


8-1-2012

Darkness in the City of Light: The Great Roundup of 1942 & France's Role in the Shoah.

Benjamin T.C. Mead

Salve Regina University, bentcmead@verizon.net

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.salve.edu/pell_theses

 Part of the [European History Commons](#), [History of Religion Commons](#), [Military History Commons](#), and the [Other History Commons](#)

Mead, Benjamin T.C., "Darkness in the City of Light: The Great Roundup of 1942 & France's Role in the Shoah." (2012). *Pell Scholars and Senior Theses*. Paper 86.

http://digitalcommons.salve.edu/pell_theses/86

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Salve's Dissertations and Theses at Digital Commons @ Salve Regina. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pell Scholars and Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Salve Regina. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@salve.edu.

Darkness in the City of Light:
The Great Roundup of 1942 & France's Role in the Shoah

Benjamin T. C. Mead

Salve Regina University
Department of History
Senior Thesis
Dr. Neary

December 2, 2011

Dedication Page

This thesis is dedicated to the following:

Katherine Lawber, Ph.D, Professor of Modern and Classical Languages at Salve Regina University, for her help in translating *Lettres de Drancy*, and for making me fall in love with the French language.

To the people of Paris, who truly welcomed me to their city and were eager to share its history.

To my wonderful French family, whose warmth, generosity, and hospitality will stay with me. I look forward to my return in a matter of months.

To the Departments of History and Religious & Theological Studies at Salve Regina University for their enthusiasm and support of this thesis.

Finally, to those who still believe and fight for liberty, equality, and brotherhood when the world tries to deny it.

Prologue

When I spent my fall semester in Paris of 2010, one could say that I was in love: I was in love with my classes, learning a new language, and forming a loving bond with my host family. But as life has taught me, loving something or someone is whole, encompassing strengths and weaknesses, virtues and faults. The Shoah is one of the darkest faults Europe ever faced; it can even be harder to accept when you've found another culture that fits you as a person. As I did some research in Paris—visiting memorials, museums, and home addresses of famous figures—my eyes went wide with curiosity, sadness, and disbelief. The typical questions of *why*, *how*, and *who* came to mind. The latter are easy to answer, but *why* is not, and will not. We will never find out why, but by acceptance, remembrance, and commemoration we acknowledge their voices: those that stood by, those that took a stand, those who lost their lives, and those who changed them.

Introduction

Paris in July can be quite a celebration. The city opens its arms to the thousands of tourists spending their summer in the City of Light: museums start extended summer hours, outdoor café terraces are full, and the nation celebrates the birth of the French Revolution on the fourteenth of July, *la Fête Nationale*.¹ It is quite romantic to picture a couple on their honeymoon, enjoying a picnic lunch to then watch fireworks in commemoration of *le quatorze juillet*. (the fourteenth of July) It was this revolution that gave France its national slogan of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*: Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood. Despite the nation's tumultuous past

¹ Translated as National Celebration or National Holiday. Bastille Day, as coined in English-speaking countries, is also referred to *le quatorze juillet*, literally the fourteenth of July, the day that the mobs of Paris stormed the Bastille prison. Throughout this thesis, French terms will be used with the English translation in footnotes, and vice versa. Some French words will not be italicized. (i.e. Jacques Chirac, a former president, or Champs-Élysées, a street).

of finding and keeping a stable government, each republic that was ushered in stood by this motto of liberty, equality, and brotherhood. This was to be extended to each man, woman, and child living in the French Republic. Unfortunately, this was not always the case. July of 1942 saw the arrest and internment of 8,160 Jews at the Vélodrome d'Hiver in Paris, the ultimate betrayal of liberty, equality, and brotherhood.

Paris in July of 1995 would see the same celebrations as years before: the fourteenth was Bastille Day, and later in the month the famed cyclists of the Tour de France would finish in the city on the Champs-Élysées. But between these two celebrations was a moment of great sobriety, sadness, and reflection. President Jacques Chirac was to be the first French president to acknowledge a dark moment in the nation's history. Reporters, citizens, government officials, and clergymen gathered to hear him speak. On Sunday July 16, 1995, President Chirac stepped up to the podium and delivered a memorable speech on the horrors committed by the French State during the Second World War. His words confessed an ugly truth that many were unwilling, and still are unwilling to admit: The French collaborated with the Germans to send Jewish citizens to their death. Chirac announced, "France, homeland of the Enlightenment and of human rights, land of welcome and asylum, France, on that very day, accomplished the irreparable. Failing her promise, she delivered those she was to protect to their murderers."²

The admission of collaboration with the German occupying forces was a step no other French president had taken. Certainly there was recognition of the pain felt during this time, but never an admission of remorse, guilt, or responsibility for what occurred. The history and study of the Holocaust, or the *Shoah* as called in France, rightfully shines a spotlight on the actions of

² « La France, patrie des Lumières et des Droits de l'Homme, terre d'accueil et d'asile, la France, ce jour-là, accomplissait l'irréparable. Manquant à sa parole, elle livrait ses protégés à leurs bourreaux. » (See Appendix)

Adolf Hitler and German leadership.³ The Final Solution (the plan to exterminate all of Europe's Jewish population) was decided in Germany and carried out by the Germans. There are names that forever connect Germany and the Shoah: Auschwitz, Dachau, Bergen-Belsen. The horror of the extermination camps is unfathomable, and the memory of the Shoah will always be connected to these places of death and despair.

Yet there are other names not as famous as Auschwitz that played a significant role in the history of the Shoah outside the borders of Germany: Drancy, Pithiviers, Beaune-la-Rolande and Compiègne. These four cities became synonymous with the internment camps that from the spring of 1941 until the liberation of France, over 75,000 men, women, and children would be held before deportation. The arrest of Jews in German-occupied France (versus Vichy France or the Unoccupied Zone, headed by Maréchal Pétain) could be small or large, targeting individuals or groups of people living in certain areas. One of the most notorious was the incident that occurred fifty-three years ago the day Jacques Chirac spoke to the world: *La Rafle du Vel d'Hiv*, the Great Roundup of the Vélodrome d'Hiver.

The Vel d'Hiv Roundup was the greatest mass-arrest of Jews ever carried out on French soil.⁴ It was a cruel slap in the face to the Jewish population of France, one that enjoyed a unique history unlike other Jewish inhabitants of Europe. When the First French Republic was established, the threefold motto of "Liberty, Equality, and Brotherhood" was truly applied: French Protestants and Jews gained full citizenship. Because of the Emancipation of 1791, Jews adhered passionately to Enlightenment values and to the modern idea of citizenship because they were proclaimed free and equal in the eyes of the law, a condition they had never known

³ Shoah will be the term used throughout this thesis, as it translates as "catastrophe" and relates exclusively to the destruction of the Jewish people in a strict period of time (summer of 1941 until spring of 1945).

⁴ Michel Laffitte, "The Velodrome d'Hiver Roundup July 16 and 17, 1942," *The Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*, 2008. http://www.massviolence.org/Article?id_article=156

throughout their history in the Christian nations of Europe.⁵ The Jews created their own niche in France, only to have their rights and lives taken away. The Roundup ended life, liberty and brotherhood for thousands; together with all the Jews of the Shoah, these ideals ended for millions.

The Jews in France: Beginnings & the *Israélites*

France, like many European nations, had a historic Jewish population. The fourth century CE saw the attestation of a Jewish presence in Roman Gaul. The Jews enjoyed freedom of worship, military service, and access to public office as granted to them in 212 by Emperor Caracalla to all the inhabitants of the empire under the *constitution Antoniniana*.⁶ The Christianization of Gaul under Clovis changed the treatment of the Jews. All aspects of life—worship, occupation, and interaction with fellow citizens—were regulated and controlled by both the Roman Catholic Church and the state. The Jews formed their own distinct communities in various cities like Bordeaux, Avignon, and in Alsace. Paris had a small Jewish population; theoretically, the capital remains “closed” to the Jews until 1789. Nonetheless, on the eve of the Revolution, some five or six hundred Jews lived there.⁷

As the Bastille fell on July 14, the Jews took advantage of the situation and publicly listed their grievances. The Jews were fully emancipated on September 27, 1791, the outcome of a whole series of measures taken in the last days of the Ancien Régime. Between the year of emancipation and the beginning of the First World War (1914), two hundred and fifty synagogues were constructed in France. The Jews were in gratitude to this nation, the first of its kind in Europe to grant full citizenship. Over the years, the French Jews (Jewish persons who

⁵ Dominique Schnaper, Chantal Bordes-Benayoun and Freddy Raphaël. *Jewish Citizenship in France: The Temptation of Being among One's Own* (New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 8.

⁶ Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (Ewing, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 4.

⁷ *Ibid*, 70.

were French nationals) began to refer to themselves as *Israélites*, Israelites. Thus they were creating a distinct identity from the other Jews of Europe. They were proud to be citizens and believe in the ideals of the Republic.

The nineteenth century saw both the flowering of assimilation and the growing population of foreign Jews flocking to France. The capital city of Paris stood as a shining example of this dichotomy. In her work titled *The Jews of France*, Esther Benbassa notes:

In 1811, Paris had 6 percent of the Jews in France, 11 percent in 1841, 17 percent in 1845, 20 percent in 1853, and 26 percent in 1861. By this latter date, less than 5 percent of the total French population lived in the capital. At the end of the nineteenth century, Paris was home to slightly more than half of the Jews of France owing to substantial migratory movements from the annexed provinces of Alsace and Lorraine: In 1900 Jews now represented 2 percent of the Parisian population; in 1808, this figure had been 0.2 percent.⁸

In the European Jewish world, Paris stood as the star attraction. By 1852, the city had the twelfth largest Jewish population in the world, and Paris was the one of the European capitals that stood as a gateway to the crossing of the Atlantic toward the Americas. Within the city its own Jewish bourgeoisie was born, the *Israélite* community who would assimilate and push themselves away from the “foreign” Jews coming into France. Benbassa notes: Sixteen families belonged to the *haute bourgeoisie d'affaires*: Fould, Oppenheim, Furtado, Goudchaux, d'Eichtal, Rodrigues, Stern, Worms de Romilly, Laurent-Meyer, Dupont, Javal, Halphen, and Allegri, with the addition of Pereire, Millaud, and Maas under the July Monarchy and the Second Empire.⁹ Among the heads of financial institutions one would find the names of famous banking families, the barons Rothschild and counts Cahen d'Anvers the most recognizable. These families were successful in becoming part of the Parisian bourgeoisie, their religious identity not constraining to their station in life: In principle, as citizens of a universalist France, they differed in no way

⁸ Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (Ewing, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 100.

⁹ *Ibid*, 104.

from other Frenchmen and women, their religion being a private matter to which they were free to accommodate themselves as they pleased.¹⁰

The Jews in France: Foreign Jews & Anti-Semitism

The latter end of the nineteenth century was both the *fin de siècle* (end of the century period) and the *belle époque* (beautiful age). Technological innovations made life easier, cities were growing, and artists were painting masterpieces. Department stores catered to the wealthy as conspicuous consumption became widespread. Fashionable tea rooms allowed more freedom for women to interact with each other without the accompaniment of men. The borders of nations were changing, as France learned in a cruel way: it lost its territories of Alsace and Lorraine in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. The Second Empire fell and the Third French Republic was born. The nation was dealing with issues of identity and direction; soon blame would come to an all-too-easy target: the Jews.

The Israélites and Jewish bourgeoisie were eager to act as patriotic Frenchmen. French Jews, now that they were on the verge of achieving integration for themselves, feared the arrival of Jews whose appearance reminded them of what they themselves had looked like before emancipation.¹¹ These foreign Jews (or non-French born Jews) would be arriving in France near the end of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth, and the subtle anti-Semitic instances found in daily life would become louder and more visible. A journalist by the name of Édouard Drumont published his anti-Semitic work *La France juive* (Jewish France) in 1886; by 1887 the book was already in its one hundred, forty-fifth printing.¹²

The nation would face a significant test of anti-Semitism at large with the emergence of the Dreyfus Affair. Captain Alfred Dreyfus (from Alsace-Lorraine, lost to Germany after the

¹⁰ Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (Ewing, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 124.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 134.

¹² *Ibid*, 140.

Franco-Prussian War) was accused of treason. According to French intelligence, he allegedly wrote a letter addressed to the military attaché of the Germany embassy in Paris. He was arrested on October 15, and found guilty of treason on December 26, 1894.¹³ He was exiled and stripped of military rank, even as others around him proclaimed his innocence. Though Dreyfus was exonerated, the Affair divided the French into Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards. The Dreyfusard cause was loudly trumpeted by the famous *J'accuse!* article by Émile Zola, published in *L'Aurore* on January 13, 1898.¹⁴ The anti-Dreyfusards would come together in reactionary political groups, and would become a large base of the population in Vichy France.

Though faced with this rise of anti-Semitism, foreign Jews were pouring into France and especially Paris in the latter end of the century and would continue up until World War II. Paris attracted not only those who wished to improve their economic situation, but also political refugees, intellectuals, young people, and business elites from the rest of Europe.¹⁵ Among these Jews was the Némirovsky family of Kiev who fled Russia at the beginning of the Revolution of 1917. They were among the thousands of Jews that came to France in the beginning of the twentieth century: Between 1906 and 1939, 175,000 to 200,000 Jewish immigrants arrived in France, representing 15 percent of the total number of immigrants in the country.¹⁶ Though Russian in origin, the Némirovsky's daughter Irène saw herself as French: "From the age of four up until the war, I came to France regularly once a year. The first time, I stayed there a year. I was raised by a French governess, and with my mother I always spoke French."¹⁷ Irène would immerse herself in the life of a French Israélite, though technically she was a foreign Jew. Her

¹³ Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (Ewing, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 141.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 144.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 104.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 148.

¹⁷ Jonathan Weiss, *Irène Némirovsky: Her Life & Works* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007),

experience over the next few decades would be shared by thousands, as the 1920s and 1930s saw great public anti-Semitism, and the 1930s saw the last days of the Republic.

The 1930s and World War II

The decades leading to France's entry in World War II saw continued immigration of Jews to France. France after the Great War had a severe labor shortage; therefore new immigrants did not yet arouse the hostility that would befall those who came after them in the 1930s—a time of world economic crisis marked by Hitler's arrival in power in Germany and the flare-up of xenophobia and anti-Semitism in France.¹⁸ Foreign Jews accounted for little of France's population, but they were a popular target. Throughout the 1930s it would not matter if one was French or foreign, to be a Jew was tough enough. One could not overlook the numerous anti-Semitic newspapers, consisting of:

Forty-seven newspapers and magazines in 1938, among them *Gringoire* (600,000 copies sold in 1936), *Candide* (465,000 copies in 1936), and *Je suis partout* (from 40,000 to 80,000 copies a week), to which Robert Brassilach and Lucien Rebatet contributed; they gave voice to an uncommonly virulent anti-Jewish hatred, taking their place alongside *L'Action française*, the organ of the movement of the same name that had led the anti-Semitic pack since the beginning of the century and had a daily print-run of 72,000 copies in 1936.¹⁹

“France for the French!” became the rallying cry and France as a place of asylum from oppressive regimes faded, the writer Jacques de Lacretelle capturing the sadness of the situation: “To be Jewish and French, how fruitful this union might have been! What hopes I had of it!”²⁰

The German Reich declared war on France on September 3, 1939. The French were confident in their defensive shield of the Maginot Line, and for months all of Europe held its breath as the *drôle de guerre* (Phoney War) lingered. The Germans made their attack on May 10, 1940 and the Battle of France began. As the German forces began making their way to Paris,

¹⁸ Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (Ewing, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 148.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 154-155.

²⁰ Olivier Philipponnat & Patrick Lienhardt, *The Life of Irène Némirovsky* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 232.

those that could were escaping: three-fourths of the Jewish population fled Paris before the arrival of German troops²¹, not realizing that the France that they had known would change forever. The government quit the city on June 11, 1940; the chief rabbi and other Jewish leaders followed suit.²² The loss of life was immense: more than 90,000 soldiers died in combat, 200,000 were wounded and 1,850,000 taken prisoner.²³ The armistice was signed eleven days later, signifying the victory of the German forces and the death of the French Republic.

Divided France, Familiar Faces

The years of 1940-1944 would see France not as one united nation but as a land of division. France became divided in several zones, each one under different political authorities. The most visible division was the Occupied and Unoccupied Zone, or North and South. Separated by a *ligne de demarcation* (demarcation line), the South zone was home to the Vichy regime, headed by Maréchal Pétain. The Occupied Zone was ruled by the German Military Command in France (MBF), headed by Otto von Stulpnagel. In total, Germany occupied three-fifths of mainland France: the areas with the most economic potential and access to the Atlantic and Northern coasts.²⁴

But France faced further division in other regions. Pétain, as the new French head of state, signed an armistice with Italy alongside Germany. This led to a minor reduction in the size of the free zone under total control of the Vichy regime, as about fifteen French *communes* (districts) mainly in the region of Alpes-Maritimes were administered by Italy.²⁵ The Germans

²¹ Jonathan Weiss, *Irène Némirovsky: Her Life & Works* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 111.

²² Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (Ewing, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 167.

²³ Thomas Fontaine, "Chronology of Repression and Persecution in Occupied France, 1940-44," *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence* (2007): 2, http://www.massviolence.org/Article?id_article=84

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2 http://www.massviolence.org/Article?id_article=84

²⁵ *Ibid.* Also, the terms North and Occupied will refer to the zone controlled by Germany. The words "unoccupied," "vichy," "southern" and "free" will be used interchangeably to refer to the zone under the control of Pétain.

created a *zone interdite* (forbidden zone) along the northern and eastern parts of France; it would later be extended to the coastal areas. The division of France into these zones had immense consequences, especially in terms of the working relationship of Vichy France and the Occupied zone. The MBF was the main executive and decision-making protagonist in the northern zone until the summer of 1942, but the Vichy authorities allowed the MBF to put them in charge of most day-to-day tasks, including *repression*.²⁶ It would be this aspect that would come into play for the eventual repression and persecution of French Jews.

Vichy France had a familiar face in leadership: the hero of the First World War, Maréchal Philippe Pétain. He was given full powers as head of state, and one thing was made clear: Pétain was not the president of *la république française*, but of *l'état français*: The French State. Upon his accession to power (given to him by a vote of the French parliament), he said, “A new order is beginning.” And this was evident in the France Pétain encouraged and created: the sacrifice of the Republic, certain ministers imprisoned, the anointment of the leader, an agrarian mystique, intellectual and moral recovery, and pledges of goodwill to the German authorities.²⁷ The Free Zone (*zone libre*) held to Pétain’s motto of *Travail, Famille, Patrie*: Work, Family, Fatherland. Symbols of French identity—the tricolor, Marianne, the *Marseillaise*—become obsolete.

Relay of Persecution: *La zone occupée & la zone libre*

The two new governments of France wasted no time in deciding what to do with the Jews, both French-born Jews and foreign Jews. But Vichy, while agreeing to collaborate with the Germans, was adamant on one aspect: Vichy was to remain a sovereign state. The two governments signed an agreement in August of 1940: Vichy promised to keep order on the

²⁶ Ibid, 4 http://www.massviolence.org/Article?id_article=84

²⁷ Olivier Philipponnat & Patrick Lienhardt, *The Life of Irène Némirovsky*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 308.

Germans' behalf; the Germans promised to respect Vichy's sovereignty over policing.²⁸ The Jews living in the Free Zone only needed to deal with the laws promulgated by Pétain and later by Pierre Laval. Jews living in the Occupied Zone had to obey both the laws of the German MBF and the laws of Vichy. Any law that passed in Vichy that did not buffer against German law was allowed.

The year of 1940 saw the beginning of repression and exclusion. Vichy issued a decree on July 22, 1940 that challenged the current naturalization process. Though Jews were not specifically mentioned, more than 7,000 had their new citizenship revoked.²⁹ This placed Jews like Irène Némirovsky on unstable ground: she and her husband had pushed for citizenship, but were dropped and now were among thousands of Jews that were “stateless.” But for other Jews like Sorbonne student Hélène Berr, her family had been living in France for several generations. They felt safe and secure, unknowing of the future. The denaturalization of the Jews became the first of many anti-Semitic laws to be passed, with no force from the Germans in the passage of these laws. Just over a month into the new regime, Vichy was eager to pass anti-Semitic legislation. It was a strong message to Germany: The French were asserting sovereignty and commitment to the persecution of the Jews.

Autumn 1940 resulted in both zones passing legislation on the definition of a Jew. What is particularly intriguing is that the MBF defined a Jew in religious terms; Vichy defined a Jew in terms of *race*. The German law of September 27, 1940 reads as follows: “Those who belong or have belonged to the Jewish religion or who have more than two Jewish grandparents are considered as Jews.”³⁰ Any Jew who fled into the Free Zone was forbidden to return, and all Jews had to register for a census by October 20. In Paris and its suburbs, 149,734 Jews went to

²⁸ Julien Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 216.

²⁹ Memorial de la Shoah Q&A. <http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/>

³⁰ Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (Ewing, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 168.

register, of whom 86,664 were French and 65,070 foreigners; 7,737 Jewish businesses and 3,456 Jewish societies were registered in the Occupied Zone.³¹ The German objective of exclusion and confiscation of property was beginning to take shape.

Vichy fired back with the first of its *Statut des Juifs*, the Statute on Jews. The law decreed on October 3, 1940 that "...any person having three grandparents of the Jewish race or, in the event his or her spouse was Jewish, two grandparents of this race, was regarded as Jewish."³² The Statute applied to both zones and any and all protectorates and territories under French control. The next day came chilling news: "Foreign nationals of the Jewish race can...be interned in special camps by the decision of the prefect of the department in which they reside...[They] can also, at any time, be assigned to house arrest by the prefect of the department in which they reside."³³ This gave birth to camps set up in the Free Zone; foreign Jews now joined those that spoke out against Vichy or the Nazi regime. By the end of November the Occupied Zone had twenty-six camps; the Free Zone had fifteen.

1941

The years of 1941 and 1942 were critical in France's history of the Shoah. Vichy took stronger steps in their own agenda against the Jews to accomplish its ultimate goal: that of turning French Jews into second-class citizens, and treat foreign Jews as an encumbrance to whose fate it was indifferent. This was seen in the camps: 40,000 foreign Jews were already being held.³⁴ This demonstration of commitment to worsening the Jew's plight pleased both the Germans and the French. The Germans could count on the French in ongoing persecutions, and the French kept their sovereignty and maintained a positive relationship of collaboration.

³¹Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (Ewing, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 168.

³²Ibid, 168.

³³Jonathan Weiss, *Irène Némirovsky: Her Life & Works* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 114.

³⁴Julien Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 357.

Vichy was encouraged by the Germans to create a Jewish office. Pétain's head of government François Darlan agreed, but on one condition: it must be a *French* organization. *Le Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives* was created on March 29, 1941.³⁵ It was a unique display of French sovereignty: the new office was created without prior submission to the German military administration, and the commission's head Xavier Vallat was an anti-Semite and an anti-German.³⁶ Under his administration the commission was responsible for the enforcement of anti-Jewish laws. But he hoped too that under his direction, he would show the Germans that the French could design and execute an anti-Jewish program appropriate for France.³⁷

June of 1941 saw another addition to its *Statuts des Juifs*. This law completed the elimination of Jews in both zones from the civil service, liberal professions, business, industry, handicrafts, the press and the tertiary sector.³⁸ The law went into further detail:

Article 1 states that one "shall be considered Jewish any person, regardless of their religious affiliation, who has at least three grandparents of the Jewish race, or only two, if their spouse descends from two grandparents of the Jewish race. A grandparent of the Jewish faith shall be considered as belonging to the Jewish race." Article 2 aggravates the previous statute by adding one "shall be considered as a Jew, any person who belongs to the Jewish religion or who did belong as of June 25, 1940, and who descends from two Jewish grandparents."³⁹

Due to this law, students like Héléne Berr could only go so far in their studies. An extremely intelligent and bright young woman, she was barred from taking courses that led to the *agrégation*, the civil service exam that led the way to becoming a university professor. Her life and others would take another turn with the establishment of the *Union Générale des Israélites de France* in November 1941. The UGIF gathered representatives from Jewish charities and

³⁵Translated into English, the organization is the General Commission for Jewish Affairs.

³⁶ Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 83.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 96.

³⁸ Memorial de la Shoah Q&A. <http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/>

³⁹*Ibid*.

community organizations, its goal to help both French and foreign Jews.⁴⁰ On the surface, it appeared to do good for the Jewish community. Hélène Berr volunteered and then worked there, gaining a level of protection by being labeled an “official” Jew.

But working at the UGIF could not blind her to the other side of life for Jews: those of poor, dispossessed immigrants.⁴¹ The Jews of Occupied France had experienced pain and horror as two mass arrests were done, one in May and the second in August. In May, the French police in Paris took 3,700 Jews, both French and foreign. They were taken to two camps: Beaune-la-Roland and Pithiviers. The August arrests, again carried out by the Parisian municipal police took over 4,200 Jews (men, including 1,500 Frenchmen) and sent them to Drancy.⁴² In both instances, though ordered by the Germans, these arrests were done with the complicity of Vichy and the participation of French police. But nothing would prepare the Jews, and all of France, for the horror to be committed in July of 1942.

1942: The Final Solution & Decision Makers

The Final Solution, the term used to define Hitler’s plan on eliminating Europe’s Jewish population, was decided at the Wannsee Conference on January 20, 1942. It was decided that France was to supply 100,000 Jews of both sexes between the ages of sixteen and forty, including ten percent unfit for work, the deportation from France being intended to supply forced labor at the rate of three trainloads per week.⁴³ The number was changed to 39,000 as outlined by Theodor Dannecker, the SS Councilor for Jewish Affairs. In order for this plan to work, the Germans needed the full cooperation of the French in both zones. Luckily for the Germans, Vichy was more than willing to cooperate in sending Jews to their deaths.

⁴⁰ Hélène Berr, *The Journal of Hélène Berr* (New York: Weinstein Books, 2008), 286.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 286.

⁴² Thomas Fontaine, “Chronology of Repression and Persecution in Occupied France, 1940-44,” *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence* (2007): 10-14, http://www.massviolence.org/Article?id_article=84

⁴³ Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France* (Ewing, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 172.

An impetus to the events of July 1942 was the return of Pierre Laval on April 18, 1942; Vichy president Maréchal Pétain faded into the background. One of Laval's major decisions in ensuring a strong anti-Semitic policy on Vichy's behalf was the replacement of the CGQJ's commissioner-general, Xavier Vallat. On May 6, 1942, Laval appointed forty-four year old Louis Darquier de Pellepoix as head of the CGQJ. Under his administration, de Pellepoix witnessed the proliferation of anti-Semitic propaganda. Under de Pellepoix, the persecution of the Jews lost whatever claims it had had to moderation and legalism and gave way to extremism. The Vichy promise that "neither against persons nor against property"—never truly kept—was now flouted daily in the most brutal fashion.⁴⁴

June of 1942 was a month of detailed planning for what would be the largest roundup of Jews in France. The meeting of June 16, 1942 determined that in addition to the 16 to 55 year-old Jews to be arrested in the Paris region, a further 10,000 were to be taken from the so-called free area. The age limit for men was then lowered to 2 years of age and raised to 60 years of age. It was raised further on.⁴⁵ June was also the month that the Jews were required to wear the yellow star labeling them as a *juif* or *juive*. Time continued to run out for the Jews as the final numbers came in: including the Jews to be taken from Paris, 10,000 Jews from the Southern zone would be arrested. A further 22,000 would be arrested, and 40 percent of those Jews were to be French.⁴⁶ The French police were to make the arrests, Laval sending his police to deal with foreigners. To satisfy the quotas while at the same time salving his conscience, he would merely

⁴⁴Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 286.

⁴⁵ Michel Laffitte, "The Vélodrome d'Hiver Round-Up: July 16 and 17, 1942," *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence* (2008): 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 2.

suggest that children, even naturalized ones, should not be separated from their parents during this distressing odyssey.⁴⁷

The days leading up to the arrest were full of repeated instructions and careful planning. Classified as *Opération Vent Printanier* (Operation Spring Wind), the gendarmerie, mobile guard, judiciary police, mass media, and public transport would all be involved in the operation, and every man taking part would be a Frenchman.⁴⁸ The arrest was scheduled for July 13, but it was delayed due to the celebration of Bastille Day. The fifteenth of July, René Bousquet gave Prefect of Police Amédée Bussièrre the order to initiate the operation.⁴⁹ As the 7,000 men were ready to implement the operation at 4:00 AM on July 16, orders stood as follows: there was to be no discussion, utilities were to be switched off, animals and keys given to the building concierge (or the nearest neighbor if necessary), and all children were to be taken, including French nationals who could eventually be set free at the sorting centers.⁵⁰ Operation Spring Wind began.

La Rafle du Vel d’Hiv

At 4:00 AM members of the French police banged on the doors of Jewish families. The orders made the arrests swift and quick, without much time for pleading with officers. It also became a moment of desperation as families took their own lives before the police could take theirs. In the Marais district of Paris, the city’s historically Jewish quarter, a woman living along rue de Poitou refused to answer her door. As the police rushed in, she took her three children with her and jumped out the window, falling five stories to their death.⁵¹ The day after the arrests

⁴⁷Olivier Philipponnat & Patrick Lienhardt, *The Life of Irène Némirovsky* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 371.

⁴⁸Claude Lévy and Paul Tillard. Translated by Inea Bushnaq, *Betrayal at the Vel d’Hiv* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 9.

⁴⁹Michel Laffitte, “The Vélodrome d’Hiver Round-Up: July 16 and 17, 1942,” *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence* (2008): 3.

⁵⁰Ibid, 3.

⁵¹Claude Lévy and Paul Tillard. Translated by Inea Bushnaq, *Betrayal at the Vel d’Hiv* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 27.

ended on the seventeenth, H  l  ne Berr wrote in her journal, “In Mademoiselle Monsaigneon’s neighborhood, a whole family, the father, the mother, and five children, gassed themselves to escape the roundup.⁵² The roundup did not continue on quietly, and the police did not discriminate. Pregnant women, the elderly, and the sick were among those taken from their homes onto buses for the internment camps. Eyewitness accounts collected from the arrests paint a scene of raw emotion and chaos. One begins to forget that the arrests are in the City of Light—*la ville de lumi  re*—and not in the ghettos of Eastern Europe: “The news spread through the city like a trail of gunpowder, and a general panic followed. All those who were able to flee ran out, scarcely dressed, seeking shelter with their French neighbors—with concierges, in cellars or attics...In cases where the doors were opened, or sometimes broken open, one saw heartbreaking scenes taking place.”⁵³

Over the course of two days, 12,884 Jews were arrested: 3,031 were adult men, the majority of the arrested being women and children (5,802 and 4,051 respectively). The number increased to 3,118 men, 5,919 women and 4,115 children after July 20, totally 13,152 people.⁵⁴ While it did not satisfy the quota goals of the Germans and French, it was successful in arresting the most number of people since arrests and deportations began. The thousands of Jews were segregated into two groups: single adults and childless couples in one group, families in the other. The first group was sent to Drancy, one of the French gateways that led to Auschwitz. The families (comprised of 8,160 people) were sent to the V  lodrome d’Hiver (The Winter Racing Stadium.) The V  lodrome, an indoor stadium, had been used for bicycle races, skating

⁵² H  l  ne Berr, *The Journal of H  l  ne Berr* (New York: Weinstein Books, 2008), 99.

⁵³ Claude L  vy and Paul Tillard. Translated by Inea Bushnaq, *Betrayal at the Vel d’Hiv* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 282.

⁵⁴ Michel Laffitte, “The V  lodrome d’Hiver Round-Up: July 16 and 17, 1942,” *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence* (2008): 4

competitions, and other spectacles. Yet the fun and excitement found within the stadium would change. It went from a place of revelry and spirit to a prison of despair and horror.

News of what happened spread quickly. One of those arrested, Clara Garnek, wrote to her other family members on the eighteenth, explaining her location and the environment she found herself in. What is most moving in her letter to her family is a remark on her brother Jean, whom she calls by his pet name in her letter: “Jeannot cries all the time because he wants to return home.” (See Appendix) Inside the stadium, 8,160 crammed for space. One of the internees mentioned that “there were thousands of people there already, and we had some trouble finding room to sit. At night we had to curl up tight in order to sleep, and many people screamed in their sleep. It was horrible.”⁵⁵ Some of the prisoners would not be sent out until the twenty-second, and during those five days, conditions were unbearable.

The glass ceiling of the stadium was darkened, raising the temperature as lights kept watch on everyone. Using the toilet became a waiting game: there were ten lavatories and about twenty urinals...it took up to an hour or an hour and a half of waiting in a line to get a turn at using the available facilities.⁵⁶ The stadium created an atmosphere of nerves as a loudspeaker made inaudible announcements, and people were pushed to the extreme. Illness and discomfort spread quickly, and only two doctors and twelve nurses could tend to the thousands of people trapped inside. Disease was rampant among the children: 300 were consequently struck with a triple epidemic of diphtheria, scarlet fever, and measles; people became so desperate that they

⁵⁵ Claude Lévy and Paul Tillard. Translated by Inea Bushnaq, *Betrayal at the Vel d'Hiv* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 46.

⁵⁶Ibid, 72.

flaunted with suicide. Walking to the top floor, poor souls would jump into the middle of the stadium, and by the twenty-second, suicide claimed five victims.⁵⁷

To the Camps, Gateways to Auschwitz

The Jews of the Vélodrome were sent to the camps in the Loiret, a *département* (an administrative division) located in north-central France, south of Paris. The two camps, Pithiviers and Beaune-La-Rolande, were administered by French authorities, under guard by one hundred gendarmes.⁵⁸ Here families were separated, and most horribly, the French police beat the mothers with rifles as they held on to their children. The camps became a hotbed for epidemics and overpopulation. July 22, 1942 was the beginning of the deportation of the Vel d'Hiv Jews. Convoy number nine left the Drancy camp (a few miles northeast of Paris) carrying 996 Jews. Over a week and a half trains left the camps at Drancy, Pithiviers and Beaune-La-Rolande. July 31 convoy number thirteen was the first convoy from the Loiret camps that included fathers and mothers arrested during the Vélodrome d'Hiver roundup. The convoy held 1,052 Jews, 147 of them mothers with children aged fifteen to twenty (139 children). But the police again beat mothers from those children under fifteen years of age. The middle to end of August saw the deportation of children held at Drancy sent to Auschwitz. Convoy number twenty held 530 children all under sixteen; convoy number twenty-one held 373 under age thirteen. None of them were to return to France.⁵⁹ In total, around 76,000 Jews total were deported from France. Out of the 76,000 more than 11,000 children were deported; 2,000 of those children were under the age of six. The number of survivors came to 2,500 total, three percent of the 76,000 deported.

⁵⁷ Michel Laffitte, "The Vélodrome d'Hiver Round-Up: July 16 and 17, 1942," *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence* (2008): 6.

⁵⁸ Memorial de la Shoah Q&A. <http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/>

⁵⁹ Ibid, <http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/>

France, the Shoah & Memory

The deportation of Jews continued from the Occupied Zone, but also started from the Unoccupied Zone. The Vichy government handed them their Jews, people who lived in an area *unoccupied by the Germans*. The governments of France and of three other countries—Hungary, Slovakia, and Bulgaria—are the only ones in Europe who delivered Jews, bound and gagged, from a non-occupied zone straight into the hands of the Nazis on the other side of the border.⁶⁰ As the years went on, France had to struggle with the issue of its role in the sending of Jews to their deaths. Perhaps the most who struggled with this horrible period were the few survivors of the camps. As deportees came back, many Jewish survivors found that no one wanted to listen: “No sooner did we begin to tell our story than we were interrupted, like overexcited or overly talkative children by parents who are themselves burdened down with real problems.” To admit a special category of ‘racial deportees’ contradicted the assimilationist tradition of the Republic to which the Jews owed their freedom in France.⁶¹

The voices that emerge from this period do indeed seem to create the myth of two Frances: the collaborationist Vichy France of Pétain and Laval and Charles de Gaulle’s Republican France, innocent of the crimes of collaboration. The Vel d’Hiv too contrasted with episodes of fellow Parisians laughing and mocking at the Jews being rounded up, concierges happily showing policemen the apartments of Jewish families, while other Parisians took pity and voiced their anger at the acts committed against the Jews. One Frenchwoman expressed: “France has dishonored herself in inflicting such cruel treatment on people who thought they were finding an asylum in our country. We are ashamed to be French, to be Christian... and the

⁶⁰ Isaac Leventel, *Not the Germans Alone* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 43.

⁶¹ Julien Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 612.

eneration which surrounds your person had been unsettled if not indeed swept away.”⁶² These voices of anger go hand in hand with the voices of mercy, French people who could not stand and watch the Jews be sent to their deaths. One of the most famous was Mother Maria Skobtsoba, a Russian Orthodox nun who aided the Vel d’Hiv Jews for three days and even smuggled out children hiding in trash bags. She died in Ravensbrück, one of the 3,500 Frenchmen and women recognized as a Righteous Gentile by Yad Vashem in Israel.

But perhaps the most significant recognition of France’s participation in the Shoah came from not the people or the victims, but the French government itself. The government intended to remember the victims, but they failed to remember any participation of the French. In 1946 a commemorative plate was erected on the site of the Vélodrome, which stood until the 1960s. On the twentieth anniversary of the Roundup a ceremony was held at the Memorial of the Unknown Jewish Martyr in Paris. Neither of these two commemorations mentioned French responsibility. It is also striking that up until 1992, not a single French president attended the Roundup commemorations.⁶³ When President François Mitterand attended in 1992, he left a wreath at the plate, with a Round-Up escapee by his side, Rosette Breski Schalit. The President refused to comment, but declared on February 3, 1993 that each Sunday that coincided with or followed July 16 would be a National Day Commemorating Racist and Anti-Semitic Persecutions Committed under the Defacto Authority Known as the Government of the French State (1940-1944). A monument erected on the *Place des Martyrs Juifs du Vélodrome d’Hiver* displayed victims of the Roundup, lying on the curved track of the space. But on July 16, 1995, President Chirac spoke to the nation, finally admitting that the French state acted in the persecution of the

⁶² Julien Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 375.

⁶³ Michel Laffitte, “The Vélodrome d’Hiver Round-Up: July 16 and 17, 1942,” *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence* (2008): 7.

Jews.⁶⁴ He further remarked that “these dark hours will forever soil our history, and are injurious to our past and our traditions. Yes, the criminal insanity of the occupier was seconded by the French, by the French state.”⁶⁵

Conclusion

In 2011, what does the Vel d’Hiv Roundup mean to us? What does the Shoah in and of itself mean to us? It is a question no one can directly answer. It is a question that continues to guide the activities of the Mémorial de la Shoah, fittingly located in the Marais district of Paris. The museum was opened in 2005, but besides its museum activities it houses *Le Centre de documentation juive contemporaine*, which can give searchers access to photographs, letters and other documents of France’s Jews who experienced the Shoah.⁶⁶ In the fall of 2010 they held a special exhibition on the life and works of Irène Némirovsky, and today the CDJC holds the journal of Hélène Berr.

The statue at the *Place des Martyrs Juifs du Vélodrome d’Hiver* is a moving sight to behold. One gets off at the Bir-Hakeim station and walks across the street to the quai de Grenelle. Walking toward the statue, one sees the faces of those the statue depicts: a family huddled together, a husband holding his very pregnant wife, a small girl playing with her doll and an older woman lying stretched across the floor. In each one’s eyes are the emotions of despair, confusion, worry and desperation. After reading the inscription it ends with, *n’oublions pas*: never forget. One can almost sense the feeling of being forgotten as the Jews felt during the ordeal of the Roundup. As one stands at the memorial, the pain of history stings: from the gaze of the victims your vision climbs up the majestic Tour Eiffel, the iconic symbol of France, the

⁶⁴Michel Laffitte, “The Vélodrome d’Hiver Round-Up: July 16 and 17, 1942,” *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence* (2008): 8.

⁶⁵Ibid, 8.

⁶⁶Translated, the Center of Contemporary Jewish Documentation.

symbol of a nation thousands called home. For thousands, the tower was the last sight of home they saw. In this one space, two monuments capture the soul of those who were lost, but are now being found, and whose voices will shape our memory of the Shoah.

Appendix A

Letter from Clara Garnek to her family, in the original French. Bolded parts are translated:

“Paris, le 18 juillet 42

Cher oncle, tante et cousins,

Deux mots pour vous dire que nous avons été pris jeudi à trois heures et demie, et on nous a conduit au vélodrome d’hiver. **Nous sommes très malheureux. À chaque instant, il y a de nouveaux malades, il y a des femmes enceintes**, des aveugles...nous couchons par terre.

Hier, on nous a donné du lait pour les enfants de moins de dix ans, une tartine de pain, une tablette de chocolat, une madeleine, des pâtes. Je ne sais pas si on pourra supporter encore longtemps ceci. **Maman n’en peut plus.**

C’est encore plus abrutissant que toutes les femmes racontent des choses qui ne tiennent pas debout et au lieu de se remonter, elles se descendent et celles qui ont un peu de courage, **elles le perdent petit à petit.**

Je ne peux en écrire plus long et nous espérons vous revoir bientôt.

Jeannot pleure tout le temps parce qu’il veut retourner à la maison.

Clara. ”

Translations: “We are very miserable. At this instant there are many who are sick and many women who are pregnant...Mama cannot handle it...the women are losing it (courage) little by little...Jeannot cries all the time because he wants to return home.”

Note: Clara, along with her mother Fanny and her two brothers Henri and Jean, were killed at Auschwitz. Clara, born on January 24, 1927, was only 15 when she was killed.

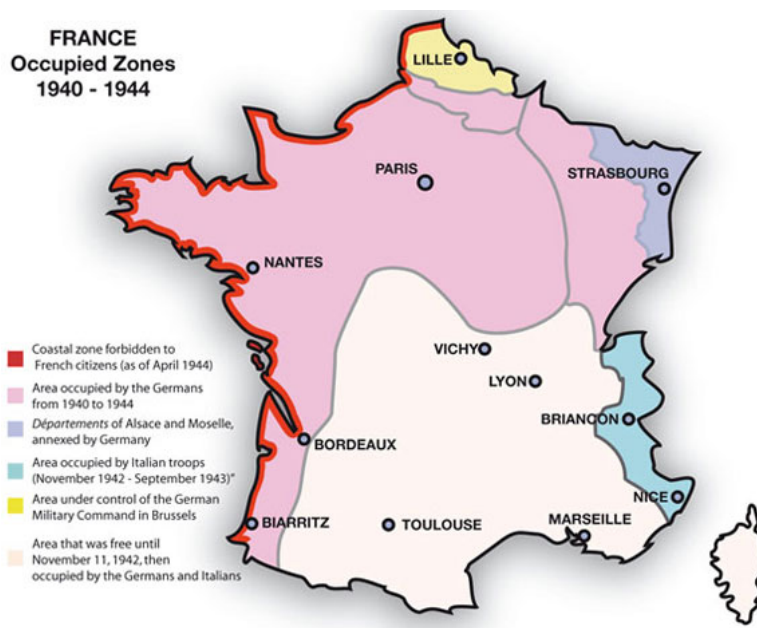
Appendix B

The widely accepted photo of the inside of the Vel d'Hiv. Proved to be false by Serge Klarsfeld.



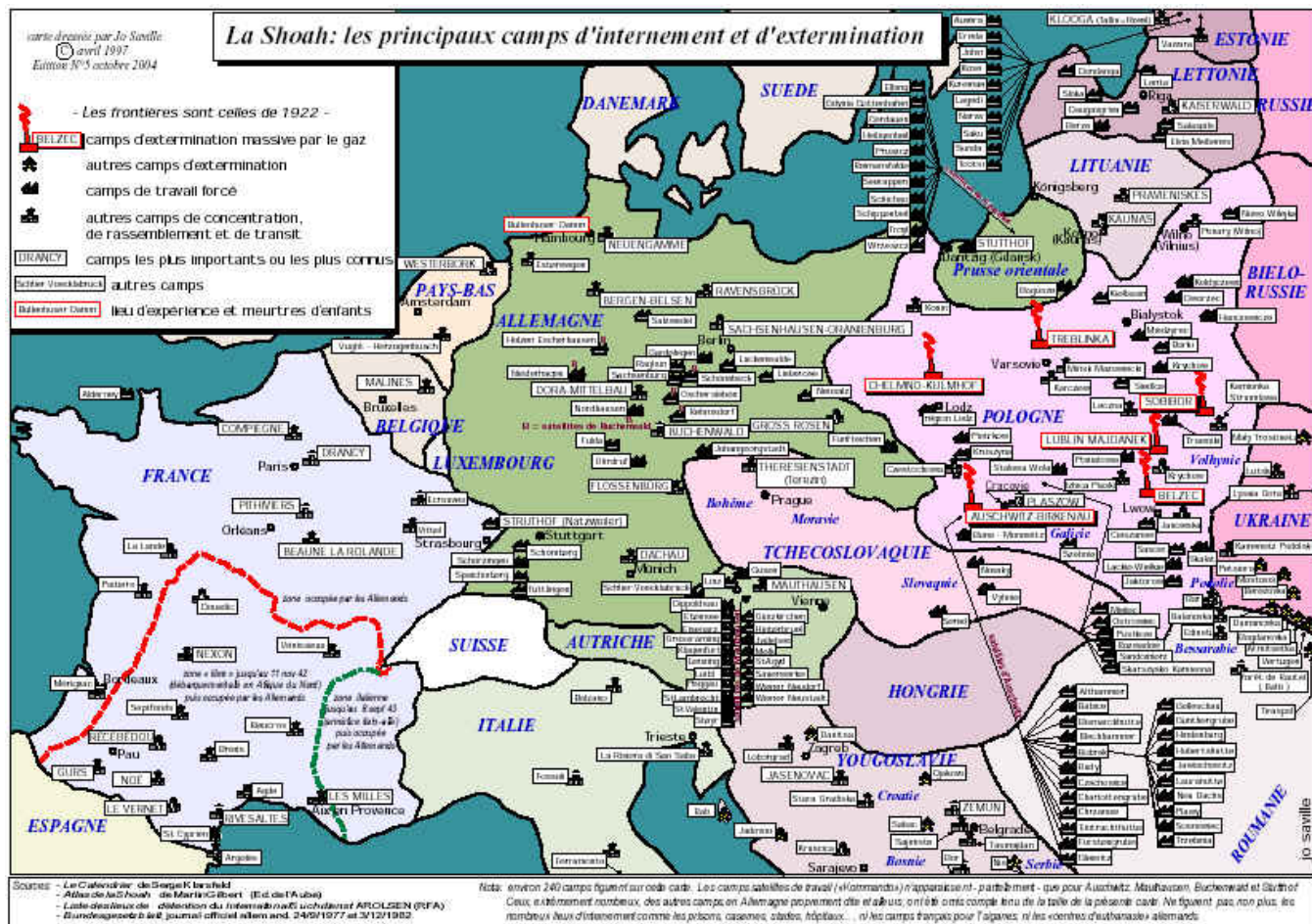
Appendix C

A map of divided France after the armistice with Germany:



Appendix D

A map of the internment and death camps of Nazi Europe:



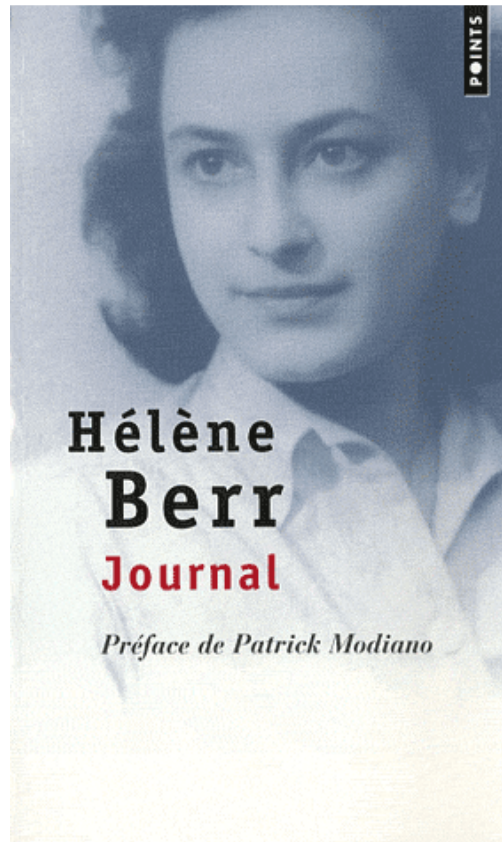
Appendix E

Irène Nèmirovsky. She and her family converted to Catholicism; this did not save her. Both she and her husband were gassed. Their daughters survived and thanks to them, helped with the publishing of *Suite française*.



Appendix F

Hélène Berr's journal was recently published. The original is kept at the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris. She died in Bergen-Belsen days before the camp's liberation.



Appendix G

Ice skating competition held at the Vel d'Hiv in its heyday.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Appendix H

The memorial in commemoration of the Roundup. Each year a ceremony is held in Paris.



Appendix I

Text of Jacques Chirac's speech at the memorial in July of 1995 in the original French. Bolded parts are the quotes used in this thesis. Other parts are starred for context with translation at the end.

« Monsieur le Maire,

Monsieur le Président,

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,

Monsieur le Grand Rabbin,

Mesdames, Messieurs,

Il est, dans la vie d'une nation, des moments qui blessent la mémoire, et l'idée que l'on se fait de son pays.

Ces moments, il est difficile de les évoquer, parce que l'on ne sait pas toujours trouver les mots justes pour rappeler l'horreur, pour dire le chagrin de celles et ceux qui ont vécu la tragédie. Celles et ceux qui sont marqués à jamais dans leur âme et dans leur chair par le souvenir de ces journées de larmes et de honte.

Il est difficile de les évoquer, aussi, parce que ces heures noires souillent à jamais notre histoire, et sont une injure à notre passé et à nos traditions. Oui, la folie criminelle de l'occupant a été secondée par des Français, par l'État français.

Il y a cinquante-trois ans, le 16 juillet 1942, 450 policiers et gendarmes français, sous l'autorité de leurs chefs, répondaient aux exigences des nazis.

Ce jour-là, dans la capitale et en région parisienne, près de dix mille hommes, femmes et enfants juifs furent arrêtés à leur domicile, au petit matin, et rassemblés dans les commissariats de police.

***On verra des scènes atroces : les familles déchirées, les mères séparées de leurs enfants, les vieillards - dont certains, anciens combattants de la Grande Guerre, avaient versé leur sang pour la France - jetés sans ménagement dans les bus parisiens et les fourgons de la Préfecture de Police.**

On verra, aussi, des policiers fermer les yeux, permettant ainsi quelques évasions.

Pour toutes ces personnes arrêtées, commence alors le long et douloureux voyage vers l'enfer. Combien d'entre-elles ne reverront jamais leur foyer ? Et combien, à cet instant, se sont senties trahies ? Quelle a été leur détresse ?

La France, patrie des Lumières et des Droits de l'Homme, terre d'accueil et d'asile, la

France, ce jour-là, accomplissait l'irréparable. Manquant à sa parole, elle livrait ses protégés à leurs bourreaux.

Conduites au Vélodrome d'hiver, les victimes devaient attendre plusieurs jours, dans les conditions terribles que l'on sait, d'être dirigées sur l'un des camps de transit - Pithiviers ou Beaune-la-Rolande - ouverts par les autorités de Vichy.

L'horreur, pourtant, ne faisait que commencer.

Suivront d'autres rafles, d'autres arrestations. A Paris et en province. Soixante-quatorze trains partiront vers Auschwitz. Soixante-seize mille déportés juifs de France n'en reviendront pas.

Nous conservons à leur égard une dette imprescriptible.

La Thora fait à chaque juif devoir de se souvenir. Une phrase revient toujours qui dit : "N'oublie jamais que tu as été un étranger et un esclave en terre de Pharaon".

Cinquante ans après, fidèle à sa loi, mais sans esprit de haine ou de vengeance, la Communauté juive se souvient, et toute la France avec elle. Pour que vivent les six millions de martyrs de la Shoah. Pour que de telles atrocités ne se reproduisent jamais plus. Pour que le sang de l'holocauste devienne, selon le mot de Samuel Pisar, le "sang de l'espoir".

Quand souffle l'esprit de haine, avivé ici par les intégrismes, alimenté là par la peur et l'exclusion. Quand à nos portes, ici même, certains groupuscules, certaines publications, certains enseignements, certains partis politiques se révèlent porteurs, de manière plus ou moins ouverte, d'une idéologie raciste et antisémite, alors cet esprit de vigilance qui vous anime, qui nous anime, doit se manifester avec plus de force que jamais.

En la matière, rien n'est insignifiant, rien n'est banal, rien n'est dissociable. Les crimes racistes, la défense de thèses révisionnistes, les provocations en tout genre - les petites phrases, les bons mots - puisent aux mêmes sources.

Transmettre la mémoire du peuple juif, des souffrances et des camps. Témoigner encore et encore. Reconnaître les fautes du passé, et les fautes commises par l'Etat. Ne rien occulter des heures sombres de notre Histoire, c'est tout simplement défendre une idée de l'Homme, de sa liberté et de sa dignité. C'est lutter contre les forces obscures, sans cesse à l'oeuvre.

Cet incessant combat est le mien autant qu'il est le vôtre.

Les plus jeunes d'entre nous, j'en suis heureux, sont sensibles à tout ce qui se rapporte à la Shoah. Ils veulent savoir. Et avec eux, désormais, de plus en plus de Français décidés à regarder bien en face leur passé.

La France, nous le savons tous, n'est nullement un pays antisémite.

***En cet instant de recueillement et de souvenir, je veux faire le choix de l'espoir.**

Je veux me souvenir que cet été 1942, qui révèle le vrai visage de la "collaboration", dont le caractère raciste, après les lois anti-juives de 1940, ne fait plus de doute, sera, pour beaucoup de nos compatriotes, celui du sursaut, le point de départ d'un vaste mouvement de résistance.

Je veux me souvenir de toutes les familles juives traquées, soustraites aux recherches impitoyables de l'occupant et de la milice, par l'action héroïque et fraternelle de nombreuses familles françaises.

J'aime à penser qu'un mois plus tôt, à Bir Hakeim, les Français libres de Koenig avaient héroïquement tenu, deux semaines durant, face aux divisions allemandes et italiennes.

Certes, il y a les erreurs commises, il y a les fautes, il y a une faute collective. Mais il y a aussi la France, une certaine idée de la France, droite, généreuse, fidèle à ses traditions, à son génie. Cette France n'a jamais été à Vichy. Elle n'est plus, et depuis longtemps, à Paris. Elle est dans les sables libyens et partout où se battent des Français libres. Elle est à Londres, incarnée par le Général de Gaulle. Elle est présente, une et indivisible, dans le coeur de ces Français, ces "Justes parmi les nations" qui, au plus noir de la tourmente, en sauvant au péril de leur vie, comme l'écrit Serge Klarsfeld, les trois-quarts de la communauté juive résidant en France, ont donné vie à ce qu'elle a de meilleur. Les valeurs humanistes, les valeurs de liberté, de justice, de tolérance qui fondent l'identité française et nous obligent pour l'avenir.

Ces valeurs, celles qui fondent nos démocraties, sont aujourd'hui bafouées en Europe même, sous nos yeux, par les adeptes de la "purification ethnique". Sachons tirer les leçons de l'Histoire. N'acceptons pas d'être les témoins passifs, ou les complices, de l'inacceptable.

C'est le sens de l'appel que j'ai lancé à nos principaux partenaires, à Londres, à Washington, à Bonn. Si nous le voulons, ensemble nous pouvons donner un coup d'arrêt à une entreprise qui détruit nos valeurs et qui, de proche en proche risque de menacer l'Europe tout entière. »

*"One will see families torn apart, mothers separated from their children, the elderly - including some veterans of the Great War, had shed their blood for France - dumped unceremoniously in Parisian buses and vans to Police Headquarters."

*"At this moment of contemplation and remembrance, I want to make the choice of hope."

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Berr, Helene. *The Journal of Helene Berr*. New York: Weinstein, 2008.

Peschanski, Denis. *Lettres de Drancy*. Paris: Les Editions Tallandier, 2002.

Mémorial de la Shoah, *Document de Déportation*. Paris, 1942.

Secondary Sources

Benbassa, Esther. *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Fontaine, Thomas. *The Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*. November 03, 2009. Accessed July 25, 2011. http://www.massviolence.org/Chronology-of-Repression-and-Persecution-in-Occupied-France?decoupe_recherche=chronology%20of%20repression%20and%20persecution%20in%20occupied%20france.

"Frequently Asked Questions." Mémorial de la Shoah. Accessed August 05, 2011. http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/b_content/getContentFromNumLinkAction.do?itemId=414&type=1.

Jackson, Julien. *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Kershaw, Angela. *Before Auschwitz: Irène Némirovsky and the Cultural Landscape of Inter-War France*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Laffitte, Michel. *The Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*. December 28, 2008. Accessed June 16, 2010. http://www.massviolence.org/Article?id_article=156.

Lévy, Claude, and Paul Tillard. *Betrayal at the Vel d'Hiv*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1967.

Levendel, Isaac. *Not the Germans Alone: A Son's Search for the Truth of Vichy*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999.

Lienhardt, Olivier, and Patrick Philipponnat. *The Life of Irène Némirovsky*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010.

Marrus, R. Michael, and Robert O. Paxton. *Vichy France and the Jews*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Schnapper, Dominique, Chantal Bordes-Benayoun, and Freddy Raphaël. *Jewish Citizenship in France: The Temptation of Being among One's Own*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2010.

Weisberg, Richard H. *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*. New York: New York University Press, 1996.

Weiss, Jonathan. *Irène Némirovsky: Her Life & Works*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007.

Wiedmer, Caroline. *The Claims of Memory: Representation of the Holocaust in Contemporary Germany and France*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999.