimed at adults portrayed the Germans as causing harm to young girls whereas propaganda aimed at young girls presented the Germans as inflicting harm on animals. The reactions shown by adults to the death of a young

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<sup>293</sup> Roux, p. 77.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> APP BA 2112 Report dated 3 July 1944.

girl are very similar to the reactions exhibited by young girls to the death of an animal: resentment, indignation and bitterness.

### **Incidents on familiar territory**

As we saw in Chapter One and Chapter Three, children's literature such as the *Bécassine* stories presented the Germans as capable of infiltrating the home with the intention of causing harm to the female inhabitants and young girls often referred to the German presence as being *chez nous* as they felt that it had metaphorically infiltrated the intimate, private sphere of their home and home region. Incident reports confirm that these fictional and metaphorical accounts did actually happen in reality as the Germans did try to gain access to the home and cause harm to those inside. Burrin states that '[l]es Français sont laissés à eux-mêmes pour tout ce qui regarde leur comportement individuel face aux Allemands.'<sup>297</sup> However, he concedes that attitudes were not only influenced by the public face of the Germans: 'Quand ils existent, les souvenirs des expériences précédentes, ou, à défaut, une sorte d'instinct peuvent fournir une ligne de conduite.'<sup>298</sup> Patrick Buisson states that 'Bien qu'il fût d'un emploi moins courant à la veille du second conflit mondial, le mot "Boche" restait synonyme d'une absolue infamie, suggérant une certaine inhumanité voire une régression vers l'animalité.'<sup>299</sup> Girls whose homes were broken into by the Germans would undoubtedly think this definition accurate and their experiences prove that they acted on instinct as self-preservation was the key to survival.

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<sup>297</sup> Burrin, p. 198.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Patrick Buisson, *1940-1945 Années érotiques Vol.2 De la Grande Prostituée à la revanche des mâles* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2009), p. 59.

One such incident took place on the evening of 7 April 1941 in the Ardennes after a German entered the home of an Italian family, which was comprised of a married couple with two sons and one daughter, without permission. The couple, who shared a bedroom with their fourteen-year-old daughter, did not lock their kitchen door when their sons were out. On the evening in question, their son Louis had gone out and on his return heard screams coming from his parents' bedroom and found them to have blood on their faces. When he went to wake his two brothers, he saw someone run out of the bedroom. The couple and their daughter had been seriously injured after being attacked with a hammer. The son caught the perpetrator who was wearing civilian clothes but had military items underneath.<sup>300</sup> In the early hours of 29 June 1941, a member of the German army knocked on the door of a house belonging to a couple and their sixteen-year-old daughter. When the inhabitants refused to let him in he fired two shots through the window, injuring the father's arm. He attacked the mother in her bed but the daughter in a state of panic fled the house in order to escape from the attacker.<sup>301</sup> In the early hours of 3 December 1941, a drunk German soldier 'introduit par effraction dans un pavillon' on the *Rue Amelin*. He smashed both the front and back doors, tore the shutters off the windows and smashed those as well with his bayonet. The owner's wife fled through the window with their young son. The soldier tried to break everything in sight and began knocking on the doors to the bedrooms. The owner's seventeen-year-old daughter Renée was stabbed with the soldier's bayonet just below her right hip. She was not

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<sup>300</sup> AN F1a 3666 'Rapport de l'Adjudant GOFFINET, Commandant provisoirement la Section de Mézières sur une agression nocturne à Deville (Ardennes)', 8 April 1941.

<sup>301</sup> AN F60 404 'Rapport du M.D.L.C. DIESNY, Commandant la brigade sur une tentative de meurtre, viol et vol', 29 June 1941.

seriously injured, however, and the weapon barely broke the skin. The owner eventually managed to wrestle the soldier out of his home and he then fled.<sup>302</sup>

However, it was not always necessary for the Germans to enter the home to cause harm, albeit unintentionally. On the evening of 1 April 1941, a celebration for the commandant of local troops was held and German soldiers ‘ont fait exploser un pétard’ in the house occupied by Monsieur and Madame Labatt, who were primary school teachers in St-Lon-les-Mines: ‘Les intéressés, ainsi que leur fillette, ont subi un commencement d’intoxication et ont dû être secourus par les allemands eux-mêmes qui les ont fait examiner par un de leurs médecins militaires; celui-ci a déclaré que leur état n’était pas inquiétant.’<sup>303</sup> A report revealed that smoke from the fireworks they were setting off had managed to penetrate the home which caused the inhabitants to develop a profound cough. A third report reveals that the behaviour of some Germans could force young girls out of their home to the extent that they had to seek refuge elsewhere. This was the case for seventeen-year-old Bernadette Marin who was living in the Ardennes. On 3 April 1941, when a group of four boisterous Germans who had been drinking beer in her mother’s café were asked to leave at 9pm, the time at which public places were required to close, they became angry as they believed other people were still being allowed to drink in the kitchen. Their anger increased to such an extent that they started brandishing a bayonet.

La jeune MARIN Bernadette, âgée de 17 ans, se trouvent aux côtés de sa mère, prise de peur est allée se réfugier dans un local servant de popote aux ouvriers employés à la centrale électrique contigüe à la maison de ses parents.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> APP BA 2106 Rapport des gardiens de la paix AUBERTIN, No.12.409 et LOYER, No.13.372, de la Circonscription d’Aubervilliers, à Monsieur le Commissaire de Police, ‘Effraction. Brise de vitres à main armée par un soldat allemand’, 3 December 1941.

<sup>303</sup> AN F1a 3666 ‘Rapport du Préfet des Landes à Monsieur l’Ambassadeur de France, Délégué Général du Gouvernement Français dans les Territoires Occupés’, 30 April 1941.

<sup>304</sup> AN F1a 3666/AN F60 404 ‘Rapport de l’Adjudant GOFFINET Commandant la Brigade sur des coups portés au jeune MAUVAIS par un militaire de l’armée allemande’, 4 April 1941.

However the Germans were not willing to let the situation lie and were determined to pursue the matter further. ‘Les militaires allemands se sont mis à la poursuite de la jeune MARIN en poussant des cris qui ont attiré l’attention des occupants du local ci-dessus.’<sup>305</sup> The customers in her place of refuge turned off the lights and barricaded the doors but this did not deter the Germans who tried without success to break in. They eventually succeeded by smashing a window at the back of the building at which point everybody inside the building fled in different directions.<sup>306</sup> These examples demonstrate that the German presence not only impacted on the public domain but also the private and in effect the young girls in question could not escape from it.

Families who had Germans billeted to their home were no safer than those who did not, as a family living in Héricourt found out when they were on the receiving end of the wrath of German soldiers who had been living in their home. When Madame Desoroux complained to the Germans’ superiors about the Germans bringing women of ill repute into her home in April 1941, they became angry and sought to intimidate the family.<sup>307</sup> Their twenty-year-old daughter Eliane, a student who lived with her parents, witnessed the incident. According to her, they heard the Germans return home and were surprised when Lieutenant Spielvogel knocked and entered the room where they were playing cards without acknowledging them. He signalled to her father that he should leave the room and when he questioned the German’s attitude, the German moved him by force out of the room. When her mother tried to intervene he pushed her violently. She also witnessed the Germans attack her father and her sixteen-

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> AN F1a 3666 ‘Rapport du Préfet de la Haute-Saône à Son Excellence Monsieur l’Ambassadeur de France Délégué Général du Gouvernement dans les Territoires Occupés’, 2 April 1941; Procès-verbal ‘Menaces et injures reprochées à des Officiers Allemands par Mme MICHAUD née DESOROUX Simone demeurant à Montbéliard’, 1 April 1941; Procès-verbal ‘Menaces faites par des officiers allemands. Plainte de Melle DESOROUX Eliane, étudiante demeurant à Héricourt’, 1 April 1941.

year-old brother, neither of whom reacted to the acts of brutality. All the family went outside and a black German officer threatened each of them with his revolver. When her sister tried to protect their father, Lieutenant Spielvogel violently pushed her away several times. She states:

L'Officier au revolver me reconduit à un moment donné à la maison sous la menace de son arme et là, il nous tint en joue, puis nous fit à nouveau sortir, et c'est alors que les deux officiers donnèrent l'ordre à mon père, à mon beau-frère de se diriger vers le quartier.<sup>308</sup>

Madame Simone Michaud, née Desoroux, was twenty-years-old and lived in Montbéliard with her husband. When the incidents between her family and the Germans took place, she was visiting her family. She added: 'Je tiens à dire qu'il y avait deux autres Lieutenants qui étaient présents à ces scènes, et qui avaient l'air ennuyés et honteux de ces horreurs mais ils n'ont pas osés s'interposer.'<sup>309</sup> Germans using other people's houses to entertain women is also mentioned by two young sisters: 'Michèle et Germaine Benèche, du Mans, racontent que le dernier étage de leur maison a été réquisitionné pour loger une dame que des dizaines d'Allemands visitaient quotidiennement.'<sup>310</sup> However in this instance the behaviour of the Germans does not appear to have been challenged. These examples show that nowhere was safe from the German presence and, despite the views of historians that they were instructed to be 'correct' especially in the period before 1942, some Germans showed little respect for the French space. Rather than the home being a place of safety and refuge, the Germans did not consider it out of bounds.

The Germans infiltrating a familiar place, even if it was not the actual home itself, could have an unsettling effect on young girls and produce a type of territorial behaviour from them. This was the case for Michelle Mercy who was eight-years-old and living with her parents in the

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Alary, Vergez-Chaignon and Gauvin, p. 160.

Eure. A letter from Monsieur Mercy details how a German lorry had broken down outside his house two weeks after the Armistice in July 1940. As an act of generosity, his wife invited the Germans to use her husband's workshop to repair their vehicle. This offer was accepted. Initially, everyone got along fine, as Monsieur Mercy writes: 'Ma petite fille Michelle qui n'a pas été élevée dans la haine joua avec ces Messieurs, et ma femme rentra à la maison tout à fait tranquille.'<sup>311</sup> However, the Germans began to exploit the generosity shown to them as they broke the lock on Monsieur Mercy's tool cupboard and proceeded to steal the contents. Although only eight, Michelle recognised that what they were doing was wrong and tried to intervene: 'La petite Michelle voyant cela voulut reprendre dans le camion les outils de son papa, mais vous pensez qu'elle en fut impuissante.'<sup>312</sup> On 12 October 1942, nineteen-year-old Simone Lemaire was working in her parents' café when some customers who were drunk became disruptive. She called the police when they started attacking her father but when she returned to the café one of the men, who were German nationals pounced on her and punched her in the stomach. They fled the scene when the police arrived.<sup>313</sup> On 23 November 1942, twenty-one-year-old Simone Chevrier, a secretary for a garage owner, was punched twice by a drunken German soldier who had tried to steal her employer's car. When this attempt failed, he entered the garage office against the wishes of the owner. When the *gardiens de la paix* entered he shut the door and refused to let them leave.<sup>314</sup> These examples show that young girls were not even safe in their place of work and the Germans did not think it necessary to treat them any differently to other categories of the population in spite of their age and gender.

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<sup>311</sup> AN F1a 3666 'Lettre du Monsieur Auguste Mercy à Monsieur l'ambassadeur de Brinon délégué général du gouvernement français dans les territoires occupés', 6 March 1941.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> APP BA 2108 Note dated 13 October 1942; 'Audition à l'hôpital Bichat de la dame LEMAIRE Simone par l'Inspecteur Quesnel de notre commissariat', 13 October 1941(sic); Rapport du gardien de la paix Caspard Edmond no.1500 à Monsieur le Commissaire de Police, 'Coups et Blessures par civils Allemands', 12 October 1942.

<sup>314</sup> APP BA 2108 Rapport des gardiens de la paix MARGUERITAT Pierre mle 6908 et COMBE Marcel mle 5896 à Monsieur le Commissaire de Voie Publique, 'Réquisition. Intervention de la Feldgendarmarie', 23 November 1942.

The evidence presented above suggests that the Germans showed little respect for the French space. Girls aged eight and above witnessed the Germans enter their home, their workplace or even their places of recreation in order to inflict harm on those inside. They not only asserted their authority on the public streets with traffic incidents, they also sought to make their presence felt in the private and personal space of the French.

### **Caught in the crossfire**

Whereas the previous examples focus on more than one person being targeted by the Germans, other archival documents show that girls were sometimes caught in the crossfire, seemingly being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Vinen states that: ‘Alongside, and mainly separate from, the war between the Germans and armed resisters, were outbursts of low-level violence produced by drink and squabbles over girls.’<sup>315</sup>

Several incidents record how young girls were injured in altercations with the Germans. In the early hours of 21 April 1941, nineteen-year-old Fernande Delange had dined with her employer and his son and the three of them were on their way home when an altercation took place between a German officer and her employer. The German officer was inebriated and approached all three to demand to see their identity papers before tearing them up. The German then tried to drag the young girl into a neighbouring building but her employer intervened and was injured by the German’s bayonet. The young girl’s hands were grazed.<sup>316</sup> On 30 November 1941, a group of young people were leaving a cafe in Biscarrosse when they

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<sup>315</sup> Richard Vinen, *The Unfree French: Life under the Occupation* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 111.

<sup>316</sup> APP BA 2106 ‘Rapport du Commissaire de Police du Quartier de l’Hôpital Saint-Louis à Monsieur le Préfet de Police’, 21 April 1941.



were attacked by some intoxicated German soldiers. Twenty-two-year-old Madame Marcelle Mouchague stated

Hier soir, vers 22 heures 45, je sortais en compagnie de ma camarade Jeanne Dourthe et 4 jeunes gens, du café du lac à Biscarrosse, lorsque nous avons été assaillis par un sous-officier allemand qui s'est mis à nous frapper. Ayant réussi à nous échapper, il nous a poursuivis à bicyclette.<sup>317</sup>

Her friend Mademoiselle Jeanne Dourthe, also twenty-two, said simply 'Hier soir vers 22 heures 45, j'étais en compagnie de ma camarade Mouchague, lorsque nous avons été attaquées par des militaires allemands.'<sup>318</sup> Although the girls managed to escape, their two Spanish friends were not so lucky as they were kicked and punched by the Germans. During an alert just before midnight on 9 April 1942, shots were heard in the vicinity of *Obligado* metro station and the perpetrators were found to be three German soldiers. One of these men admitted to firing shots through the window of a ground floor flat on the *Avenue de la Grande Armée* as a light could be seen during an alert. The room was found to belong to twenty-one-year-old Antoinette Pannetier who was instructed to block out the light immediately from her window.<sup>319</sup> In these examples, the Germans targeted specific groups of people which resulted in young girls coming to harm but these acts appear to have been spontaneous.

Other incidents indicate that young girls were unfortunate as they were in the wrong place at the wrong time but these incidents could have happened to anyone. On 28 May 1941 a man tried to escape from a group of prisoners outside the *Gare de Lyon* which resulted in members of the German army firing shots. A passerby, nineteen-year-old Lucienne Biscay was shot in

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<sup>317</sup> AN F1a 3666 'Rapport du gendarme Harté, Commandant le poste de gendarmerie, sur un incident entre civils et militaires des troupes d'occupation', 1 December 1941.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> APP BA 2107 Rapport du Commissaire de Voie Publique à Monsieur le Directeur de la Police Municipale, 'Coups de feu tirés sur la V.P. par soldats allemands', 9 April 1942.

the left leg.<sup>320</sup> In a similar incident on 19 May 1944 members of the German military were transferring a group of prisoners to the *Cherche-Midi* prison when one escaped. A sixteen-year-old girl was shot in the arm as the Germans pursued the escapee.<sup>321</sup> On 1 August 1944, the *Feldgendarmarie* fired shots in the street as part of a police operation, one of which hit an eighteen-year-old girl who was passing by.<sup>322</sup> On 7 November 1943, fourteen-year-old Andrée Lemaire was shot in her left leg in *Ternes* metro station by a member of the German police who was aiming at an unnamed male. The circumstances surrounding this incident are unclear.<sup>323</sup> In the late evening of 23 June 1942, twenty-year-old Alexandre Aurore, originally from Portugal, was one of twenty people injured by a German NCO armed with a bayonet. She was reportedly drinking from a public fountain when he stabbed her repeatedly in the head and stomach before fleeing the scene. She was taken to hospital with a suspected fractured skull and wound to her stomach.<sup>324</sup> Seventeen-year-old Gisèle Charbonnel was amongst five people either killed or seriously injured on 8 March 1944 in Clermont-Ferrand when the Germans carried out reprisals after twenty-four of their men, who were walking to a nearby cinema, were injured by grenades which they assumed had been thrown by French people. The Germans began to shoot in different directions which resulted in Gisèle being shot in her left arm.<sup>325</sup> On 5 February 1944, nineteen-year-old Geneviève Chauffangon sustained facial injuries after the car in which she was a passenger ignored a German patrol's instructions to

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<sup>320</sup> APP BA 2106 Note dated 28 April 1941.

<sup>321</sup> APP BA 2111 'Rapport du Commissaire Principal du 6<sup>ème</sup> Arrondissement à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale', 19 May 1944.

<sup>322</sup> APP BA 2112 Report dated 2 August 1944.

<sup>323</sup> APP BA 2110 'Rapport du Commissaire de Voie Publique à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale', November 1943.

<sup>324</sup> APP BA 2108 'Principaux faits signalés dans la soirée du 23 et dans la nuit du 23 au 24 juin 1942'; 'Rapport du Brigadier CARPENTIER Henri et le gardien NICOLAS Joseph no.4973 à Monsieur le Commissaire de Police', 23 June 1942.

<sup>325</sup> AN F1a 3781 Rapport du Commissaire Principal Chef du Service Régional de Police de Sûreté à M. le Directeur des Services de la Police de Sûreté à Vichy, 'Attentat contre les troupes d'opération le 8 mars 1944', 9 March 1944.

stop. The Germans fired shots at the car which resulted in shards of glass injuring her.<sup>326</sup> On 2 April 1944, seventeen-year-old Eugénie Monin was killed after an altercation took place in a café between two German soldiers and a Frenchman. When the Germans began firing shots at the Frenchman, the young girl was shot in the throat.<sup>327</sup> In these examples, the young girls were undoubtedly not the intended recipients of German violence but they were merely caught in the crossfire.

In some cases, young girls were the intended recipient of German violence even though they did not know the perpetrator. On 24 July 1941, an *adjudant de la Gendarmerie allemande de Meaux* fired a fatal shot at Mademoiselle Frappa before he committed suicide himself. Her father was captain of an infantry regiment who had been taken prisoner in Germany but wrote to the authorities requesting compensation for his daughter's death when he returned.<sup>328</sup> On 19 September 1941 in Nantes, thirteen-year-old Mademoiselle Le Bihan was shot in the head by a *marin allemand*. She subsequently died as a result of her injuries on 13 October.<sup>329</sup> Shortly before midnight on 15 August 1943, a policeman heard a woman's voice calling for help. When he arrived at the scene he found that 'il s'agissait d'une jeune fille qui était frappée par un soldat allemand.' The policeman notified the Germans stationed nearby who took both the soldier, who appeared inebriated, and the young girl away for questioning.<sup>330</sup> On 11 December 1943, fifteen-year-old Yvonne Liez was found at the exit of *Place de Balard* metro station after having been shot in the stomach. She was taken to hospital by a *gardien de la paix*, who had heard the shot being fired and the cries for help from the victim, helped by

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<sup>326</sup> APP BA 2111 Report dated 6 February 1944.

<sup>327</sup> APP BA 2111 Rapport du Commissaire Principal à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale, 'Coup de feu par soldat allemand – Deux personnes tuées', 2 April 1944.

<sup>328</sup> AN F60 404 'Note pour Monsieur le Commandant Beumelburg', 22 December 1941.

<sup>329</sup> AN F60 404 Note pour la Vice-Présidence du Conseil, 'Incidents survenus à Nantes avant l'attentat du 20 Octobre', 6 November 1941.

<sup>330</sup> APP BA 2110 Rapport du Commissaire Principal du 6<sup>ème</sup> Arrondissement à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale, 'Incident provoqué par soldat allemand en état d'ivresse', 15 August 1943.

two German soldiers, but she later died. Although there were no witnesses to the incident, the report states: 'De l'enquête effectuée il ressort que le meurtrier est vraisemblablement un militaire de l'Armée d'occupation mais les raisons qui auraient motivé son geste n'ont pu être établies.'<sup>331</sup> In the early hours of 4 May 1942, twenty-one-year-old Janina Lauer who was originally from Poland was found lying on the pavement by the police after they had received a phone call saying shots had been fired. She had a wound to her head and had been shot in her right arm. She was taken to hospital and the report states 'Elle a déclaré avoir été frappée et blessée à coups de revolver par un soldat allemand qu'elle avait refusé d'accompagner.' The police found the soldier who was in an animated state and he claimed he was the victim of an attack. When the girl's bag was searched, a wallet belonging to the German soldier was found and she could not explain how it had come to be in her possession.<sup>332</sup> On 13 July 1944, twenty-year-old Yvonne Poulet 'a été blessée mortellement par plusieurs balles de fusil tirées par un soldat allemand de faction devant la batterie de D.C.A. située à la Porte de Versailles, qui lui avait fait plusieurs sommations sans résultat.'<sup>333</sup> The exact circumstances of this incident are unclear as the girl had received numerous warnings but failed to act on them which puzzled the authorities. Seventeen-year-old Hélène Fournier made a fatal mistake on her bicycle journey to deliver grapes from her home in St. Mitre where she lived with her parents to her brother's house in Martigues which resulted in her being killed by the Germans. 'La barbarie allemande s'est manifestée à MARTIGUES jeudi 9/9, à 15h., sur ordre d'un sergent, une sentinelle allemande a abattu d'une balle de mousqueton dans le dos, la jeune Hélène FOURNIER 17 ans.'<sup>334</sup> The report states that 'La malheureuse n'avait pu (le terrain étant en pente forte) s'arrêter aussitôt que les sentinelles qui gardaient le barrage établi lui en

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<sup>331</sup> APP BA 2110 Report dated 12 December 1943.

<sup>332</sup> APP BA 2108 Note dated 4 May 1942.

<sup>333</sup> APP BA 2112 Report dated 13 July 1944; Rapport du Brigadier DECKER, Paul à Monsieur le Commissaire de Voie Publique du 15<sup>ème</sup> Arrdt, 'Personne tuée par balles tirées par sentinelle allemande', 13 July 1944.

<sup>334</sup> AN F1a 3781 'France-Politique - Informations diverses', September 1943.

eurent donné l'ordre (elle avait parcouru 15m après le barrage.)'<sup>335</sup> The teenager's body remained on the road for around one hour. The girl's brother, who had gone to meet her, recognised his sister from her bicycle which was lying in close proximity to her body. The Germans had been looking for Italians dressed in civilian clothing. Naturally this incident caused outrage throughout the commune as the report states 'Oraison funèbre des officiers allemands "grand malheur". Les obsèques de la victime ont eu lieu le lendemain à St. Mitre. Foule énorme venue de tous les environs. Population indignée.'<sup>336</sup> It is interesting to note the tone used in this report which is by no means neutral. The use of *barbarie allemande* is significant as it constructs the incident not as a case of an unfortunate accident in the heat of the moment, but as a premeditated act of violence. In these examples, only limited information has been provided as those writing the reports do not appear to understand the motives for these incidents themselves. They were apparently spontaneous acts of violence but which were deliberately carried out against young girls.

Some young girls were injured in accidents, when the Germans fired their weapons unintentionally. On 20 December 1942, twenty-three-year-old Isabelle Monnet, who was in a hotel bedroom with her sister and two German soldiers, was accidentally shot by one of the Germans.<sup>337</sup> On 28 March 1944, twenty-two-year-old Françoise Touchant was admitted to hospital after sustaining a bullet wound to her right calf. The incident took place when a gun belonging to a German soldier fell out of his pocket.<sup>338</sup> On 4 August 1944, an eighteen-year-old girl who was working for the Germans in a *fabrique de literie* was accidentally shot. 'La jeune fille était en conversation avec le militaire lorsque celui-ci, en tirant son ceinturon, a

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> APP BA 2108 Note dated 21 December 1942.

<sup>338</sup> APP BA 2111 Note dated 28 March 1944.

provoqué la chute de l'arme ce qui eut pour effet de faire partir la coup.<sup>339</sup> Again, only limited information is provided by these reports into the circumstances surrounding the incidents but the authorities support the view that these were genuine accidents.

In all of these examples, young girls were either the recipients of violence after the Germans had had an altercation with another person, the unfortunate, yet intended, victims of spontaneous acts of German brutality or were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. However, it is interesting to note that all of these incidents involve young girls who were aged thirteen or above and the majority focus on those aged in their mid to late teens or early twenties. No young children were involved. It is possible, therefore, that these girls who were on the brink of adulthood were attracting the attention of the Germans which distracted them from their duties. Furthermore, the motivations of the attacks which were deliberately carried out on young girls may have been because they disliked the attention they were getting from the Germans or because they refused to interact with them.

Some young girls witnessed members of their family being attacked by the Germans or saw the effects of what they had done. This was the case for Anne-Marie Ardoin who recalled how her brother and his friend were attacked by the Germans because they were caught outside after the curfew had passed:

Ils ont été battus sauvagement. Les Allemands ont crevé un œil à notre voisin et ont laissé mon frère inconscient. Jacques, qui était à l'époque tout juste adolescent, a été traîné jusqu'à la maison. Mes parents nourriciers se sont affolés quand ils ont vu leur fils dans cet état, et moi, dans cette panique, j'ai pleuré toutes les larmes de mon corps. C'est un épisode qui m'a marquée. J'avais eu très peur.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> APP BA 2112 Report dated 4 August 1944; Rapport du Commissaire Principal du XIème Arrondissement à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale, 'Personne blessée accidentellement par balle de pistolet, dans une entreprise Allemande', 4 August 1944.

<sup>340</sup> Anne-Marie Ardoin cited in Carrier, p. 16.

This was evidently a very traumatic experience for a young girl. Anne-Marie also witnessed the Germans threaten her mother. When looking for one of Anne-Marie's neighbours, 'Ils sont entrés chez nous et ont demandé après ce monsieur. Il était parti depuis quelques jours, mais je me souviens de la phrase que les soldats répétaient à ma mère: "Si vous cachez, vous fusillée"'.<sup>341</sup> The Germans were obviously trying to use intimidation and threats as a means to extract information. Nancette Blanchou witnessed the Germans attack her mother:

Les Allemands tenaient ma mère...Ils l'ont traînée jusqu'à la voiture restée sur la route. Elle ne voulait pas y entrer. Elle s'est alors accrochée à la portière. Ils l'ont poussée à l'intérieur et ont refermé la portière sur ses doigts. Elle a hurlé...Je ne pourrai jamais oublier ce hurlement!<sup>342</sup>

Furthermore, Nancette was threatened with a gun when she refused to answer the Germans' questions.

Comme je refusais, il m'a mis un revolver sur la tempe. J'ai dit: 'Je veux que tu me donnes mon papa.' J'ai attrapé son sexe et j'ai serré de toutes mes forces. Je ne savais pas ce que je faisais, j'avais sept ans. Il a hurlé: 'Tu me lâches ou je te tue.' Nous sommes partis vers les champs.<sup>343</sup>

These examples show that some Germans did not have any respect for human life and in the case of reprisals did not care if they injured innocent young girls. To a large extent, these girls were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time but these examples demonstrate that no section of the population was immune from German brutality. Younger girls' views of the Germans were shaped by their experiences of witnessing the occupiers attack or threaten their relatives whereas teenagers were the intended, or unintended, victims of this violence.

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> Nancette Blanchou cited in Carrier, p. 61.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

## Sexual assaults

As discussed in Chapter One, Germany had been France's traditional enemy for many years which made the defeat and subsequent Occupation of France even more humiliating. However far from being content with their military victory, the Germans also sought to obtain a personal victory over the French, as Gildea states: 'The Germans, as conquerors, took the view that defeated Frenchmen had forfeited the right to Frenchwomen, who now belonged to them.'<sup>344</sup> One way in which they could stake their claim to Frenchwomen was by carrying out rapes and sexual assaults. According to Nicole Dombrowski, '[t]he French feared rape, which they believed to have been common during the First World War. A group of young women refugees in the region around Chartres smeared themselves with Dijon mustard, "to sting the Germans when they rape".'<sup>345</sup> Mireille Albrecht suggests that class was a key factor where rapes took place: 'The reports of rape in Paris came from working-class districts. Generally speaking, both the French and German authorities seem to have taken rape most seriously when bourgeois women were involved in some way.'<sup>346</sup> According to Sandra Lallam, another factor which was evident from reports was that Frenchwomen and German soldiers seemed to have different ideas about what actually constituted rape.

The views of German soldiers were heavily influenced by national stereotypes about the sexual availability of Frenchwomen and very few ordinary soldiers understood French. Many Germans clearly believed that incidents which Frenchwomen perceived as rape were in fact consensual, perhaps even amicable: in one case, German soldiers asked their victim to make them coffee before they left.<sup>347</sup>

Reports of rape in the archives are rare. There are only four incidents recorded by the *Préfecture de Police* of a German making unwelcome advances towards a young woman. On

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<sup>344</sup> Gildea, p. 29.

<sup>345</sup> Nicole Dombrowski, 'Beyond the Battlefield: The French Civilian Exodus of 1940' cited in Vinen, p. 24.

<sup>346</sup> Mireille Albrecht, *Vivre au lieu d'exister: La vie exceptionnelle de Bertie Albrecht, compagnon de la liberation* cited in Vinen, p. 25.

<sup>347</sup> Sandra Lallam, 'La Population de la Seine et les forces d'occupation allemandes, 14 juin 1940-25 août 1944' cited in Vinen, p. 25.



10 June 1943 twenty-three-year-old Gisèle Vuillet, an *employée de métro*, was on her way to report for duty when she ‘a été accostée par un soldat allemand qui la saisissant par le cou l’a serrée fortement contre lui.’ When a passerby tried to intervene, he was punched in the eye by the German, who appeared inebriated. The culprit then fled the scene.<sup>348</sup> Of course, this incident could have been a lot worse if the man had not intervened when he did. Similarly on 24 October 1943, twenty-two-year-old Marie Malakou was waiting for her boyfriend outside a bakery, like she did every evening, when a German soldier ‘a saisi par les cheveux [...] et lui a frappé la tête le long du mur.’<sup>349</sup> She had reportedly said to him ‘Tu es fou’ after he had made advances towards her which provoked the attack.<sup>350</sup> On 4 January 1944 eighteen-year-old Geneviève Petit, a *sténo-dactylographe*, reported a drunk German soldier who had tried to attack her on 1 January. The report states he ‘a tenté de la violenter sur la berge du quai de la Gare [...] où il avait contrainte à le suivre après l’avoir giflée (sic) et menacée de sa baïonnette, alors qu’elle regagnait seule son domicile.’<sup>351</sup> The young girl was not harmed however as ‘Mlle Petit ayant réussi à se dégager sans être blessée et ayant appelé “au secours”, son agresseur s’est enfui.’ On 27 April 1944, twenty-three-year-old Anita Cornillard ‘qui repoussait les avances d’un individu revêtu d’un uniforme allemand, a été blessée par celui-ci de 2 balles dans le bas ventre.’<sup>352</sup> She was taken to hospital in a serious condition. Another report states that two soldiers, who were inebriated, had requested that she follow them and the shots were fired when she refused.<sup>353</sup> Although the authors of these reports do not refer to the prospect that these incidents were sexually motivated, the details of the incident certainly imply that this was the case. The young women, who were aged between

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<sup>348</sup> APP BA 2109 Report dated 10 June 1943.

<sup>349</sup> APP BA 2110 Report dated 25 October 1943.

<sup>350</sup> APP BA 2110 Rapport du Commissaire de Voie Publique à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale, ‘Incident entre Français et soldat Allemand’, 24 October 1943.

<sup>351</sup> APP BA 2111 Report dated 5 January 1944.

<sup>352</sup> APP BA 2111 Report dated 28 April 1944.

<sup>353</sup> APP BA 2111 ‘Rapport du gardien GAONACH, Louis à Monsieur le Directeur Général à la Police Municipale’, 27 April 1944.

eighteen and twenty-three, were alone when the perpetrator approached them and the fact that they reported the incident suggests that they certainly feared for their safety. Although rape did not take place, there is a strong possibility that it could have done if others had not intervened. Furthermore, the Germans' reactions to having their advances rebuffed suggests that they were not prepared to let the matter go.

Although these assaults were committed by a member of the German military, those recorded by the *Archives nationales* focus on rapes which took place on Frenchwomen by men who wore the German uniform but who were not of German nationality. On 25 December 1943, around 200 Georgian soldiers arrived in Guéret and were stationed at the Rotor factory. They were *volontaires pour la Légion Antibolchévique* and wore the uniform of the German army. A report reveals that five incidents took place shortly after their arrival, two of which involved inappropriate behaviour towards young girls. 'Le 29 décembre 1943 ils provoquaient un incident en essayant de se livrer à des attouchements honteux sur la personne de deux jeunes filles.'<sup>354</sup> Furthermore,

[I]e 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 1944 vers 19 heures, un soldat Géorgien arrêta une jeune fille, lui prenait sa carte d'identité et sa valise et lui donnait l'ordre de le suivre. Il emmenait ensuite cette jeune fille dans un endroit isolé et sous la menace de son revolver il avait des rapports sexuels avec elle.<sup>355</sup>

Although these incidents are reported as fact by the official documentation, an incident which occurred in Coulounieix was disputed. A young girl claimed that she was raped by Georgian soldiers on 27 October 1943 but the report could find no evidence to support this claim. It states

Du reste les déclarations de la jeune fille sont si imprécises qu'il n'est même pas établi avec certitude qu'il faille admettre qu'il a été fait réellement usage de violence. Ni les déclarations de la jeune fille, ni

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<sup>354</sup> AN F1a 3781 'Les Allemands en France – Informations Diverses', December 1943.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

l'enquête à laquelle ont procédé les autorités allemandes et françaises n'ont montré, de façon incontestable, qui peut être tenu pour le coupable.<sup>356</sup>

The report is doubtful that the Georgian soldiers were the real culprits of the attack or even that a rape actually occurred. Both of these reports claim that the population in these areas were willing to attribute any incidents which occurred to Georgian soldiers, claiming that the inhabitants were fearful and suspicious about what would happen next. 'La population craint beaucoup toutes sortes d'incidents de plus en plus graves étant donné la présence de ces Géorgiens à Guéret.'<sup>357</sup> Similarly, the inhabitants of Périgueux felt an uneasiness towards these soldiers. 'Il existe dans la population et chez certaines autorités de Périgueux une tendance à imputer aux soldats géorgiens tous les actes de violence et tous les crimes qui se produisent fréquemment en cette ville.'<sup>358</sup> Furthermore it attributes the real cause of the insecurity felt by the inhabitants to another section of the population: 'Or, l'insécurité qui règne à Périgueux et dans le département de la Dordogne sont le résultat de l'activité très vite déployée dans cette région par les bandes terroristes.'<sup>359</sup>

Just as Georgian soldiers wore the German uniform, so did some Cossack soldiers who were members of the German army. Christiane Peugeot stated: 'J'ai un peu peur des Russes blancs qui commettent des atrocités. On raconte qu'ils violent les femmes et ensuite leur dansent sur le ventre pour les étripier.'<sup>360</sup> She then reinforces this point by recalling how 'A Beaucourt, des soldats d'origine cosaque se sont mis à neuf pour violer une gamine de treize ans. Elle est

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<sup>356</sup> AN F1a 3781 Note du Secrétaire d'Etat à la Défense du 23.11.43 no.3801/DN/SC au Général Allemand représentant le commandant en Chef Ouest à Vichy, 'Prétendu crime de viol commis par des soldats géorgiens à Coulounieix (Dordogne)', 23 November 1943.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Peugeot, p. 85.

folle maintenant. Le père s'est interposé, il a été descendu!'<sup>361</sup> Nicole Roux recalled how towards the end of the war three dishevelled Germans who they assumed were deserters appeared in a neighbouring farm. They rounded up men, women and the *curé* at gun point but singled out a teenage girl for the most brutal treatment.

Deux sont sortis avec elle, et l'ont entraînée derrière la ferme. Le troisième a intimidé tout le monde avec son arme. Personne n'a bougé. On a entendu la fille crier, et puis elle s'est tue. C'est une fille de quinze ans qui préparait le certificat. Je la connais.<sup>362</sup>

Nicole overhears her mother talking to some other women and she says 'Ils lui sont passés tous les trois dessus!'<sup>363</sup> A fifteen-year-old girl goes over to Nicole to try to explain to her what has happened. Nicole replies 'Mais je sais! Ils l'ont obligée à faire ce que font les parents!'<sup>364</sup> In contrast to the examples given earlier in this chapter, these acts of violence were specifically targeted at young females. It is important to note that these rapes were carried out by soldiers of different nationalities but that they had one thing in common and that was that they all wore the German uniform and so were representing Germany.

It is therefore evident from the examples provided that only a very small number of young girls experienced sexually inappropriate behaviour from the occupiers. In Paris, girls in their late teens and early twenties received unwelcome attention from the Germans when the latter made advances towards them. When the young girls made it clear this behaviour was neither welcome nor acceptable, some Germans responded angrily inflicting violence on their victim. Outside of Paris, a couple of members of the German military did carry out sexual assaults or rapes on younger teenagers but again these examples are rare. However, these examples are

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<sup>361</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>362</sup> Roux, p. 112.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., pp. 112-113.

based on the incidents which were recorded or reported to the police so the true number may be higher but it is impossible to tell.

### **Attraction to the Germans**

Although the incidents previously discussed focus on negative encounters between the occupiers and young girls, this was not always the case. Some girls felt an attraction to the Germans and wanted to get to know them better. Ousby refers to the notion of presence and absence which was a defining feature of the Occupation – the absence of French men due to being conscripted into the French army or being taken prisoner of war and the presence of German soldiers.<sup>365</sup> Although a sentimental void remained within the home environment for those whose relatives were missing, the physical void in French society was subsequently filled by the Occupation Army. Richard Vinen suggests that this was a contributing factor to relationships taking place between the occupiers and the occupied: ‘The French population during the occupation was predominantly female (because so many men had died in the First World War or been captured in 1940), whilst the German occupying forces were overwhelmingly male.’<sup>366</sup> Whereas in Chapter Three we saw how the German uniform had a negative effect on young girls as it represented the enemy, Douglas Boyd offers a different explanation: ‘Young girls naturally fall in love with young men, especially those in uniform, which is seen to endow them with all the masculine virtues.’<sup>367</sup> He then poses the question ‘If many thousands of French girls flirted with, or had affairs with, German soldiers while most

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<sup>365</sup> Ousby, pp. 154-193.

<sup>366</sup> Vinen, p. 157.

<sup>367</sup> Douglas Boyd, *Voices from the Dark Years: The Truth about Occupied France 1940-1945* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2007), p. 258.

boys of their own age were away in POW camps, with the Maquis or in Germany with the STO, was that treason?’<sup>368</sup>

Specifically where the sight of the Germans on French soil was concerned, Alary suggests that attitudes were far more complex than many would care to admit: ‘Leur présence est obsédante autant dans le paysage que dans les esprits. Ils sont lus, vus, entendus, sentis, redoutés. [...] Pour autant, certains sont plus curieux ou intéressés que d’autres et n’hésitent pas à aller au-devant des Allemands.’<sup>369</sup> This implies that on a conscious level the French attempted to maintain a sustained anti-German stance but in reality it was easy to become preoccupied by this presence on a subconscious, almost involuntary level. The apparent conflict between antagonism and curiosity is evident in girls’ diaries and memoirs of the period.

An important element of adolescence is personal relationships and being attracted to someone for the first time. This development takes on a new dimension when the young girl finds herself attracted to the enemy, the German soldier in the case of occupied France, as it raises questions about her allegiance to France. Of course, there were a variety of reasons why a young girl or woman should choose to forge a friendship with a German or even enter into a relationship with him:

There were those who genuinely loved men they should not have loved but whose feelings were not inspired by Nazi ideology. Other women were motivated by self-interest and duplicity, rather than political opinions or racial prejudice and would have easily slept with American soldiers a few days later simply because this was their ‘profession or way of life’.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Alary, Vergez-Chaignon and Gauvin, p. 148.

<sup>370</sup> Corran Laurens “‘La Femme au Turban’: les Femmes tondues’, in *The Liberation of France: Image and Event*, eds. H.R. Kedward and Nancy Wood (Oxford: Berg, 1995), p. 175.

In his analysis of diaries written by adult males under the Occupation, David Boal claims that this type of source is particularly revealing because the author inadvertently discloses more information than they would have initially intended: ‘Il y a une certaine tendance involontaire, inhérente à l’acte d’écrire, qui peut faire basculer l’écrit tantôt dans l’indiscrétion, tantôt dans la révélation [...]’.<sup>371</sup> Young girls’ autobiographical writings conform to Boal’s suggestion as they reveal that their relationships with the Germans were much more complex than the terms ‘occupied’ and ‘occupiers’ would suggest.

Girls who had sustained contact with the Germans had mixed experiences. Fabrice Virgili draws attention to the fact that the affinity felt between French women and German men during this period could be compared to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, with the exception that the action takes place in a different period and context; his argument centres on the fact that the story of these fifteenth-century protagonists kept apart by their disapproving families is played out again and again during periods of crises and conflicts such as world wars when people on opposing sides find themselves attracted to each other, to the dismay of their families, friends and the wider community.<sup>372</sup> Those involved justified their actions by explaining how they believed that love and politics were two separate, distinct spheres and that one should not influence the other. This concept also extended to business arrangements as a list of *Conseils à l’occupé* appeared in July 1940 in a pamphlet by Jean Texier, which advised ‘Si tu vois une fille en conversation d’affaires avec l’un d’eux, ne t’en occupe pas. Ce garçon en aura juste pour son argent qui ne vaut rien.’<sup>373</sup> This suggests that it was deemed

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<sup>371</sup> Boal, p. 23.

<sup>372</sup> Fabrice Virgili, *Naître ennemi: Les enfants de couples franco-allemands nés pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Payot and Rivages, 2009), p. 62.

<sup>373</sup> AN F1a 3765 Forces Françaises Libres, Etat-Major du Général de Gaulle ‘Conseils à l’Occupé’, London 4 September 1941.

more acceptable for a woman to be paid to sleep with the Germans than if she had genuine feelings and fell in love with him.

Christiane Peugeot, whose diary focuses on 1944 when she was sixteen, had Germans living in her family's annex. She reveals how the Germans confided in them about their own concerns and felt that they were also victims of the war:

L'un d'eux, qui loge au garage avec les chevaux, a perdu trois frères et trois beaux-frères; il est fiancé mais, craignant d'être tué, ne s'est pas marié. Un second a paumé deux frères. Ses parents et ses sœurs ont été évacués plusieurs fois sous les bombardements. Ce sont des Boches, d'accord, mais quand même des hommes et, à part la langue, pas différents de nous!<sup>374</sup>

In a similar way, Nicole Roux witnessed a conversation which took place between her mother and a German soldier who wanted to requisition their radio. She recalled how when the conversation turned to discussing his own personal circumstances he showed a compassionate side: 'L'Allemand finit par sortir les photos de sa femme et de ses enfants. Il nous les montre. Ils évoquent tous les deux les malheurs de la guerre.'<sup>375</sup> These examples demonstrate that just as the French suffered at being separated from their loved ones, so did the Germans. Girls who found themselves with absent fathers and brothers would undoubtedly have been able to relate to these soldiers who were experiencing similar emotions to themselves as they would have realised that the two opposing sides had more in common than one would have thought.

Although Micheline Bood was extremely anti-German when she commenced her diary, her attitude mellowed as the war progressed. Her diary reveals that she faced an internal struggle when a decision had to be made about how she should react to the German presence. Although she felt comfortable enough to have a conversation in public with two German

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<sup>374</sup> Peugeot, p. 98.

<sup>375</sup> Roux, p. 88.



soldiers, when she sees one of them the following day, she writes ‘J’étais indécise, ne sachant si j’allais lui répondre devant les gens.’<sup>376</sup> However a sign that she is maturing into a more tolerant young woman is demonstrated by a diary entry in June 1941 which reads:

J’ai toujours détesté ‘le Boch’<sup>377</sup> dans son ensemble et son horreur. Mais peut-on haïr quelqu’un qu’on ne connaît pas? Ou qu’on ne connaît que par des récits qui datent de tant d’années? Je me pose la question. Je déteste et je détesterais toujours ‘le Boch’ qui est notre ennemi depuis des siècles, mais il y a une grande différence entre une masse de gens et un individu dans cette masse. Les Allemands, pris individuellement, sont très gentils, généralement bien élevés et corrects.<sup>378</sup>

However, an incident in April 1944 makes her see the Germans in a different way. She meets Karl, a member of the SS, who goes to visit her one night after he has been drinking. He offers to supply her with as much food as she wants but she naturally refuses. However, he wants to kiss her but when she refuses he threatens to shoot her dog. She relents out of fear of him carrying out his threat. A few days later she starts to feel that he has taken away some of her innocence:

Je pensais que j’avais 18 ans et que j’étais fière de me dire qu’à 18 ans, je n’aurais pas encore embrassé un garçon. Aussi, j’étais horriblement triste, parce que j’avais toujours cru qu’un premier baiser ça devait être quelque chose de merveilleux, qui vous transporte dans une sorte de rêve et que maintenant, tout était fichu.<sup>379</sup>

Although Micheline wanted to socialise with the Germans and get to know them as individual people, being forced to kiss one was a step too far. Historians such as Philippe Burrin emphasise how the occupied had to form codes of conduct towards the occupiers and the conflict experienced by Micheline Bood is very much in line with this view. No matter how strong the attraction, or the curiosity, it was important for the two sides to maintain boundaries which should not be crossed.

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<sup>376</sup> Bood, p. 27.

<sup>377</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Three, although this term is usually spelt ‘Boche’ in French, Micheline was extremely pro-English and preferred to use the English spelling.

<sup>378</sup> Bood, p. 106.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., p. 276.

Antonia Hunt, an English teenager, was befriended by Egon Martin, an Austrian officer. Although their friendship developed naturally, their nationalities and personal circumstances meant that this was not a classic relationship between occupiers and occupied. Her friendship with Egon developed to the extent that he confessed his love for her and she shared her first kiss with him, but was unable to completely relax:

He kissed me – for the first time I had been kissed by a man. It was an indescribable sensation and I melted with guilty joy. Standing against the rocks on the beach he pressed his whole body against mine and in my complete ignorance and naive innocence, I wondered how wrong it was.<sup>380</sup>

This was as far as their relationship went, but they had been living on borrowed time: ‘Maybe he guessed my age, or maybe they all had strict instructions; in any case he never tried to do more. Then the inevitable happened. I was found out. The disgrace was absolute.’<sup>381</sup> The Germans ordered any English people aged over sixteen living on the coast of Brittany to move inland, and although she was under sixteen, she was sent away to prevent her from seeing Egon. Although she made a close friend there, she kept her past behaviour a secret as she was overcome with guilt.

In these examples, a rite of passage such as a first kiss takes on different connotations during wartime as it raises questions about collaboration and betrayal of one’s country when it takes place with a person representing the enemy. Girls could not be carefree in their choice of boyfriends – they had to think about the consequences of their actions on their families and on their own lives.

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<sup>380</sup> Hunt, p. 19.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

Although the girls featured above did not attract the attention of the police whilst in the company of Germans, archival documents suggest that others were not so lucky. Although archival documents usually do not provide the circumstances surrounding an incident, or any background information to the people involved, they reveal that some girls were either directly or indirectly incriminated in incidents involving the Germans.

The *Archives de la Préfecture de Police* contain several reports of Germans committing suicide towards the end of 1943 and 1944. One particularly striking example states that on 4 January 1944 a German soldier shot himself in the head in the toilets of a *La Brasserie Alsacienne*. A female witness stated that ‘ce soldat s’est certainement suicidé par désespoir, car il venait de déclarer qu’il avait perdu toute sa famille et son bien.’<sup>382</sup> Other reports focus on a German committing suicide with his girlfriend. On 2 June 1942 twenty-two-year-old Marie Selle and a German soldier were found unconscious in a hotel room. They were believed to have tried to commit suicide, as the report states they were ‘victimes d’un commencement d’asphyxie par gaz d’éclairage.’<sup>383</sup> On 9 September 1943, twenty-one-year-old Denise Arnoux and a German officer attempted to commit suicide by tying their legs together and jumping in the Seine. Although the young girl was revived, the German died.<sup>384</sup> In these examples the two parties involved appear to have taken the decision to end their lives together. However, other reports indicate that the German alone took the decision to end his own life and that of his girlfriend. On 20 March 1944, a member of the Occupation Army killed both himself and his girlfriend in a hotel room. The report states ‘Des renseignements qui ont pu être recueillis, il résulte qu’à la suite d’une scène de jalousie, le nommée MAIER

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<sup>382</sup> APP BA 2111 Rapport du Commissaire de Voie Publique du 2<sup>ème</sup> Arrondissement à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale, ‘Suicide d’un soldat allemand’, 6 January 1944.

<sup>383</sup> APP BA 2108 Note dated 2/3 June 1942.

<sup>384</sup> APP BA 2110 Report dated 10 September 1943.

aurait tué sa campagne d'une balle dans la nuque durant son sommeil, et se serait suicidé d'une balle au cœur.<sup>385</sup> In this case, the German decided that he could not live without his girlfriend and if he could not live then neither could she.

Other reports indicate that one half of a Franco-German couple committed suicide on their own. On 31 May 1941, eighteen-year-old Marcelle Boissière 'subi un commencement d'asphyxie par gaz éclairage' at the home which she shared with a German officer.<sup>386</sup> The circumstances surrounding this incident are unclear. On 17 January 1944 nineteen-year-old Micheline Divoor was found dead in a hotel room. The hotel had been requisitioned by the Germans and the report states: 'Des renseignements recueillis, il résulte que cette femme s'est suicidé à l'aide du revolver d'un soldat allemand en compagnie duquel elle avait passé la nuit.'<sup>387</sup> The police were unable to establish the motive for this suicide. On 28 March 1944 a German soldier committed suicide for reasons believed to be connected to his personal relationships. A witness claimed that 'ce soldat avait fréquenté pendant quelques temps, Melle BOISOT, Raymonde, 24 ans, que celle-ci ne voulant plus le recevoir chez elle, avait rompu toutes relations et que probablement ce soldat avait commis cet acte à la suite de chagrins intimes.'<sup>388</sup> Although information is very limited, these examples suggest that there were problems in the relationship that one person felt was insurmountable and they felt death was the only solution.

Although the girls who felt an attraction to the Germans who have been previously discussed did not receive formal punishments for their behaviour, others were brought to account for

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<sup>385</sup> APP BA 2111 Report dated 20 March 1944.

<sup>386</sup> APP BA 2106 Note dated 31 May 1941.

<sup>387</sup> APP BA 2111 Report dated 17 January 1944.

<sup>388</sup> APP BA 2111 Rapport du Commissaire de Voie Publique du IVème Arrondissement à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale, 'SUICIDE par coup de feu d'un soldat allemand', 28 March 1944.

their actions. Following the Allied landings in June 1944, France embarked on a campaign of settling scores which involved punishing those who were considered to have collaborated with the enemy. According to Michael Kelly:

Perhaps the most strikingly gendered event of the Liberation is the wave of wildcat shearings of women as the liberating armies advanced through France [...] Ostensibly punishing women for sexual relations with German soldiers or for passing information to them, the shearings took a carnivalesque public revenge on the bodies of women, revealing in the process that what they symbolically exorcized was experienced and constructed as male humiliation.<sup>389</sup>

It is believed that between 10,000 and 20,000 women who were accused of this ‘crime’ were punished in this way.<sup>390</sup> Although the emphasis of this punishment was righting the wrongs of women who had slept with Germans, this was not always the case. According to Julian Jackson, ‘Any woman seen in the company of a German risked finding herself accused of horizontal collaboration.’<sup>391</sup> A young girl could quickly establish a negative reputation for herself if this sight was communicated to others, through conversation for example. The power of rumours especially during wartime is the focus of an article by Jean-Marie Guillon, who writes:

Rumours exist at all times and in all places because they are one of the most instinctive ways of transmitting information. They start with word of mouth, the ‘have you heard?’, a piece of news passed on, which might be true, or false, but which is always credible in the context of the moment, and meaningful for those who spread it.<sup>392</sup>

He adds that rumours are particularly important during wartime as emotions are heightened and fears for both the present and future are prevalent.

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<sup>389</sup> Michael Kelly, ‘The Reconstruction of Masculinity at the Liberation’, in Kedward and Wood, p. 119.

<sup>390</sup> Jackson, pp. 334-335.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid., p. 335.

<sup>392</sup> Jean-Marie Guillon, ‘Talk which was not Idle: Rumours in Wartime France’, in *Vichy, Resistance, Liberation: New perspectives on wartime France*, eds. Hanna Diamond and Simon Kitson (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p. 73.

Archival sources relating to the Charente region support this claim as they show that young girls were punished for a range of offences relating to the crime of associating with the enemy, even if sexual relations had not taken place. In some cases, the actions of the young girl reflected the attitudes of their families as two young girls were arrested along with their mothers on suspicion of them both having had relationships with the Germans. One such girl was sixteen-year-old Georgette F. and her mother. Although both women fiercely denied the accusations, the report states: ‘Malgré les dénégations de la fille F. nous sommes convaincus qu’elle a eu des rapports intimes avec les allemands. Les témoignages à ce sujet sont trop nombreux et trop précis pour être sans fondement.’ One witness stated that he had seen Georgette walking with some Germans. Another witness claimed to have seen her ‘couchée avec un allemand dans un pré près de CHOISY, et l’avoir vu couchée derrière une maison près des grandes vignes.’ The second witness was not on good terms with the family, however, the mother having denounced him as a communist. In addition to the statements provided by witnesses, the young girl did not portray herself as trustworthy which only aroused the suspicions of the interviewers even more: ‘A ce sujet la culpabilité de Mlle. F. ne fait pas de doute, d’autant plus qu’au cours de l’interrogatoire elle se contredisait très souvent et nous donnait l’impression de mentir.’<sup>393</sup>

In addition to the ‘crime’ of having relationships with the Germans, fourteen-year-old Léona N. and her mother were also arrested for supplying information and denouncing Free French Forces to them. Both women denied the allegations on physical grounds, the mother having a prolapsed womb and the daughter ‘âgée de 14 ans, n’est pas physiologiquement plus apte.’<sup>394</sup> They also denied having denounced Free French Forces, stating that no German arrests took

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<sup>393</sup> AN 72AJ 108 ‘Rapport de renseignements sur les femmes F. de C.’, undated.

<sup>394</sup> AN 72AJ 108 ‘Rapport de renseignements sur Marguerite S., & Léona N.’, undated.

place in the place where they lived. The investigators believed both women and concluded that it was unlikely anything physical had taken place due to these medical reasons: ‘Il n’y a aucune preuve de leur culpabilité – elles ne peuvent que s’être amusées avec leurs hôtes sans même avoir de relations coupables’ or phrased a different way ‘sans aller plus loin.’<sup>395</sup> However they both received the punishment of having their heads shaved and were released from the concentration camp as the punishment was deemed sufficient. Similarly, twenty-one-year-old Renée F. was arrested on suspicion of having ‘relations intimes et continuelles avec l’ennemi’ and because she ‘a indiqué aux boches les routes à suivre pour éviter les barrages.’ When arrested, she admitted conducting a relationship with a German for a period of eight months but denied that she had indicated the whereabouts of roadblocks to them. The report concludes: ‘La déclarante paraît sincère.’ Furthermore her home was in an isolated area, far away from any roads which persuaded them that the second allegation of providing intelligence appeared to be unfounded. The punishment of head shaving and two weeks internment was to be enforced.<sup>396</sup> It is interesting in these examples, however, that denouncing the Resistance or indicating roadblocks is synonymous with sleeping with the enemy and suggests how the two concepts were considered to be linked during this period.

A third girl’s mother was also implicated following the arrest of her daughter. Twenty-year-old Pierrette C., a student, was arrested on suspicion of having had a relationship with a German officer since September 1940 when she was aged just sixteen. The report states that the relationship began after she had spoken to the lieutenant about how her family could secure the release of her cousin who had been taken prisoner of war in Germany. Her mother was aware of the relationship taking place, even burning three or four letters which the couple

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<sup>395</sup> AN 72AJ 108 ‘Contrôle nominatif – camp de concentration’, undated.

<sup>396</sup> AN 72AJ 108 ‘Rapport de renseignements sur Renée F.’, undated; ‘Contrôle de camp de concentration’, undated.

had exchanged, but chose to turn a blind eye to her daughter's antics even allowing the couple to meet in the family home. Pierrette became engaged to this German lieutenant in February 1941, shortly before he was sent to Poland. Her mother stated that she did not believe that her daughter's relationship with the German was a betrayal of the French nation. The report states 'Mlle C. reconnaît avoir été fiancée à un officier allemand. Elle prétend être excusable en raison de son jeune âge (16 ans).' However the report adds that 'Elle estime néanmoins mériter une punition.' She also admitted receiving presents such as chocolate and cigarettes from him. The relationship ended in August 1943 and she had since become engaged to a Frenchman. However, both mother and daughter were punished by having their heads shaved and were interned in a concentration camp.<sup>397</sup> In this example, there are undertones of the young girl having ulterior motives for becoming involved with the German as she appears to have tried to manipulate the situation. It is interesting that she tries to use her age as an excuse, as although she had the maturity to consider how befriending a German could be used to her advantage she claims that she did not think about the consequences of her relationship.

These examples demonstrate that far from keeping their relationships with the Germans a secret from their families, the mothers of young girls were complicit in their daughter's actions. Furthermore being of the same sex, mothers were thought to lead their daughters by example. Although the circumstances of individual families are not included in these reports, by conducting their own relationships with the Germans or turning a blind eye to their daughter's choice of partner, mothers implied to their daughters that this type of behaviour was acceptable or at the very least condoned. The fact that more than one family member is incriminated by these reports suggests that the family as a whole may have been in favour of

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<sup>397</sup> AN 72AJ 108 'Rapport de renseignements sur Pierrette C.', undated.



collaboration. Even if young girls did not consider their relationship with the Germans to be a betrayal of the French nation, the fact that they were accused of denouncing Free French Forces to them would certainly have been deemed unpatriotic as they were willing to endanger the lives of their compatriots.

In some cases, girls met Germans through their jobs which resulted in accusations being made about their conduct. Twenty-year-old Marie-Rose B., a shorthand typist, was denounced for having had relationships with the Germans, for planning to go to Germany and for having received a letter from Russia. The report states ‘Mme B. déclare n’avoir eu avec les Allemands aucune relation d’ordre sentimental.’<sup>398</sup> She does state however that she was required to work for them, but her phrasing suggests that this was out of necessity rather than choice: ‘j’ai tapé des laissez-passer parce que j’ai été obligée de le faire. Ma machine avait été réquisitionnée par les Allemands, j’ai été requise par la suite.’ The report concludes that all of the allegations were unfounded and that she had a good reputation in her village. She was therefore released from the internment camp where she had spent a week.

Seventeen-year-old Odette B. worked as a housekeeper at the Braconne camp which required her to come into contact with the Germans on a constant basis and she admitted ‘avoir rigolé’ with the Germans but claimed that her contact with them had not gone any further than that. The young girl tried to protest her innocence as the report states ‘Elle nie énergiquement avoir eu des relations intimes avec les Allemands.’ However, the investigators were unconvinced, stating ‘Toutes les apparences laissent supposer que Mlle. B a eu des rapports sexuels’ and she admitted she was no longer a virgin, a fact that had been verified by a doctor. The report

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<sup>398</sup> AN 72AJ 108 ‘Rapport de renseignements sur B’, undated.

adds that she appeared sincere in her denials. However, the punishment of having her head shaved was imposed.<sup>399</sup>

Twenty-one-year-old Odette D. was arrested on suspicion of having had a relationship with the Germans. When questioned, she claimed that she only had contact with the Germans through her business as she ran a café. She was also engaged to a member of the *maquis*, a clandestine resistance group which was situated in mountainous regions. Although she initially denied the allegations made against her, the investigators appear unconvinced as the report states ‘Mlle. D. est une fille de mœurs légères; elle allait en compagnie d’allemands à Angoulême, elle a eu de nombreuses relations avec eux.’ After she was questioned for a second time, the young girl admitted that her contact with the Germans had not been as innocent as she had first claimed, stating that she had had ‘des relations coupables.’ She had her head shaved and was interned in a concentration camp.<sup>400</sup>

Similarly Olympe C., who was twenty-one when the Occupation began, was questioned on suspicion of having worked for the Germans and having had a relationship with one of them.<sup>401</sup> The report infers that this young girl had dubious morals as it states ‘Mme C. qui a mené une vie “sentimentale” des plus mouvementée a eu, alors que son mari était prisonnier, un enfant d’un ami nommé D.’ She subsequently had an abortion and was sentenced to a year in prison. The report adds that working for the Germans was not entirely her decision: ‘Son avocat lui conseilla alors d’aller travailler pour les boches afin de ne pas accomplir sa peine.’ She took this advice and was employed in the *contrôle du personnel*. In spite of her previous dubious conduct, the report concludes that there is insufficient evidence to find her guilty:

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<sup>399</sup> AN 72AJ 108 ‘Rapport de renseignements sur Odette B.’, undated.

<sup>400</sup> AN 72AJ 108 ‘Rapport de renseignements sur Odette D.’, undated.

<sup>401</sup> AN 72AJ 108 ‘Rapport de renseignements sur Olympe C.’, undated.

‘Malgré sa vie mouvementée, il a été impossible de relever une preuve de ses relations avec les allemands. D’autre part, elle nie avec la dernière extrémité et malgré les moyens mis en œuvre.’ Her head was still shaved as a punishment. However, the report adds a word of caution which suggests that they believe there is more truth to the allegations than they can prove:

elle a travaillé chez les frisés, ils sont venus chez elle et il y a encore trois semaines ils étaient encore chez elle en civil, je recommande une grande prudence car l’ennemi se renseigne pour l’action, cette femme est entourée de beaucoup d’autres.

In these examples, the young girls were at a disadvantage to begin with as working with Germans on a daily basis meant that they had more contact with them and were therefore more likely to come under suspicion of collaboration than other categories of people. However, the tone of these testimonies varies considerably. In the first example, the young girl was seemingly indignant at being accused of having a personal relationship with a German and emphasised how it was only out of necessity and not choice that she worked for them. However, the young girl in the second example was only seventeen and the remarks that she made about having ‘rigolé’ with the Germans are a sign of her immaturity and are telling for her age. The reputations of all these girls are also taken into account by those investigating as they refer to the fact that one was no longer a virgin, another had ‘mœurs légères’ and a third had dubious morals because she had had an abortion. This suggests that judgements were based on how they had behaved in the past rather than in the present. Furthermore, the examples show how these girls were perceived by others.

Whereas most of the girls previously mentioned did not appear to have partners, others were accused of betraying their spouses. When questioned, Janine B. denounced Anne-Marie C. for

having been the mistress of German soldiers. The report states that when interviewed, Anne-Marie, who was twenty when the Occupation began, admitted ‘avoir couché avec un allemand qui lui a donné 800 frs pour 3 nuits.’<sup>402</sup> She attempted to justify her behaviour by explaining how she was in a ‘situation pécuniaire déplorable’ and she also had children to raise. However, her husband who had been taken prisoner was less understanding and filed for divorce after learning of the ‘conduite scandaleuse’ of his wife. Her head was shaved on 30 July and she was interned in a concentration camp as it was affirmed that there was a risk that she would pass on information to the Germans. In this case, the young girl implies that the constraints and circumstances of the Occupation led her to become involved with the Germans. However the fact that money was exchanged suggests that this was a business arrangement rather than a true relationship.

Agnès B, who was twenty-one when the Occupation began, was accused of having been the mistress of German soldiers. In contrast to some of the other examples, the young girl seems to have unwittingly provided them with irrefutable proof of her behaviour as the report states: ‘Nous avons trouvé cousu dans la doublure de son sac des photos qui ne laissaient aucun doute sur la nature de ces relations avec ces derniers et une lettre de rupture (pour infidélité) de l’un de ceux-ci.’<sup>403</sup> She admitted being the mistress of one German. The young girl’s husband had been taken prisoner in 1940 and was still away and she had an eight-year-old child. Her head was shaved and she was interned in a concentration camp for two weeks.

Anna-Marie L., who was twenty when the Occupation began, was accused of ‘des rapports coupables avec les allemands.’ The report states that she initially denied having had

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<sup>402</sup> AN 72AJ 108 ‘Rapport de renseignements sur Mme C.’, 1 August 1944.

<sup>403</sup> AN 72AJ 184 ‘Rapport de renseignements sur Mme B.’, undated.

relationships with French or German men since her husband was taken prisoner and sent to Germany. However, she changed her mind partway through the interview: ‘Au cours d’un interrogatoire serré, reconnaît avoir eu des relations intimes avec un français et d’autre part avec un certain gradé, habillé en kaki, qu’elle a cru appartenir au Maquis.’ She claimed to be unsure of his identity. She then admitted having ‘des rapports absolument intimes’ with a member of the heavy artillery based in the Braconne camp. She had her head shaved and was interned for two weeks.<sup>404</sup>

In these examples, girls were not only accused of collaboration but also of betraying their husbands and families. The use of *conduite scandaleuse* epitomizes how this behaviour was perceived by those in charge. Just as we saw earlier how denouncing the Resistance was linked to sleeping with the enemy, in these cases sleeping with the enemy was a betrayal of both the French nation and of Frenchmen on a national and personal level. However, the fact that some of these young girls had children suggests that they may have begun relationships with the Germans as it was a way for them to obtain both emotional and financial support at a time when their partner was unavailable to provide these aspects.

In a particularly interesting case, a twenty-one-year-old girl was arrested for being the mistress of German soldiers, which was confirmed by a witness seeing her on a German tank in March 1944. The report states that the police believed that she ‘a eu des rapports très suivis avec les allemands. Beaucoup de faits lui sont reprochés sans preuve formelle. Mais les soupçons sont graves.’ Although the young girl denied the allegations and there was little concrete evidence, the fact of having serious suspicions appears to have been sufficiently

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<sup>404</sup> AN 72AJ 108 ‘Rapport de renseignements sur L.’, undated.

strong evidence as her head was shaved and she was interned in a concentration camp.<sup>405</sup> Madeleine F, who was twenty-three in 1944 when she was arrested, was also accused of having relationships with the Germans. Although the actual report was missing from the archives, a summary of those arrested stated that the police were not convinced that the allegations were true and she was therefore required to remain in the concentration camp whilst they pursued their investigations.<sup>406</sup>

From the examples presented, which all focus on young girls aged sixteen or over, it is clear that these young girls were punished for ‘collaboration’ even when the reports admitted that the allegations had been denied and there was little substantive evidence to support the claims made against them. The fact that the vague term of ‘having fun’ is frequently used in these reports suggests that these young girls were naive about how their behaviour could be construed by others. They were undoubtedly exhibiting the typical teenage behaviour of pushing boundaries, rebelling against the constraints placed on their lives because of the war and experimenting with their feelings and attraction to boys. One young girl even used her age as an excuse to justify her behaviour and the mother of another tolerated her daughter’s meetings with the German in the family home, suggesting that she believed the relationship would not last. A seemingly innocent act such as standing on a tank, albeit one that belonged to the enemy, was seen as proof that a young girl had been having a relationship with a German, which typifies how actions take on different meanings during wartime. Guillon’s assertion that the power of rumours during wartime should not be underestimated is validated by these reports which allude to word-of-mouth accounts being responsible for the accusations made against these girls. These factors confirm Jackson’s view that ‘rather than

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<sup>405</sup> AN 72AJ 108 ‘Contrôle nominatif – camp de concentration’, undated.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid.

viewing the relationships between French women and German men as a particularly flagrant form of collaboration, they should be seen as one of the many moral dilemmas confronted by people living under foreign occupation',<sup>407</sup> especially where young girls are concerned.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, we can see that the experiences of young girls who came into direct contact with the Germans, whether it was for a brief period of time or longer, were overwhelmingly negative. Incident reports show that young girls were exposed to danger at the hands of the Germans in almost every area of their life – home, work, daily life and recreation. Furthermore they were subject to different categories of crime – physical attacks, violence using weapons or rape. Their experiences suggest that the reality of living in an occupied country was remarkably similar to that which was presented in the propaganda discussed in Chapter One, the exception being that whereas the Germans could infiltrate the home environment without being noticed in propaganda, in reality they made their entrance in a more overt and violent way.

Although several young girls felt attracted to the occupiers and wanted to get to know them better, the issue of guilt proved to be insurmountable. Teenagers typically feel self-conscious at times which results in their becoming introverted or overcompensating by exhibiting a rebellious attitude. However when Micheline and Antonia faced the prospect of being seen with the enemy, they felt uncomfortable at the prospect of their private feelings being revealed on a public stage. They were reluctant to compromise their integrity. To a certain extent they realised that the Germans were no different from themselves, young people who

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<sup>407</sup> Jackson, pp. 336-337.

were also victims of circumstances. However in Micheline's case, her empathy towards the Germans was soured by the soldier who forced her to kiss him. This of course poses the question of whether appearing 'correct' and winning young girls' trust was simply a means to manipulate the situation.

For those girls who chose to associate with the enemy the consequences could be serious. Incident reports show that merely being in the company of the Germans could provoke accusations from other members of the population. However the most serious consequences were reserved for those who were accused of *collaboration sentimentale*, which carried a punishment of head shaving and two weeks internment in a concentration camp.

Existing studies of the Occupation, such as Richard Vinen's *The Unfree French*, Philippe Burrin's *La France à l'heure allemande*, and Julian Jackson's *France: The Dark Years* tend to include a couple of examples of incidents with the Germans but no study exists which provides a substantial range of examples about one category of people therefore the first part of this chapter provides both a quantitative and qualitative approach to this topic and shows the overwhelmingly negative side to the interpersonal relations between young girls and German soldiers. The lack of studies on this topic is possibly due to the limited availability of the Police archives until recent years which has resulted in them being underused. The second part of this chapter contributes to existing research on 'horizontal collaboration' such as Fabrice Virgili's *Naître ennemi: Les enfants de couples franco-allemands nés pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* and *La France 'virile': Des femmes tondues à la libération* but takes it further by demonstrating that a lack of life experience combined with the fact that their sexuality was being awakened could result in young girls becoming romantically



involved with the Germans and ultimately being punished for it. My research shows that their age and gender could provide further explanations for the actions of these young girls in light of their adolescence.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISSIDENCE, DEMONSTRATIONS AND DECORATIONS

We have seen in previous chapters how the Germans aroused fear and hatred in some young girls and intrigue and fascination in others. However, there was also a third category of young girls who viewed the Germans as an unwelcome force whom they wanted to oppose at all costs. Dominique Veillon emphasises that '[l]es Français sont submergés par les difficultés quotidiennes qu'impose l'Occupation, et leur attitude oscille entre soumission feinte ou réelle, passivité et rébellion.'<sup>408</sup> In this chapter, it is the actions and motivations of those girls who, rather than being submissive and compliant to the occupiers' list of increasing rules, restrictions and demands, actively sought to show their defiance by attending public demonstrations or wearing discreet signs to portray their support for France or even the Allies that is of interest. Paul Griffiths notes that when studying juvenile delinquency, it is necessary to take into account not just the behaviour of the individual but also the way in which this behaviour is perceived and interpreted by others.<sup>409</sup> This point is particularly relevant during wartime. Although historians do not consider the acts featured in this chapter to be evidence of delinquency during the Occupation, the French police and the German Occupation authorities did, as it contravened their regulations and could lead to the arrest of those involved. This chapter will therefore focus on the act of protesting in its broadest sense. It will assess how girls sought to *narguer les Allemands* before examining girls' participation in the demonstrations which took place on Armistice Day 1940 and Bastille Day 1941. It will then assess how young girls used visible symbols such as insignias as a means of protest. Primarily

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<sup>408</sup> Veillon, *Vivre et Survivre en France*, p. 71.

<sup>409</sup> Paul Griffiths, 'Juvenile Delinquency in Time', in *Becoming Delinquent: British and European Youth*, eds. Pamela Cox and Heather Shore (Aldershot: Ashgate Dartmouth, 2002), p. 25.

using archival documents from the *Archives de la Préfecture de Police*, this chapter seeks to assess girls' reactions to the Germans in the public domain. It argues that a significant number of young girls actively chose to resist the Germans albeit on an individual basis. This particular source allows us to see the number of girls who were caught in the act during a given period and also the ways in which they sought to justify their behaviour to the Police following their arrest.

The term 'resistance' can be interpreted in different ways. The definition suggested by Margaret Collins Weitz is the most inclusive and the one that this chapter will use: 'To stand fast to a position or principle well defines those French who protested. Their inner certainty was allied with a strong sense of conscience and belief in human dignity.'<sup>410</sup> The acts that this chapter examines are not those traditionally associated with the French Resistance but it is the motivations of the girls who carried out these gestures that is important. They did so to express their own strong beliefs, to demonstrate their viewpoint and so for them these minor acts were a very personal form of resistance.

### *Narguer les Allemands*

There were varying degrees to which young girls wanted to show their opposition to the Occupation, the mildest of which was to *narguer les Allemands*, which meant irritating or annoying the Germans in minor ways without endangering lives. This pastime was popular amongst young girls as it made them feel as if they were doing something, no matter how small, to demonstrate their opposition to the Occupation. Some young girls sought to undermine the occupiers by carrying out childish games on an individual basis. Micheline

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<sup>410</sup> Weitz, p. 8.

Bood was one such girl and she describes how she would throw fruit stones at passing Germans:

J'ai découvert un nouveau jeu très amusant: on *en* prend une poignée à côté de soi, on *les* mange. Ce sont des prunes. Quand le noyau est bien visqueux, on le saisit délicatement entre le pouce et l'index et on appuie quand passe un Boch. Ça arrive étonnamment juste, surtout sur le nez.<sup>411</sup>

Although this was a particularly juvenile game, it was perceived as effective in terms of confusing the Germans. Martine Rouchaud used a less subtle technique to show her opposition to the Germans. When she went with her mother to buy schoolbooks, she sat down and leafed through a magazine. As a German officer walked towards the cash desk to pay for his German magazines, she stuck out her foot to trip him up without raising her eyes from her magazine. Her trick worked, as he fell, but instead of being annoyed at her, he simply apologised. However, she was ungracious and stated 'Il y a de quoi.'<sup>412</sup> Following this incident, her mother tried to instil in her the difference between acts which serve a purpose and silly games. The reaction of her mother demonstrates the generation gap, and reflects why young girls were likely to participate in acts of resistance at this time. Whereas adults recognised the danger that openly displaying opposition to the Germans could bring, young girls were more naive as previously discussed in Chapter Three. They acted on impulse rather than thinking about the consequences. Although these acts were very minor, silly schoolgirl pranks, they served the purpose of making the young girl feel like she was actively doing something to express her viewpoint.

Slogans were also a means for young girls to defy the occupiers. Martine Rouchaud described how she and a friend had a competition to see who could draw the most Crosses of

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<sup>411</sup> Bood, p. 38.

<sup>412</sup> Rouchaud, p. 84.

Lorraine in the dust on parked German cars.<sup>413</sup> However, her mother did not approve of this pastime and banned her from doing it again. Martine's disappointment is evident in the phrase: 'Sur la route qui mène à la librairie, je dois donc me contenter de passer auprès des objets tentateurs sans les marquer du sceau qui nous est cher.'<sup>414</sup> Micheline Bood was profoundly pro-English and sought to express her hopes for an Allied victory whenever possible, even at school. Her activities varied from writing *Vive de Gaulle* on tables or even on the back of one of her classmates. In January 1941 when the ground was covered in snow, she described how she could not suppress her desire to write *Vive de Gaulle!* in the snow.<sup>415</sup> These examples are interesting as the young girls carried them out in a way that meant they were visible, but only for a limited amount of time. The choice of substances, dust and snow, is significant: the symbol or slogan could either be washed off or would disappear of its own accord in a matter of days.

The archives of the *rectorat de Paris* reveal that young girls sought to express their opinions of the Occupation at school in other ways. Three seventeen-year-old girls were suspended from school for a week because 'à la manipulation de chimie sur l'acide fluorhydrique [elles] ont gravé sur les plaques de verre qui leur étaient confiées "Vive de Gaule" (sic).'<sup>416</sup> Another girl at the same school who was thirteen-years-old received a warning as she 'se permet des réflexions déplacées sur les événements actuels dans un devoir qui n'y prêtait nullement' and also 'met des inscriptions sur son cahier de géographie.'<sup>417</sup> A fifteen-year-old girl at the *lycée*

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<sup>413</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> Bood, p. 63.

<sup>416</sup> AN AJ16 7117 'Rapport de la Directrice du lycée Molière à Monsieur le Recteur', 4 April 1941.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

*Racine* was suspended for a week ‘pour inscriptions de caractère politique sur une table.’<sup>418</sup> A young girl was suspended from the *lycée Victor-Duruy* for ‘une inscription tendancieuse.’<sup>419</sup> Two thirteen-year-old girls were suspended from the *lycée Lamartine* for two days and received a severe reproach from their teacher in front of the class for ‘inscriptions et de dégradations sur une table.’<sup>420</sup> The report describes the girls as ‘bonnes petites filles qui se sont montrées très affligées de leur faute.’ In the aftermath of the Armistice Day protest of 1940, Brigitte Friang, a seventeen-year-old student, stated that ‘je me suis fait renvoyer du lycée Molière pour avoir gravé des croix de Lorraine sur les vitres.’<sup>421</sup> Although the content of these inscriptions is not always revealed, the fact that they chose to engrave their opinions into tables demonstrates that they wanted their views to be preserved for a while to come.

We saw in Chapter Four how the Germans’ behaviour towards young girls was often less than chivalrous, but not all young girls behaved in a correct manner towards the Germans. Whereas the previous examples focus on the young girls choosing to record their feelings in some way, others directed their anger at the cause: the German soldiers themselves. They sought to antagonize the Germans by refusing to respect their authority. Under German regulations, the people of France were required to step off the pavement in order to allow a member of the Occupation Army to pass by. However, some young people refused to do so:

Le 17 janvier 1941, le maire de Chalon est averti par le sous-préfet et le Kreiskommandant Streuber que dans sa ville ‘la discipline des piétons laisse beaucoup à désirer, [...] les jeunes gens occupant tout le trottoir et tendant à faire descendre des officiers allemands.’<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> AN AJ16 7117 ‘Rapport de la Directrice du Lycée Racine à Monsieur le Recteur de l’Académie de Paris’, 4 April 1941.

<sup>419</sup> AN AJ16 7117 ‘Rapport de la Directrice du Lycée Victor-Duruy à Monsieur le Recteur de l’Académie de Paris’, 1 April 1941.

<sup>420</sup> AN AJ16 7117 ‘Rapport de la Directrice du Lycée Lamartine à Monsieur le Recteur de l’Académie de Paris’, 4 April 1941.

<sup>421</sup> Brigitte Friang cited in Tandonnet, p. 154.

<sup>422</sup> Veillon, *Vivre et Survivre en France*, p. 74.

Micheline Bood sought to antagonize the Germans in this overt and obvious way, as she confessed: ‘D’abord je ne traverse *jamais* dans les clous, parce que les Allemands ont dit qu’il fallait le faire. Quand je ne peux faire autrement, je passe juste à côté.’<sup>423</sup> She added: ‘Je n’attache *jamais* Darak, parce que les Allemands ont dit d’attacher les chiens. Je ne m’arrête *jamais* pour laisser passer une voiture boch.’<sup>424</sup> Elisabeth Sevier also confessed that she wanted to *narguer les Allemands* as much as possible:

During the next several months I put my whole heart into thwarting the Germans at every opportunity. I gave out wrong directions and rode my bicycle in their path. These were small nuisance acts, but they gave my morale a big boost.<sup>425</sup>

In these examples, the young girls wanted to show that although the German presence meant that the French now had to abide by German rules, they were not willing to do so wholeheartedly. In fact, young girls actively sought to flout the regulations as a means of defiance.

On 13 November 1940, a nineteen-year-old Jewish girl, Elisabeth T., ‘aurait une grimace et [aurait] tiré la langue’ at the occupants of a German car as it drove past her, which resulted in her being arrested.<sup>426</sup> On 18 February 1941, Mademoiselle A., *élève au lycée Marie-Curie* was excluded from school and sentenced to three months in prison for sending ‘une lettre injurieuse au Médecin-Chef allemand au lycée Lakanal.’<sup>427</sup> The recipient attributed the letter to *gaminerie* but the content was described as ‘non seulement un tissu d’injures, de grossièretés et presque d’ordures, mais encore qui contenait une menace de manifestation collective, le 13 Décembre, des lycéens contre les éléments d’occupation de leur

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<sup>423</sup> Bood, pp. 81-82.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

<sup>425</sup> Sevier, p. 48.

<sup>426</sup> AN AJ16 7116 Note dated 13 November 1940.

<sup>427</sup> AN AJ16 7117 ‘Arrestations (enseignement secondaire)’, undated.

établissement.<sup>428</sup> On 21 September 1941, twenty-two-year-old Eliane G. along with two women in their forties, one of whom was probably her mother, were arrested as all three had insulted three members of the German military. Furthermore Eliane had also slapped an NCO of the same group.<sup>429</sup> In these examples, young girls had the courage of their convictions and wanted the Germans to know that they disapproved of them being in France. They were not intimidated or frightened but showed strength of character despite their young ages.

The evidence presented above shows how young girls sought to exhibit their negative feelings about the German Occupation in minor ways. Whereas younger girls were content to draw symbols or slogans in snow or dust, others wanted to leave a lasting impression by engraving their views into tables. Older girls, however, targeted the source of their anger and frustration and did not hesitate to make their feelings clear to the occupiers. It is important to note that these acts reflected personal viewpoints on an individual basis and were therefore isolated incidents, but their significance should not be underestimated.

## Protests

French national identity and the symbolism associated with that identity, as previously discussed in Chapter One, gains strength and importance during wartime. Although the French decree of 23 October 1935<sup>430</sup> and the German *ordonnance* of 20 June 1940<sup>431</sup> stated that all public demonstrations had to gain permission from the *Préfecture de Police* and that all street gatherings and demonstrations were punishable under martial law respectively,

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<sup>428</sup> AN AJ16 7117 'Rapport du Proviseur du lycée Lakanal à Monsieur le Recteur de l'Académie de Paris', 13 December 1940.

<sup>429</sup> APP BA 2105 'Principaux événements signalés dans la soirée du 21 et dans la nuit du 21 au 22 Septembre 1941'; APP BA 2106 Rapport du Commissaire principal à Monsieur général de la Police municipale, 'Militaires de l'Armée de l'Occupation frappés et injuriés dans station du Métro', 22 September 1941.

<sup>430</sup> Raymond Youngs, *English, French and German comparative law* (London: Cavendish, 1998), p. 193.

<sup>431</sup> Danielle Tartakowsky, *Les manifestations de rue en France 1918-1968* (Paris: Sorbonne, 1997), p. 449.



young girls were not deterred. They sought to show their patriotism in overt ways by participating in *Fêtes nationales* such as Armistice Day 1940 and Bastille Day 1941. According to Ousby, '[i]n the aftermath of 1940 the popular mood remained defeatist and for the most part compliant. For a long time France, which had been frighteningly easy to conquer, proved quite as easy to occupy.'<sup>432</sup> However, this statement is somewhat misleading as the fact that the first prominent protest of the Occupation took place in November 1940, less than six months after the Occupation had begun, is suggestive of a discontented mood. According to Michael Stenton, '[f]ew nations had prepared for occupation, and defeat robbed them of the power to react. Violent resistance was tremendously difficult. It could not be an instant response, it might never be genuinely important.'<sup>433</sup> However, protesting was a realistic option for many during 1940 and 1941 as it was before the Resistance became a dominant force and began to organise violent protests from 1942 onwards. According to Danielle Tartakowsky, the street had taken on a particular significance from the late eighteenth century: 'C'est assurément avec la Révolution, soit il y a plus de deux siècles, que la rue s'est affirmée comme acteur majeur de la vie politique, susceptible de faire et de défaire les régimes dans les décennies ultérieures.'<sup>434</sup> She adds that protests during the Occupation differed from those which took place during the Interwar period:

Les manifestations patriotiques qui représentent la quasi-totalité des démonstrations politiques contrastent avec les figures dominantes de l'action de rue de l'entre-deux-guerres dans la mesure où elles épousent les formes, les espaces et les temps de la commémoration ou des enterrements, à l'exclusion de tous les autres.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> Ousby, p. 197.

<sup>433</sup> Michael Stenton, *Radio London and resistance in Occupied Europe: British political warfare, 1939-1943* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 98.

<sup>434</sup> Danielle Tartakowsky, *Le pouvoir est dans la rue: Crises politiques et manifestations en France* (Paris: Aubier, 1998), p. 13.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

The number of people who took part in these protests suggests the extent of anti-German feeling in France at this time.

The student protest which took place on Armistice Day 1940, the first *Fête nationale* since the Occupation had begun, is the most well-known of these events. The legacy of this protest is summarised by Philippe Chapleau:

Le 11 novembre 1940, avec la manifestation des lycéens et étudiants parisiens, constitue – comme l’a bien rappelé Claude Ducreux le 11 mai 2006 devant le monument élevé en Mémorial des élèves de France morts pour la France pendant l’Occupation nazie – un événement ‘fondateur’, ‘exemplaire’.<sup>436</sup>

The Germans recognised the importance of this day in the French calendar which resulted in the German High Command in Paris passing the law of 29 October 1940 which forbade all forms of demonstrations and ceremonies on 11 November 1940. The inclusive nature of this event is emphasised by Pierre Laborie, who states:

Le jour anniversaire de l’armistice de 1918, en fin de journée, sur les Champs-Élysées, des étudiants et lycéens de différentes sensibilités, nationalistes, communistes et ‘gaullistes’ mêlés, se heurtent pendant deux heures à la police française puis à des forces allemandes qui ouvrent le feu. [...] Si la portée politique de l’événement est restreinte, et ses motivations diverses, l’union instinctive qui s’est faite contre l’occupant est symbolique.<sup>437</sup>

Establishing statistics for this protest is difficult as historians generally refer to it in a singular form. However, the archives of the *Préfecture de Police* reveal that arrests took place on numerous days throughout November 1940 and the fact that these lists are grouped together in a folder entitled *La manifestation étudiante du 11 novembre 1940* suggests that the police consider these lists to be linked. The first arrests took place on 10 November and police records reveal that fifty-eight people were arrested, of whom ten or 17.2% were female.

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<sup>436</sup> Philippe Chapleau, *Des enfants dans la Résistance (1939-1945)* (Rennes: Ouest-France, 2008), p. 66.

<sup>437</sup> Pierre Laborie, *L’opinion française sous Vichy* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), p. 242.

Although these ten females were aged between sixteen and twenty-eight, eight or 80% of them were aged between fifteen and twenty. Therefore 13.8% of the total number of people arrested were female and in their mid to late teens.<sup>438</sup> The motive given for the arrest of all of these people is *circulation en groupe*. Only thirty-eight people were arrested on Armistice Day itself. These were mainly teenage boys with the exception of three women, two of whom were aged forty and the other forty-six. According to one list, seventy-six people were arrested by the Germans on Armistice Day 1940 but there is only one female name on that list.<sup>439</sup> As a result of the protest on Armistice Day, 1041 people were arrested on 21 November 1940. Of these 1041 people, 132 or 12.7% were females aged between twelve and twenty-four. Only seven of these 132 females were aged twenty-one or above which amounted to 5.3% of the total number of females or 0.7% of the total number of participants. 109 females were aged between sixteen and twenty which comprised 82.6% of the total number of females or 10.5% of the total number of participants. Sixteen females were aged between twelve and fifteen which was 12.1% of the total number of females or 1.5% of the total number of participants. To summarise, 125 females were aged between twelve and twenty which amounted to 94.7% of the total number of females or 12% of the total number of participants. The reason given for all of these arrests is *refus de circuler*. However another report adds that these arrests were carried out by police who were on duty to prevent any demonstration from taking place on *la voie publique* and these arrests were purely for security reasons.<sup>440</sup> Although the archives do not contain statistics for the Armistice Day commemorations which took place in the latter years of the war, they do reveal that some isolated incidents took place throughout France. In Lyon, the graves of 17 British airmen

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<sup>438</sup> APP BA 2361 'Etat des arrestations du 10.11.1940 17 heures.'

<sup>439</sup> APP BA 2361 'Liste des étudiants écroués par les Allemands le 11 Novembre 1940.'

<sup>440</sup> APP BA 2105 'Principaux incidents signalés dans la soirée du 21 novembre et dans la nuit du 21 au 22 novembre 1940.'

disappeared under a mound of flowers on Armistice Day 1943. Although the Guillotière cemetery was visited frequently throughout the day, it was a note addressed to General de Gaulle left under a wreath that made the most impact as it read: ‘Trois petites soeurs françaises souhaitent que vous veniez vite en France pour leur rendre leur cher papa qui est en prison “VIVE DE GAULLE”’.<sup>441</sup>

According to Laurence Thibault, Charles de Gaulle appealed for people in occupied France to act in certain ways:

Il s’agit par exemple de se promener en masse, de telle heure à telle heure, sur telles avenues ou boulevards en arborant les couleurs tricolores: on voit des jeunes filles vêtues de corsages blancs, de jupes bleues et de vestes rouges ou coiffées de chapeaux garnis de bleuets, de coquelicots et de pâquerettes ou portant à la main un petit bouquet aux trois couleurs [...].<sup>442</sup>

Maxime Tandonnet, however, simplifies the reasons why young people chose to participate in this protest: ‘Quelques-uns se considèrent déjà comme “gaullistes”. Le mot n’a alors strictement aucune connotation politique; il exprime la révolte face à l’Occupation et l’espoir préservé même lointain, d’une libération.’<sup>443</sup> He also summarises how two mindsets were present at this protest which he implies are gender-dependent:

Les lycéens et les étudiants ont été guidés par le seul besoin de se rassembler pour exprimer à la fois leur douleur – certains portent la cravate noire du deuil – et l’espérance que symbolisent les bouquets de fleurs ou papiers découpés en forme de croix de Lorraine.<sup>444</sup>

This implies that, by wearing black ties, men tended to focus on the present and the negative aspects of the Occupation; the defeat and humiliation of France at the hands of the Germans.

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<sup>441</sup> AN F1a 3765 ‘Manifestations patriotiques’, November 1943.

<sup>442</sup> Laurence Thibault, *Les jeunes et la Résistance* (Paris: La Documentation française, 2007), p. 52.

<sup>443</sup> Tandonnet, p. 14.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

In contrast to this, women were more likely to focus on the future and their patriotism by carrying flowers which showed that they had hope for the future.

According to the archives of the *rectorat de Paris* Elizabeth T. was sentenced to three months in prison for participating in this protest but no further details are provided.<sup>445</sup> Personal testimonies, however, help to provide an insight into the motivations of those girls who took part in this protest. Clothilde Rousseau, whose mother had lost a brother during the First World War and was extremely patriotic, stated that she had a specific reason for participating in this protest:

Mon frère et moi qui étaients des enfants très sages [...] mais avec des idées bien déterminées sur la situation de cette guerre qui pour nous n'était pas terminée. Nous avons décidé d'assister à la manifestation et d'exceptionnellement quitter notre établissement scolaire pour aller à la manifestation.<sup>446</sup>

Her strong beliefs resulted in her displaying behaviour which was out of character for her, especially as she was very close to her parents, but that she thought the event worthwhile.

Le 11 novembre, pour la première fois de ma vie, à dix-sept ans, je ne suis pas rentrée directement à la maison. Je n'ai rien dit à mes parents. Sans réfléchir vraiment, j'ai pris seule le métro pour aller à la Concorde.<sup>447</sup>

She participated in the protest because the cause was something in which she strongly believed. It was a means for her to show that she did not accept what had happened. When she returned home after the protest, her parents were frantic with worry. Although she understood their concern, she states: 'Bien sûr, ils étaient prêts à tout donner pour la patrie. Tout sauf la vie de leurs enfants. [...] Moi, je n'avais fait que mon devoir, le devoir qu'ils m'avaient

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<sup>445</sup> AN AJ16 7117 'Arrestations (Enseignement supérieur)', undated.

<sup>446</sup> Clothilde Rousseau cited in *11 Novembre 1940, Témoignages & Archives historiques (CD)*, ed. Institut des archives sonores (2000).

<sup>447</sup> Clothilde Rousseau cited in Tandonnet, p. 105.

toujours enseigné.’<sup>448</sup> Similarly Geneviève Anthonioz-de-Gaulle stated that the decision of whether to participate was a strictly personal one. Those students who chose to participate did so because they were confronted with ‘une France dégradée, avilie.’ They did not want France to be presented and remembered in this way; they wanted the images of students protesting to be a lasting memory instead:

On a reconnu dans leurs gestes la vraie image de la France. [...] Ça arrive dans l’histoire que l’image réelle, l’expression profonde d’un pays, ne soit pas la majorité mais au contraire une minorité qui s’engage tellement qu’elle finit par avoir raison, ce qui est arrivé d’ailleurs à ceux qui se sont révélés comme cela. A ce moment-là, la réalité de la France, c’est l’étudiant qui remonte les Champs-Élysées, qui se fait arrêter, qui risque tout de même d’être tué comme otage, qui est blessé aussi.<sup>449</sup>

Geneviève’s testimony suggests she wanted the lasting memory of France in 1940 to be that of the altruistic, courageous, protesting student who represented the thoughts of the majority of people but was amongst the minority who were willing to act on these thoughts and actively show their opposition to the Occupation. Micheline Bood’s diary from the period is evidence of the impact that this protest had on young people’s mood at the time, as she states: ‘J’y ai été. J’ai vu. Je n’ai pas vaincu, mais j’ai manifesté.’<sup>450</sup> In referring to how she saw around thirty German officers attack a man who had protested, she states that ‘Nous les avons traités de cochons, vaches, salauds et toutes les bêtes de l’Arche de Noé.’<sup>451</sup> She also witnessed members of the crowd attacking a German, a scene which she realised did not bode well for the future: ‘Ah mes enfants! Qu’est-ce qu’on va avoir comme représailles! Mais je peux dire: “J’Y ETAIS”.’<sup>452</sup> In this example, Micheline appeared to recognise that this protest would become a symbolic event in the history of the Occupation and she wanted to participate in the making of history. These young girls were not content merely to oppose the Occupation

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>449</sup> Geneviève Anthonioz-de-Gaulle cited in *11 Novembre 1940: Témoignages & Archives historiques*.

<sup>450</sup> Bood, p. 44.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

on a personal level; they wanted to make their views felt on the public stage. In contrast to the above testimonies, Maroussia Naïtchenko stated that the communist party had not banned its members from attending but did try to discourage them as much as possible, due to a fear that the police would be hiding amongst the protesters. However, she states: ‘J’étais venue à pied, prudemment, avec l’intention d’observer de loin.’<sup>453</sup> When she notices that violence has broken out amongst the crowd and the police arrive, she quickly flees the scene. However her thoughts about doing this are revealed in the following statement:

Je repartis sans hâter le pas vers les petites rues qui me ramenaient vers la place de l’Alma. Je passai le pont sans encombre, pas très fière de moi qui ne m’étais pas mêlée à ces jeunes courageux, que j’avais regardés de loin sans rien risquer.<sup>454</sup>

Marie-Thérèse Froux, who was eighteen in 1940, was the daughter of an *ancien combattant*. Her family were very patriotic and the young girl was described as having ‘un caractère rebelle, d’une grande indépendance d’esprit, elle ne peut se résoudre à l’occupation allemande et à la politique de collaboration qui la révolte.’<sup>455</sup> After hearing different students discussing how extreme the protest should be she states that:

La confusion n’en finit pas. Ils discutent, ils discutent, et j’ai le pressentiment qu’ils ne vont rien faire du tout. Je ne peux m’empêcher de houspiller deux grands garçons qui ne semblent pas vraiment déterminés. ‘Bon, eh bien puisque c’est ainsi, je vais y aller toute seule.’<sup>456</sup>

The attitudes of these two girls contrast sharply, as Maroussia felt disappointed that she was unwilling to put herself in danger whereas Marie-Thérèse was frustrated as she felt that more should have been done to voice their disapproval.

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<sup>453</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 189.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

<sup>455</sup> Tandonnet, p. 103.

<sup>456</sup> Marie-Thérèse Froux cited in Ibid., p. 104.

The archives of the *Préfecture de Police* suggest that Bastille Day was another patriotic occasion on which the French sought to protest. Danielle Tartakowsky summarises the impact of protests in the statement: ‘La manifestation est destinée à “rendre manifeste” un problème donné au-delà de la seule sphère de ceux qu’il implique directement [...] De plus, elle interpelle toujours, à des degrés variables, l’opinion publique.’<sup>457</sup> She also states that the French newspaper *L’Humanité* printed an appeal to the population in July 1941: ‘Le quotidien appelle à pavoiser tricolore le jour de la fête nationale, préconise “partout, dans les villes et villages, des manifestations avec drapeau tricolore, *Marseillaise*, *Chant du départ*”.’<sup>458</sup> The first Bastille Day of the Occupation took place on 14 July 1941, that of 1940 not taking place due to the upheaval and disorder caused by the exodus. One girl does refer to Bastille Day taking place in 1940 but it was not a celebration: ‘Nous sommes, pour le moment, en zone “libre” et fêtons le 14 Juillet: une cérémonie minable à pleurer.’<sup>459</sup> Documents held by the Paris *Préfecture de Police* reveal that 488 arrests took place on this day. Of these 488, only 136 or 28% were women. Of these 136, forty or 29% were aged twenty-one or under when the Occupation began. One of these girls was eleven, twenty-one were aged between fifteen and nineteen, and eighteen were aged between twenty and twenty-two.

A police report dated 12 July 1941 stated that no mass protests had been planned but they believed individual forms of protest were going to take place. If they saw people wearing tricolore clothing or emblems they were told to ask the culprit to remove the offending articles by means of persuasion. If they did encounter people protesting they should arrest them.<sup>460</sup> On 13 July 1941, a group of men were arrested for refusing to remove *cocardes tricolores*. The

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<sup>457</sup> Tartakowsky, *Le pouvoir est dans la rue*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>459</sup> Françoise Bechu cited in Sullerot, p. 54.

<sup>460</sup> APP DA 464 Report dated 12 July 1941.



police car was driving past a café when the men shouted that they were wearing this symbol to celebrate the Republic and that they would refuse to wear a swastika. On hearing their claims, a group of young people of both sexes shouted that they disapproved of what had happened and that they found it shameful.<sup>461</sup> Two young girls were arrested on the *Place de la Sorbonne* on the corner of the *Boulevard Saint-Michel* for wearing tricolore insignias. The two girls aged twenty-two and thirteen shared a surname so were probably sisters.<sup>462</sup> Maroussia Naïtchenko was given the task of making *cocardes tricolores* in preparation for Bastille Day by a senior member of the communist resistance. On the day itself she handed them out to passers-by and pinned them to the lapels on women's jackets or on the buttonholes of men.<sup>463</sup> A twenty-two-year-old hairdresser was arrested on the *Boulevard Montmartre* for carrying a flag 'en tête colonne.'<sup>464</sup> At 23:40 on 14 July, around 100 young people were singing camping songs outside a café on the *Boulevard de Belleville*. The police attempted to disperse the group but five young people were arrested for *refus de circuler*: Pauline C. aged nineteen, and Esther S. aged twenty, a *manutentionnaire*.<sup>465</sup> At 17:50 a mother and her twenty-two-year-old daughter were arrested during a protest on the *Boulevard Saint-Michel* for wearing tricolore insignias and shouting *Vive la France*.<sup>466</sup> At 15:45 three young girls used clothing as a means to express their patriotism. The report states that '3 jeunes filles se promenant Brd de la Madeleine, vêtues l'une d'une robe blanche, l'autre d'une robe bleu et la dernière d'une robe rouge.'<sup>467</sup> However only two of the girls were arrested. At

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<sup>461</sup> APP DA 464 'Rapport du Gardien de la Paix Bastide Philippe à Monsieur le Commissaire de Police', 13 July 1941.

<sup>462</sup> APP DA 464 'Liste des personnes conduites au poste Central du 5<sup>ème</sup> Arrt 14 Juillet 1941.'

<sup>463</sup> Naïtchenko, pp. 223-226.

<sup>464</sup> APP DA 464 'Etat des arrestations du 14-7-1941 17 heures 55 Boulevard Montmartre près Richelieu Drouot.'

<sup>465</sup> APP DA 464 'Journée du 14 Juillet, Renseignements reçus par l'Etat Major.'

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

13:15 twenty-two-year-old Solange B., a *mouleuse sans travail*, was arrested for selling *insignes rubans tricolores*.<sup>468</sup>

In terms of the mood of the times, extracts from newspapers show that the authorities in France were keen to suppress protests and issued statements to that effect which were printed in authorised newspapers. However, non-official newspapers actively encouraged people to protest. A newspaper entitled *Patriote Parisienne* from 1943 described itself as a ‘journal édité par l’Union des Femmes pour la Défense de la famille et la libération de la France’ and its entire aim was to persuade Frenchwomen to protest on Bastille Day. The headline was ‘PARISIENNES Avec tous les patriotes faites la démonstration de la puissance française. Arborez les couleurs tricolores! PAVOISEZ! MANIFESTEZ!’ The symbolic nature of this day is evoked in an emotive fashion: ‘14 Juillet, date évocatrice de jours heureux pour notre peuple, d’un passé fait de gloire, de liberté, d’idées grandes et généreuses, date toujours vivante dans le cœur des Français.’ It calls on women of all ages to remember what their ancestors achieved on this day during the 1789 revolution and to take inspiration from them.<sup>469</sup> Whether they were answering appeals such as this or whether it was due to more personal reasons, several incidents involving young girls took place on 14 July 1943. Around 100 young people of both sexes walked from Montparnasse station along the *rue de Rennes* whilst singing the *Marseillaise* and carrying tricolore bouquets and wearing tricolore insignias.<sup>470</sup> Fourteen of these protesters were arrested, of which four were young girls. Madeleine P, a *cartonnière*, and Mauricette H., a *fleuriste*, were fifteen, and Jeanne C., a

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

<sup>469</sup> APP DA 464 ‘Patriote Parisienne’, July 1943.

<sup>470</sup> APP DA 464 Rapport du Commissaire Principal du 6<sup>e</sup> Arrondissement à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale, ‘Arrestations pour chants et port d’emblèmes tricolores’, 14 July 1943.

*manœuvre*, seventeen, and Marcelle L, a *teinturière*, was sixteen.<sup>471</sup> At 3:25pm two men and three women were intercepted as the women were each carrying a large tricolore bouquet. When the police informed them that it was an offence to be carrying these flowers, the young women responded ‘qu’elles aimaient ces fleurs et les portaient par sympathie à l’égard de la France.’<sup>472</sup> However the fact that these women were German makes the gesture even more symbolic.

On 14 July 1943, several incidents involving young girls took place in Eastern France. In Belfort, a protest was organised by the *Comité Local de la France Combattante* which distributed tracts calling on the population to take part. Although all categories of the population were involved in distributing tricolore-coloured confetti and filing past the *monument aux morts*, some young girls seemingly took it upon themselves to carry out their own protest: ‘Le 14, dans l’après-midi, 40 jeunes filles parcourent la ville a bicyclette au chant de “La Marseillaise”, manifestation spontanée non organisée par les Comités Locaux.’<sup>473</sup> On the same day in Besançon a protest was organised by the *Front national* on the square in front of the *arbre de la Liberté*. However, ten minutes before the protest was due to begin, ‘Une jeune fille sort un ruban tricolore de sa poche et se met à le couper par petits bouts tandis que la police française s’affaire à ramasser les fleurs jetées.’ A German gendarme then intervened and the situation quickly deteriorated as he was booed by the crowd. However it was his attitude towards another young girl that made matters worse:

Une jeune fille le traite de ‘salaud sale boche.’ L’officier se dirige vers elle, menaçant. Il est reçu par une magistrale claque à laquelle il répond. Une lutte s’engage entre lui et la jeune fille qui résiste et ne veut pas se laisser emmener. Elle se défend avec son soulier et frappe l’officier. La foule se fait menaçante et

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<sup>471</sup> APP DA 464 ‘Liste des personnes arrêtées rue de Rennes à 15 heures pour chants et port d’emblèmes tricolores.’

<sup>472</sup> APP DA 464 ‘Journée du 14 Juillet, No.20’, 14 July 1943.

<sup>473</sup> AN F1a 3765 ‘Rapport sur les manifestations du 14 juillet 1943... dans l’est, No.553’, July 1943.

avance. L'officier et les allemands présents sortent leurs revolvers. La foule intimidée s'arrête et la jeune fille est emmenée.<sup>474</sup>

On Bastille Day 1944, police reports infer that there were no major problems and that the population was willing to comply with their directives and instructions. One report states that no wreaths were layed at war memorials and the police officers who were stationed at these commemorative sites did not need to intervene. Furthermore any businesses found selling tricolore emblems complied with the request to remove them from sale. The report adds: 'Il en a été de même pour quelques jeunes filles ou jeunes femmes ayant arboré un insigne tricolore; aucun homme n'en a été trouvé nanti.'<sup>475</sup> However, a different report states that around 200 protesters accompanied by 'des groupes de protection' managed to gain entry to a cemetery in the Parisian suburb of Ivry whilst singing the Marseillaise. Around 250 people also gathered at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The report adds: 'Parmi la foule, certaines personnes, notamment des jeunes filles déposent des petits bouquets de fleurs tricolores.'<sup>476</sup>

On the same day, two twenty-one-year-old girls were arrested along with a thirty-six-year-old woman for placing flowers on the tombs of Barbusse and Vaillant-Couturier in Père Lachaise cemetery. The report states that Marguerite B., Irène D., and Odette H. were not known to the police and had not been previously arrested for any political activities.<sup>477</sup> It appears that Irène D. and Odette H. were related as the former's maiden name was the same as the latter's surname although their connection is not detailed in the report. Incidents on a larger scale are also reported, such as that which took place at 5:30pm in Vitry. The incident consisted of a cortège of 300 people headed by a car on which armed individuals were standing making its

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<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> APP DA 464 Rapport Commissaire de Police de la Circonscription d'AUBERVILLIERS à Monsieur le Préfet de Police, 'Physionomie de la Circonscription', 14 July 1944.

<sup>476</sup> APP DA 464 'Journée du 14 Juillet', 14 July 1944.

<sup>477</sup> APP DA 464 'Journée du 14 Juillet', 14 July 1944.

way from Vitry to Choisy. Although the composition of the cortège is not disclosed, the report states that a twenty-two-year-old girl named Renée B. had been shot by a German Gendarme who was attempting to disperse the cortège before the French police arrived.<sup>478</sup>

The evidence presented above suggests that the memory of the First World War and the symbolism of the Republic provided an opportunity for young girls to show both their patriotism and their opposition of the Occupation. Although archival documents showed that all categories of the population participated in these protests, they also show that young girls took it upon themselves to conduct their own, independent forms of protest. Danielle Tartakowsky states: ‘La manifestation signifie, enfin, une occupation précaire et transitoire de la rue et une rupture dans les usages codifiés de l’espace et du temps.’<sup>479</sup> However, the number of participants in these protests is significant, as Tartakowsky emphasises:

Hormis quelques rares moments de l’histoire nationale, la manifestation de rue ne mobilise jamais qu’une infime fraction de la population française. Ce qui vaut pour les temps ordinaires vaut plus encore dans cette phase de l’histoire où les rues, interdites, sont le lieu de tous les dangers.<sup>480</sup>

This is particularly true of the Occupation, as we saw in Chapter Three how the German presence had infiltrated French streets and in Chapter Four we saw how young girls came to harm on the streets when they were involved in incidents with the German occupiers. However, whilst Tartakowsky’s point that a fraction of the total population of France were involved in these protests is true, the number of examples which mention young girls protesting is equally significant and shows that they comprised a significant proportion of this minority. Protesting was thus a means for young girls to reclaim their French identity and take back control of the streets in a symbolic, defiant manner.

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<sup>478</sup> APP DA 464 Rapport du Commissaire de Police de la Circonscription de Choisy-le-Roi à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale, ‘Manifestation sur la V.P. Choisy le-Roi’, 14 July 1944.

<sup>479</sup> Tartakowsky, *Les manifestations de rue en France*, p. 8.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 495.

## Incidents in cinemas

Girls who wanted to display an anti-German viewpoint or express their discontent with the ways in which the German presence was having a negative impact on their everyday lives could do so from within the darkened and anonymous confines of the cinema. The cinema was an important aspect of life under the Occupation, as in addition to being a leisure activity, its warmth also provided a haven from the material restrictions of wartime France. Maxime Tandonnet states that: ‘Le cinéma est un espace de liberté, de rêve, une échappatoire où les jeunes citadins se retrouvent entre eux. D’ailleurs, c’est des salles de cinéma qu’est venu l’un des premiers signes apparents de rejet de l’Occupation.’<sup>481</sup> From the moment the Germans began their Occupation of France they sought to control all aspects of everyday life, which included the cinema industry. As Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit states, ‘Dès juillet 1940, l’administration allemande du cinéma en France entend diriger la profession en zone occupée et créer les conditions favorables au développement d’un marché du film allemand sur tout le territoire.’<sup>482</sup> It was in July 1940 that the German army’s *Propaganda Abteilung* took control of cinemas and exploited this control by showing German newsreels before French films were allowed to start. The Germans recognised that they could use the popularity of the cinema to disseminate their propaganda to a captive audience. Daniel Boyer states that this type of propaganda portrayed a common theme just after the Germans had conquered European countries: ‘l’habitant qui fraternise avec l’armée qui arrive, avec en point d’orgue: les cigarettes qu’on allume en commun.’<sup>483</sup> Other themes which were prominent throughout the Occupation were ‘les scènes montrant les victimes civiles, d’un bombardement ou d’une attaque, sauf si c’est l’ennemi qui a agi – avec certitude – ou que ce soit utile à la propagande

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<sup>481</sup> Tandonnet, p. 48.

<sup>482</sup> Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Le Cinéma français sous l’Occupation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994), p. 7.

<sup>483</sup> Daniel Boyer, *Le cinéma des années 40 (1939-1950)* (Coulommiers: Dualpha, 2005), p. 64.

politique.<sup>484</sup> As previously detailed in Chapter Three, the French were unsure what to expect with regards to the behaviour of the Germans. However, they recognised that these newsreels were trying to manipulate public opinion and therefore demonstrated their opposition to this technique.

Kedward summarises the reaction of the French population in the following way: ‘The reaction of the French was not to boycott the cinemas, whose warmth and entertainment were vital to them, but to whistle, stamp or go outside during the newsreels.’<sup>485</sup> Jackson claims that this behaviour irritated the Germans: ‘The booing of German newsreels, however, remained a major irritation for the Occupation authorities. Turning up the lights only caused people to arrive at the cinema after the newsreels were over.’<sup>486</sup> Bertin-Maghit suggests that the newsreels provoked more negative outbursts from the audience than German documentaries:

Les rapports mensuels des préfets et les rapports de surveillance de la police ont enregistré les réactions de spectateurs au passage des films de propagande: elles sont nombreuses et critiques quand il s’agit des actualités allemandes, mais peu de documentaires en sont la cible.<sup>487</sup>

The negative impact of the cinema on young minds is mentioned briefly in an article by Sarah Fishman in which she states: ‘Nearly every book or article on juvenile crime singled out one especially dangerous environmental factor: the cinema. Doctors, lawyers, social workers, and religious activists alike decried the cinema’s evil influence on the minds of France’s youth.’<sup>488</sup> Furthermore, ‘In the darkness of an artificial environment... the child is impregnated with the film he sees, he is defenceless against it, and, aided by the spirit of imitation, he comes

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid., pp. 64-65.

<sup>485</sup> H.R. Kedward, *Occupied France: Collaboration and Resistance 1940-1944* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 8.

<sup>486</sup> Jackson, p. 287.

<sup>487</sup> Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Les documenteurs des ANNÉES NOIRES: Les documentaires de propagande, France 1940-1944* (Paris: Nouveau monde, 2004), p. 70.

<sup>488</sup> Sarah Fishman, ‘Absent Fathers and Family Breakdown: Delinquency in Vichy France’, in *Becoming Delinquent: British and European Youth, 1650-1950*, eds. Pamela Cox and Heather Shore (Aldershot: Ashgate Dartmouth, 2002), p. 145.

entirely enmeshed in its atmosphere.<sup>489</sup> To a certain extent, this idea was both confirmed and refuted by the incidents that took place during the Occupation. On the one hand, young girls who demonstrated their opposition to the German propaganda shown in cinemas confirmed that this cinema environment could have a negative impact on young people as by protesting their behaviour was perceived by the French and German authorities as delinquent. In contrast to this, however, those young girls who protested proved that the cinema was not having a brainwashing effect on them as they refused to condone, let alone believe, what they were being shown. In this case the cinema had a positive effect on their development as it inspired and motivated them to act on their disbelief.

According to the *Archives de la Préfecture de Police*, around thirty incidents took place in Parisian cinemas between February and December 1941. These incidents all involved members of the audience displaying their disagreement with, or animosity towards, the propaganda newsreels which were played before and after films. Only eighteen of these police reports give the names, thirty-three in total, of the perpetrators, who demonstrated their viewpoints by coughing, laughing or making derogatory comments about the content of the newsreels. Only eight of these thirty-three, or 24%, were female and they were aged between seventeen and forty-four. Of the nine incidents which took place during February 1941, three involved young girls. At 16:30 on 9 February 1941 in a cinema on the *Boulevard des Italiens*, seventeen-year-old Louise B., a primary school teacher, along with three boys aged between seventeen and twenty ‘se sont levés de leur siège ont tourné le dos à l’écran et intentionnellement ont toussé à plusieurs reprises.’<sup>490</sup> At 17:00 on 9 February 1941 in a cinema on the *Rue Marbeuf* ‘des toussottements et rires ont retenti’ which resulted in the

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<sup>489</sup> P. Blancho, ‘Esquisse sur l’enfance après la guerre de 1940 à 1945: Etude médico-social’, cited in Ibid.

<sup>490</sup> APP BA 2097 ‘Note sur incident Cinéma Marivaux’, 9 February 1941.



arrest of eighteen-year-old Lucienne M. and a twenty-year-old boy. The motive for the young girl's arrest is given as 'pour rires.'<sup>491</sup> At 21:10 on 13 February 1941 in a cinema on the *avenue de Clichy*, twenty-one-year-old Yvonne V., an office worker, 'a manifesté dans la salle en riant bruyamment' as the newsreels were being played. She was then taken to the nearest police station.<sup>492</sup> Two incidents took place in March 1941, one of which involved a young girl. At 21:35 on 17 March 1941, twenty-three-year-old Madeleine W. was said to have 'émettre un léger sifflement au moment du passage des actualités à l'endroit ou des soldats allemands descendants un talus' in a cinema on the *Champs-Élysées*. She was taken to the nearest police station where she was released without charge upon verification of her personal details. According to the report 'Mademoiselle W. a déclaré avoir émis un sifflement admiratif au moment de ce passage.'<sup>493</sup> Denise Domenach-Lallich's diary reveals that she also exhibited this type of behaviour during the war but that her pro-English, Gaullist attitude often caused conflict with her friends. On one occasion when she went to the cinema with a friend she stated that 'il a voulu m'empêcher de manifester pour les Anglais pendant le documentaire sur le blocus de Djibouti.'<sup>494</sup>

The evidence presented above suggests that a few girls in their late teens and early twenties exhibited a negative attitude towards the German newsreels. Although this type of propaganda was being enforced on them, they were not prepared to take the messages portrayed at face value and chose to voice their disapproval. Although the cinema should have provided a form of escapism from the everyday realities of the Occupation, they found themselves in a

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<sup>491</sup> APP BA 2097 'Note sur incident Cinéma Marbeuf', 9 February 1941.

<sup>492</sup> APP BA 2097 Rapport du Commissaire de Voie Publique à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale, 'Compte Rendu sur incident Cinéma "Select" Av.de Clichy', 14 February 1941; APP BA 2105 'Principaux incidents signalés dans la soirée du 13 février et dans la nuit du 13 au 14 février 1941.'

<sup>493</sup> APP BA 2097 Rapport du gardien de la paix Mathieu à Monsieur le Commissaire de Police, 'Incident aux actualités du cinéma "Le Cinéphone"', 17 March 1941.

<sup>494</sup> Domenach-Lallich, p. 97.

position where in effect by paying to visit the cinema they were paying to watch German propaganda at the same time. So although the cinema was seen as corrupting young minds, as Fishman had stated, this was not always the case during the Occupation as it had the opposite effect by making young girls see the reality of what the occupiers were trying to do and subsequently opposed it. However, it should be noted that, in certain ways, this form of protest was perceived as safer than others, as Sandra Lallam states: ‘De plus, ces incidents sont provoqués le plus souvent, par des “bruits naturels”, des réactions humaines comme le rire, les éternuements ou la toux; difficile parfois de faire la différence entre une manifestation et une réaction biologique.’<sup>495</sup>

## **‘V’ Campaign**

The importance of symbolism under the Occupation should not be underestimated. According to Ousby, ‘[t]he whole history of the Occupation challenges any notion that words are just words and symbols just symbols, and that both are somehow separate from real action.’<sup>496</sup> He adds that ‘[s]ymbols do not stay safe and inert on the printed page any more than words do: they too spill out on to the streets.’<sup>497</sup> This behaviour was evident from the very beginning of the Occupation, as Jackson states: ‘In the first months of the Occupation, there was also a lot of anti-German graffiti. In one week of January 1941, the Paris police counted 400 handwritten anti-German stickers on walls.’<sup>498</sup> Rather than this ‘spilling out onto the streets’ being a spontaneous course of action, it was incited and actively encouraged by British propaganda. According to Michael Stenton,

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<sup>495</sup> Sandra Lallam, ‘La population de la Seine et les forces d’occupation allemandes (14 juin 1940-25 août 1944)’ (Unpublished Mémoire de Maîtrise, Paris IV, 2000), p. 96.

<sup>496</sup> Ousby, p. 220.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>498</sup> Jackson, p. 287.

In Belgium there was a vogue for painting 'RAF' on walls and hoardings. Musing on this, the BBC Belgian editor first thought of the sign 'V'. He made a broadcast on 14 January 1941 which casually recommended this 'V' sign, and the response provided the first evidence that prescriptive propaganda from London was welcome.<sup>499</sup>

He adds: 'Throughout the spring of 1941 a BBC-driven V campaign spread the sign of anti-Nazi impudence. The BBC was explicit: to write a 'V' in public was to sign one's name on the invisible muster roll of the army of liberation.'<sup>500</sup> According to Julian Jackson the BBC was one of the most trusted sources for information during the Occupation: 'People listened to the BBC because they trusted it more than Vichy propaganda. This eventually created a kind of clandestine community, but initially the Occupation generated an accumulation of individual discontents rather than any collective movement of dissent.'<sup>501</sup> Tim Brooks states how the 'V' Campaign was 'one of the most potentially dangerous examples in propaganda terms.'<sup>502</sup> Although British propaganda actively encouraged the dissemination of the 'V' sign, Ousby states that it did not start out being a pro-Allied symbol:

To start with, the V-sign had been a German emblem standing for German victory. V might not begin the German word for victory (which is *Sieg*) but it is the initial letter of the word in the languages of several of those countries the Reich intended to defeat.<sup>503</sup>

This idea is supported by an extract from an English radio broadcast which stated:

L'inscription des 'V' inquiète fortement les Allemands, qui s'efforcent de l'adopter. Hier soir, le docteur Friedrich, journaliste allemand, a expliqué à la radio que la lettre 'V' était le signe de la victoire allemande. La propagande nazie prêche l'inscription des 'V'.<sup>504</sup>

However, the broadcast continued to state that it had faith in the French people to not be taken in by German attempts to undermine this form of resistance as it added: 'Mais les auditeurs

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<sup>499</sup> Stenton, p. 99.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

<sup>501</sup> Jackson, p. 281.

<sup>502</sup> Tim Brooks, *British Propaganda to France, 1940-1944: machinery, method and message* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 20.

<sup>503</sup> Ousby, p. 222.

<sup>504</sup> APP BA 2095 'Emission de la Radio anglaise du 18 juillet 1941 (12h.45).'

français savent que la naissance du “V” est due à la “France Libre” et que chanter les “V” veut dire “vainqueur”, siffler les “V” signifie “victoire” et taper les “V” est synonyme de “vengeance”.<sup>505</sup> Furthermore by appropriating the enemy’s symbolism, ‘it was, after all, an equivalent of capturing and defacing the enemy’s flag in battle.’<sup>506</sup>

The ‘V’ Campaign began in France on 13 March 1941 and provided an opportunity for young girls to show their patriotism to France and their hope for an Allied victory by writing the letter ‘V’, often accompanied by a Cross of Lorraine, on public buildings. Ousby states: ‘[b]y mid-1941, with the encouragement of the underground press, they [the French] were chalking Vs on pavements, walls and military vehicles, folding their Métro tickets into Vs, breaking their matches into Vs before discarding them.’<sup>507</sup> Dominique Veillon adds that some females even took the campaign one step further: ‘D’après une source du BCRA d’avril 1941, “quelques femmes dans le métro, se risquent à marquer le dos des Allemands de grands V avec leur bâton de rouge”.’<sup>508</sup> The scale of the problem is revealed by Micheline Bood, who recalled seeing the ‘V’ sign everywhere but was at first unsure as to the reasons why:

Les murs de Paris se sont couverts de V et je me demandais pourquoi. La radio anglaise a demandé d’écrire des V pour Victoire, et on en trouve partout, même sur les devantures des magasins. Il y en a aussi sur les tableaux noirs, sur les tables, partout enfin.<sup>509</sup>

The figures contained in the *Archives de la Préfecture de Police* provide an idea of the scale of the problem. On 25 March 1941, 32,798 inscriptions had to be removed from 11,175 buildings.<sup>510</sup> On 27 March 1941, 28,194 inscriptions were found on 7448 buildings<sup>511</sup> and on

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<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

<sup>506</sup> Ousby, p. 222.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid.

<sup>508</sup> Veillon, *Vivre et Survivre en France*, p. 148.

<sup>509</sup> Bood, p. 92.

<sup>510</sup> APP BA 2095 Report dated 4 April 1941.

<sup>511</sup> APP BA 2095 Report dated 28 March 1941.

29 March 1941, 20,386 inscriptions were found on 5032 buildings<sup>512</sup>. Police reports reveal that they believed one category of people were primarily responsible for these types of inscriptions:

Il est apparu que ces inscriptions étaient surtout le fait de jeunes gens. En effet, sur les 35 personnes appréhendées dans la période allant du 25 Mars au 4 Avril, 5 seulement sont âgées de plus de 18 ans, les autres étant des jeunes gens, voire même des enfants.<sup>513</sup>

Furthermore the prefect of Paris noted that young girls played a significant part in this campaign:

The prefect of Paris reported, for example, that ‘the most effective elements of Gaullist propaganda were very often young girls.’ He added disdainfully that it was mostly young girls who were childishly writing the V for victory and the Cross of Lorraine everywhere.<sup>514</sup>

Gildea confirms that this view was also true of Nantes, as ‘It was becoming clear by the summer of 1941 that the dissident network included not only male students from the faculties and secondary schools but also female students and women from outside the education system.’<sup>515</sup> In Paris between 29 March and 12 April, six girls between the ages of eight and twenty-one were arrested for being caught in the act of writing ‘V’s in prominent places. On 29 March 1941 nine-year-old Paulette D. was arrested along with two boys aged twelve and nine.<sup>516</sup> On the same date fourteen-year-old Geneviève I. was arrested after being ‘surprise au moment où elle traçait ces signes.’<sup>517</sup> On 3 April 1941 Jeanne B., a sixteen-year-old schoolgirl was ‘appréhendée à 12h45, alors qu’elle traçait des ‘V’ dans les couloirs de la station du métropolitain “Bastille”, et relaxée après les vérifications d’usage.’<sup>518</sup> On 10 April 1941 Alice

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<sup>512</sup> APP BA 2095 Report dated 30 March 1941.

<sup>513</sup> APP BA 2095 Report dated 4 April 1941.

<sup>514</sup> Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 95.

<sup>515</sup> Gildea, p. 167.

<sup>516</sup> APP BA 2095 Report dated 28 March 1941.

<sup>517</sup> APP BA 2095 Report dated 4 March 1941.

<sup>518</sup> APP BA 2095 Report dated 4 April 1941.

C., a twenty-one-year-old *employée dans un établissement de spectacle* was arrested ‘pour inscriptions de la lettre V, dans les couloirs de la station de métropolitain “Daumesnil”’.<sup>519</sup> However, the report states that ‘Elle a été relaxée après les vérifications d’usage.’<sup>520</sup> On 12 April 1941 eleven-year-old Jenny S. was arrested along with her eight-year-old sister Olga and seven-year-old brother.<sup>521</sup> The sheer volume of offences committed along with the fact that they were often carried out under the cover of darkness meant that the only people arrested were those who happened to be caught in the act. This means that establishing figures for the actual number of girls who participated in the ‘V’ campaign is difficult. The limited information provided by the police reports also means that there is no way of knowing the reasons why these girls were found defacing prominent places in this way.

In contrast to these archival reports, girls’ diaries and memoirs provide more detailed information into the kinds of incidents which provoked this behaviour from young girls at this time. Renée Roth-Hano revealed how when she found out about the ‘V’ campaign from a family friend and saw that it had worked, her spirits were given a boost:

Well, it turns out Mme Chavignat was right after all. The BBC must have hundreds of listeners. There are *J*’s all over town! This morning, Pépée and I spot three just on the way to school. We even see VIVE DE GAULLE and a Cross of Lorraine!<sup>522</sup>

Although she does not actively participate in it at first, an incident provokes her into taking action. After she finds out at school that all Jewish books are to be removed from circulation, her annoyance gets the better of her. She confesses:

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<sup>519</sup> APP BA 2095 Report dated 1 August 1941.

<sup>520</sup> APP BA 2095 Report dated 11 April 1941.

<sup>521</sup> APP BA 2095 Rapport du Commissaire de Police des Quartiers de Saint-Germain-des-Prés et de la Monnaie à Monsieur le Préfet de Police, ‘Au sujet d’une inscription de V’, 16 April 1941.

<sup>522</sup> Roth-Hano, p. 61.

This evening, when I take the garbage down, I make sure there is no one in the yard and the corridor – and I draw a *V* on the side of the door, right underneath the doorbell, with a rainbow next to it.<sup>523</sup>

As Micheline Bood was devoted to the English and never missed a chance to thwart the Germans, she took great delight in writing ‘V’s on the walls of the cinema, outside shops and even scratched the letter onto German vehicles.<sup>524</sup>

Although the above examples focus on the Paris region, the ‘V’ Campaign was evident in other areas of France. Robert Gildea’s regional study of the Loire Valley stated how in Nantes, ‘V’s were initially drawn in chalk but were later drawn in paint. Furthermore:

The speed with which they appeared, said the police chief, is explained ‘not only by the ease with which they can be drawn but by the rebellious attitude [*l’esprit frondeur*] of young people who are convinced that they will not be caught’.<sup>525</sup>

Gildea also describes how one young girl was arrested for her part in the ‘V’ Campaign: ‘Gisèle Neau, a girl of eighteen from the outskirts of Saumur, was prosecuted for her part in the ‘V’ sign and Lorraine cross campaign and fined 10 francs, although her father was held civilly responsible as she was a minor.’<sup>526</sup> According to Jackson, ‘In Montpellier the prefect complained that the extent of such defacement had become “disagreeable to the eye”.’<sup>527</sup> On 25 March 1941, thirteen young people aged between ten and seventeen were arrested in Reims for taking part in the ‘V’ campaign. Amongst those accused were thirteen-year-old Thérèse L., sixteen-year-old Geneviève L., seventeen-year-old Françoise L. and seventeen-year-old Mauricette S. The report states that the letter ‘V’ had been found written in chalk on the walls of blocks of flats and shopfronts, and on doors and windows. When interviewed, the

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<sup>523</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>524</sup> Bood, p. 92.

<sup>525</sup> Gildea, p. 164.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>527</sup> Jackson, p. 287.

culprits did not appear to know why they were doing it. However their age and gender influenced the punishments that they received. The four males who were over thirteen were ‘placés sous mandat de dépôt.’ The remaining boys and all the girls were taken home to their families who agreed to monitor their behaviour.<sup>528</sup> Interestingly, the report refers to them as ‘enfants’ which suggests that they believed the act to have been a childish prank rather than an act of resistance.

From these examples, we can see that younger girls had a tendency to participate in the ‘V’ campaign as the majority of those caught were under sixteen. Although the exact number of girls who took part in it is difficult to establish, it does give an indication of the fact that young people were opposed to the German presence and wanted to show their support for the Allies. Their diaries and memoirs reveal that in some ways they felt powerless to do more to help their country possibly due to their young ages, but these minor acts were a way for them to boost their moral and seeing the scale of the effectiveness of the ‘V’ campaign in Paris in particular gave them hope for the future. Even if young people felt unable to voice their disapproval of the German presence, this was a means for them to express their frustration. The example of those caught in Reims is revealing of the outlook of the authorities at this time as it implies that young girls were not thought to be heavily involved in Resistance activities whereas the fact that the older boys were detained shows that they were of more interest to those in charge.

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<sup>528</sup> AN F60 404 ‘Rapport du Procureur de la République près le Tribunal de première instance de Reims à Monsieur le Procureur Général près la Cour d’Appel de Paris’, 26 March 1941.



## Insignias

According to Michael Stenton, although Charles de Gaulle was believed to have had good intentions at the beginning of the Occupation he was not popular either amongst his colleagues in London or with the French people who he had left behind in his homeland. In order to capture their attention, he needed a symbol which could unite them. According to Stenton,

France seemed to need symbols that were broader, or at least older, than those which had lost their gloss. Patriotic depth might be acquired by invoking a Christian past which no one could expunge from French history. The Cross of Lorraine became the Free French symbol in August.<sup>529</sup>

The importance of symbolism is revealed in Denise Domenach-Lallich's diary. As early as November 1939 she writes: 'Je viens d'aller faire un tour en vélo avec Mireille. J'ai acheté un Bleuet et un Coquelicot pour la France.'<sup>530</sup> In November of the following year she writes 'Je vais acheter une croix de Lorraine, c'est l'insigne des partisans de De Gaulle.'<sup>531</sup> Her diary also admits that she is very much pro-English and a Gaullist and that she regularly wears 'une petite croix de Lorraine attachée au bracelet de ma montre.'<sup>532</sup> However, Maxime Tandonnet makes an interesting point which provides an insight into why a contrasting viewpoint needs to be considered: 'De Gaulle et la France libre représentent, pour quelques lycéens et étudiants, une bouffée d'oxygène, la seule et unique lueur d'espoir dans cette période d'humiliation et de détresse profonde.'<sup>533</sup> This view is reinforced by Claudine Planus who heard De Gaulle's speech in June 1940 and was glad to learn that some people were going to

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<sup>529</sup> Stenton, p. 134.

<sup>530</sup> Domenach-Lallich, p. 44. She adds 'Ces fleurs en papier se vendent dans la rue le 11 Novembre pour l'anniversaire de l'Armistice.'

<sup>531</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>532</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>533</sup> Tandonnet, p. 50.

fight the Occupation. She described her memory of this event as follows: ‘Dans le désastre général, il venait comme une bouffée d’air pur.’<sup>534</sup>

Young girls were one of the main categories of people who wore insignias from the beginning of the Occupation. This behaviour was not condoned by either the German or French authorities who issued Ordinances on 28 August 1940 and 20 November 1940<sup>535</sup> respectively which explicitly banned the wearing of all types of insignia in public places without prior permission. A report located in the *Archives de la Préfecture de Police* specifies that two categories of people were particularly prone to wearing this insignia: ‘Les sympathisants de l’ex-général de Gaulle, qui se manifestent depuis quelque temps sous le signe de la Croix de Lorraine, se recrutent en partie dans la jeunesse estudiantine [...]’ The report adds that ‘la Croix de Lorraine est aussi arborée par de nombreuses jeunes filles ou femmes catholiques.’<sup>536</sup> Maxime Tandonnet refers to the prominence of this symbol in the *Quartier latin* from the beginning of the academic year: ‘Aux premiers jours de la rentrée universitaire, les signes de protestation commencent [...] Le port d’une petite croix de Lorraine pendue autour du cou se répand aussi dans les rues du Quartier latin.’<sup>537</sup>

Although historians associate the Cross of Lorraine with resistance sympathisers, another report offers a different potential reason for females wanting to wear this symbol: ‘Des renseignements légèrement contradictoires des commerçants visés il appert que la vente ou mieux la demande serait très importante pour les femmes depuis l’aggravation des restrictions

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<sup>534</sup> Claudine Planus cited in *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>535</sup> APP BA 2437 ‘Lois réglementant le port des insignes, emblèmes et décorations’, 20 November 1940.

<sup>536</sup> APP BA 2437 Report dated 28 September 1940.

<sup>537</sup> Tandonnet, p. 65.

notamment.<sup>538</sup> According to Dominique Veillon, the restrictions on clothing had an effect on public opinion, as clothing is considered an integral part of an individual's identity and many people, especially amongst the middle classes, did not appreciate having their choice of clothing restricted in this way.<sup>539</sup> Furthermore, the type of clothing worn distinguished one social class from another: 'Le vêtement est le signe d'une distinction sociale, on appartient à telle catégorie plutôt qu'à telle autre.'<sup>540</sup> This implies that shortages served to deepen class differences during the war. A group of five schoolgirls aged between ten and thirteen in Tournissan in the south of France wrote an essay in which they blamed the Germans for the restrictions placed on clothing at this time:

Lorsque les Allemands sont arrivés en France, ils ont acheté des vêtements et des chaussures, car ils ont décidé que 1 mark valait 20 francs, et tout cela ils l'ont envoyé à leur famille en Allemagne, et nous pauvres Français nous nous privons pour ces beaux messieurs. Eux, les Allemands sont bien habillés, bien chaussés, nous les Français nous devons porter des vêtements tous reprisés et en haillons.<sup>541</sup>

In Chapter Four we saw how the perceived 'correctness' of the Germans was only superficial and Dominique Veillon believes that the impact of the Occupation on fashion is a further example of how this 'correctness' was false: 'Mais derrière cette correction, il fallut se rendre à l'évidence, les réalités de l'Occupation étaient bien là.'<sup>542</sup> The material of the Cross of Lorraine is significant in this respect. Whereas a few young girls wore crosses made out of paper, the majority wore them as a pendant on a necklace or as a brooch which meant they were made out of metal or enamel. They were therefore an affordable type of jewellery which

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<sup>538</sup> APP BA 2437 'Rapport du Commissaire de Police du Quartier des Quinze-Vingts à Monsieur le Directeur de la Police Judiciaire', 24 January 1941.

<sup>539</sup> Veillon, *Vivre et survivre en France*, p. 155.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid.

<sup>541</sup> Essay written by Gisèle Bertrand, Huguette Foulquier, Eliette Lastenouse, Louise Fillol and Claudine Doudiès in *Les écoliers de Tournissan 1939-1945: Pendant la guerre et l'occupation les enfants d'un village audois racontent la vie de tous les jours*, ed. Rémi Cazals (Toulouse: F.A.O.L. et Privat, 1978), p. 122.

<sup>542</sup> Veillon, *La mode sous l'Occupation*, p. 46.

could embellish and personalise an outfit. Wearing insignias could therefore be a means to reduce social distinctions and show unity at a time of crisis.

The scale of the problem is shown by statistics. One shop owner reportedly sold three dozen Cross of Lorraine insignias between 25 July and 11 November 1940. The document notes: ‘Pendant la période susvisée, les acheteurs étaient des étudiants fréquentant en majeure partie l’Ecole des Francs Bourgeois, Rue St Antoine.’<sup>543</sup> However, another report explains that the police did not consider the Cross of Lorraine to be definitively linked to de Gaulle or those who wanted to resist, as it states:

Il y a, en outre, lieu de noter que la Croix de Lorraine n’a pas été spécialement créée comme l’insigne de ralliement des partisans de l’ex-général de Gaulle. Elle constitue les armes héraldiques de cette province et, de tout temps, des personnes l’ont arborée, notamment en souvenir de Jeanne d’Arc.<sup>544</sup>

Philippe Burrin supports this argument as he notes that towards the end of 1940, ‘[I]a seule mention du mot de collaboration entraîne pour les populations de zone occupée l’image des Alsaciens et Lorrains chassés de leurs foyers [...]’<sup>545</sup>

Between July 1941 and February 1942, sixty young girls aged between thirteen and twenty-one were arrested for offenses relating to *propagande gaulliste*, the term used by the *Préfecture de Police*. The average age of these girls was eighteen. Fifty-two police reports, which amounts to 87%, list the motive for arrest as being due to the young girls wearing a Cross of Lorraine. Although not all the police reports detail the response given by the young girl to her arrest, those that do are revealing of their motivation for committing the offence. A couple of girls stated that they had made a conscious decision to wear the Cross of Lorraine as

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<sup>543</sup> APP BA 2437 ‘Rapport du Commissaire de Police de l’Arsenal à Monsieur le Directeur de la Police Judiciaire M. Raymond Coudret’, 24 January 1941.

<sup>544</sup> APP BA 2437 ‘Note du Commissaire de Police’, 24 January 1941.

<sup>545</sup> Burrin, p. 188.

a means to demonstrate their opposition to the German Occupation or the effects that it had had on France. Nineteen-year-old Raymonde P., a temporary employee of the *Préfecture de la Seine*, was arrested along with her mother on the *avenue des Champs-Élysées* on 11 November 1940. According to the police report, the young girl admitted to wearing the insignia not because she supported De Gaulle but to protest against the German presence in France:

Mme P. m'a expliqué qu'elle ignorait que la Croix de Lorraine put être considérée comme l'insigne adopté par les partisans de l'ex-général de Gaulle. Elle n'était à les (sic) yeux, qu'un emblème essentiellement français qu'elle portait en manière de muette protestation contre l'occupation allemande. Avec des camarades de bureau, elle avait acheté cette broche au bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville, la veille, pour le prix de 7f.75. Mme P. m'a enfin affirmé qu'elle n'était affiliée à aucun groupement 'de Gaulliste'.<sup>546</sup>

Another girl admitted that she was wearing the insignia because she wanted to show that she disapproved of Alsace-Lorraine being annexed and in her eyes Lorraine would always be a part of France. Monique L., a seventeen-year-old student, was arrested on the *Boulevard Saint-Michel* because 'elle portait au revers de son vêtement une figurine représentant la France en trois couleurs bleu, blanc, rouge, et dans la partie centrale blanche, une croix de Lorraine de couleur bleu.' When questioned about her reasons for wearing the insignia, she stated:

J'ai cet insigne qui représente la France aux trois couleurs depuis quinze jours. Pour moi cette figurine veut dire que la Lorraine appartiendra toujours à la France. Je sais également que la croix de Lorraine représente l'emblème du général de Gaulle. C'est pour ces motifs que je porte cet insigne. Il m'a été remis par Mr D. Jacques, 19 ans, mécanicien, demeurant Paris-Jardins à Draveil (S. et O.), qui l'a fait à mon intention. Je l'ai peinte et décorée moi-même.<sup>547</sup>

Seventeen-year-old Gisèle C., a student at the *Ecole Professionnelle Jacquard*, was arrested on the *place de Rennes* for wearing a blue Cross of Lorraine. When questioned about her

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<sup>546</sup> APP BA 2437 'Rapport du Commissaire de Police du quartier des Champs-Élysées à Monsieur le Directeur de la Police Judiciaire', 11 November 1940.

<sup>547</sup> APP BA 2095 'Rapport du Commissaire Principal du 6ème Arrondissement à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale', 6 August 1941.

motives for wearing the insignia, she replied ‘J’ai acheté cette croix à Brest, au moment de l’exode. Je la porte parce que c’est l’insigne de Jeanne d’Arc.’<sup>548</sup> In these examples, the Cross of Lorraine was used to demonstrate the young girls’ disapproval of the Occupation and its effects on their country, thus the insignia was a subtle but effective means of protest.

Other girls told the police that that they wore this emblem for sentimental reasons, connected to their family. Seventeen-year-old Thérèse P., a schoolgirl who was arrested at the entrance to the *Parc des Princes* on 13 April 1941 for wearing a white Cross of Lorraine pinned to her clothing, stated:

Il est exact que je portais, épinglée sur ma poitrine, la petite croix de Lorraine que vous me représentez. Ce n’est pas parce que cette croix est l’emblème des Français qui se battent avec l’Angleterre que je la portais. Mon arrière grand’mère était Lorraine; j’ai conservé le culte de cette contrée et j’ai commencé à porter la croix de Lorraine lorsque j’étais encore toute petite. J’ignorais qu’il était interdit de porter des insignes et en particulier celui-ci. J’affirme que j’ai nullement eu l’intention de traduire un sentiment politique en arborant cette croix de Lorraine.<sup>549</sup>

The statement of nineteen-year-old Marie R., a student who was arrested on the *Boulevard Saint-Michel* for wearing a yellow Cross of Lorraine, continues the theme of wearing the cross for family reasons:

Je porte cette croix depuis mon enfance, c’est un cadeau de ma grand’mère; je n’écoute la radio que pour la musique, jene (sic) fais pas de politique, je suis une bonne Française et c’est tout. Je ne manifeste aucune intention en portant cette croix.<sup>550</sup>

Renée C., an unemployed twenty-year-old telephone operator, was arrested on the *rue Bonaparte* for wearing a blue Cross of Lorraine. When challenged by the police about her

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<sup>548</sup> APP BA 2095 ‘Rapport du Commissaire Principal du 6ème Arrondissement à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale’, 28 July 1941.

<sup>549</sup> APP BA 2437 ‘Procès Verbal de Thérèse P.’, 13 April 1941.

<sup>550</sup> APP BA 2095 ‘Rapport du Commissaire Principal du 6ème Arrondissement à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale’, 5 August 1941.

motivations for wearing the insignia, she also revealed that her reason for wearing it was connected to her grandmother:

Je possède cette croix depuis plusieurs années. C'est ma grand-mère qui me l'a offerte. Je la porte fréquemment. Je sais que c'est une croix de Lorraine. J'en ai vu à terre découpées dans du papier. Je ne sais pas ce que cela signifie. Je n'écoute pas la T.S.F. vivant seule et ayant quitté mes parents car je ne m'entends pas avec eux. Je ne fais pas de politique.<sup>551</sup>

Whereas the girls previously discussed have attributed their wearing of the cross to reasons connected to their grandmothers specifically, eighteen-year-old Josette O. who was arrested on the *rue des Ecouffes* whilst wearing a Cross of Lorraine on the lapel of her jacket admitted wearing it for family reasons. The police report states 'Interrogée elle a fait connaitre qu'il s'agissait d'un souvenir de famille et qu'elle n'avait aucune intention de mal faire en portant cet insigne bien qu'elle savait que ce port était interdit.'<sup>552</sup> In these examples, the wearing of insignias does not appear to have been linked to contemporary events but was merely a way for young girls to feel close to their grandparents or other family members from whom they had perhaps been separated. These insignias appear to be linked to tradition and sentimentality rather than opposition.

Some young girls chose to not only wear a Cross of Lorraine but also demonstrate their support for the Allies. Jeannine L., a nineteen-year-old bank employee, was arrested on the *Boulevard Saint-Michel* for wearing a white Cross of Lorraine and admitted knowing the insignia was associated with resistance. The police report quotes her as saying

J'ai cette croix depuis huit mois environ; je ne puis vous dire où je l'ai achetée. Je sais que c'est l'insigne du général de Gaulle. Je la porte presque tous les jours malgré la défense de mes Parents. Toutefois je ne

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<sup>551</sup> APP BA 2095 'Rapport du Commissaire Principal du 6<sup>ème</sup> Arrondissement à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale', 23 September 1941.

<sup>552</sup> APP BA 2095 'Rapport du Commissaire de Police du Quartier Saint-Merri à Monsieur le Directeur des Renseignements Généraux et des Jeux', 26 May 1942.

pensais pas être mauvaise Française en portant cette croix. J'ignorais qu'elle fût considérée comme emblème séditionnel. Je ne fais pas de politique.<sup>553</sup>

The young girl did not help her cause as the police found two paper flags in her bag, one French and one English. Twenty-one-year-old Simone R., a *sténo-dactylo*, was arrested on the *place de Rennes* for wearing a blue Cross of Lorraine. When questioned about her motives for wearing this insignia, she responded: 'Je porte cette croix depuis quelques mois. Je sais que c'est l'insigne de de Gaulle. Je ne savais pas que cela était interdit. Mes parents sont au courant du port de cet insigne. Je ne fais pas de politique.'<sup>554</sup> Similarly, Eliette R., a nineteen-year-old student, was arrested on the *rue de Rennes* because 'elle portait sur sa robe, quatre gros boutons décoratifs avec des drapeau anglais et drapeau français entrelacés et au poignet, une croix de Lorraine en métal de couleur bleue.' When she was questioned about her motivations for taking this course of action, the police report states that she knew the significance of what she was wearing. She is quoted as saying

J'avais placé ces boutons décoratifs sur ma robe il y a un an. Je porte cette robe depuis les chaleurs. Ma mère m'avait fait la remarque, j'ai continué de porter cette robe avec les boutons. Je sais que c'est interdit. Cependant je ne pensais pas mal faire. Pour la croix de Lorraine, je l'ai achetée au mois d'octobre 1940. Je la porte tous les jours. Je sais également que c'est interdit. Mes parents paraissent ignorer le port de cette croix. J'ai également chez moi une broche avec les drapeaux anglais et français, ainsi qu'un tract que je devais reproduire. Je ne l'ai pas fait, sur la défense de mon père.<sup>555</sup>

Twenty-one-year-old Anne-Marie F., who was unemployed, was arrested on the *Boulevard Saint-Germain* for wearing a blue Cross of Lorraine and she also admitted that she knew the significance of what she was wearing. The police report states 'Interpellée sur le port de cet insigne, elle nous a déclaré 'Je possède cette croix depuis longtemps. Je la porte tous les jours. Je sais que c'est l'insigne de dissidence de De Gaulle.' She adds that her parents had voiced

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<sup>553</sup> APP BA 2095 'Rapport du Commissaire Principal du 6ème Arrondissement à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale', 6 August 1941.

<sup>554</sup> APP BA 2095 'Rapport du Commissaire Principal du 6ème arrondt à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale', 31 July 1941.

<sup>555</sup> APP BA 2095 'Rapport du Commissaire Principal du 6ème Arrt, à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale', 24 July 1941.



their disapproval of her actions as she adds ‘Mes parents savent que je porte cette croix. Mon père me l’a interdit, mais je suis majeure.’ Although her statement shows that she knowingly wore a sign which was deemed unpatriotic and as a sign of rebellion by those in power, she then claims ‘Je ne fais pas de politique. J’ai la T.S.F. mais elle ne fonctionne pas.’<sup>556</sup> In these examples, the young girls appear to be knowingly contravening regulations which not only defied the authorities but also their parents. The combination of the Cross of Lorraine and the Allied flags is suggestive of their political views and they appear to be standing up for what they believed in.

Whereas some girls admitted wearing the insignia for family reasons, others claimed diminished responsibility by stating that they had not bought them themselves, but had been given them or made to wear them by a friend. Seventeen-year-old Hélène C., a student who was born in London, was arrested on the *rue Lafayette* for wearing a blue Cross of Lorraine ‘d’une façon ostensible’ in the form of a brooch. The police report states ‘Elle nous déclara l’avoir fait acheter il y a environ un mois par une camarade.’<sup>557</sup> Nineteen-year-old Lucie S., a secretary, was arrested on the *rue de Sèvres* for wearing a blue Cross of Lorraine. The police report states:

Une personne amie, dont je refuse de donner l’identité, m’a donné cette croix, il y a environ trois mois. Depuis, je porte cet insigne que je sais être l’insigne de dissidence et de propagande de Gaulle. Mes parents connaissent le port de cette croix.<sup>558</sup>

Eighteen-year-old Lucienne Puel, a cashier, was arrested on the *rue de Buci* for wearing a blue Cross of Lorraine pinned to her jacket. Her behaviour when confronted by the police

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<sup>556</sup> APP BA 2095 ‘Rapport du Commissaire Principal du 6<sup>ème</sup> Arrt à Monsieur Directeur Général de la Police Municipale’, 23 July 1941.

<sup>557</sup> APP BA 2095 ‘Rapport du Commissaire Principal à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale’, 30 July 1941.

<sup>558</sup> APP BA 2095 ‘Rapport du Commissaire Principal du 6ème Arrondissement à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale’, 19 June 1941.

suggests that she was aware that she was contravening the law as the report states that when she realised she was about to be confronted by the police, she quickly attempted to remove the emblem. The report also reveals how she attempted to attribute blame to a third party as a means to deflect attention from herself:

Je porte cette Croix de Lorraine depuis deux heures. Elle m'a été remise par une camarade dont j'ignore le nom et l'adresse. Je sais que c'est l'emblème du Général de Gaulle, mais je la porte pour être agréable à la personne qui me l'a remise. Je ne fais pas de politique.<sup>559</sup>

In these examples, young girls seem unwilling to take responsibility for their actions. They refuse to admit their guilt but the fact remains that they could have removed the emblem but chose not to which suggests that referring to a third party forcing them to wear it was actually an excuse.

Although the girls previously mentioned stated that they had a reason for wearing it, other girls pleaded ignorance to the laws regarding the insignias. Five girls who were all students aged between fourteen and eighteen gave this excuse when they were arrested in November 1940. A typical example of the girls' response when questioned is provided by Andrée L. who was arrested at the corner of the *rue de la Pompe* and the *rue de Longchamp*: 'Je ne connaissais pas ces Ordonnances et je m'engage à l'avenir à m'y conformer.'<sup>560</sup> In these cases, the young girls were apparently unaware that they were committing an offence and were keen to emphasise that they would abide by them in the future. However, the phrasing used by the girls to plead ignorance in the different reports is remarkably similar which suggests that they had either thought about what their defense would be in advance or were keen to deflect attention from themselves by telling the authorities what they believed they

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<sup>559</sup> APP BA 2095 'Rapport du Commissaire Principal du 6<sup>ème</sup> Arrondissement à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale', 13 August 1941.

<sup>560</sup> APP BA 2437 'Procès Verbal d'Andrée L.', 13 November 1940.

wanted to hear as it was plausible rather than the whole truth. However, the fact that these reports date from November 1940 is interesting as the ban on wearing insignias was not meant to come into effect until January 1941.<sup>561</sup>

Six girls aged between fourteen and twenty-two were arrested for wearing *pièces d'un nickel*. These insignias were often combined with red, white and blue ribbons. A report dated 30 April 1941 states:

Depuis quelques jours, on remarque parmi la population parisienne, des personnes des deux sexes arborant, soit au revers du pardessus, soit épinglés au corsage, des insignes en métal émaillé représentant notamment trois 'cocottes' aux couleurs bleu-blanc-rouge, ou un 'Coq gaulois' également tricolore.<sup>562</sup>

Furthermore, the report reasoned that there was a specific reason for these colours being worn: 'On peut admettre qu'il s'agit là de bijoux de fantaisie destinés seulement à agrémenter la tenue vestimentaire des parisiennes et parisiens.'<sup>563</sup> Sixteen-year-old Denise Millot, a student, was arrested on the *Boulevard des Italiens* on 20 Octobre 1941 'pour port d'un insigne constitué par 2 pièces de nickel de 0f.05 reliées par un ruban tricolore.'<sup>564</sup> Seventeen-year-old Raymonde A., a *manutentionnaire*, was arrested on the *Boulevard Montmartre*, on 25 October 1941 'arborant une cocarde tricolore à laquelle étaient suspendues trois pièces de monnaie en nickel, une de 5, une de 10 et une de 25 centimes.'<sup>565</sup> German-born Christiane C. de C., an eighteen-year-old student, was arrested in the corridors of Saint Lazare metro station because she was wearing an *insigne gaulliste*. The police report states: 'Cette personne portait ostensiblement trois pièces de nickel attachées à une broche en métal jaune par 3 cordonnets

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<sup>561</sup> APP BA 2437 'Rapport du Directeur de la Police Judiciaire à Monsieur le Préfet de Police', 29 January 1941.

<sup>562</sup> APP BA 2095 Report dated 30 April 1941.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid.

<sup>564</sup> APP BA 2095 'Rapport du Commissaire Principal à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale', 20 October 1941.

<sup>565</sup> APP BA 2095 'Rapport du Commissaire Principal à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale', 26 October 1941.

de laine bleu, blanc, rouge; elle a déclaré avoir conçu elle-même cet insigne sans idée politique quelconque.<sup>566</sup> Yvonne G., fourteen, was arrested on the *Boulevard des Capucines* on 2 November 1941 ‘en arborant une broche faite de trois pièces de nickel réunies par trois fils, bleu, blanc et rouge.’<sup>567</sup> Italian-born Clara J., a twenty-two-year-old *conditionneuse*, was arrested at Montmartre metro station because she ‘portait ostensiblement au revers de son manteau un insigne composé d’une pièce de 25 centimes en nickel, 1 de 10 centimes, et 1 de 5 centimes, assemblées par des fils de couleur: bleu-blanc-rouge.’<sup>568</sup> Colette Grenet, a seventeen-year-old student, was arrested at Montmartre metro station on 26 November 1941 because she ‘portait ostensiblement au revers de son manteau un insigne composé par trois pièces de nickel, une de 25 centimes, une de 0fr10 et une de 0fr05 assemblées par des fils bleu – blanc – rouge.’<sup>569</sup> The young girl was taken to the police station along with her mother who stated ‘qu’elle porte cet insigne comme une simple fantaisie.’ Micheline Bood’s diary provides a possible reason for why people chose to wear this symbol in particular at this time:

C’est pour faire des canons que les Bochs prennent les pièces de un sou, alors je garde les miennes. Bien plus, j’ai été chez les commerçants leur en demander et je vais m’en faire un bracelet; ils m’ont dit qu’ils garderaient aussi les leurs.<sup>570</sup>

Although the examples from the Paris region took place during 1941, Gildea states that this form of resistance did not take place until 1943 in Nantes.

In the spring of 1943, however, a craze spread among opposition students, and from them to young workers, of wearing badges made from 50-centime, 1-franc or 2-franc coins, on which the head of Marianne, symbol of the Republic in her Phrygian bonnet, was etched... As divisions within the French

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<sup>566</sup> APP BA 2095 ‘Rapport du Commissaire Principal à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale’, 24 October 1941.

<sup>567</sup> APP BA 2095 Report dated 3 November 1941.

<sup>568</sup> APP BA 2095 ‘Rapport du Commissaire Principal à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale’, 14 November 1941.

<sup>569</sup> APP BA 2095 ‘Rapport du Commissaire Principal à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale’, 16 November 1941.

<sup>570</sup> Bood, p. 65.

population intensified, badge-wearing, at once discreet and provocative, was defining the loyalties of the young people of Nantes.<sup>571</sup>

Sarah Fishman's study on juvenile delinquency in World War II France reveals how these acts, which could easily be considered as childish pranks or petty acts, were actually taken seriously by the German authorities who took matters into their own hands:

One teenage girl persisted despite several warnings, in wearing a brooch with the French and English flags crossed. A case notation reads: 'The delinquent youth will be prosecuted with a direct summons; the file has been sent on to the German authorities.'<sup>572</sup>

It is therefore evident that a significant number of young girls used material objects such as the Cross of Lorraine to portray their personal viewpoint at this time. The reasons they provided for wearing this insignia vary between protesting about the contemporary situation in France, to wanting to uphold some sort of family tradition, to having it forced upon them by a third party. However, the fact that police reports state that it was mainly young girls and women who were buying them combined with the fact that they were worn as a form of jewellery suggests that shortages could have played a role in influencing their decision. Clothing was rationed during the Occupation so a discreet sign such as the Cross of Lorraine could serve the dual purpose of decorating their outfit whilst also showing their disapproval of the Germans in France or even their support for the Allies. Similarly, the wearing of the cross or parts of coins accompanied by red, white and blue ribbons reinforces the idea that they were worn to show their support for France. But the fact remains that whether this insignia was worn as a decorative item or for the reasons they claimed, these young girls discovered that something as simple as wearing jewellery could have consequences during wartime.

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<sup>571</sup> Gildea, pp. 170-171.

<sup>572</sup> Sarah Fishman, *The Battle for Children: World War II, Youth Crime, and Juvenile Justice in Twentieth-Century France* (London: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 107.

## *L'insigne des Juifs*

In their pioneering study on *Vichy France and the Jews*, Robert Paxton and Michael Marrus note that

In the 1930s, under the Third Republic, tolerant and cosmopolitan France had been a haven for thousands of refugees, many of them Jewish, who fled from Germany and eastern Europe, from fascist Italy, and from the battleground of the Spanish civil war.<sup>573</sup>

After all, as André Kaspi notes, ‘Le pays des Droits de l’Homme a ses traditions et saura les préserver.’<sup>574</sup> However, there was a flaw in this argument as just as France and Germany were known to have had a long history of conflict, France was also renowned for having anti-Semitic tendencies. As Susan Zuccotti<sup>575</sup> notes, anti-Semitism was not specific to World War II France; France had already experienced an increase in anti-Semitism following its defeat by the Germans in the Franco-Prussian War in the early 1870s, and then again following the Dreyfus Affair of 1895. The Stavisky Affair and the Depression in the 1930s only compounded France’s problems and a scapegoat was thus needed: the Jews. However, due to the fact that many Jewish soldiers fought for France in the First World War, it was believed that there was an abatement of anti-Semitism in France in the post-war period. As the young girls who feature in this chapter were mostly born in the 1920s, there is a strong possibility that they only knew French society during the period when Jews were accepted. This would be a possible explanation for Denise Domenach-Lallich’s belief that anti-Semitism was a new concept to France which had been introduced by the Germans:

Les Allemands ont introduit en France l’antisémitisme; je n’avais jamais entendu parler de ça et maintenant tout le monde se met à détester les juifs et à en dire du mal. Rue de la République des gens ont cassé les vitrines de deux magasins juifs.<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>573</sup> Paxton and Marrus, p. xv.

<sup>574</sup> André Kaspi, *Les Juifs pendant l’Occupation* (Paris: Seuil, 1997), p. 98.

<sup>575</sup> Susan Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French and the Jews* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993).

<sup>576</sup> Domenach-Lallich, p. 78.

Although the Germans attempted to isolate and segregate the Jews, both Jewish and Aryan young girls disobeyed orders in order to manifest their opposition to this form of persecution. The Jews were targeted for persecution by both Vichy and the Germans shortly after the Occupation began. However, it was not until mid-1942 that this persecution intensified with the introduction of the *Huitième Ordonnance concernant les mesures contre les Juifs*, which was promulgated by the Germans on 28 May 1942 and came into effect on 7 June 1942.

Article One of the Eighth Ordinance states:

Il est interdit aux personnes juives, à partir de l'âge de 6 ans accomplis, de paraître en public sans porter l'étoile des Juifs. L'étoile des Juifs consiste en une étoile à 6 branches, noire, de la grandeur de la paume, en étoffe jaune, portant en noir l'inscription 'Juif'. Elle doit être portée, cousue solidement, de façon apparente, sur la poitrine, sur le côté gauche du vêtement.<sup>577</sup>

Ousby highlights the perceived need for this emblem: 'The logic behind the imposition of the star was simple: to discriminate against people, let alone persecute them, you first have to be able to identify them.'<sup>578</sup>

The *Archives de la Préfecture de Police* state that on the day the Eighth Ordinance came into effect, thirty-nine people were arrested for breaching its guidelines. According to André Kaspi, Jews living in Paris were in particular danger:

Or, Paris est à la fois le cœur du dispositif allemand en France et le lieu dans lequel souffle avec le plus de force et de violence l'esprit de l'antisémitisme [...] Paris est pour les Juifs la ville de tous les dangers.<sup>579</sup>

Seventeen Jews were arrested for not wearing their insignia, two Jews were arrested for wearing more than one insignia or an insignia with an inscription, seven Aryans were arrested

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<sup>577</sup> APP BA 2436 Rapport du Chef Suprême des SS, et de la Police dans la circonscription du Commandant des Forces Militaires en France à Monsieur le Délégué Général du Gouvernement Français dans les Territoires occupés à Paris, '8ème Ordonnance concernant les mesures contre les Juifs du 28 Mai 1942', 29 May 1942.

<sup>578</sup> Ousby, pp. 183-184.

<sup>579</sup> Kaspi, p. 87.

for wearing the Jewish insignia and thirteen Aryans were arrested for wearing an *insigne fantaisiste*.<sup>580</sup> According to police records, sixty-one people were arrested between 6 and 16 June 1942 for breaching the regulations stipulated by the Eighth Ordinance. Seventeen people were arrested for breaching Article One of the Eighth Ordinance. Eight of these people were female and were aged between nine and forty-four. Five, which amounted to 62.5% of the females arrested for this offence, were aged between ten and thirteen. All five were arrested at 20:40 on 13 June 1942 for ‘se promenant sur la voie publique, après l’heure du couvre-feu, en manteau, l’insigne étant placé sur la robe, sous le manteau.’<sup>581</sup> Although these young girls had not totally disregarded the instructions but had merely adapted them, Serge Klarsfeld refers to another girl who was imprisoned for the ‘crime’ of not wearing the yellow star. Louise Jacobson, a seventeen-year-old *lycéenne* who was studying for her *baccalauréat*, was first sent to Fresnes prison, then Drancy, then Beaune-la-Rolande and then Drancy again. Whilst there she wrote a letter to her friends which took the form of a story which suggests she felt the situation was perhaps surreal and found it difficult to take in what was happening to her. She writes: ‘Mes chères petites camarades, Il était une fois une pauvre petite fille. Je vais vous raconter une histoire triste, mes chères vieilles.’<sup>582</sup> Renée Poznanski notes how children and young people were particularly prone to not wearing the obligatory star: ‘Une minorité seulement choisit d’ignorer la nouvelle obligation faite aux Juifs, des jeunes en règle générale, opposés sur ce point à l’avis de leurs parents, ou certains militants très avertis qui étaient déjà clandestins ou semi-clandestins.’<sup>583</sup> On 25 July 1942, twenty-two-year-old Margot Brecher

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<sup>580</sup> APP BA 2436 ‘Port de l’insigne juif, journée du 7 juin 1942, état numérique des arrestations’, 9 June 1942.

<sup>581</sup> APP BA 2436 Direction de la Police Judiciaire, ‘Application de l’ordonnance du commandant des forces militaires en France concernant le port d’un insigne pour les juifs. Bordereau No. Neuf. Arrestations opérées le 13 Juin 1942 à la disposition de M. le Capitaine Dannecker.’

<sup>582</sup> Serge Klarsfeld, *Adieu les enfants (1942-1944)* (Paris: Mille et une nuits, 2005), p. 130.

<sup>583</sup> Renée Poznanski, *Etre juif en France pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Hachette, 1994), p. 353.



and twenty-year-old Dora Kahama were arrested for failing to wear the Jewish star.<sup>584</sup> Ernst Jünger, a German officer in Paris, found the sight of children and adolescents wearing the Jewish star particularly uncomfortable:

In the Rue Royale I encountered for the first time in my life the yellow star, worn by three young girls who passed close by me, arms linked.... In the afternoon I saw the star far more frequently. I consider that this is a date which will leave a deep mark, at the personal level too. A sight like this cannot but provoke a reaction. I was immediately ashamed to be in uniform.<sup>585</sup>

Ousby concludes that the reason why Jünger found this sight particularly difficult to witness was because it did not comply with the stereotypes and images with which anti-Semitic propaganda had indoctrinated people. He adds: ‘But in the eyes of most adults such children bore so little resemblance to what they thought they feared or hated in Jews that the yellow star looked grotesque on them, even heart-rending.’<sup>586</sup> However, rather than encouraging the Jewish community to ignore the obligation to wear the Jewish Star of David, Jewish organisations such as the *Union générale des israélites de France* encouraged the exact opposite, stating that Jews should ‘porter l’insigne dignement et ostensiblement.’<sup>587</sup> Furthermore, this stance appears to have been viewed in a positive light: ‘Et la tendance générale semble bien avoir été d’arborer avec dignité ce que certains Juifs appelaient leur “décoration”.’<sup>588</sup>

According to Julian Jackson, ‘The events of the summer of 1942 transformed French responses to the plight of the Jews. Already in June 1942, the authorities noted the adverse

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<sup>584</sup> APP BA 2108 ‘Principaux faits signalés dans la soirée du 25 et dans la nuit du 25 au 26 juillet 1942.’

<sup>585</sup> Ernst Jünger cited in Ousby, p. 185.

<sup>586</sup> Ousby, p. 186.

<sup>587</sup> Poznanski, p. 354.

<sup>588</sup> Ibid.

reaction of the Parisian population to the imposition of the yellow star.<sup>589</sup> However, he also states:

Most people affected not to notice the star, a response appreciated by Jews, who feared being the object of ostentatious curiosity. Perhaps what some Jews, desperate for reassurance, interpreted as sympathy was really indifference, but there were also open manifestations of solidarity. Some people even put on stars in sympathy, and were punished by being sent to Drancy.<sup>590</sup>

The Germans were intent on singling out Jews from other sectors of society and therefore the offence of breaching the Eighth Ordinance was not taken lightly. A note dated 6 June 1942 which was to be distributed amongst the Parisian Police states: ‘Les autorités occupantes ont décidé de ne tolérer aucune manifestation ou démonstration de quelque nature qu’elle soit en faveur des Juifs.’<sup>591</sup> The police were given the following guidelines about how to treat any person found to have breached this instruction:

Vous procéderez à l’arrestation de toute personne juive ou aryenne qui par son attitude aura manifesté son hostilité au port de l’insigne. Vous ferez de même, d’une part à l’égard des non juifs qui porterait l’étoile ou un insigne, qui par sa forme et sa couleur en serait une imitation et d’autre part, à l’égard des juifs qui se promèneraient en groupe portant ostensiblement leur insigne.<sup>592</sup>

However, just as Jews had been instructed to wear their stars with pride, the same attitude was adopted by non-Jews, with the effect that ‘Une élégance soignée, un port digne devaient mettre en évidence l’échec des Allemands dans leur entreprise d’humiliation des Juifs.’<sup>593</sup>

Ten Aryans were arrested for wearing the standard Jewish insignia, of which seven were female and aged between nineteen and thirty. Four, or 57.1% of the total number of females arrested for this offence were aged between nineteen and twenty-two. In his book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige discusses the use of style as a means of intentional

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<sup>589</sup> Jackson, p. 375.

<sup>590</sup> Ibid.

<sup>591</sup> APP BA 2436 Note dated 6 June 1942.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid.

<sup>593</sup> Poznanski, p. 354.

communication. He states: ‘the conventional outfits worn by the average man and woman in the street are chosen within the constraints of finance, “taste”, preference, etc. and these choices are undoubtedly significant.’<sup>594</sup> He adds: ‘Ultimately, if nothing else, they are expressive of “normality” as opposed to “deviance” (i.e. they are distinguished by their relative invisibility, their appropriateness, their “naturalness”).’<sup>595</sup> However, forcing Jews to wear this identifying feature meant that the aspect of choice was taken away from them, whilst rendering them visible. At the same time some Jews positively assumed this choice in order to defy the Germans in a different way. Whilst the Germans wanted to single out the Jewish community as being different, some Jews embraced the fact that they were different and chose to wear the star with pride. Others refused to wear the star, therefore rejecting the Germans’ power and authority and taking back the option of choice. Similarly, although the Germans were trying to segregate the population into Jewish and non-Jewish categories, some Aryans refuted these distinctions and exercised their option of choice by electing to wear the Jewish insignia as a means of protest thus blurring the boundaries between the two communities once again. In this case, Aryans used clothing as a form of commitment, which could also be said about the Cross of Lorraine as mentioned previously in this chapter. At 14:30 on 7 June 1942, Madeleine Bonnaire, a twenty-two-year-old *artiste-peintre*, was arrested at the corner of the *Boulevard Saint-Germain* and the *Boulevard Saint-Michel* for being an ‘aryenne, portant indûment sur son marteau l’insigne juif.’<sup>596</sup> Furthermore, the young girl persisted with her act of resistance as ‘en cours de route au carrefour de l’odéon Mme Bonnaire s’est précipitée devant un groupe d’une dizaine de soldats allemands leur faisant un

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<sup>594</sup> Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the meaning of style* (London and New York: Routledge, 1979), p. 101.

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>596</sup> APP BA 2436 Direction de la Police Judiciaire, ‘Application de l’ordonnance du commandant des forces militaires en France concernant le port d’un insigne par les juifs. Bordereau No. Trois. Arrestations opérées le 7 Juin 1942 à la disposition de M. le Capitaine DANNECKER.’

pied de nez.<sup>597</sup> At 19:35 on 7 June 1942, Paulette Pecoil, a twenty-one-year-old *auxiliaire aux P.T.T.*, was arrested for being an ‘aryenne portait indûment un insigne juif qui lui avait été donné par un inconnu.’<sup>598</sup> Paulette admitted that she knew what she was doing as she stated: ‘J’ai arboré cet insigne sur ma poitrine cet après-midi et je me suis promenée avec Bd Saint Michel. C’est alors que j’ai été arrêté. J’ai agi seule. Je n’ai obéi à aucun mot d’ordre. J’ignorais que c’était défendu.’<sup>599</sup> On 8 June 1942, Renée Mignaud, a nineteen-year-old *écolière*, was arrested along with a thirty-year-old woman, for ‘port illégal insigne juif’.<sup>600</sup> Also on 8 June 1942, Joséphe Cardin, a nineteen-year-old *étudiante au Collège Sévigné*, was arrested on the *Boulevard Saint-Michel* for being an ‘aryenne, portant un insigne juif qui lui a été donné par une camarade dont elle a refusé d’indiquer l’identité et portant à la ceinture huit petites étoiles sur chacune desquelles figurait une lettre du mot “VICTOIRE”.’<sup>601</sup> Another report states that she knowingly disobeyed the Eighth ordinance as it states ‘Elle dit avoir porté l’insigne et les huit petits étoiles pour protester contre le port de l’étoile juive. Elle déclare n’avoir obéi à aucun mot d’ordre.’<sup>602</sup> When interviewed in 2004, she stated: ‘Ma meilleure amie était juive et ma décision de manifester m’était dictée par la profonde amitié qui me liait à elle, et par extension, à tous ceux qui la touchaient de près ou de loin.’<sup>603</sup> Simone Ambroise, who was twenty in 1942, and her sixteen-year-old brother made yellow stars out of paper which they wore in the street or whilst travelling in the last carriage of the

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<sup>597</sup> APP BA 2436 Note à Monsieur le Directeur sur ‘Port injustifié d’insigne juif et outrage à soldat allemand.’

<sup>598</sup> APP BA 2436 ‘Application de l’ordonnance du commandant des forces militaires en France concernant le port d’un insigne par les juifs. Bordereau No. Trois. Arrestations opérées le 7 Juin 1942 à la disposition de M. le Capitaine DANNECKER.’

<sup>599</sup> APP BA 2436 ‘Rapport du Commissaire de police du Quartier de la Sorbonne à Monsieur le directeur de la Police judiciaire’, 7 June 1942.

<sup>600</sup> APP BA 2436 ‘Note à Monsieur le Directeur.’

<sup>601</sup> APP BA 2436 Direction de la Police Judiciaire, ‘Application de l’ordonnance du commandant des forces militaires en France concernant le port d’un insigne par les juifs. Bordereau No. Quatre. Arrestations opérées le 8 Juin 1942 à la disposition de M. le Capitaine DANNECKER.’

<sup>602</sup> APP BA 2436 Préfecture de Police, ‘Rapport du Commissaire de Police du Quartier de la Sorbonne à Monsieur le Directeur de la Police Judiciaire’, 8 June 1942.

<sup>603</sup> Joséphe Cardin cited in Cédric Gruat and Cécile Leblanc, *Amis des Juifs: Les résistants aux étoiles* (Paris: Tirésias, 2005), pp. 193-194.

metro, the only compartment in which Jews were allowed to travel. She states: ‘Par ce geste, on voulait narguer les Allemands, protester contre l’occupation de notre pays par une armée étrangère. C’était une provocation de notre part.’<sup>604</sup> Just as the young girls we saw earlier in this chapter chose to *narguer les Allemands* by writing pro-Allied slogans in the snow or on desks, Simone chose to express the same emotion but in a more profound and controversial way by actively seeking to provoke a reaction from the Germans. Suzanne Mathieu-Guibretière, who was eighteen in 1942, was a student at the *lycée Victor Duruy* and she wore ‘un œillet jaune dans les rues et le métro de Paris par solidarité pour son amie juive Nicole contrainte de porter un insigne.’<sup>605</sup> In these examples, young girls used the standard yellow star as a means to protest against the Occupation but also to show support for their Jewish friends.

Twenty-seven people were arrested for wearing an *insigne fantaisiste*, the term used by the police reports. This term is significant as Gruat and Leblanc state:

L’expression ‘insigne fantaisiste’ utilisée dans les rapports de l’époque pour qualifier leur geste tend volontairement à minimiser celui-ci, à le réduire à un simple acte enfantin et de dérision. Cette formule réductrice masque une réalité plus complexe, celle d’une transgression symbolique qui s’apparente à une forme de (micro)résistance.<sup>606</sup>

However, one potential reason for this is that the French police authorities did not consider this a serious act of resistance. Furthermore, the young ages of the majority of the culprits implied that these were considered acts of childish rebellion and they therefore wanted to play down the severity of the offence committed. Twelve of these arrests were female and were aged between fifteen and fifty-eight. Eight, or 66.7% of the total number of females arrested for this offence, were aged between fifteen and twenty-two.

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<sup>604</sup> Simone Ambroise cited in Gruat and Leblanc, p. 143.

<sup>605</sup> Suzanne Mathieu-Guibretière cited in Gruat and Leblanc, p. 145.

<sup>606</sup> Gruat and Leblanc, pp. 25-26.

On 7 June 1942 two students Paulette Voisin, aged eighteen, and Françoise Siefridt, aged nineteen, were arrested on the *Boulevard Saint-Michel*. The reports for both girls state the motivation for arrest as being because ‘[c]ette jeune fille portait sur la poitrine côté gauche un insigne fantaisiste qui par la couleur et la forme tournait en dérision l’insigne réglementaire juif.’<sup>607</sup> Another report adds that Paulette was an ‘aryenne portant un insigne fantaisiste en forme d’étoile, avec, au centre, le chiffre 130’ and Françoise an ‘aryenne, portant un insigne fantaisiste en forme d’étoile avec l’inscription “Papou”.’<sup>608</sup> The report comments on Paulette’s attitude, as it says: ‘Interpellée sur le port de cet insigne Melle Voisin déclara: “C’est uniquement pour rire car cela m’amuse”.’<sup>609</sup> However, when interviewed in 2004 Françoise Siefridt stated that both herself and Paulette were living in a *foyer des étudiantes* in which there was a group of communist resisters. It was at their request that the two girls wore the yellow star. Speaking about her own reasons for doing so, Françoise stated that as she was pro-De Gaulle and against Nazism she was prepared to take part in some activities, but nothing too dangerous. Françoise was also a fervent Christian and so wore the star as a way of showing her support for the Jews. However, she does not regard her actions as significant, as she states: ‘Pour ma part, je n’ai rien fait d’extraordinaire, contrairement à ceux qui ont caché ou sauvé des vies humaines. Porter l’étoile, c’était un geste pacifique, bon enfant, symbolique.’<sup>610</sup> She also adds that she never felt hatred towards the German soldiers or the French police. On 7 June 1942, fifteen-year-old Huguette Lecollier was arrested along with a fifteen-year-old boy who was accompanying her, on the *Boulevard Sébastopol* for being an

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<sup>607</sup> APP BA 2436 ‘Rapport à Monsieur le Commissaire Principal du quartier de l’Odéon’, 7 June 1942; ‘Rapport du Brigadier Giorro Pierre et le gardien de la Paix Priore André, no.8720, à Monsieur le Commissaire Principal du quartier’, 7 June 1942.

<sup>608</sup> APP BA 2436 Direction de la Police Judiciaire, ‘Application de l’ordonnance du commandant des forces militaires en France concernant le port d’un insigne par les Juifs. Bordereau No. Deux. Arrestations opérées le 7 Juin 1942.’

<sup>609</sup> APP BA 2436 ‘Rapport à Monsieur le Commissaire Principal du quartier de l’Odéon’, 7 June 1942; ‘Rapport du Brigadier Giorro Pierre et le gardien de la Paix Priore André, no.8720, à Monsieur le Commissaire Principal du quartier’, 7 June 1942.

<sup>610</sup> Gruat and Leblanc, pp. 172-173.

‘[aryenne] portant un insigne juif sur lequel figurait l’inscription “Swing”.’<sup>611</sup> At 16:00 on 7 June 1942, Denise Recouvrot, a twenty-one-year-old *sténo-dactylo*, and Jenny Wiou, a twenty-year-old *sténo-dactylo* were arrested at the crossroads of *Strasbourg-Saint-Denis*, the former for being an ‘aryenne, portait cousu sur côté gauche de son vêtement un insigne blanc en forme d’étoile sur lequel était inscrit le mot “Dany”’ and the latter for being an ‘aryenne – portait, cousu sur côté gauche, un insigne blanc en forme d’étoile sur lequel était écrit son prénom “Jenny”.’<sup>612</sup> At 19:15 on 8 June 1942 Ginette Orien, a seventeen-year-old student, was arrested on the *Boulevard Magenta* ‘pour port d’un insigne juif fantaisiste.’<sup>613</sup> This insignia was described as being ‘en papier de couleur jaune portant l’étoile avec le mot “Swing 135%”, de même dimension que l’insigne racial.’<sup>614</sup> At 12:00 on 9 June 1942, Marie Planeix, a twenty-two-year-old student, was arrested for the following offence: ‘Arrêtée à 11h45, rue gay Lussac/angle boulevard St. Michel sur réquisition d’un gendarme allemand pour port d’un insigne de fantaisie imitant celui imposé par l’armée d’occupation aux juifs.’<sup>615</sup> The report adds: ‘A titre indicatif mentionnions que l’insigne porté par la jeune Planeix, se composait d’une étoile en papier jaune, de cinq centimètres environ avec la mention J.N.R.J. au crayon.’ When questioned she stated: ‘J’ai confectionné l’étoile de David chez moi. Avant de sortir, je l’ai attachée à ma robe. Par ceci je voulais démontrer que Jésus-Christ était le

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<sup>611</sup> APP BA 2436 Direction de la Police Judiciaire, ‘Application de l’ordonnance du commandant des forces militaires en France concernant le port d’un insigne par les juifs. Bordereau No. Trois. Arrestations opérées le 7 Juin 1942 à la disposition de M. le Capitaine Dannecker.’

<sup>612</sup> APP BA 2436 Direction de la Police Judiciaire, ‘Application de l’ordonnance du commandant des forces militaires en France concernant le port d’un insigne par les juifs. Bordereau No. Trois (suite). Arrestations opérées le 7 Juin 1942 à la disposition de M. le Capitaine Dannecker.’

<sup>613</sup> APP BA 2436 Rapport de l’Agent en civil Pignet Charles à Monsieur le Commissaire de Police, ‘Port d’insigne fantaisiste’, 8 June 1942.

<sup>614</sup> APP BA 2436 ‘Application de l’ordonnance du commandant des forces militaires en France concernant le port d’un insigne pour les Juifs Bordereau No. Cinq Arrestation (sic) opérées le 8 Juin 1942 à la disposition de M. le Capitaine DANNECKER’; Rapport de l’agent en civil Pignet Charles à Monsieur le Commissaire de Police, ‘Port d’insigne fantaisiste’, 8 June 1942.

<sup>615</sup> APP BA 2436 Direction de la Police Judiciaire, ‘Rapport du Commissaire de police du Quartier du Val de Grâce à Monsieur le Préfet de Police’, 9 June 1942.

premier juif royal. Je n'ai rien d'autre à ajouter.'<sup>616</sup> On 10 June 1942, Solange de Lipkowski, a seventeen-year-old *élève de l'Ecole Alsacienne*, was arrested for being an 'aryenne – portant deux insignes fantaisie avec inscription – sur le 1<sup>er</sup>: bouddhiste – sur le 2<sup>ème</sup>: budhist.'<sup>617</sup> Another insignia was found in her handbag. Another report reveals how 'Interpellée elle a déclaré qu'elle portait cet insigne pour "s'amuser".'<sup>618</sup> When interviewed in 2004, Solange revealed that she was motivated by the anger she felt when she saw young people of a similar age to herself wearing the yellow star and the shame that she could see in their faces. She states: 'J'ai porté l'étoile pour me moquer des Allemands, pour leur montrer que c'était inepte, pour protester contre cette mesure qu'on savait allemande.'<sup>619</sup> Surprisingly, she says that several German officers saw her wearing the star but did nothing. Although she was initially taken to the *Préfecture de Police* the Germans collected her the following day:

C'était la honte de ma jeunesse, car c'était une voiture découverte qui a remonté les Champs-Élysées pour se rendre avenue Foch, à la Gestapo. J'étais assise derrière, à côté d'un officier allemand. Je me souviens de ma fureur intérieure au cours du trajet: je me disais en effet que les gens qui me voyaient dans cette voiture allaient penser que j'avais fait la bringue toute la nuit avec cet officier allemand, alors que j'avais envie de leur crier que j'étais arrêtée.<sup>620</sup>

This feeling of shame and guilt at being seen in the company of the Germans is remarkably similar to that felt by the young girls who were befriended by the occupiers, as we saw in Chapter Four. As she refused to cooperate when she was questioned by the Germans, they threatened to deport her to Poland (as her name was of Polish origin) which resulted in her exclaiming how ashamed she was that the Germans could do such things. The German then

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<sup>616</sup> Serge Klarsfeld, *L'Etoile des Juifs* (Paris: L'Archipel, 2002), p. 101.

<sup>617</sup> APP BA 2436 Direction de la Police Judiciaire, 'Application de l'ordonnance du commandant des forces militaires en France concernant le port d'un insigne pour les juifs. Bordereau No. Huit. Arrestations opérées les 10 & 11 Juin 1942 à la disposition de M. le Capitaine Dannecker.'

<sup>618</sup> APP BA 2436 Direction de la Police Judiciaire, 'Rapport du Commissaire de Police quartier Notre-Dame-des-Champs à Monsieur le Préfet de Police', 10 June 1942.

<sup>619</sup> Solange de Lipkowski cited in Gruat and Leblanc, pp. 34-35.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid.



appeared to respect her for making a stand, as he responded ‘Vous êtes une gentille fille’<sup>621</sup> and then released her.

The *rectorat de Paris* was so concerned about the arrests of students including Françoise Siefridt who was being held in the *Prison de Tourelles*, Paulette Voisin, who was also in the *Prison de Tourelles* and Marie Planeix who was in the *Prison de la Santé*, that it intervened in their favour. The author of the report expresses his disapproval that they went against his instructions but adds ‘Mais je voudrais éviter d’autre part qu’une sanction par trop sévère à l’égard des coupables ne risquât de provoquer parmi leurs camarades un mouvement de sympathie peu souhaitable et ne manquât ainsi son but essentiel.’<sup>622</sup>

Of course, trying to establish the number of people who showed their sympathy to the Jews in this way is difficult as the archives only record those who were caught in the act. In their study on the *Amis des Juifs*, Cédric Gruat and Cécile Leblanc managed to locate others who protested but who were not caught by the authorities. Suzanne Citron, a twenty-one-year-old Jewish girl, decided to join forces with Micheline and Geneviève Lévy, Jewish twins, and five non-Jewish friends. They met on the corner of the *rue de l’Ecole de Médecine* and the *Boulevard Saint-Michel* and then ‘on s’est donné le bras et on a remonté ensemble le boulevard Saint-Michel jusqu’au Luxembourg, formant une chaîne.’<sup>623</sup> However they were stopped by German soldiers who prevented them from passing. When discussing their reasons for reacting to the implementation of the Jewish star, she states: ‘Ce geste était presque naturel étant donné qu’on était très solidaires, c’était dans le courant des choses qu’on vivait à

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<sup>621</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>622</sup> AN AJ16 7117 ‘Lettre du Secrétaire d’Etat à Cabinet du ministre’, 9 July 1942.

<sup>623</sup> Suzanne Citron cited in Gruat and Leblanc, p. 118.

l'époque, on formait un peu une grande famille, on a marqué notre parenté affective.'<sup>624</sup> Although this was their primary motivation, she adds: 'C'était en même temps assez drôle et culotté d'occuper pendant quelques minutes le boulevard Saint-Michel.'<sup>625</sup> One of their non-Jewish friends was Marie Médard, who was twenty-one in 1942. She states that she had political beliefs in the sense that she supported De Gaulle: 'Porter une étoile était une attitude politique. Cet acte avait une signification. C'était ce qu'il fallait faire.'<sup>626</sup> However whenever the group saw any Germans they immediately removed their stars. She had *Chrétien* on her star as that is what she was. Her feelings about wearing this emblem are revealed in the statement 'Porter l'étoile avait une valeur démonstrative et symbolique. C'était une manifestation non-violente. C'était une participation, certes minime, mais quand même importante.'<sup>627</sup>

Just as these young girls were willing to risk the consequences of their actions in order to show their support for the Jewish community, others were also willing to support their peers. Louise Lubliner was fifteen in 1942 and she recalled how the first time she went to school wearing the yellow star, her friends gathered around her in astonishment. The headteacher visited each class and asked the pupils to show their support which resulted in them all wearing their own star the next day.<sup>628</sup> Similarly in Bordeaux all the girls in one class at the *lycée de filles* wore a yellow star in order to be like their Jewish friend: 'Une classe de jeunes filles de l'EPS allant à la salle d'éducation physique arbore l'étoile à l'entrée, pour défiler aux yeux étonnés de quelques soldats allemands. Des étudiants se promènent arborant l'étoile en

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<sup>624</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>625</sup> Ibid.

<sup>626</sup> Marie Médard cited in Gruat and Leblanc, p. 124.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>628</sup> Gruat and Leblanc, p. 67.

collier.<sup>629</sup> The headteacher of a *lycée de Jeunes Filles* in Niort also reported how ‘Trois élèves non-juives ont arboré un insigne analogue fait par elles.’ After being spotted, the girls handed over their stars and promised not to wear them again either within or outside of school grounds.<sup>630</sup>

From the examples provided above, we can see that young girls were sufficiently affected by the introduction of the yellow star that they either avoided being seen wearing it if they were Jewish or they actively sought to show their support for the Jewish community by breaking the regulations and wearing fake stars. Rather than the anti-Semitic regulations persuading people to ostracize the Jewish community, they actually had the opposite effect as young girls both sympathised and empathised with them. However, the police statements detailed above suggest that there was also an element of defiance, rebellion even, in young girls’ decision to wear the star and they potentially did so in order to provoke a reaction. Cédric Gruat and Cécile Leblanc state: ‘porter l’étoile fut aussi un acte contre l’occupant, contre sa présence en France, contre ses pratiques, contre son idéologie.’<sup>631</sup> Although the young girls did not express their true feelings to the police during questioning, as this was potentially too dangerous for them at the time and they did not want to attract attention to their Jewish friends, their justification for wearing this symbol appears to have been out of loyalty and respect to their peers.

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<sup>629</sup> Claude Singer, *Vichy, l’Université et les Juifs* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1996), p. 372.

<sup>630</sup> Jean-Marie Pouplain, ‘Les chemins de la honte. Itinéraire d’une persécution. Deux-Sèvres, 1940-1944’ cited in Gruat and Leblanc, p. 158.

<sup>631</sup> Gruat and Leblanc, p. 16.

## Conclusion

We can therefore see that young girls of different social classes sought to oppose the Occupation and the Germans to varying extents throughout the war. However it should be noted that a considerable number were students at different stages of their education, which meant that they perhaps had more time available than those in employment. On the smallest scale, younger girls were content to express their feelings by means of writing slogans in dust, on tabletops or by participating in the 'V' Campaign. Older girls however confronted the cause of their discontent and actively sought to antagonize the Germans, either by insulting the occupiers on a face-to-face basis or from within the anonymous confines of the cinema. Girls of all ages took part in protests which used commemorative events as a means to show their opposition to the Occupation and their support for the Republic. The wearing of patriotic colours, the singing of the *Marseillaise* and the prevalence of the French flag during protests was a means for young people to retain an element of their French identity which the Germans were continuously fighting to suppress. The wearing of insignias such as the Cross of Lorraine was also evidence of this quest to preserve French identity and to combat restrictions. It was also a means for young girls to maintain links to other family members as well as to those lost parts of France such as Alsace-Lorraine. Although the Jewish Star was meant to segregate and isolate the Jews, young girls showed that they were prepared to run the risk of antagonizing the Germans in order to support their Jewish friends. Although all the girls in this chapter who protested did so on an individual basis, and we are only talking about a very small percentage given the population of France, their acts provide a significant insight into the mentality of some young girls at this time.

Few studies exist which use the Police Archives as they have only become accessible in recent years. This means the examples in this chapter have not previously been examined. Furthermore, these sources provide an insight into the scale and background of the girls involved but most importantly the ways in which the culprits sought to justify their actions at the time. The themes of this chapter also build on the existing research of scholars such as Danielle Tartakowsky's *Le pouvoir est dans la rue: Crises politiques et manifestations en France* and *Les manifestations de rue en France 1918-1968*, and Sarah Fishman's *The Battle for Children: World War II, Youth Crime, and Juvenile Justice in Twentieth-Century France*. My research does this by incorporating the protests carried out by one particular category of people and widening the scope of what actually constitutes juvenile delinquency respectively. Furthermore, the concept of using fashion as a means of resistance is specific to this category of people and contributes to existing research on fashion such as Dominique Veillon's *La mode sous l'Occupation*. It also extends Sophie B. Roberts findings on the yellow star being a form of dissidence in her article on the yellow star protest in June 1942 by showing that other symbols were used by young girls in a similar way and also provides their reasons for doing so.

## CHAPTER SIX

### YOUNG GIRLS IN THE ORGANISED RESISTANCE

In the previous chapter we saw how young girls sought to *narguer les Allemands* and portray an anti-German/pro-French viewpoint on an individual basis. These girls were manifesting their own private, personal, singular viewpoints in the public domain and their actions were noticeable because others felt the same and carried out similar, spontaneous acts. However not all young girls were content to merely show their opposition to the Germans; they wanted to locate and work together with other like-minded individuals who had a specific long-term aim in mind – to liberate France. The role and actions of the French Resistance has been well documented in the post-World War II period, particularly by historians such as Rod Kedward and Dominique Veillon. Similarly the role of women in the Resistance has been the focus of numerous studies such as those carried out by Paula Schwartz, Margaret Collins Weitz and Margaret Rossiter, but these volumes often neglect to mention the ages of the women involved and rarely devote much space to the experiences of young girls in the Resistance. More recent studies have focused on the role of young people within Resistance groups but the majority of the experiences are recounted by men with only one or two women being consulted. It is the experiences of these young girls that this chapter will consider. It will begin by looking at the significance of youth and gender in the context of the Resistance before detailing the role of *propagandistes* and *agentes de liaison*. This chapter therefore argues that although the organised Resistance recognised that there were undoubtedly advantages to using women to carry out their tasks, combining youth with gender could be even more advantageous. It therefore asks the question, why use young girls for resistance activities and what was specific about their experience?

## Youth

Philippe Chapleau emphasises the specificity of World War II and in particular how it was a turning point in terms of those categories of people who participated in the war:

Dans l'histoire militaire mondiale, la guerre de 1939-1945 constitue, à au moins un titre, une rupture: pour la première fois, de très nombreux jeunes garçons et jeunes filles ont pris part aux combats. La guerre n'était plus la prérogative des adultes [...].<sup>632</sup>

Furthermore, Jean-Pierre Azéma states: 'Comme dans tous les pays de l'Europe occupée, des femmes et des hommes ont choisi, par patriotisme et/ou pour des motifs idéologiques (la défense de la République ou la croisade antifasciste) d'agir contre l'occupant allemand et nazi.'<sup>633</sup> However, the fact that young people chose to adopt this stance is significant.

Christiane Peugeot's statement illustrates why the choice by young people to participate in the Resistance is important:

Comme la plupart des individus de notre âge et, je dois le reconnaître, plus particulièrement les filles, nous ne semblons voir les effets de cette guerre immense et meurtrière que sur notre propre vie et notre entourage géographique et familial immédiat.<sup>634</sup>

Kedward also emphasises that '[m]ost French people reacted to the hopelessness of the situation by keeping to their daily lives, grudgingly coming to terms with the occupation, harbouring increasing resentment towards the Germans but leaving the war to those who were obviously still involved.'<sup>635</sup> Young resisters went against this trend in order to put the future of others before themselves. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, youth became a discreet age group in the immediate post-World War II period as advertisers recognised that

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<sup>632</sup> Chapleau, p. 5.

<sup>633</sup> Jean-Pierre Azéma, 'Des résistances à la Résistance', in *La France des années noires Vol. 2 De l'Occupation à la Libération*, eds. Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida (Paris: Seuil, 2000), p. 277.

<sup>634</sup> Peugeot, p. 13.

<sup>635</sup> Kedward, p. 47.

young people possessed specific qualities such as their enthusiasm and determination.<sup>636</sup> In some cases the mere fact of being young provided enough of an incentive to become involved in the Resistance. Madeleine Riffaud endorses this fact as she states: ‘J’avais dix-huit ans en 1942. J’appartiens à une ethnie minoritaire, celle des garçons et des filles qui avaient juste vingt ans le jour de la libération de Paris [...]’<sup>637</sup>

A distinguishing feature of young people is the fact that they are prepared to fight for a cause in which they believe: ‘Le refus de l’inacceptable est un sentiment particulièrement développé chez la jeunesse et une richesse considérable pour un pays.’<sup>638</sup> However, being passionate about a cause is often inextricably linked to the fact that young people are less aware of the dangers involved than adults, as mentioned in Chapter Three and Chapter Four. Madeleine Riffaud describes the characteristics which she considered were the fundamental features of young people in the Resistance: ‘Nous étions volontaires, nous savions ce que nous risquions, nous n’attendions aucune récompense. Nous n’avions que notre colère, notre pureté, notre amour. Cette lumière est à jamais irrécupérable.’<sup>639</sup> However, whereas Madeleine emphasises how strength of character and a decisive outlook were positive attributes, Denise Domenach-Lallich recognises that this impulsiveness and single-mindedness could have been fatal: ‘je crois qu’à 18 ans la vie n’a pas le prix qu’on lui accorde plus tard, peut-être parce qu’on se croit un peu immortel.’<sup>640</sup> Marie-Thérèse Vincent’s testimony supports this view as in an article entitled *Jeunes filles sans uniformes* which appeared shortly after the Liberation of Paris she states: ‘Aujourd’hui, je viens de passer mon bachot, que j’avais un peu délaissé pour

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<sup>636</sup> Savage, p. xv.

<sup>637</sup> Riffaud, p. 11.

<sup>638</sup> Thibault, p. 4.

<sup>639</sup> Ibid.

<sup>640</sup> Domenach-Lallich, p. 36.



le maquis et, en quatre ans, c'est bien la première fois que j'ai eu la frousse.'<sup>641</sup> It is only when looking back at the tasks they carried out that they recognised the dangers that they willingly put themselves in.

One of the principal reasons why girls were attracted to the Resistance was due to the sense of freedom that it accorded. It is generally believed that young people grow up quicker during wartime due to the unusual and difficult circumstances. The historian Margaret Collins Weitz supports this argument as she contrasts the prewar years with the war years: 'In prewar France, girls and young women were generally not granted much independence. They could not leave for destinations unknown, to sleep they knew not where, for an undetermined length of time.'<sup>642</sup> In a patriarchal society, girls were very restricted as to the roles and activities which they could undertake without prior permission. To a certain degree this all changed during the war years as circumstances outweighed tradition:

However, in wartime France – with many families separated because the father was a POW or perhaps in hiding, and young girls obliged to take jobs earlier than usual because of pressing financial needs – the traditional social conventions no longer prevailed. Now young women often were accorded freedom that would have been unacceptable prior to the war.<sup>643</sup>

In some cases girls could make their own decisions for the first time in their lives as the dominant force within their family was no longer present. Hanna Diamond suggests another explanation for why young people became involved in the Resistance:

Often younger people, who were less afraid, talked amongst themselves more openly about what was happening. Students, for example, were a particularly important group of young people who could be more easily drawn into Resistance. Class and education therefore also played an important role here.<sup>644</sup>

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<sup>641</sup> AN 72AJ 61 Marie-Thérèse Vincent cited in *Paris aux liens*, undated.

<sup>642</sup> Weitz, p. 109.

<sup>643</sup> Ibid.

<sup>644</sup> Hanna Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France, 1939-1948: Choices and Constraints*, (London: Longman, 1999), p. 115.

Girls and young women often chose to join the Resistance as a means of focusing their anger, and channelling their emotions into constructive behaviour. As Lydie Salvayre states: ‘Leur engagement s’imposa avec la même force, la même imprudence, la même sauvagerie que celles avec lesquelles l’amour s’impose aux amants.’<sup>645</sup> We saw in Chapter Three how the sight of the Germans on French soil had a powerful effect on young girls, instilling in them a sense of fear and arousing patriotism at a time when French national identity was seriously threatened. This was the case for Marie-Thérèse Le Calvez, who was sixteen in August 1940 and lived in Plouha (Côtes-du-Nord). Her father was in the Merchant Navy and she had five brothers. The disappearance of her brother Georges, to whom she was closest, was a contributory factor in her decision to take action. After going to join De Gaulle, he had disappeared during a mission to bomb Koufra. She states: ‘C’est sa disparition héroïque en 1941 qui a marqué ma volonté de le venger.’<sup>646</sup> The situation surrounding other family members also influenced her choice: ‘Dès le début de la guerre, j’ai eu la douleur de perdre mon père, et je suis certaine que sa fin a été hâtée par les revers de nos armées laissant prévoir la catastrophe qui nous menaçait.’<sup>647</sup> The deaths of all her other brothers made her determined to fight to free France. Marie-Thérèse also cites De Gaulle’s speech on 18 June 1940 as a factor which inspired her to resist the German occupation:

Le 18 juin 1940, serrée contre maman et pleurant avec elle, en écoutant l’appel du général de Gaulle à la radio, nous nous étions juré de combattre pour notre liberté, et la nouvelle de la disparition de mon frère ne put que renforcer notre décision.<sup>648</sup>

Simone Dauvé, who was twenty in 1940, recalled how she was ‘vivement impressionnée par les sonneries de cloches des vainqueurs à leur arrivée dans le village’ and that this was a

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<sup>645</sup> *Femmes dans la guerre, 1940-1945*, ed. Lydie Salvayre (Paris: Le Félin, 2003), p. 10.

<sup>646</sup> Le Trividic, p. 19.

<sup>647</sup> Ibid.

<sup>648</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

contributing factor to her desire to resist.<sup>649</sup> Furthermore, ‘L’appel de De GAULLE n’a pas été une surprise pour le patriotisme de S. Dauvé qui affirme avoir reçu une forte empreinte de son institutrice à l’école primaire.’ De Gaulle’s speech was also a motivating factor in young girls choosing to participate in the Armistice Day protest of 1940 as we saw in Chapter Five.

Although the Occupation undoubtedly had a negative effect on France and French public opinion, young girls recognised that the Resistance could counter this negativity. Their young ages meant that they had a single-mindedness and a determination to follow their instincts which were telling them that they did not have to passively accept what was happening. Just as we saw in Chapter Two how the exodus afforded new opportunities to young girls, to a certain extent so did the Resistance. They were able to take decisive action to help a cause in which they believed and were able to take control of their own lives, possibly for the first time. The testimonies discussed suggest that young girls were focused on the present and were not looking too far ahead into the future and thus did not fully appreciate the risks that they were running. Whereas some adults would have been gripped by fear at the prospect of concrete action, young girls embraced the novelty of the situation.

## **Gender**

One of the key roles performed by young female resisters at this time was that of an *agente de liaison*. Although young men could and did also carry out this role, there were numerous reasons as to why it was not practical or sometimes feasible for them to do so. For example, France was already experiencing a shortage of males due to the sheer number who were killed during the First World War, the low birth rate in the Interwar period, and the number of men

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<sup>649</sup> AN 72AJ 164 ‘Témoignage de Simone DAUVE de Courcelles s/Aujon’, March 1947.

who had been taken as prisoners of war. With the introduction of the *Relève* scheme, where for every worker who ‘volunteered’ to go to work in Germany, three prisoners of war would be released, and later the *Service du Travail Obligatoire* which required all men over the age of eighteen to go to work in Germany, it was in the interests of young men not to draw any unnecessary attention to themselves and to keep a low profile. Women were thus less likely to arouse the suspicion of the Nazis. Furthermore, the work involved in the role of an *agente de liaison* often conformed to gender stereotypes and therefore went unnoticed: the occupiers expected to see females running errands on a daily basis.

Girls and young women were often used as *agentes de liaison* because they had certain advantages; they were young enough to not be married or have families and did not have any of the constraints that came with being a part of adult life. They had the freedom to come and go, without having to think about the effects that their clandestine life would have on their children. Another advantage was the image of young girls; their youthful appearance gave the impression of innocence and naivety which was less likely to attract the attention of the Nazis in a negative way:

Les très jeunes agents – ou agentes – de liaison attiraient, semble-t-il, moins l’attention des Allemands qui les prenaient – quand ils – ou elles – portaient un cartable ou une serviette analogues à celles des écoliers ou des étudiants – pour des étudiants ou lycéens ou des lycéennes.<sup>650</sup>

However, this proved to be a double-edged sword. Dominique Veillon reveals how fashion enabled the authorities to identify some members of the Resistance. For example, due to wartime restrictions a ban was placed on the manufacture of large leather bags in 1941 which resulted in them being less prevalent in French society. But more importantly,

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<sup>650</sup> AN 397AP 12 Marie Granet, *Le rôle des femmes dans la Résistance*, unpublished manuscript.

Le revers de la médaille est qu'il devient soudain facile d'identifier la ou les propriétaires – et plus tard, quelques jeunes filles ont cruellement appris, à leurs dépens, qu'en ces temps où l'ennemi était roi et où la délation triomphait, elles pouvaient être repérées à cause de leur sac, puis trahies lorsque celui-ci servait au transport de journaux résistants.<sup>651</sup>

In contrast to this, Marie Granet cites an example when a young girl carrying one of these bags provided enough of a distraction to prevent a prominent member of the Resistance from being discovered. 'Un jour, Prieu-Valleau, qui jouait un rôle important à "Libération-Nord", sortit avec sa secrétaire Madeleine Perrier, une très jeune fille, toute petite et menue, qui avait l'air d'une fillette et que, pour cette raison, on avait surnommé "Bouchon"!'<sup>652</sup> They took the metro together and were faced with a German checkpoint, where it was standard practice to search bags and verify identity papers. This could have been dangerous, especially for Prieu-Valleau who was carrying a briefcase containing incriminating documents. However, for Prieu-Valleau, the youthful, innocent appearance of his companion, along with her quick thinking, was enough to save his life:

Bouchon n'hésite pas: elle saisit vivement la serviette de son chef de mouvement et passe, l'ait (sic) innocent, le barrage. Les policiers regardent nonchalamment les papiers, mais ne demandent pas d'ouvrir la serviette: cette fillette est évidemment une écolière. Prieu-Valleau fut ainsi sauvé.<sup>653</sup>

Dominique Veillon described how some girls would even take the tactic of diversion one step further by using their feminine charms to their advantage. This could mean accepting the advances of a German officer, who would offer to carry their belongings through a checkpoint on the agreement that they could meet at a later date. Of course, the girls had no intention of keeping to their side of the agreement – it was simply a way to avoid detection.<sup>654</sup> Avoiding detection, however, was based on one fundamental principle:

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<sup>651</sup> Veillon, *La mode sous l'Occupation*, p. 93.

<sup>652</sup> AN 397AP 12 Marie Granet, *Le rôle des femmes dans la Résistance*, unpublished manuscript.

<sup>653</sup> Ibid.

<sup>654</sup> Veillon, *Vivre et survivre en France*, p. 254.

Another factor that helped was the stereotyped view of *la Française* held by the enemy – at least in the early days of the war. Attractive young women seldom were suspected of working in the underground, sometimes even after being caught *en flagrant délit*.<sup>655</sup>

It was not just *agentes de liaison*, however, who could use their appearance to their advantage. ‘Jennie (Rousseau) de Clarens worked in a French company dealing with German firms building the V-1 rockets. With her braid and innocent appearance, no one suspected the nineteen-year-old of gathering intelligence.’<sup>656</sup> In order to conform to this stereotypical image, Maroussia Naïtchenko adopted a more feminine persona to carry out one of her missions. In order to do this she decided to buy some new feminine clothes so as not to arouse suspicion, but the shop assistant thought she was pregnant. She explains: ‘Je portais une très légère gaine élastique sous mes vêtements à laquelle j’avais cousu une large poche pour transporter des documents. C’étaient ceux-ci qui lui faisaient croire que j’étais enceinte!’<sup>657</sup> In these examples, it was the combination of youth and gender which led to young girls being used by the Resistance.

There was also a negative side to using young girls as *agentes de liaison*. One such problem is highlighted by Maroussia Naïtchenko:

Gisèle et sa sœur Nicole venaient d’être recrutées sur l’Inter qui avait bien des difficultés à trouver des agents de liaison. Les familles de sympathisants et même de militants ne laissaient pas leurs jeunes filles vagabonder sans surveillance au milieu des hommes.<sup>658</sup>

Whereas adults could make their own choices about whose company they frequented, some young girls were still subject to the authority of their parents. In some cases, families would disapprove of their daughters joining the Resistance, not only because of the danger in which

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<sup>655</sup> Weitz, p. 247.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid.

<sup>657</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 335.

<sup>658</sup> Ibid., p. 344.

they put their own life, not to mention those of their families, but also because some parents did not want their daughters mixing with, sometimes older, men without supervision. Some families believed that the Resistance was a promiscuous environment of which they did not want their daughters to be a part.

Elisabeth Sevier believed that male resisters did not have a problem with young women and girls being in the Resistance and that most men did not try to take advantage of the situation by abusing the trust of the often young females. She could recall only one incident when one of her colleagues tried to take advantage of her. The doctor in question had been drinking and followed her to her room before trying to force himself on her. Although she managed to escape before anything happened, she found out that he had been informing their colleagues that they were lovers for quite some time. Although she eventually managed to persuade them that this was untrue, they were initially reluctant to believe her version of events. With the exception of this incident, Elisabeth believes that the men tried to look after the young women as much as possible and make them feel at ease:

Most of the men were very protective of the women, especially the young girls, and treated us like ‘little sisters’ or like their own daughters. Sometimes the younger men, like Alex, teased and called us ‘baby,’ ‘sexy,’ or something similar. But we were not offended, because we trusted them. We knew they were just having fun, so in truth, we enjoyed their little games.<sup>659</sup>

Maroussia Naïtchenko supports the view put forward by Elisabeth Sevier, as she says that some of the men took on a paternal role towards the young girls. In referring to her own *responsable*, Charles, she states: ‘Il se conduisait un peu comme un père vis-à-vis de moi, le père que je n’avais jamais eu! Nous nous entendions très bien, notre estime était

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<sup>659</sup> Sevier, p. 63.

réciproque.<sup>660</sup> However, she also reveals how some men enforced the concept of hierarchy within resistance groups, which could prove problematic. 'Les relations des agents de liaison avec leurs responsables n'allaient pas toujours de soi, ces derniers se montrant parfois autoritaires et exigeants.'<sup>661</sup> Marie-Thérèse Le Calvez was of the opinion that some young girls were inspired by their *responsables* to such an extent that they were almost in awe of them. Referring to Léon Dumais, a Canadian who became the head of the Shelburn network during December 1943, she recalled how his voice made up for the fact that he was of small build and that she took what he had to say very seriously.

Toutes ses paroles se gravaient en moi comme les prières que les mères apprennent à leurs enfants, afin qu'ils les répètent plus tard, au moment du danger et de l'épreuve. Mais, pour l'instant, elles résonnaient comme le clairon de Déroulède entraînant les soldats au combat.<sup>662</sup>

These examples demonstrate the need to maintain clear boundaries at all times to avoid confusion. The fact that these girls refer to feeling protected by older males is significant, as it is possible those girls whose fathers or brothers had been taken prisoner or been killed, viewed their male work colleagues as helping to fill the void left by their absent relative.

Teenagers of all ages were often involved with liaison work, especially where the *maquis* were concerned. Due to the fact that the *maquis* were by nature based in woodland far away from towns and cities, it was sometimes necessary for these girls to spend prolonged periods in the hills with unfamiliar men whom they had no option but to trust would do the right thing by them:

A camaraderie comparable to camping and Scout life prevailed among the *maquis*. Rita Thalmann recounts how girls as young as thirteen and fourteen supplied *maquis* units. When they had to stay

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<sup>660</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 336.

<sup>661</sup> Ibid.

<sup>662</sup> Le Trividic, p. 21.



overnight, they slept on the straw with the men – sometimes as the only female there. In the instances she mentioned, the young girls were not ‘bothered’.<sup>663</sup>

Naturally this sort of behaviour was not encouraged but these were unusual circumstances. ‘While liaisons were discouraged in the movements and networks – they seriously compromised activities and sometimes led to betrayals – human emotions could not be repressed completely.’<sup>664</sup> These examples suggest that young girls did not feel threatened by sleeping in a mixed-sex environment with older men. They felt safe and secure and a mutual trust was evident between the different members. They also suggest that in spite of the age differences, they were more like a peer group who were united in their common beliefs.

Maroussia Naïtchenko believes that neither the Resistance environment nor the Communist Party encouraged relationships between its members. ‘A ma connaissance, l’intimité constante de nos couples n’engendrait pas de liaisons plus intimes entre eux, et des relations sexuelles auraient été très mal jugées par le Parti. La morale communiste était extrêmement puritaine sur ce point.’<sup>665</sup> In fact, she can recall only one *agente de liaison* who became involved with her *responsable*. ‘C’est celui de Maurice Le Dréan (colonel Réaux) et de son amie Annick, qui eut plus tard un enfant de lui.’<sup>666</sup> Annie Kriegel was a member of the Jewish Young Communist Movement and served as an *agente de liaison* between the FTP in the city of Grenoble and those in the hills. Although only sixteen, she viewed the mixed-sex environment to be a positive aspect of the Resistance. Due to the very nature of the circumstances, life in the *maquis* was tough but it could be alleviated by teamwork. ‘Solidarity at that time, she noted, meant that women would help the men and the men would

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<sup>663</sup> Weitz, p. 290.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid.

<sup>665</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 336.

<sup>666</sup> Ibid.

protect the women.<sup>667</sup> It is only natural that relationships within the Resistance were viewed negatively as this would distract those involved from their duties. However, it is noticeable that although men and women were fighting for a common cause, traditional gender roles were still in evidence. Therefore, although young girls sought independence from their family, some ultimately found themselves fulfilling a similar role to the one they would have done if they were married.

A drawback of using young girls was also connected to their age. ‘Their lack of experience and their eagerness sometimes created problems. In underground work, small errors could be fatal. The Défense de la France movement had a few “scatterbrains” as well as several agents who joined for the salary.’<sup>668</sup> Sometimes, their youth and inexperience led to indiscretion. As many young people wanted to escape the constraints of wartime, and dances had been banned, clandestine balls flourished under the Occupation. According to Gildea, dancing was a very controversial activity during the Occupation, as ‘[t]he Vichy government took the view that France was in mourning after her defeat and that so long as families were deprived of their loved ones in POW camps merry-making was to be banned.’<sup>669</sup> Being caught at one of these social events would have been frowned upon for any young person, but it was especially discouraged for resisters. When Maroussia Naïtchenko was unable to contact a fellow *agente de liaison*, Nicole, she finds out that she is attending a clandestine ball. Naturally, Charles, her resistance leader, is even more displeased. ‘C’est inadmissible qu’un agent de liaison soit assez inconsciente pour se montrer dans un bal où elle se fera repérer comme fille qui n’est pas du pays, donc suspecte.’<sup>670</sup> Not only was Nicole putting her own life in danger but also

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<sup>667</sup> Rossiter, p. 172.

<sup>668</sup> Weitz, p. 289.

<sup>669</sup> Gildea, p. 134.

<sup>670</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 344.

that of every resister that she had ever had contact with. ‘Les bals étaient strictement interdits par les autorités, et des descentes et des arrestations étaient effectuées par la gendarmerie. La présence d’une jeune fille inconnue en ce lieu n’avait pas dû passer inaperçue!’<sup>671</sup> However, as previously discussed in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, young people were at a stage in their lives when they wanted to express their own opinions and push boundaries, which meant they had a tendency to rebel. Therefore, ‘[t]his dancing is first and foremost an expression of youth culture. [...] The Occupation nourished political awakening, but it also stimulated political indifference, escapism and hedonism.’<sup>672</sup> Although a typical trait of young people is often their single-mindedness, young girls in the resistance had a duty to think about others. They needed to find a balance between the continuation of their ‘normal’ life and their clandestine life, without laying themselves open to unnecessary risks.

The evidence presented above suggests that there were numerous advantages to using young girls to carry out resistance activities. Their youth and gender meant that they were less likely to arouse the suspicions of those in charge and attract any unnecessary attention. Their outward appearance implied conformity, innocence and naivety. However, at the same time, they needed to have a maturity beyond their years in order to ensure their own safety and that of their colleagues. Mixed-sex environments were a new concept for many young girls but rather than feeling attracted to older men, they appear to have felt admiration. They embraced this different environment and those they worked with became a sort of surrogate family.

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<sup>671</sup> Ibid.

<sup>672</sup> Gildea, pp. 155-156.

## Propaganda

Acts of resistance evolved and changed as the war progressed. ‘For the first two years of the Occupation, the activities of Resistance groups consisted largely in making contacts, meeting others to maintain morale and share ideas, printing tracts and papers, and laying foundations for future actions when the Allies landed.’<sup>673</sup> The population of the occupied zone had to deal with the constant German presence on a daily basis, as we saw in Chapter Three and Chapter Four. Resistance in the occupied zone was thus focused on undermining the enemy and manifesting an anti-German viewpoint as we saw in Chapter Five. Some activities were common to both zones, however, such as the distribution of clandestine tracts and newspapers. According to Dominique Veillon and Olivier Wieviorka, ‘Le journal, d’une part, en créant un lien entre des individus qui s’ignorent et en manifestant de façon tangible l’existence d’une infrastructure clandestine, facilite les ralliements.’<sup>674</sup>

One of the first, and easiest, ways of becoming involved with the Resistance was by producing or transmitting propaganda. Alary states that ‘[l]es tracts et les journaux clandestins constituent souvent le premier geste et le premier travail résistants.’<sup>675</sup> This could be done either orally or in written form. Madeleine Riffaud emphasises that the Communists were amongst the first people who refused to accept the defeat: ‘Parmi ces jeunes peu enclins à la soumission, malgré la clandestinité dans laquelle avait été relégué le Parti en septembre 1939, passèrent vite à l’action, avec la confection et la distribution de tracts et l’édition du journal *La Relève*.’<sup>676</sup> Maroussia Naïtchenko described the main focus of the clandestine section of *Des Jeunesses communistes* at the beginning of the Occupation in the following way:

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<sup>673</sup> Weitz, p. 62.

<sup>674</sup> Dominique Veillon and Olivier Wieviorka, ‘La résistance’, in Azéma and Bédarida, p. 82.

<sup>675</sup> Alary, Vergez-Chaignon and Gauvin, p. 467.

<sup>676</sup> Riffaud, p. 45.

On nous donna les premières directives sur les actions à mener. C'étaient des inscriptions massives sur les murs, des collages de papillons et l'explication des responsabilités du désastre à fournir tant aux adhérents qu'à la jeunesse déboussolée et sans travail qui se réunissait dans les squares.<sup>677</sup>

Denise Domenach-Lallich was not a communist herself but ended up working alongside them when she attended university. She supports the idea that they were passionate about their cause, even more so than some other resisters:

J'ai travaillé là avec des étudiants appartenant aux *Jeunesses communistes* qui m'ont semblé à cette époque plus enthousiasmants et plus proches de l'Évangile que mes camarades jécistes ou scouts plus timorés, surtout les filles qui craignaient de désobéir à la hiérarchie catholique.<sup>678</sup>

In terms of transmitting propaganda orally, word of mouth was one of the Resistance's most powerful tools. 'Les résistantes, comme les résistants, faisaient tous de la propagande. Tous pouvaient en faire de bien des manières, et, d'abord, de la façon la plus simple, par la parole, par des conversations, avec des parents, des amis, des collègues [...].'<sup>679</sup> The power of rumours has been previously discussed in Chapter Four. Madeleine Riffaud sought to undermine the Occupiers in minor ways on a daily basis by using this means:

Pour Rainer c'était quoi, le 'grand dessein'? Au jour le jour... de petites choses. Exemple: prendre la parole dans les amphithéâtres de la faculté de médecine où elle avait ses entrées, ou bien au marché, où les ménagères faisaient la queue.<sup>680</sup>

She would also shout slogans in the street: 'Il s'agissait de lancer rapidement quelques mots: "Pas un homme pour Hitler, pas un homme pour le STO!" Difficile de ne pas avoir le trac dans de telles conditions. Déjà, simplement parler en public [...].'<sup>681</sup> This sort of activity was

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<sup>677</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 170.

<sup>678</sup> Domenach-Lallich, p. 27.

<sup>679</sup> AN 397AP 12 Marie Granet, *Le rôle des femmes dans la Résistance*, unpublished manuscript.

<sup>680</sup> Riffaud, p. 62.

<sup>681</sup> Ibid.

not without problems. ‘Alors, elle était complètement bloquée et ça faisait rire Sergent, son chef du mouvement qui la regardait du fond de la salle.’<sup>682</sup>

One of the best places to find a captive audience was near shops where women were queuing to buy foodstuffs. Due to rationing and demand greatly exceeding supply, queues were always heavily populated. Maroussia Naïtchenko described how she distributed tracts to people in these queues:

Des lanceurs de tracts à bicyclette furent organisés sur les marchés, le long des queues qui se formaient pour le ravitaillement. La tactique était la suivante: deux jeunes passaient en vélo le long de la queue et lançaient des poignées de tracts, tandis que d’autres jeunes disséminés alentour, et ayant repéré les agents, se mettaient maladroitement sur leur chemin quand ils s’élançaient pour arrêter les cyclistes.<sup>683</sup>

Ruth Kapp Hartz, who was a four-year-old Jewish girl at the start of the Occupation, recalled in her memoirs how her sixteen-year-old cousin Jeannette had been involved with the transmission of propaganda. When Jeannette was unable to collect her cousin from school, Ruth reflected on the reasons for her absence. ‘Peut-être est-elle rentrée tôt aujourd’hui pour aider son petit ami à imprimer des tracts. C’est ce qu’elle fait parfois, mais c’est un secret.’<sup>684</sup> She also recounted the activities in which Jeannette participated. ‘L’ami de Jeannette, ainsi que quelques autres du quartier, ont l’intention de distribuer des tracts dans les boîtes à lettres de l’immeuble et dans le voisinage.’<sup>685</sup>

The archives of the *rectorat de Paris* contain reports of several girls who were found with tracts in their possession. As early as December 1940, one Parisian *lycée* reported anglophile tendencies amongst some of its students: ‘Il existe au lycée Jules Ferry parmi les jeunes filles

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<sup>682</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>683</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 178.

<sup>684</sup> Stacy Cretzmeyer, *Tu t’appelles Renée: Paroles d’une enfant cachée dans la France de Vichy (1940-1944)* (Pennsylvania: Beach Lloyd, 2005), p. 8.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid.

des classes supérieures (préparation au baccalauréat) une cellule où l'on s'occupe activement de propagande.<sup>686</sup> The report adds that they were actively sharing their views with other students: 'Pendant les cours et récréations il y a distribution de tracts où l'on exalte bien entendu la conduite de de Gaulle et la politique anglaise. Par contre Pétain est traité de "vendu" et Laval de "fumier".' Jacqueline N., an *élève de Première A* at the *lycée Molière*, was caught with a tract during a French class. When the tract was found, the young girl claimed to have received it from one of her classmates. Rather than asking Jacqueline to provide her classmate's name, the teacher asked another member of staff to visit the class and request the culprits go to the teacher's office; Cécile H. and Germaine P. came forward. The former claimed to have been given it by a female friend, who did not attend the *lycée Molière*, in the street. The report states 'Elle l'a apporté au lycée, en a parlé à des camarades, et l'a remis à Jacqueline N. sur la demande pressante de celle-ci.'<sup>687</sup> Although three girls were involved in the incident, only one of them was thought to be really guilty: 'La plus coupable des trois paraît être Jacqueline N. qui a demandé avec insistance à ses camarades de lui passer des tracts dont elle désirait prendre la copie.' The girls were suspended from school and Jacqueline was required to move into a different class. Several of the girls mentioned in Chapter Five who were interviewed by the police for wearing a Cross of Lorraine were also found to have propaganda tracts in their possession. Seventeen-year-old Gisèle C. was one of them: 'Dans son sac nous avons trouvé deux tracts: un représentant les photos des Officiers Français dissidents, l'autre: intitulé: "Doryphore", qui est contre l'Armée d'Occupation.'<sup>688</sup> Gisèle claimed that the first tract had been given to her by her father and the second by a female friend at the beginning of the Occupation. Furthermore when the police searched her

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<sup>686</sup> AN AJ16 7117 'Rapport de la directrice du lycée Molière à Monsieur le Recteur', 1 March 1941.

<sup>687</sup> AN AJ16 7117 'Rapport de la Directrice du lycée Molière à Monsieur le Recteur', undated.

<sup>688</sup> APP BA 2095 'Rapport du Commissaire Principal du 6ème Arrondissement à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale', 28 July 1941.

home they found a tract against Italy and the Italian Army. Similarly when twenty-one-year-old Simone R. was taken to the police station, two foreign propaganda tracts were found in her bag. One was against the German Occupation Army and the other focused on the Occupation of France by Italian civilians. When questioned about these tracts being found in her possession, she stated: 'Des amis m'ont donné ces tracts; comme ils me plaisaient, je les ai gardés. Je ne les ai pas reproduits, mais, je les montre à qui veut les voir.'<sup>689</sup> These examples show that some young girls were interested in the content of these tracts either out of curiosity or because they were searching for a means to actively do something to help France even during the early stages of the Occupation.

It was not only locally produced propaganda which entered circulation in Clermont-Ferrand, as some was distributed by air. When British planes dropped packets of resistance tracts, which had been produced by the Free French in London, the destination of the material was dependent on who got to it first:

According to one witness, local schoolchildren who were assigned the task of gathering up these leaflets (for example, the *Courrier de l'Air*) turned over only about one-fourth of their collection to the police or gendarmes, distributing the rest to family, friends, and neighbours in the vicinity.<sup>690</sup>

One of the most effective ways of communicating written propaganda was through clandestine newspapers. However due to wartime constraints, such as paper shortages, it became increasingly difficult to produce these newspapers thus certain measures had to be taken in order to surmount these problems:

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<sup>689</sup> APP BA 2095 'Rapport du Commissaire Principal du 6ème arrondt à Monsieur le Directeur Général de la Police Municipale', 31 July 1941.

<sup>690</sup> Sweets, p. 201.



Jeunes filles et jeunes garçons distribuèrent, en outre, des journaux à leurs camarades de Lycée, de Faculté, de bureau, en leur demandant de les donner, après les avoir lus, à d'autres amis, et, si possible, de les recopier, de les photocopier [...].<sup>691</sup>

Marie-Thérèse Le Calvez was nineteen-years-old when she became involved in the Resistance in 1943. Her first role was to deliver a clandestine newspaper, *Agent de liaison*, for the Shelburn network. She considered this to be a worthwhile activity, especially as it provided her with the vital skills which she would later need when her role was transformed into that of an *agente de liaison* for the same network. 'C'est de cette manière que j'ai appris mon métier de "Sioux", me glissant comme un chat dans la nuit pour porter l'espérance dans des boîtes aux lettres dont je n'étais pas bien certaine des "sentiments".'<sup>692</sup>

Denise Domenach-Lallich first distributed tracts, and then clandestine newspapers:

J'ai baladé comme ça *Franc-Tireur*, *Libération*, *Combat* et plus tard *Témoignage chrétien*. Nous portions ces paquets dans ce que nous appelions une boîte aux lettres et qui pouvait aussi être un magasin ou bien nous devions les livrer à quelqu'un.<sup>693</sup>

For some girls, the role of a *propagandiste* served as an induction for when they later fulfilled the tasks of an *agente de liaison*.

In terms of the distribution of clandestine newspapers, Marie Granet stated how members of the *Défense de la France* movement, which was mainly comprised of university students, would slide them under apartment doors in order to avoid paying the cost of stamps. By delivering them by hand to different areas, they could ensure that their message reached the maximum number of people. Indeed, '[d]es jeunes filles se joignirent souvent aux garçons qui formaient un "corps franc" chargé de transporter de gros paquets de journaux (et souvent des

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<sup>691</sup> AN 397AP 12 Marie Granet, *Le rôle des femmes dans la Résistance*, unpublished manuscript.

<sup>692</sup> Le Trividic, p. 20.

<sup>693</sup> Domenach-Lallich, p. 24.

armes!)<sup>694</sup> Young girls also found other means of distribution which required a great deal of discretion in order to avoid detection. For example:

Les filles participèrent aussi à quelques diffusions spectaculaires: elles lancèrent des numéros à la volée Boulevard St Michel, Boulevard Haussmann...elles les glissèrent dans les sacs ou les paniers des ménagères dans certains marchés, ou dans la main des gens qui sortaient de la messe, à St Pierre de Montrouge, St Pierre de Chaillot, St Christophe de Javel [...].<sup>695</sup>

Odette R. described how she became involved with a clandestine newspaper in 1940 but emphasised how her role had various aspects to it: ‘Je travaillais à Paris au *Gaulliste*, le premier journal de la Résistance Française. Je devais diffuser le journal, recueillir des renseignements militaires et civils, récupérer des fonds, passer des plans.’<sup>696</sup>

It is therefore evident that young girls wanted to channel their negative energy towards the Occupation by doing something productive from the beginning. These examples show that girls were found in possession of tracts at an early stage and the implication is that they had kept them primarily because they agreed with the messages that they contained but also because they felt reassured by the fact that others felt the same. Some of the testimonies suggest that they did not intend to keep the anti-German messages to themselves and were more than happy to share them with any friends who expressed an interest. This was the same for clandestine newspapers. By reproducing and distributing them, young girls sought to target others who felt the same way in the hope that by making contacts, France would be freed from oppression.

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<sup>694</sup> AN 397AP 12 Marie Granet, *Le rôle des femmes dans la Résistance*, unpublished manuscript.

<sup>695</sup> Ibid.

<sup>696</sup> AN 72AJ 61 Odette R. cited in *Paris aux liens*, undated.

## *Agentes de liaison*

Although girls and young women held a variety of roles within Resistance groups, the most common was that of an *agente de liaison*. Maroussia Naïtchenko explains that the precise function and role of an *agente de liaison* was unclear; in fact in some cases it could be entirely dependent on the personality of the resister. ‘Les fonctions d’agents de liaison n’étaient pas précises. Chaque responsable demandait à la sienne plus ou moins, selon son caractère et parfois sur un ton un peu élégant.’<sup>697</sup> Madeleine Riffaud draws attention to the fact that young women were required to fulfill specific duties: ‘Le travail des femmes, des jeunes filles, consistait surtout à faire des liaisons, à transporter les armes [...] Elles étaient les petites mains de la Résistance, celles qui réparaient les filets brisés, qui raccommodaient le tissu clandestin.’<sup>698</sup> Alary, however, describes how those who undertook ‘minor’ roles within the resistance often carried out some of the most important jobs: ‘Parmi ces humbles on compte de petits groupes de “permanents”, toutes les “petites mains” des états-majors, dactylo, radio, agent de liaison, secrétaire, parfois recrutés sur place, parfois envoyés par la France Libre, pour des missions plus ou moins longues.’<sup>699</sup> However the number of young girls who fulfilled this role is particularly difficult to establish. As Margaret Rossiter explains, many of their names will never be discovered: ‘To foil the police, the young women were called only by their first names, instead of being given pseudonyms that would have included them in the membership lists of resistance groups.’<sup>700</sup> There was no shortage of volunteers when it came to filling this role:

According to a French officer assigned to help provide intelligence to American and French units advancing from the south in the fall of 1944, they had no trouble finding women for this hazardous undertaking: ‘We looked for suitable women whom we could use as couriers. It was quite easy to find

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<sup>697</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 340.

<sup>698</sup> Riffaud, p. 56.

<sup>699</sup> Alary, Vergez-Chaignon and Gauvin, p. 468.

<sup>700</sup> Rossiter, p. 122.

several young girls who volunteered to help us.’ None of these ‘young girls’ were identified, even after the war.<sup>701</sup>

Denise Domenach-Lallich is a good example, as although she kept a diary during the period, she did not record her experiences of being a liaison agent in it. This was to protect both her own welfare and that of her family. She does however refer to these experiences in an interview with Christine Mital.<sup>702</sup>

According to Marie Granet, *agentes de liaison* were of vital importance to the Resistance due to the constraints of the period. For example, censorship limited the amount of information which could be transmitted by letter, thus Resistance members needed to find alternative ways of communicating with each other:

La Résistance dut donc créer son propre ‘Service Postal’, avec facteurs et ‘boîtes aux lettres’. Ces ‘facteurs’, on les appelait les ‘agents de liaison’. Ils allaient porter le courrier (dont ils ignoraient le contenu) à des ‘boîtes aux lettres’, c’est-à-dire chez des gens qui acceptaient de recevoir et de garder chez eux des papiers extrêmement compromettants.<sup>703</sup>

Alary summarises the most fundamental aspect of their role as follows: ‘maintenir des communications entre des individus qui, eux, ont généralement fini par plonger dans une complète clandestinité.’<sup>704</sup> However, in some cases young girls also fulfilled the role of *boîtes aux lettres* which put them in just as much danger as those who worked as *agentes de liaison*:

‘Libération-Nord’ avait aussi à sa disposition pour ses réunions des magasins soit tenus par des femmes, soit par des camarades dont les femmes ou les filles ou les employées étaient acquises à la Résistance, comme le magasin du ‘Nouveau-né’ rue des Pyramides (Madame Simon), ou la boutique d’appareils de chirurgie, près de la Sorbonne, où la fille du patron, Lucienne Bonnet, qui n’avait que 17 ans, recevait les membres du Mouvement, les agents de liaison, et qui fut arrêtée, lors d’une terrible râfle (sic) de la police en 1944. Déportée, elle est revenue de déportation.<sup>705</sup>

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<sup>701</sup> Ibid.

<sup>702</sup> Denise Domenach-Lallich and Christine Mital, *Une jeune fille libre: journal (1939-1944)* (Paris: Les Arènes, 2005).

<sup>703</sup> AN 397AP 12 Marie Granet, *Le rôle des femmes dans la Résistance*, unpublished manuscript.

<sup>704</sup> Alary, Vergez-Chaignon and Gauvin, p. 469.

<sup>705</sup> AN 397AP 12 Marie Granet, *Le rôle des femmes dans la Résistance*, unpublished manuscript.

The role of an *agente de liaison* was often dangerous due to the sheer number of people with whom they had contact in the course of transmitting both messages and packages:

Les agents de liaison ne connaissaient pas le ‘contenu’ du courrier, donc pas les secrets du Mouvement, mais ils connaissaient beaucoup de noms et d’adresses, et non seulement les noms et les adresses, mais personnellement plusieurs résistants, ceux pour qui ils travaillaient, ceux chez qui ils allaient porter et chercher les papiers.<sup>706</sup>

Therefore, these *agentes* would be of great use to the Germans as they could attempt to extract as much information as possible from them in the hope of tracing other Resistance members.

In addition to transporting messages between different members of the same resistance group, some *agentes de liaison* had links to the *maquis*, as we have seen. Marie Granet explains how this role could involve maintaining contact between different factions:

Lorsque les maquis s’organisèrent, il fallut des agents de liaison pour assurer le contact entre les maquis et les dirigeants du Mouvement dont ils dépendaient, d’autres agents de liaison entre les maquis d’une part et fermes et les villages qui assuraient leur ravitaillement, et que quelquefois aussi des liaisons entre les divers maquis d’une même région et entre groupes qui dépendaient d’un même chef.<sup>707</sup>

Marie-Thérèse Vincent became involved with the Resistance in March 1944 at the age of eighteen and her role was to liaise with the *maquis de Chartreuse*. She states: ‘J’aidais aux parachutages étant au premier barrage, c’est-à-dire que si les Allemands montaient je devais prévenir les hommes gardant le terrain de parachutage, munie, bien entendu, du mot de passe afin de traverser les autres barrages.’<sup>708</sup> Similarly Odette R. became involved with the *maquis de Chartreuse* in August 1943: ‘J’y suis en rapport avec le maquis de Chartreuse pour l’approvisionner en médicaments (introuvables en principe) en même temps je faisais fonction d’agent de renseignements.’<sup>709</sup>

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<sup>706</sup> Ibid.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

<sup>708</sup> AN 72AJ 61 Marie-Thérèse Vincent cited in *Paris aux liens*, undated.

<sup>709</sup> AN 72AJ 61 Odette R. cited in *Paris aux liens*, undated.

Some young girls started off being an *agente de liaison* for a resistance movement but were then transferred to the *maquis*. This was the case for some members of the *Défense de la France* movement:

Philippe Viannay, par exemple, emmena dans son maquis de Seine-et-Oise un certain nombre des adhérentes actives du Mouvement, surtout des étudiantes, puisque 'Défense de la France' était surtout formé de jeunes. Plusieurs de ces jeunes filles furent chargées de missions extrêmement délicates et périlleuses: ce fut le cas d'Hélène Roederer (qui fut arrêtée et mourut en déportation), de Renée Mottay qui depuis le début de l'occupation, avait joué un rôle actif dans la Résistance.<sup>710</sup>

The girls who performed this role were required to supply the *maquisards* with the basics such as food and clothes, but they could also warn them of any immediate dangers, such as Germans who had arrived in the area. Evelyne Sullerot had links to the *maquis*. When she found out that the Germans had captured some members of her former Resistance network in Paris, she went to inform the *maquis* of what had happened:

There were two other young girls with the *maquis*. We did liaison and tried to find medicine and food; nothing very dangerous. And we waited for parachute drops. Truly, it was like a game – like games we played as Scouts. This was in the area south of Orléans known as the Sologne, where there are forests and many springs.<sup>711</sup>

She goes on to explain what the game actually was. 'First the British planes would shoot off a rocket, then drop containers of arms and munitions by parachute. It was a question of who would get the supplies first – the Germans or us.'<sup>712</sup>

D'autres jeunes filles servirent d'agents de liaison: Geneviève Gayet (alias Germaine) qui n'avait pas 20 ans, et Charlotte Mayaud, qui toutes deux, collaborèrent avec les fondateurs du maquis dès 1942 et continuèrent à les aider jusqu'à la fin.<sup>713</sup>

The reality of being an *agente de liaison* was that it was often an arduous role; the young girls involved had to adopt a completely new, clandestine life:

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<sup>710</sup> AN 397AP 12 Marie Granet, *Le rôle des femmes dans la Résistance*, unpublished manuscript.

<sup>711</sup> Evelyne Sullerot cited in Weitz, p. 134.

<sup>712</sup> Ibid., pp. 134-135.

<sup>713</sup> AN 397AP 12 Marie Granet, *Le rôle des femmes dans la Résistance*, unpublished manuscript.

For the mother of nineteen-year-old Christiane, who became a liaison agent for a *maquis* in the Paris region, her daughter's life was not all that appealing, even though she herself was a *résistante*. Christiane slept without taking her things off, seldom had time to wash, ate at odd hours and in odd places, going about by bike, risking her life at every moment.<sup>714</sup>

Maroussia Naïtchenko also describes the difficulties of a clandestine life: 'Nous menions une vie fatigante, dangereuse. Nous passions nos jours à nous rendre d'une ville à l'autre, en bicyclette mais aussi en train, attendant des heures une correspondance dans ce qui restait d'une gare qui avait été bombardée.'<sup>715</sup> Denise Jacob, a nineteen-year-old Jewish girl, became an *agente de liaison* for Franc-Tireur in Lyon and states how numerous factors contributed to the difficulties of her new life:

Denise was always hungry when she left the table, and black market food was out of the question because it was so expensive. She was lonely because she had no friends in the city, and for security reasons she could not socialize with other agents. She was also very busy making about 12 resistance contacts a day while transporting messages, journals, and other material.<sup>716</sup>

The job could also be physically demanding, as the distances travelled by *agentes de liaison* varied considerably. The most common form of transport amongst resisters was bicycles. However these could only really be used for short distances, such as in and around towns or to visit neighbouring villages. Naturally, resisters avoided using the Parisian metro as much as possible as its passengers were subject to German checkpoints. Marie Granet emphasises that bicycles aroused less suspicion than other forms of transport:

Aussi, tant à Paris que dans toutes les villes et les campagnes, tant de gens circulaient à bicyclette, que les Allemands ne pouvaient les arrêter tous! Faute d'essence, de cars, d'autobus, de voitures particulières, la bicyclette devint la mode de transport indispensable des Français. Se déplacer à bicyclette était un des moyens les plus sûrs de ne pas être inquiété.<sup>717</sup>

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<sup>714</sup> Weitz, p. 78.

<sup>715</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 335.

<sup>716</sup> Rossiter, p. 154.

<sup>717</sup> AN 397AP 12 Marie Granet, *Le rôle des femmes dans la Résistance*, unpublished manuscript.

Thus, bicycles were considered to be the safest and most practical mode of transport, which provided girls with the freedom to move about without being noticed. One girl who took advantage of this was Marie-Jo Chombart de Laüwe:

Seventeen-year-old Marie-Jo Chombart de Laüwe biked about her native Brittany while working for the small escape network her family helped set up to assist aviators and soldiers return to their native England in the summer of 1940.<sup>718</sup>

She made sure that her activities did not arouse suspicion by enrolling in Medical School in Rennes, so that she had a valid reason to travel between the Occupied and Unoccupied zones.

Sometimes, *agentes de liaison* had no alternative but to use public transport to travel long distances. This could be very dangerous as not only did they have to transport incriminating documents, but also, the Germans could inspect their identity documents and search their belongings at any given time. Even worse was the fact that there would be no way for them to escape, as they were travelling on a moving train. In order to minimise the risks, they had to take certain measures:

Quand on emportait des papiers compromettants, il fallait prendre de minutieuses précautions; ne pas s'asseoir dans le compartiment où on avait placé la valise contenant journaux clandestins, papiers, argent..., rester dans le couloir, surveiller les allées et venues des agents de la Gestapo, changer de wagon, et, en cas de danger, descendre à la gare suivante...<sup>719</sup>

However, it was not only the obvious uniformed Germans that one needed to be suspicious of; anyone could be a potential enemy in wartime France. Fellow passengers on a train could easily be Germans dressed in civilian clothes, collaborators, collaborationists, spies or Nazi sympathisers. *Agentes de liaison* thus had to be guarded in who they spoke to and in what they said. The key was to strike a balance:

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<sup>718</sup> Weitz, p. 78.

<sup>719</sup> AN 397AP 12 Marie Granet, *Le rôle des femmes dans la Résistance*, unpublished manuscript.



Il était donc prudent de ne pas trop se mêler aux conversations – inévitables dans le cas de longs parcours (et les trains n'étaient pas rapides!). Pourtant, il ne fallait pas trop attirer l'attention – et la méfiance – des autres voyageurs en restant ostensiblement à l'écart de toute conversation! Il fallait avant tout éviter de parler politique.... Il valait mieux se plaindre du mauvais ravitaillement: on était sûr de n'être contredit par personne!<sup>720</sup>

Although this could be done with strangers, it was far more difficult to avoid conversations if a resister found herself in a confined space with somebody that she knew. In this case, she had to appear completely natural without revealing too much about her own views in case the person she was talking to did not share them.

*Agentes de liaison* faced the added difficulty of having to 'lose' their pre-war identities. This is illustrated by Denise Jacob, who emphasises the importance of having a good memory to carry out this role:

You cannot imagine how much you must develop your memory when you become a liaison agent. To begin with, you have to change your identity all the time. That means different names, different addresses, different false identity cards. If stopped and questioned, you have to remember all the details of your current identity.<sup>721</sup>

Madeleine Riffaud was required to use a pseudonym in order to conceal her real identity. 'Elle devint Sonia. Plus tard, ce fut Rainer. Elle avait lu Rilke, elle aimait les *Elégies de Duino* et choisit de se baptiser du prénom du poète.'<sup>722</sup> Assuming a German name at this time was obviously quite controversial, and she remembers the comments of her friends. "Ce n'est pas possible, dit un copain, c'est un nom allemand." Mais un autre rétorqua: "Ce n'est pas contre le peuple allemand que nous sommes en guerre, c'est contre les nazis." Alors ce fut Rainer.'<sup>723</sup> Denise Domenach-Lallich also assumed a German identity at this time: 'Nous avions chacun un nom de guerre et nous ne connaissons pas nos adresses respectives; au début

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<sup>720</sup> Ibid.

<sup>721</sup> Denise Jacob cited in Weitz, p. 110.

<sup>722</sup> Riffaud, p. 51.

<sup>723</sup> Ibid.

j'avais choisi le nom d'une sirène envoûtante de la littérature allemande *Loreley* chantée par Apollinaire, histoire de leur renvoyer l'ascenseur.'<sup>724</sup> Maroussia Naïtchenko also mentioned the need for *agentes de liaison* to adhere to certain security measures, especially where their identities were concerned:

On m'avait demandé de choisir un prénom qui soit euphoniement aussi celui d'un homme comme René, ou Marcel, précaution utile car, si on parlait d'un ou d'une camarade, une oreille indiscrete ne pouvait savoir s'il s'agissait d'un homme ou d'une femme.<sup>725</sup>

She decided to assume the identity of 'Claude' but adds that it did not take long for her fellow resisters to refer to her affectionately as 'Claudie'. In order to make her new identity more 'official' the young girl acquired new identity papers:

Pour ma part, j'avais de faux papiers procurés par l'Inter. Une femme que je n'ai jamais rencontrée avait accepté de me fournir sa véritable identité pour la fabrication d'une fausse carte. L'avantage pour moi était d'évidence que, si la gendarmerie vérifiait par téléphone si cette personne existait bien à l'adresse indiquée, il lui serait répondu affirmativement.<sup>726</sup>

The process of forgetting some details whilst trying to remember others was complex in itself, but the difficulty was increased if a girl was placed in an unfamiliar town or city. This was the case for Denise Jacob, who had to familiarise herself with Lyon, a city she did not know. 'I had to memorize the plan of the city of Lyon – a city I did not know before – along with all the names of the streets, the bridges, the districts, and other relevant details.'<sup>727</sup> In addition to this, it was vital for *agentes de liaison* to remember their contacts and the details of the messages that they were communicating, especially as the frequency with which they had contact with different members varied considerably. The need to have a good memory is also mentioned by Maroussia Naïtchenko, who stated that when meetings took place and

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<sup>724</sup> Domenach-Lallich, p. 26.

<sup>725</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 330.

<sup>726</sup> Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>727</sup> Denise Jacob cited in Weitz, p. 110.

instructions were given, the members would write notes, memorise them and subsequently destroy them. Madeleine Riffaud described how codes would be used in order to enable her to memorise the details of her meetings. For example, she would draw symbols on a metro ticket to remind her of the meeting points. ‘Une crosse d’évêque, c’était la rue des Bernardins, “drôle d’ombrage” c’était rue Baudelaire à cause du poème *Semper eadem* qui se termine par ce vers: “Et sommeiller longtemps à l’ombre de vos cils!”.’<sup>728</sup> It would have been negligent, not to mention irresponsible, for resisters to have kept written records of their activities as they would have effectively been signing their own death warrant if the classified information was to fall into the wrong hands.

Using common sense was also a vital requirement of this role. For example, if someone was not at a given meeting point at the specified time, then *agentes de liaison* were required to exercise extreme caution. ‘Il fallait être vigilant: quelquefois l’un s’était fait prendre juste avant, sans pouvoir prévenir, ou bien l’endroit était surveillé. On attendait trois ou quatre minutes et, si l’autre n’était pas là, il fallait s’en aller.’<sup>729</sup> If this happened, the meeting would be abandoned on security grounds. However, resisters would have the opportunity to conduct the meeting at a later date. ‘Mais il y avait toujours un rendez-vous de repêchage, un lieu, un jour, une heure, chaque semaine, où l’on pouvait se retrouver, pour ne pas perdre la liaison avec le réseau. C’était le rendez-vous du dernier espoir.’<sup>730</sup>

*Agentes de liaison* also faced practical difficulties such as not possessing the correct tools to make their tasks easier. This meant that those in charge had to be flexible and realistic about the activities that they asked *agentes de liaison* to accomplish:

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<sup>728</sup> Riffaud, pp. 66-67.

<sup>729</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>730</sup> Ibid.

Il n'était évidemment pas demandé à un agent de liaison de posséder un C.A.P. de dactylographie. Chaque responsable devait s'accommoder des qualités et des défauts de celle qui partageait sa vie agitée. Elle devait en premier lieu assurer une sécurité maximum, prenant plus de risques que lui afin de le protéger, en transportant seule les documents ou des sommes d'argent importantes.<sup>731</sup>

As well as being physically demanding, the role of an *agente de liaison* could also be emotionally challenging. This aspect of the job is emphasised by Madeleine Riffaud, as one of her activities consisted of informing people that their life was in danger:

Quand quelqu'un était arrêté par exemple, et qu'il fallait prévenir ses camarades de ne pas rentrer chez eux, d'entrer dans la clandestinité, 'dans le brouillard' comme on disait. C'était dire à un père de famille: 'Tu ne reverras pas ta femme ni tes enfants. Tu vas aller dans le lieu qu'on t'a fixé pour le jour où il y aurait un risque pour ta sécurité et pour celle de l'organisation.'<sup>732</sup>

Some people took the news particularly badly, especially if they had not been expecting to hear it. 'Une ombre soudain passait sur les visages. Chacun était prêt à cela mais, le moment venu, c'était un choc et tout ce qu'on pouvait dire, c'était: "Ne t'en fais pas, nous allons prévenir ta femme".'<sup>733</sup> Elisabeth Sevier fulfilled a similar role, as she was responsible for warning Jewish Parisians that they were in imminent danger of being located:

He would give me an address, which I memorized. I would watch the address, often in an affluent neighborhood, to ensure that someone was home. Then I slid a blank, black envelope under the door, knocked three times, and left. The Jewish family understood the prearranged signal to leave.<sup>734</sup>

Strength of character was thus a necessary character trait for a young girl if she was to be able to cope with transmitting this information. It would also serve to remind a resister of the danger that her own life was in at any given moment. Fallibility was a fundamental feature of life in the Resistance.

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<sup>731</sup> Naïtchenko, p. 335.

<sup>732</sup> Riffaud, p. 56.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid.

<sup>734</sup> Sevier, p. 51.

Although considered to be a minor role, *agentes de liaison* still faced opposition from some members of the French population who were unwilling to take risks to free their country. In fact, they wanted to distance themselves from resisters as much as possible and were often aggressive and resentful towards anyone, even young girls, who implicated them, either directly or indirectly, in resistance activities. This was the case for Denise Jacob, who was sent on a mission to retrieve two radio transmitters and managed to persuade a taxi driver to take her to Aix-les-Bains where she would be able to find people to help her transport them:

Just out of Lyon, we were stopped by a German roadblock and taken to Gestapo headquarters. My taxi driver did all he could to help the Germans. He even tried to hit me to show that he had not chosen to work for the Resistance, as I had. He blamed me for his arrest.<sup>737</sup>

The naivety of youth meant that some young girls did not always think about the consequences of their actions. Neither did they imagine that someone of a similar age to themselves could set them up. At the end of January 1944, Elisabeth Sevier returned home after a sleepless night treating people injured by bombs, and was met by the neighbourhood bully, Jean-Claude, who asked her to deliver a package on behalf of a man who had been looking for her whilst she was out. As the package resembled those that she had delivered before, her suspicion was not aroused, and she agreed. However, when she reached the address in the *Bois de Vincennes*, events took a turn for the worse. After waiting for a while to check there was nobody around, she observed a German soldier leaving a neighbouring property and another one cycling towards her. She started to feel that something was not quite right when the soldier on the bike began to follow her, yelling. Fearing for her life, she headed into the *Bois de Vincennes*, cycling erratically. Fortunately for her, the German's pursuit came

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<sup>737</sup> Denise Jacob cited in Weitz, p. 112.

to an abrupt end when he had an accident. After such a close call, she decided to discard the package:

I tossed the packet into the woods and left the area as quickly as I could peddle. I passed two more German soldiers as I cycled out, but they were involved in conversation and barely looked up. A loud explosion came from the same area where I had thrown the package. *Had I been carrying a bomb?*<sup>738</sup>

After such a close call, she was far more cautious about carrying out her future activities.

We can see therefore that although considered as the most minor role within the Resistance, in fact the role of an *agente de liaison* was very complex. The young ages of the girls who fulfilled this role meant that they needed to grow up quickly and act in a responsible manner at all times. Although barely more than children in some cases, young resisters had to develop adult qualities such as organisational skills and an instinct about who they could trust. The reality of being an *agente de liaison* was difficult for some girls who found the vast amounts of travelling and the instability this brought with it as challenging. This contrasts sharply with the views put forward by young girls in Chapter Two who relished the opportunities that the travel and displacement of the exodus afforded. Rather than expressing their individual identity, a typical trait of adolescence as seen in Chapter Five, young girls were required to suppress their own identity and assume a false one in order to sustain an element of safety. However, by taking on this role, young girls gained independence at an earlier age than they would have perhaps have done during peacetime.

## **Conclusion**

We can see therefore that youth and gender were both fundamental attributes to the involvement of young girls in the organised Resistance. The naivety of youth was both a

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<sup>738</sup> Sevier, p. 52.

positive and negative aspect of girls' identities. Their appearance meant that they were often beyond the suspicion of the Nazis, at least at the beginning of the Occupation, but this characteristic also meant that sometimes, they did not fully comprehend the consequences of their actions:

Nombreuses sont les agentes de liaison qui ont été arrêtées, torturées, déportées. Elles n'ignoraient pas les dangers qu'elles couraient. Mais l'enthousiasme patriotique soulevait tous ces jeunes, filles et garçons, qui, moins expérimentés que leurs camarades plus âgés, sous-estimaient peut-être les périls...<sup>739</sup>

Their youthfulness meant that they had the passion, drive and determination to achieve their goal but their age sometimes meant that they exposed themselves to unnecessary dangers.

The roles fulfilled by young girls such as *propagandistes* and *agentes de liaison* show that they were required to develop adult qualities at an earlier stage than normal. They needed to be discreet and show an awareness of their surroundings in order to avoid endangering their own lives. Particularly where the latter role is concerned, young girls needed to be organised, punctual and professional. Life in the Resistance was far from glamorous, with young girls often having little or no routine, working long hours, moving from place to place and never being sure of who they could or could not trust. However, they obviously felt that the irregular lifestyle was a price worth paying if they could rid France of the Germans.

Although there have been numerous studies on women in the Resistance such as Margaret Rossiter's *Women in the Resistance*, Margaret Collins Weitz's *Sisters in the Resistance: How Women Fought to Free France*, Paula Schwartz's 'Partisanes and Gender Politics in Vichy France' and Claire Andrieu's 'Women in the French Resistance', these authors all emphasise the specific roles of women in general in the Resistance. Similarly, studies such as Philippe

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<sup>739</sup> AN 397AP 12 Marie Granet, *Le rôle des femmes dans la Résistance*, unpublished manuscript.

Chapleau's *Des enfants dans la Résistance* predominantly focus on young boys in the Resistance. My research takes their findings a step further by showing that there were even more advantages to using people who were both young and female, as young or even just young-looking girls were not suspected of resistance activities and had more flexibility and fewer responsibilities than older women.



## CONCLUSION

The evidence discussed in this thesis shows that no universal experience existed for young girls growing up in World War II France. However, there is undoubtedly a specificity in their experiences. Firstly the fact that they were young and female meant that they were more susceptible to being affected by their relatives' tales of German atrocities and propaganda aimed at making them dislike the Germans served to reinforce this point. Secondly, their young ages meant that the exodus could be a positive experience for them as they had the chance to travel but they were also naive in thinking the Germans would not want to harm them. Thirdly, the fact that teenage girls were going through puberty and becoming attracted to the opposite sex for the first time meant that the beauty of the Germans when seen for the first time left a lasting impression on them. Furthermore, it is not surprising that they chose to act on their feelings as they did not have the life experience of older women to realise that their actions could be perceived as unpatriotic and disloyal to France by others. Fourthly, young girls were likely to attract the attention of the Germans which could lead to them being attacked if the Germans' attentions were rebuffed. Fifthly, fashion, which is traditionally a female preoccupation, was used by young girls to show their disapproval of the German presence and to protest against the Occupation. Lastly, the specific combination of youth and gender meant that young girls could be an asset to the Resistance as they were less likely to be detected and their lifestyles were more adaptable for the chaotic nature of resistance work.

To summarise the overall findings of this thesis, we can see that the legacy of the past in written, verbal and visual forms was influential in forming young girls' opinions in the Interwar period. This transmitted memory created a sense of patriotism and anti-Germanism

in young girls' minds and resulted in them feeling fearful and wary of the Germans as they saw their relatives, the people they depended on most, feeling vulnerable and unsettled as the Second World War approached. Propaganda depicted the Germans as causing harm to the innocents of society, such as children and animals, which showed young girls that they probably faced more danger than other sections of the population. The physical environment, however, combined the positive and negative aspects of war; *monuments aux morts* showed that war could be a traumatic experience which caused people to lose their lives but these structures also helped to create a sense of community amongst those left behind, ensuring that the people who sacrificed their lives for *la patrie* would never be forgotten.

The exodus was a time of mixed emotions and mixed experiences for young girls. Some aspects of their accounts show that their young ages made them view this experience with a more positive outlook than that of adults. Although girls of all ages felt an element of excitement, this was accompanied by different emotions depending on their age. Younger girls failed to fully comprehend the severity of the situation which resulted in them focusing on the positive aspect of going on an adventure. Girls in their mid-teens had a better knowledge of what was happening, so their excitement was often accompanied by apprehension and a generic fear of the unknown or a specific fear of the Germans. Older girls relished the opportunities afforded by the exodus, especially the chance to have an unexpected holiday, but this was accompanied by a sense of guilt that they were taking pleasure at a time of such uncertainty. Whereas girls of all ages faced the danger of being bombed by the enemy, older girls risked being taken advantage of sexually by their fellow citizens at a time when the majority of people were only concerned for their own welfare. Whereas adolescence usually takes place over a matter of years, young girls felt that the period of the exodus

encompassed their adolescence as it brought about an abrupt end to their childhood and propelled them into the adult world prematurely, bringing about a consciousness of what was happening in their country at this time which would leave a marked impression on them for the rest of the war or even the rest of their lives.

The sight of the Germans on French soil provoked varied reactions from young girls of all ages. Those aged between nine and nineteen experienced the intensely negative emotions of shock, fear and anger at the arrival of the Germans on French soil. Muteness was a strategy adopted instinctively by younger girls, and as a demonstration of freedom of choice or as a means of resistance by older girls. They were dumbfounded at the speed with which events were happening and harboured resentment towards the Germans for taking over every aspect of their country from their streets to their hearts. However, this resentment only served to make young girls feel more passionate about their country which resulted in them expressing their views in a patriotic manner. Girls in their mid to late teens felt an unexpected attraction to these foreign soldiers and appreciated their physical 'otherness'. This appreciation was superficial, however, as they did not appreciate their sometimes arrogant personalities, their uniforms or the public symbolism associated with Nazism which made them feel unwelcome in their own country. For younger girls, the uniform acted as a barrier which made them view the Germans as the enemy rather than as individual people.

Whereas emotions surrounding the exodus and the sight of the Germans on French soil varied considerably, the experiences of young girls who came into direct contact with the Germans, either fleetingly or for a more substantial period, were unanimously negative. Young girls were attacked in various locations varying from their home, to their workplace, to in the

street. The majority of attacks involved violence and were therefore not gender-specific. However, a handful of incidents involved members of the German army making unwelcome advances towards young girls which, when rebuffed, resulted in the culprits attacking the victim, sometimes sexually. Whereas in peacetime, finding herself attracted to a boy of a different nationality would not be considered detrimental, this was not the case in the context of wartime France. Teenage girls' autobiographical writings reveal that they felt an attraction, albeit in varying degrees of intensity, towards the enemy and empathised with the situation in which the Germans found themselves. However, they also recognised that by associating and socialising with German soldiers, they could be perceived as betraying their country by being unpatriotic and not acting like 'good French people'. Although rebellion is a typical trait of adolescence, this was somewhat suppressed by the feelings of guilt that being seen with the occupiers aroused, as they feared being judged negatively by their fellow citizens. In this respect the Occupation encouraged conformity rather than experimentation. For those girls who chose not to conform, the consequences could be serious. Archival sources reveal that an innocent act such as standing on a tank in the company of a German could be deemed unpatriotic and that the word of another French citizen could be enough to cast suspicion on another's conduct which could lead to them being found guilty of *collaboration sentimentale* and subsequently punished.

Not all girls were willing to conform which resulted in them actively demonstrating their opposition to the occupiers and the Occupation. These demonstrations took place on both an individual and a collective level. On the individual level, younger girls wrote pro-Allied slogans on whatever objects they happened to have in their possession or in public places. Older girls however wanted to make more of an impact and antagonized the Germans by

insulting them. On a collective level, girls of all ages took part in protests which used commemorative events and symbolism associated with the Republic as a means to show their opposition to the Occupation. Discreet symbols, such as the Cross of Lorraine, were evidence that although young girls felt unable actively to do anything to rid France of the Germans, at least they could display their French identity. Although the Germans sought to isolate the Jews, the methods they used could have the opposite effect as young Aryans demonstrated both their support of the Jews and their disapproval of German regulations by choosing to wear either the standard Jewish yellow star or an adapted insignia.

Youth and gender were important qualities of which the organised Resistance could make good use. Youth suggested dynamism, passion and a focus on what needed to be achieved. However, this was a double-edged sword as with hindsight, young girls acknowledged that they did not fully understand the consequences of what they were doing. The naivety associated with youth and gender meant that young girls were not suspected of working against the Germans, which further helped the Resistance's cause. The discretion and self-control that young girls in the Resistance needed to possess meant they needed to show maturity at an earlier stage in their development than they perhaps would have done during peacetime. They also had to adjust to a way of life with very little stability but were prepared to make sacrifices for a cause in which they believed.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the scope of the project has been intentionally narrow in order to focus on the interplay between the Germans and young girls. However, it would be interesting to carry out further research into the areas which have not been included in order to assess whether this changes our understanding of this relationship. As the number

of Germans varied from region to region, it would be pertinent to assess what impact this had on young girls and whether substantial regional variations existed, particularly between regions which were occupied during both the First and Second World Wars and those which were only occupied during World War II, thus adding to the work of Richard Cobb's *French and Germans, Germans and French: A Personal Interpretation of France under Two Occupations, 1914-1918/1940-1944*. A second area for further research focuses on the Jewish experience. Although it has been mentioned briefly, it would be useful to assess the attitudes of young Jewish girls to the Germans and the Occupation in more detail in order to understand the differences and similarities which characterise the responses of Jewish and non-Jewish girls to the German occupiers, thus adding to the work of Renée Poznanski's *Etre juif en France pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale*. A third potential route to explore would be to use oral testimony in order to assess whether differences exist between written and verbal memory.

Nevertheless, by examining the effects of youth and gender on public opinion, the conclusions drawn from my research contribute to the existing studies in this field such as Pierre Laborie's *L'opinion française sous Vichy* and Eric Alary, Benedicte Vergez-Chaignon and Gilles Gauvin's *Les Français au quotidien*. By considering the opinions of young girls, it can be argued that we gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding public opinion during the Occupation. Whereas adults have a greater awareness of the consequences of their actions, realise how their behaviour can be interpreted by others and therefore moderate their behaviour accordingly, this was not always the case for young girls who reacted instinctively, recklessly even, to the Germans and had to learn by their mistakes. This realisation is evident in their testimonies and from police reports. Even when

these testimonies were written retrospectively, the authors do not attempt to shield their anxieties about the dilemmas they faced during this period from the reader. My research also shows how the nature of the period impacted upon adolescence, forcing young girls to mature quicker than they perhaps would have done during peacetime and giving them a greater awareness of world events. I would therefore argue that this research gives a more nuanced insight into public opinion than studies which only take the views of adults into account.

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