AWESOME stories

FRENCH RESISTANCE

0. FRENCH RESISTANCE - Story Preface

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Men and women were part of the French Resistance against Hitler and Germany's occupation of France. In this image, we see members of the Maquis (resistance) in La Tresorerie (a hamlet part of Wimille, near Boulogne-sur-Mer), on the 14th of September, 1944. About three months after D-Day, these individuals were joining forces with the Canadian army at Boulogne. The photo was taken by Donald I. Grant, Department of National Defence, and is maintained by Library and Archives Canada, PA-166396. PD

When Marshal Pétain signed the Armistice, it wasn't just control of the country which he gave up. He also bound the French people to other onerous terms, like:

- All Jews, living in France, would be surrendered to the Nazis.
- The French Army would be disbanded, except for 100,000 men who would maintain domestic order.
- French soldiers, already captured by Germany - 1.5 million of them - would remain prisoners of war.
- The Vichy government would stop members of the French armed forces from leaving France (thereby precluding their anti-German efforts elsewhere).
- Pétain's government would instruct French citizens not to resist Germany's occupation of their country.
- France would pay for the German occupation.

Charles de Gaulle, among others, was furious at such a "deal." He urged his fellow citizens to follow a different path:

> *I, General de Gaulle, now in London, call on all French officers and men who are at present on British soil, or may be in the future, with or without their arms; I call on all engineers and skilled workmen from the armaments factories who are at present on British soil, or may be in the future, to get in touch with me. Whatever happens, the flame of the French resistance must not and shall not die.* (See *Speeches that Changed the World*, edited by Simon Sebag Montefiore, page 109.)

Initially, people were so humiliated by Germany's easy victory that they did little to resist. Those who did fight back were mostly disorganized, and their efforts ended in arrests.

On the 11th of November, 1940, highschool children led one of the first displays of public resistance. Gathering at the Arch of Triumph, in Paris, they celebrated the Allied victory over Germany in the First World War.

In occupied France, the Nazis could harass whomever they wished. When Alois Brunner (a real-life "Jew Hunter" on whom Hans Landa is likely based) arrived in the country, French people were plagued with an experienced "Final Solution" administrator who

> *...organized squads that prowled about the country making arrests.*

Targeted people, fleeing to the forests of Vichy France, gradually joined together to form the Maquis. Its members attacked German troops and helped Allied airmen (whose planes had been shot-down over France) to escape.

As the resistance grew more effective, René Hardy (a key leader) was arrested. After he was tortured by Klaus Barbie and the Gestapo, the Nazis were able to arrest more leaders. Jean Moulin and Pierre Brossolette were

tortured to death, while Charles Delestraint was sent to Dachau (where he was killed near the war's end).

People who had once supported the Vichy government also started to turn against it, and fought back. In retaliation, a secret-police force - called the Milice - began to investigate the French resistance. Its 35,000 members used torture - against their own countrymen - to gain information, leading to some of France's darkest days.

In late March, of 1944, the German Army began its campaign of repression in France. The plan was to punish people who protected resistors - even if villagers weren't involved in fighting back themselves. If the objective was to stop the resistance, the plan failed.

On the 5th of June, 1944 - the day before D-Day - General Eisenhower asked the BBC to broadcast coded messages to the French resistance. Responding to the General's request for help, Frenchmen attacked German soldiers who were occupying their country.

The price for such resistance was high. On the 9th of June, the Nazis hanged 120 men in Tulle and murdered 67 more people in Argenton. The next day, Sturmbannführer Adolf Diekmann led a group of soldiers to Oradour-sur-Glane (a village in the Limousin region) where his troops killed 642 men, women and children. Then they burned the village.

Despite such atrocities against them, French resistors continued their attacks. When the war was over, Eisenhower acknowledged the value of their help and sacrifice:

> *Throughout France the Free French* [that is, the Resistance] *had been of inestimable value in the campaign . . . Without their great assistance the liberation of France and the defeat of the enemy in Western Europe would have consumed a much longer time and meant greater losses to ourselves.* (Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, page 296.)

Joseph Goebbels, however, saw things differently. He did everything he could to convince German citizens the war was going splendidly well. But, like most propaganda, Goebbels' movies were greatly slanted toward his own objectives.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/FRENCH-RESISTANCE-Inglourious-Basterds

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/FRENCH-RESISTANCE-Inglourious-Basterds

Questions 2 Ponder

Can Teenagers Lead the Way When Adults Falter?

On the 11th of November, 1940—Armistice Day—French high schoolers led one of the first displays of public resistance during the Nazi occupation of their country. Gathering at the Arch of Triumph, in Paris, they celebrated the Allied victory over Germany in the First World War.

A memorial, in the Luxembourg Garden in Paris, pays tribute to those student-resistance fighters.

Can you explain how teenagers were able to accomplish what adults, up to that point in time, had been unable to do?

What experiences have you had where children were able to lead the way by acting courageously?

Could the French teenagers' resistance to Hitler, and his regime, be likened to resisting bullying in today's world? Could it be likened to teenagers, in America, who are calling for legal changes regarding gun ownership?

Media Stream



French Internment Camp - Jews Sent to Pithiviers

Photo online, courtesy Deutsches Bundesarchiv (German Federal Archive), Bild (picture) 183-S69238.

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Nazi Occupation of France - Internment Camp

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Alois Brunner - "Jew Hunter" in France

Image online, courtesy the Ministry of the Interior, Austrian government.

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Maquis - Part of the French Resistance in WWII

Photograph by Donald I. Grant, originally maintained at the Department of National Defence, now at the Library and Archives Canada.

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Joseph Darnand and the Milice

Photo online, courtesy *Deutsches Bundesarchiv* (German Federal Archive), Bild (picture) 1011-720-0318-04.

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Arrest of French Resistors by the Milice

Image online, courtesy National Archives of France.

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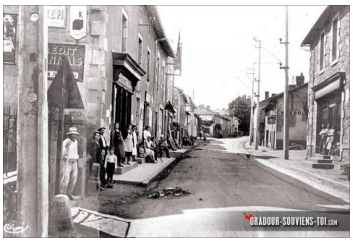


Adolf Diekmann - Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane

Photo by Herbert Escher, likely taken sometime between the 20th of April, 1942 and the 20th of April, 1944.

Image online, courtesy Oradour.info.

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Oradour-sur-Glane - Scene of Nazi Massacre

Photo online, courtesy Oradour-Souviens-Toi.
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Oradour-sur-Glane - Aftermath of Massacre

Description references from *Martyred Village - Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane*.
Photo online, courtesy Oradour-Souviens-Toi
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Oradour-sur-Glane - Ruins after Massacre

Description references from *Martyred Village - Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane*.
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Oradour-sur-Glane - Murdered Teachers and Students

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.
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Massacre Inside the Church - Oradour

Image online, courtesy Oradour.info.
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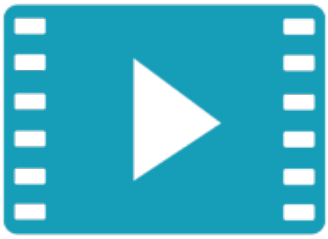
Hans Landa - Real-Life SS "Jew Hunter" in France

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.
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FRENCH RESISTANCE

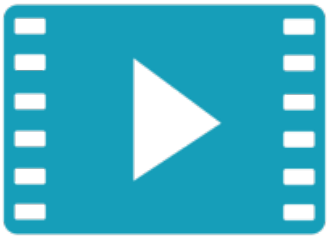
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Hitler and His Plan of Conquest - The Nazis Strike

Why We Fight, #2: "The Nazis Strike" (1943), produced by the US Army Special Service Division and directed by Frank Capra.

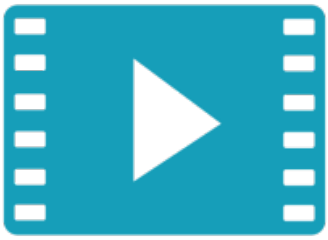
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Why We Fight - The Nazis Strike, Part 2

Why We Fight, #2: "The Nazis Strike" (1943) - part 2 - produced by the US Army Special Service Division and directed by Frank Capra.

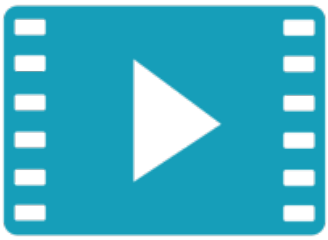
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Why We Fight - The Nazis Strike - Part 3

Why We Fight, #2: "The Nazis Strike" (1943) - part 3 - produced by the US Army Special Service Division and directed by Frank Capra.

Video online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.
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Why We Fight - The Nazis Strike, Part 4

Why We Fight, #2: "The Nazis Strike" (1943) - part 4 - produced by the US Army Special Service Division and directed by Frank Capra.

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