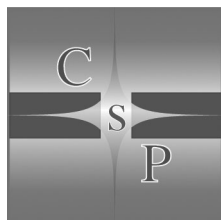


Germaine Tillion, Lucie Aubrac, and the Politics
of Memories of the French Resistance

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By

Donald Reid



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For my father, Robert Clark Reid,
and my mother, Anna Marie Murphy Reid

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADIR	Association nationale des anciennes déportées et internées de la Résistance
ALN	Armée de Libération Nationale
AMGOT	Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories
ATD-Quart Monde	Aide à Toute Détresse-Quart Monde
ATTAC	Association pour la Taxation des Transactions Financières pour l'Aide des Citoyennes et Citoyens
BERIM	Bureau d'Études et de Recherches pour l'Industrie Moderne
CCE	Comité de coordination et d'exécution (FLN)
CGT	Confédération Générale du Travail
CHDGM	Comité d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale
CICRC	Commission Internationale Contre le Régime Concentrationnaire
CNR	Conseil National de la Résistance
FFI	Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur
FIS	Front Islamique du Salut
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale
IHTP	Institut d'histoire du temps présent
MLN	Mouvement de Libération Nationale
MUR	Mouvements Unis de la Résistance
NN	Nacht und Nebel
OAS	Organisation de l'Armée Secrète
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PCF	Parti Communiste Français
REP	Régiment Étranger des Parachutistes
SS	Waffen-Schutzstaffel
STO	Service du travail obligatoire

PREFACE

I have had an opportunity, from two different angles, to gauge men's disarray before the world they had made, and twice to see the real support an understanding—in other words, an analysis—of crushing mechanisms can afford to those being crushed (besides, this light thrown on monsters is also, I am sure, one effective way of exorcizing them).

Each of us possesses this 'interpretative grid', whose mesh is progressively reduced throughout our lives. The mesh of mine was reduced between 1940 and 1945, in the fraternity of great danger, with people whose origins and cultural formation were very disparate, but who all really wanted to understand: people who were enduring things that were very hard to endure and wanted to know why. Once they had understood, in their innermost hearts, a little mechanism called reason began to operate again; and this often, quite miraculously, set in motion the delicate gears that anatomists and doctors study, which Xavier Bichat used to call "the complex of functions that resist death".

—Germaine Tillion¹

[When the torture by French paratroopers during the Battle of Algiers was worst,] I thought of Jean Moulin. This helped me put into perspective [*relativiser*] my sufferings and procured for me a kind of anesthesia.

—Louissette Ighilahriz²

A small number of French men and women made the decision to resist the occupation of their nation by Germany in 1940.³ For some of them, this existential experience would come to express elements of what Walter Benjamin, writing in Paris in 1940 on the eve of the defeat of France, called *Jetztzeit*, the explosive 'now-time' of truly radical challenges to power in history. Engagement with these challenges held the potential for later

¹ Germaine Tillion, *The Republic of Cousins: Women's Oppression in Mediterranean Society*, trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Al Saqi Books, 1983), 23-24.

² Florence Beaugé, *Algérie. Une Guerre sans gloire* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2005), 27.

³ For the life of Marc Bloch, see Carole Fink, *Marc Bloch: A Life in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For Germaine Tillion, see Jean Lacouture, *Le témoignage est un combat* (Paris: Seuil, 2000); and Nancy Wood, *Germaine Tillion, une femme-mémoire. D'un Algérie à l'autre* (Paris: Autrement, 2003). For Geneviève de Gaulle Anthonioz, see Caroline Glorion, *Geneviève de Gaulle Anthonioz* (Paris: Plon, 1997); and Frédérique Neau-Dufour, *Geneviève de Gaulle Anthonioz* (Paris: Cerf, 2004). The place to start for biographies of the Aubracs are their own memoirs.

generations to open the door to new worlds: ‘a past charged with the time of the now which [could be] blasted out of the continuum of history’.⁴ In 1940, Marc Bloch turned to the science of history to analyze his experiences, and the society in which he lived, in order to identify and affirm allegiance to a France truly at odds with that which was taking shape in Vichy. He did not yet know the Resistance, but to make the choice he was making, he evoked the emotional, identity-confirming power he experienced in thinking of particular moments in the French past. Bloch was an historian whose understanding of history involved a dialogue of the past with the world in which he lived. Although Bloch died in the Resistance, his life would in turn take on new meanings in the collective memories of postwar France.

The Resistance was an experience whose qualities were at once preserved and constructed in the memories of resisters, who could not but fear that these would be lost or suppressed when historians made the Resistance their past time. Faced with the disappointments of France after the war, resisters became archivists of the *Jetztzeit* of resistance in France and in the concentration camps, a ‘now-time’ only they had known when it was *now*, a spirit that they could (re)call up in order to try to transmit its *now* quality to future generations. Resisters’ commitment to resist did not end with the end of the Occupation. The acts Germaine Tillion took during the French-Algerian War and Geneviève de Gaulle Anthonioz took when confronted with poverty in the France of the *trentes glorieuses*, were of a piece with the radical nature of their earlier decision to resist.

Resisters’ actions during the war provided a basis for France to reconstitute itself with honor after the war. What Henry Rousso has called the Vichy Syndrome resulted from the French nation’s identification with the myth of the French as a people in resistance and the nation’s failure after the war to confront the nature of Vichy collaboration in Nazi rule.⁵ Revelation of the limited nature of French resistance, and particularly of the French state’s participation in the deportation of Jews, became an obsession for postwar generations.⁶ Living with the Resistance had been a blessing for the French after the war, but it could also pose difficult issues for future generations. They could

⁴ Walter Benjamin, Thesis XIV of ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’ in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt; trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1985), 261.

⁵ Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

⁶ For an examination of the effort to prompt such a reaction to France’s experience with Communism, see Donald Reid, ‘Pursuing the Communist Syndrome: Opening the Black Book of the New Anti-Communism in France’, *International History Review* 27 (June 2005): 295-318.

never hope to do what resisters, who had given birth to the society in which they were raised, had done. If de Gaulle's promotion of the French as a people in resistance had ironically left less place for the role of resisters, the shattering of the Gaullist myth forced the generation that came of age in 1968 to engage with the memory of the intrepid resisters of the first years of the war, whose decision to resist stood as an inspiration and a challenge.⁷ Historians, with the imperative to take the mandate to narrate the past from historical actors, to make resisters figures of history, have developed a complex relationship with those who resisted.⁸ Tillion confronted Olga Wormser-Migot on her account of the concentration camp Tillion had known and in which her mother had died; historians of the Resistance challenged Lucie Aubrac and Raymond Aubrac about their accounts of their actions during the war.⁹ While a prisoner at the Ravensbrück concentration camp, Tillion wrote an operetta which features an academic giving a lecture on the camp. He will never understand the resistance of resisters in the camp; the audience learns of it only by listening to them. Filmmakers Claude Berri and Jean-Luc Godard have made the history of the Aubracs' Resistance activity and of its memory figure in their own expressions of resistance to elements of the society in which they live.

I would like to thank Lucie Aubrac, Raymond Aubrac, and Daniel Cordier, who welcomed me into their homes and spoke with me about their experience as resisters in the postwar era; and Nelly Forget and Anise Postel-Vinay, who answered my questions with generosity and warmth. I would also like to thank friends who have read earlier versions of these chapters, especially Herrick Chapman, Alice Conklin, and Alice Kaplan, who read a number of them. I want to express my gratitude to the Center for European Studies of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and to the Guggenheim Foundation for research support. I would also like to thank the journals in which earlier versions of these essays appeared for permission to publish them: *European History Quarterly*, *French Cultural Studies*, *French Politics, Culture & Society*, *History and Memory*, *History Workshop Journal*, *Journal of Modern History*, and *Modern & Contemporary France*. It gives me real pleasure to thank Holly Russell, Hadley Reid and Otis Reid, whose love means so much to me.

⁷ See Donald Reid, 'Pierre Goldman: From *Souvenirs obscurs* to *Lieu de mémoire*', forthcoming in *French Politics, Culture & Society*.

⁸ Laurent Douzou has written a very good study of the Resistance as an historical subject: *La Résistance française: une histoire périlleuse* (Paris: Seuil, 2005).

⁹ For discussion of another such conflict in a different historical context, see Donald Reid, 'Dealing with Academic Conflicts in the Classroom: Teaching *I, Rigoberta Menchú* As a Case Study', *Teaching History* 31:1 (Spring 2006): 19-29.

CHAPTER ONE

THE NARRATIVE OF RESISTANCE IN MARC BLOCH'S *L'ÉTRANGE DÉFAITE*

There are two kinds of Frenchmen who will never understand the history of France: those who refuse to vibrate to the memory of the coronation of Reims; those who read without emotion the story of the Festival of the Federation. The direction of their preference matters little. Their impermeability to the most beautiful bursts of collective enthusiasm condemns them.

—Marc Bloch¹

I will say it frankly. I hope that we still have blood to spill, even if it has to be that of those who are dear to me (I don't speak of my own, to which I attach little value). For there is no salvation without a share of sacrifice nor national liberty that can be complete, unless we have worked to conquer it ourselves.

—Marc Bloch²

I believed in the future because I was making it myself.

—Jules Michelet, 'Introduction' to *Le Peuple*, copied by Marc Bloch (1940-41), shortly after finishing *L'Étrange défaite*³

Inverse selection, carried out systematically by Nazism, was, without a doubt, one of the most hideous characteristics of World War II. In major conflicts in the past, and even that of 1914, large somber swathes were taken from the engaged masses, most often in battles of position and attrition. This time, in the occupied territories, the best by character, judgment, and fidelity, *by wanting* to continue the struggle, designated themselves, and the enemy could... decimate the elite with certainty.

—Georges Friedmann⁴

An earlier version of this essay with the same title appeared in *Modern & Contemporary France* 11 (2003): 443-452. (© Taylor and Francis, 2003) Permission to reprint has been granted by Taylor and Francis.

¹ Marc Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 198.

² *Ibid.*, 207.

³ Carole Fink, 'Marc Bloch, alias Narbonne: L'épreuve suprême', in Pierre Deyon, Jean-Claude Richez and Léon Strauss, eds., *Marc Bloch, l'historien et la cité* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1997), 211n46.

In July 1940, a few weeks after Marshall Pétain had told the French they should accept their loss to the Germans, and General Charles de Gaulle had called on the French to resist, Marc Bloch drew on his experience in the army during the *drôle de guerre* of 1939-40 and in the campaign of the spring of 1940 to write a manuscript which asked how France had reached this impasse and what the French should do. Referring to *L'Étrange défaite* in a letter to Lucien Febvre, Bloch wrote, 'The historians we are will have had other experiences than those of documents [*chartes*]'.⁵ Published in 1946, the book is about finding the will and means to resist in a society that had defeated itself, a colonial power that had played the role of the hapless colonized ('the primitives'⁶). Febvre suggested that too few Frenchmen read *L'Étrange défaite* on its appearance because Bloch had not belonged to any political party⁷. However, this in turn helped give the text the qualities that allow Frenchmen from a diversity of political perspectives to continue to return to it in troubled times. 'Each line', Jean-Pierre Rioux could write in 1987, 'lays out anxiety or hope'.⁸

Bloch shows the French army in 1940 was premised on a rigid conception of order, which, when faced with the unexpected, collapsed into chaos, leaving no place for 'islets of resistance' to the invader⁹: 'the static order of an office is, in many ways, the antithesis of order, active and perpetually inventive, that the movement requires. One is a matter of routine and dressage; the other, of concrete imagination, of suppleness in intelligence and, perhaps, especially of character'.¹⁰ French army leaders, 'ruled by their memories of the last campaign'¹¹, proved unable to recognize that history is not a source of fixed lessons to guide future planning. This resulted in defeat. History is 'the science of change',¹² a resource that reveals unexpected developments and contingencies as well as apparent continuities.

L'Étrange défaite was written by an individual in a world of shattered collectivities, the antithesis to the bureaucratic world of reports Bloch contests

⁴ Georges Friedmann, 'Maurice Halbwachs', *Europe* 24:1 (1 January 1946): 45.

⁵ Marc Bloch to Lucien Febvre, 26 July 1942, in Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, *Correspondance*, ed. Bertrand Müller (Paris: Fayard, 2003), III: 208.

⁶ Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite*, 67.

⁷ Lucien Febvre, 'Vers une autre histoire', in *Combats* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1953), 419n2.

⁸ Jean-Pierre Rioux, 'Marc Bloch. Historien résistant', in *Visages de la Résistance* (Lyon: La Manufacture, 1987), 30.

⁹ Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite*, 81.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹² *Ibid.*, 150.

and resists. No authority requested the work and Bloch could not know its fate: 'Will these pages ever be published? I don't know'. The very decision to write was the first step toward resisting the world as it was—'how much more agreeable it would be to give in to the feelings of fatigue and discouragement'. Writing *L'Étrange défaite* was an affirmation of faith in a new France to come, the narrative of a resistance leading to a renaissance. Bloch begins by imagining future researchers who will find in the text something to help them pierce the 'ignorance' and the 'bad faith' in which the defeat is sure to be veiled.¹³

The apparent finality of the title *L'Étrange défaite* given the book in 1946 when the original title, *Témoignage*, became unavailable, is misleading. 'Quelle étrange guerre!', Bloch wrote a friend in December 1939.¹⁴ The defeat of France in 1940 was *étrange* to him in the sense of foreign and alien. However, Bloch argues that the four years of the First World War had given the French time to develop new modes of thought. Like de Gaulle in 1940, Bloch did not see the six weeks of May-June 1940 as a final defeat, but as one event in a long war. France, in continuing the struggle, would once again have the chance to nurture the new modes of thought it needed. Completing *L'Étrange défaite*, Bloch wrote Febvre, 'The Hundred Years War did not end at Crécy, nor even at Poitiers. Yet, there it is! The poor chaps who saw Crécy did not live to see the end of the war!'¹⁵ The defeat had its roots well before 1939; the struggle would continue after 1940.

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A deeply patriotic Jewish army captain whose family had left Alsace for France after the Franco-Prussian War delivers the scathing critique of the Intelligence Service of the French army that Captain Alfred Dreyfus had foresworn. Born in 1886, Bloch identified himself as a member of 'the Dreyfus Affair generation'.¹⁶ Great grandchild of a volunteer in the French revolutionary army in 1793, he apologizes for needing to tell us¹⁷, Bloch refutes once again the chronic charges of questionable national allegiance made against Jews. He embodied the model French citizen and republican, the antithesis of bourgeois

¹³ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁴ Marc Bloch to Michel Mollat, 4 December 1939, cited in François Bédarida, 'Marc Bloch historien, soldat et père de famille', in 'Marc Bloch à Etienne Bloch. Lettres de la "Drôle de Guerre"', *Cahiers de l'IHTP* 19 (1991): 13.

¹⁵ Bloch to Febvre, 26 September 1940, in Bloch and Febvre, *Correspondance*, III: 105.

¹⁶ Marc Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1993), 184.

¹⁷ Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite*, 31.

egotism, in volunteering to serve in 1939 at age fifty-three. Reflecting on his service in *L'Étrange défaite*, he makes the bureaucratic failings of the Intelligence Service, the 2^e bureau, emblematic of French incompetence in 1940. The methods used by the 2^e bureau cause 'grievous concerns'; the information it provided was 'contradictory' and contained serious errors.¹⁸ Furthermore, the 2^e bureau proved unable to assess and evaluate the data it received. 'Haunted by the cult of the secret'¹⁹, the Intelligence Service labeled in red ink "very secret", information it discovered, then locked it up 'far from the eyes of those it might concern, in a closet with three locks'.²⁰ But Bloch also saw the army bureaucracy as making spying easy: 'a tour of a few minutes through our office... would be sufficient to put in the hands of a spy, if there was one on our staff, quite valuable information'.²¹ Yet, spying was not Bloch's explanation of the failures of the French army in 1940. 'The triumph of the Germans was essentially an intellectual victory'²², he wrote, and he looked to consequences of the Dreyfus Affair for an explanation.

Bloch begins *L'Étrange défaite* by explaining that his experience in rural history has taught him that the historian can learn as much about former times from reading the traces of the past visible in the palimpsest constituted by plots of land today as from reading archives.²³ He sees the defeat in 1940 as bearing the traces of Dreyfus Affair. Since the divisiveness of the Affair, the teaching profession in France had failed to engage with the officer corps. As a consequence, the army was crippled by its inability to recognize the resources a republican citizenry could provide, and was unable to respond to the enemy's practice of the unexpected. If the defeat of France had begun in France, Bloch found the response there as well. *L'Étrange défaite* emerges as a founding text of the Resistance when Bloch abandons the legal model of a witness presenting evidence and turns to an examination of conscience. He too, he writes, has been too engaged in his career to assume the civic role France demands of her social and cultural elite.²⁴ But French culture contains the seeds of its own regeneration: reason exercised critically rather than to reiterate the status quo. There was no treasonous individual for the Intelligence Service to track down; there were only those Frenchmen who had not done their duty.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 113, 119, 117.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 130.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 116.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

²² *Ibid.*, 66.

²³ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁴ For a telling presentation of his 'bad conscience', see Bloch to Febvre, 8 October 1939, in Bloch and Febvre, *Correspondance*, III: 70.

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‘Without turning toward the present, it is impossible to understand the past’, wrote Bloch²⁵, but the historian’s construction of the past in turn sheds light on the present. ‘The near past is, for the average man, a convenient screen; it hides from him the remote pasts of history and their tragic possibilities of renewal’.²⁶ Early in volume one of *La Société féodale*, published in 1939, Bloch wrote a chapter on the ‘teachings’ derived from study of the Saracen, Hungarian and Norse invasions of western Europe in the ninth century. The nomadic raiders were born soldiers and had a great advantage over the settled communities in Western Europe defended by professional armies:

The incapacity of [these communities] ... to put up a truly effective resistance [to the nomadic raiders] says a lot about their internal defects.... Brave in the face of familiar dangers, simple folk are ordinarily incapable of dealing with surprise and mystery. The monk of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, who, shortly after the event, told of the movement up the Seine, in 845, by the Norman boats—see with what a troubled voice he notes, “that we had never heard speak of such a thing nor read of such in the books”.... The letters that Alcuin sent to England after the disaster of Lindisfarne are just exhortations to virtue and repentance; of the organization of resistance, not a word.... The profound truth is that the chiefs were much less incapable of fighting if their own life or their own goods were in play, than to organize methodically the defense—and with very few exceptions—to understand the bonds between particular interests and the general interest.²⁷

Bloch’s portrait of France in *L'Étrange défaite* echoes the opening of *La Société féodale*. In the France of 1940, the elite allowed individual interests to take precedence over collective interests; the highly mobile invaders took actions that stunned the defenders, who had never seen them in their books. After the defeat, collaborators displayed a willingness to ‘engage us to enter, as vassals, in the German continental system’.²⁸

Volume two of *La Société féodale* appeared in 1940, when Bloch was in the army. In it, he laid out how feudalism created the social basis for a society which could protect itself from alien invaders, and which provided the origins of national allegiance (as well as the differences between France and Germany). In the final paragraph, Bloch underscored that the mutual obligations of ruler and ruled endowed the latter with the “‘right of resistance’” when the

²⁵ Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite*, 30. See also Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire*, 96.

²⁶ Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite*, 162.

²⁷ Marc Bloch, *La Société féodale* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1968), 93-94.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 182.

ruler betrayed the contract binding kings and vassals.²⁹ That is to say, out of the chaos of the earlier invasions came the basis of the social and political order at the heart of European civilization and this order embodied the right—and responsibility—of resistance to illegitimate order and injustice.

This was not how supporters of the Vichy regime read this history. The response of the bourgeoisie to the victory of the Popular Front in 1936, Bloch believed, had revealed that it was having great difficulty moving from the democracy of the early Third Republic, that solidified bourgeois leadership (by displacing nobles), to one in which the lower classes exercised power and did not show deference to the bourgeoisie. The army officer corps perpetuated for the bourgeoisie this sense of a fixed social hierarchy.³⁰ Vichy calls for a return to the soil gave voice to the bourgeois elite's dream of a loyal peasantry. Vichy had, Bloch notes, clearly forgotten the Ur-resisters in French history, *les croquants*, the peasants who revolted repeatedly against state oppression in the early seventeenth century.³¹ In *L'Étrange défaite*, Bloch finds the sources for rejuvenation of France in manifestations of working-class solidarity—the world of the Popular Front—the true, that of the crowds, not the politicians—[in which] there revived something of the atmosphere of the [Festival of the Federation held at the] Champ de Mars, in the bright sunshine of 14 July 1790'.³² The sense of participation in a shared project is what had been lost. Drawing inspiration from the anarcho-syndicalist Fernand Pelloutier, Bloch spurned unions' *Kleinbürgerlich* fixation on '*petits sous*',³³ and looked to the solidarity of the proletariat as an antidote to social egotism. He condemned the businessman who could not understand why workers would engage in a 'solidarity strike', on the grounds that it did not concern their own salaries.³⁴ Not surprisingly, Bloch concluded, the soldier who was a scab in civilian life and betrayed his fellow miners, lacked what it took to defend his country.³⁵

Bloch's celebration of the qualities of the French people is accompanied by a call for the bourgeoisie to fulfill its role as an elite, not unlike the calls made to the liberal aristocracy in 1789. For Bloch, characterized as a man of the 'bourgeois aristocracy' by fellow resister Georges Altman³⁶, the bourgeoisie provided the intellectual elite of France and bore responsibility for the intellectual defeat of the nation. In the nineteenth century, the *rentier*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 618.

³⁰ Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite*, 62-63.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

³² *Ibid.*, 199.

³³ *Ibid.*, 171-172.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 198.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

³⁶ 'Avant-propos de Georges Altman', in *ibid.*, 270.

bourgeoisie had produced an intellectual class driven by neither the vagaries of the market nor the corporate straitjackets of professions like the law, medicine or the university: 'Our bourgeoisie, which remains, despite all, the brains of the nation, undoubtedly had a greater taste for serious studies at the time when it was, in large measure, a class of *rentiers*'.³⁷ However, the twentieth-century bourgeoisie to which Bloch belonged was increasingly rooted in business and the professions. Bloch believed that this bourgeoisie had failed to perform the civic mission French society required: 'Above all, we were taken up by daily tasks. For most, there remained only the right to say we were good workers. Were we always good enough citizens?'³⁸

Bourgeois who recognized the problems besetting France in the interwar years, but did not speak out, or who saw these developments as irresistible and any attempt to counter them as 'the desperate gestures of a shipwrecked individual', were wrong.³⁹ Resistance is an act of self-defense in the sense of defense of the self, but not the self of the egotistical. Resistance is a response to the corruption of the self which could result from the shame and humiliation of defeat. It was not too late to resist the temptation not to resist. *L'Étrange défaite* can be read as opening the way to a critique of the *Annales* methodology Bloch himself had pioneered between the wars. Had it devoted insufficient attention to acts of individual agency, like the resistance on which Bloch would embark? Bloch's experience in World War I helped him forge the fundamental *Annales* category of mentality, a concept that Bloch can be seen using in *L'Étrange défaite* to interpret the failed institutions of Third Republic France as well as the other France which could resist. However, *L'Étrange défaite* also asks the historian to analyze how and why individuals like the citizen Bloch acted in extreme situations, a problematic whose new questions and new ways of answering them is broached in *L'Étrange défaite* and Bloch's other major wartime text, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien*.

In the opening chapter of *L'Étrange défaite*, Bloch tells of donning civilian clothes to escape capture by the Germans: 'the only means to continue to serve, in any fashion, my country'. If, at first, he felt a 'certain discomfort at living in a lie', he would learn to give in to 'the malicious pleasure, finally to get the best of these gentlemen [the Germans], without them suspecting a thing'.⁴⁰ Evading capture was Bloch's first act of a resistance that would necessarily develop outside of the army. An officer tells Bloch he learned from the war in 1940, "that there are professional soldiers who will never be warriors; [and]

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 205.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 52-54.

civilians, to the contrary, who, by nature, are warriors”⁴¹ Bloch himself argued that ‘for the development of the qualities needed in such new circumstances [as are found in war], many civil professions are a much better school’ than the military.⁴²

After the Germans occupied southern France in November 1942, the authorities advised Bloch to leave his teaching post at Montpellier. Then they revoked his appointment for ‘abandonment of position in the face of the enemy’: vile wording, wrote Febvre, ‘when one thinks that it was perhaps dictated, in any case counter-signed, by... the same “enemy”’.⁴³ In 1943, a student put the ex-professor Bloch in contact with the Franc-Tireur resistance movement. Living the double life as traveling salesman ‘M. Blanchard’ (the name of the general he excoriated in *L’Étrange défaite* for speaking of capitulation when continued combat should have been the order of the day⁴⁴), Bloch served on the Comité directeur of Franc-Tireur and as Rhône-Alpes regional delegate to the Mouvements Unis de la Résistance (MUR), where his organizational skills were put to the test. Captured by the Germans, he was executed in June 1944.

In *L’Étrange défaite*, Bloch vents his frustration with the fruitless bureaucratic labors he was assigned in the army. These did not recognize or draw on his skills. The Resistance made use of Bloch’s talents and gave him authority no captain in the army would exercise. France, Bloch contended, had been undermined by a reified culture, but the world-turned-upside-down of the Resistance offered an opportunity to defeat this culture and, in so doing, to prefigure the France of the future. Dominique Veillon, historian of Franc-Tireur, characterizes Bloch’s work as disentangling a knotted skein, favouring the creation of autonomous services in a number of places over their centralization in a single locale in order to deal with the diversity of functions in a resistance organization⁴⁵: in the words of Bloch’s biographer, Carole Fink, he ‘distinguished himself by bringing order and discipline to a hitherto chaotic organization.’⁴⁶ Bloch got the chance to create and live the world of information exchange and contingency whose absence he saw at the heart of the failure of the French army. The Resistance Bloch projected in *L’Étrange défaite* was secondarily about defeating Germany and primarily about forging a new French culture, a culture which would emerge from the chrysalis of defeated

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 138.

⁴³ Lucien Febvre, ‘Marc Bloch et Strasbourg’, in *Combats*, 405.

⁴⁴ Bloch, *L’Étrange défaite*, 143.

⁴⁵ Dominique Veillon, *Le Franc-Tireur* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977), 176.

⁴⁶ Carole Fink, *Marc Bloch: A Life in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 306.

France. 'All national calamities call, first of all, for an examination of conscience; then (for the examination of conscience is only a morose gratification, if it does not result in an effort to make things better) for establishing a plan of renewal'.⁴⁷

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The Marc Bloch of *L'Étrange défaite* has become an icon and an oracle in the world of the Vichy Syndrome⁴⁸, a *citoyen thaumaturge* whose identity as Jewish republican patriot resister and martyr today offers a healing touch: 'the heroic figure of our good and bad consciences as citizens'.⁴⁹ In 2006, a number of prominent historians asked that Bloch's ashes be placed in the Panthéon.⁵⁰ Bloch might even be seen as a *lieu de mémoire*, in the sense that Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* are grottoes, suitable for pilgrimages of the imagination, that resulted from the identification and destruction of an all-encompassing collective memory by the very kind of historical examination that Bloch himself championed.⁵¹ As the defining national trauma moved from the defeat of France to Vichy participation in the Holocaust, the relation of Bloch's critique in *L'Étrange défaite* to national identity changed. When *L'Étrange défaite* was first published, Raymond Aron astutely recognized that what made Bloch's analysis so telling was that it confronted the French on the terrain of what they considered their natural strength, intellectual ability. 'Moral self-accusation often serves [the French] as an alibi to avoid intellectual critique'.⁵² From this perspective, the turn, a generation after publication of *L'Étrange défaite*, to uncovering the repressed nature of Vichy collaboration, was a reassuring assertion for the French of their intellectual power of revelation in the service of a project of national moral self-accusation.

In October 1940, a few weeks after Bloch finished *L'Étrange défaite*, Vichy promulgated the Statute of the Jews. Emancipation of the Jews and their integration into French institutions had been a fundamental legacy of the France of the Revolution. The National Revolution pursued by Vichy did not simply deny that Jews were French; in so doing, it denied that it was France. Bloch

⁴⁷ Marc Bloch, 'Sur la réforme de l'enseignement', in Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite*, 254.

⁴⁸ Olivier Dumoulin, *Marc Bloch* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 2000), esp. 21-50.

⁴⁹ Bertrand Müller, 'Marc Bloch et les années trente: l'historien, l'homme et l'histoire', in Deyon, Richea and Strauss, eds., *Marc Bloch*, 159.

⁵⁰ *Libération*, 2 June 2006.

⁵¹ See Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History', in *Realms of Memory*, ed. Pierre Nora; trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1-20.

⁵² Raymond Aron, 'Méditations sur la défaite', *Critique* 12 (1947): 440.

explains in *L'Étrange défaite* that he identified as Jewish only when faced with an anti-semitic.⁵³ The Resistance revealed itself to be the true France because the Resistance was the only incarnation of France that would let Bloch be French.⁵⁴ He resisted strenuously Febvre's plan in 1941 to drop Bloch's name from *Annales*, in order to allow the journal they had co-founded to be published in Paris (required because Bloch was Jewish). Febvre believed only this would prevent 'a new death for [his] country'⁵⁵ and destruction of 'an instrument of emancipation of the first order'⁵⁶, which would provide 'an unexpected victory' for 'the Beast'.⁵⁷ What Febvre termed Bloch's 'desertion'⁵⁸ would have been an 'abdication' for Bloch⁵⁹, a shameful pursuit (by others) of professional interests, like that which had corrupted the bourgeois elite before the war.

Febvre's behaviour features prominently in the forty-page reflection written to Bloch with which Daniel Schneidermann, columnist for *Le Monde*, concludes his account of the trial of Maurice Papon, *L'Étrange procès*. Each night of the trial Schneidermann read a few lines from Bloch's *L'Étrange défaite* and found in Bloch the antithesis of Papon. *L'Étrange défaite* served as 'an excellent antidote to the poisons of the court session of the day'; Bloch 'cleanses the spirit of the daily defilement of the renunciations and compromises' that 'the Papon trial and its descent into the spirit of Vichy' inflicted on Schneidermann.⁶⁰ Bloch's critique of army bureaucracy as unable to deal with the unexpected becomes for Schneidermann a critique of the Vichy administrative bureaucracy that appeared unable to deal with the unthinkable—to say *non* to deportations of Jews.

Bloch found in the Dreyfus Affair the divorce of institutions of the French republic, like the army, from university professors, increasingly the new face of intellectuals in France. He was not the voice of the intellectual for whom engagement was solely speaking the truth of universal principles to power. He chastised himself and others for failing to make the principles of the history they pursued in places like *Annales* operative in the bureaucracies upon which the

⁵³ Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite*, 31.

⁵⁴ Bloch actively opposed Vichy creation of the Union générale des israélites de France because he believed it ghettoized French Jews, treating them as Jews first and French second.

⁵⁵ Febvre to Bloch, 19 April 1941, in Bloch and Febvre, *Correspondance*, III: 127.

⁵⁶ Febvre to Bloch, 3 May 1941, in *ibid.*, III: 132.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Febvre to Bloch, 19 April 1941, in *ibid.*, III:125.

⁵⁹ Bloch to Febvre, 16 April 1941, in *ibid.*, III:123.

⁶⁰ Daniel Schneidermann, *L'Étrange procès* (Paris: Fayard, 1998), 170. There is a Cercle Marc Bloch, active c. 1999-2000 and more recently. It has focused on opposition to Holocaust denial. See <http://membres.lycos.fr/cmbloch> (accessed 30 November 2006).

Republic depended.⁶¹ In *L'Étrange défaite*, Bloch presents the Dreyfus Affair not primarily as evidence of an anti-semitism at the core of French political culture, a leitmotif of accounts of Vichy complicity in the Holocaust, but as an event that weakened the Republic by creating barriers among its elites.

Is the France that Bloch evoked in *L'Étrange défaite* disappearing? Alain Finkielkraut wrote in 1980:

Getting goose bumps at the memory of the coronation of Reims, and always feeling the same emotion when reading the account of the festival of the Federation. Being willing to give your life for your country on a moment's notice. Until quite recently, this is what it meant to be French. And these were the criteria used to measure the extent to which Jews had really become part of France. Today, the magnetism no longer holds. Deprived of its former attraction, the paradigm fractures and falls apart. And not just for Jews. The disaffection has become general: the French on the whole are distancing themselves from any such collective enthusiasm. No longer finding commonality in their territorial identity, they imperceptibly cease dramatizing France.⁶²

Other republican activists contest Finkielkraut's observation, and turn to *L'Étrange défaite* to call up the France Bloch invoked in 1940. Communists, Trotskyists, Socialists, and republicans, hostile to what they saw as a commodification of public culture and encroachments on the nation state in the Treaty of Amsterdam governing the European Union, launched a Fondation Marc-Bloch in March 1998.⁶³ The Fondation saw itself confronted with the '*étrange défaite*' of the Mitterrand presidency and made frequent reference to Bloch's text of that name.⁶⁴ 'It required the Nazi Occupation for a new elite [the resisters] to emerge', one founder of the Fondation explained, in presenting their project.⁶⁵ If the French no longer get goose bumps hearing of kings and the

⁶¹ *L'Étrange défaite* is the document to which historians still turn when fulfilling Bloch's injunction to bring the scientific method of history to bear on the political culture of the republic. See Annette Wieviorka's use of *L'Étrange défaite* to critique the positions of participants at the U.N. Durban conference on racism in 2001. *Le Monde*, 19 September 2001. Daniel Hémerly and other historians also call on Bloch—'Marc Bloch, reviens!'—to condemn legislation requiring instruction on French colonialism to valorize the European presence. *Libération*, 8 June 2006.

⁶² Alain Finkielkraut, *The Imaginary Jew*, trans. Kevin O'Neill and David Suchoff (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 85.

⁶³ *Libération*, 27 September 1999.

⁶⁴ Association pour la Fondation Marc Bloch, 'Appel', *Panoramiques* 35 (1998): 221-222.

⁶⁵ *Le Monde*, 29 September 1998. Etienne Bloch, Marc Bloch's son, filed suit against the Fondation for illicit use of his father's name for an association opposed to the European

Revolution, they may still understand the history of France, when they vibrate to *L'Étrange défaite*, the text in which Marc Bloch wrote himself into resistance.

vision he believed his father had championed. The Fondation claimed it was evoking the resister Bloch writing as a citizen, and therefore a figure in the public domain, not Bloch the historian. However, the Fondation lost the case (*Le Monde*, 10-11 October 1999) and renamed itself the Fondation du 2 mars, after the date of its creation in 1998. See <http://notre.republique.free.fr/amisafimb.htm> (accessed 6 December 2006).

CHAPTER TWO

GERMAINE TILLION AND RESISTANCE TO THE VICHY SYNDROME

Those in charge cannot always prefer 'their mother to justice', to the constraints of a fixed objective. But it is likely that faced with the revelations brought by the report of Dorine [a wartime report to Allied governments on conditions in the camps by a French resister who had been in Ravensbrück and escaped], they said in the offices: 'It's a crazy woman. She is raving about persecution, a Frenchwoman haunted by the Jardin des Supplices'.
—Olga Wormser-Migot¹

It was luck that people [like Wormser-Migot] weren't in the camps. You can't imagine, you know, the things that could happen [there]. So she judged all this and she was much too assertive and much too skeptical....She did not feel the drama of the concentration camps. This escaped her. She reasoned like a normal woman. So that I find Germaine Tillion more trustworthy.
—Georges Wellers²

Henry Rousso suggests that after the war Charles de Gaulle offered the French a mirror in which they could see themselves during the Occupation as they wanted to be seen. When this mirror broke after 1968, the emerging obsessions of what Rousso has termed the Vichy Syndrome had two components. The dominant element was recognition of the nature of the collaboration of the Vichy Regime with the Third Reich, particularly in the

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¹ Olga Wormser-Migot, *Le Retour des déportés* (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 1985), 176. Preferring one's mother to justice is a reference to Albert Camus' position on the French-Algerian War. *Le Jardin des supplices* [the Garden of Tortures] is the title of a novel by Octave Mirbeau, published in 1899. Wormser-Migot is the author's married name; she is identified as Wormser-Migot throughout this essay.

² Michel Folco, 'Dans Un Champ de Mines', *Zéro* 8 (May 1987): 72. Wellers is an Auschwitz survivor who testified at the trial of Adolf Eichmann and co-authored a work on the gas chambers with Germaine Tillion.

deportation of Jews. Confrontation with the previously unacknowledged degree of French support for and acquiescence to Vichy authority fed a second element of the Syndrome: an attack on the hegemony of Resistance memory of the war. The issue was both whether a 'silent majority' in France during the war had favored Vichy rather than the Resistance, and whether the resisters' memory of their own experiences had been corrupted by fabulists. For no one were conflicts over the Resistance memory more painful than for deported resisters, who had themselves struggled for recognition and distinction after the war. At Ravensbrück, Germaine Tillion had developed the narrative of extermination she has presented over the succeeding half-century. This narrative became an element of the Resistance interpretation of the war. After 1968 Tillion played an important role in critiquing representations both of the French as fundamentally sympathetic to the Vichy regime and of the deported resisters' memory as mythopoetic, a charge brought by the historian Olga Wormser-Migot. The struggle against the generation of Holocaust negationists of the 1970s and 1980s, the height of what Rousso refers to as the 'Jewish memory' phase of the Vichy Syndrome obsession, was ushered in by this earlier conflict among historians and deported resisters, neither of whom had any doubts about the Nazi use of gas chambers to exterminate Jews. We will conclude by examining the nature of the 'unfinished mourning' Rousso identifies at the heart of the Vichy Syndrome and the ways in which this concept, transferred from the individual to the collective by Rousso, is enriched when it is brought back from collective psychology in order to analyze the individual in the case of Tillion.

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Germaine Tillion is an ethnologist who studied the inhabitants of the southern Aurès in Algeria from 1934 to 1940. She returned to France in time to hear Philippe Pétain's capitulation. She was eating in a stranger's kitchen and went out in the street and threw up. 'From that moment, the Vichy government was, for me, that of a foreign country'.³ Beginning in June 1940, Tillion played a major role in the Réseau du Musée de l'Homme, one of the first resistance groups in France. She was arrested in 1942 and deported the following year to Ravensbrück, the only concentration camp created solely for women. Her mother, Émilie Tillion, was also arrested for Resistance activities and sent to Ravensbrück. She died in a gas chamber there in March 1945. Late the following month, Tillion was released and on her return to France put aside her work on Algeria for study of the camps. The British would allow only one

³ Georges-Marc Benamou, *C'était un temps déraisonnable. Les premiers résistants racontent* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1999), 244.

French deportee to attend all the 1947 trials of Ravensbrück camp administrators (for witnesses could not attend trials before they testified), and two deportee organizations chose Tillion as their representative.

The trials were a disappointment to Tillion, leaving her with 'the memory of a nightmare',⁴ because trials of individuals for individual offenses could do justice neither to what had happened in the camps nor to the perpetrators' role in sustaining the camp universe. The trials 'skimmed over the facts'⁵; 'the representation—re-presentation—of crimes followed its course, and I measured the deepening of the abyss being dug between what really happened and the uncertain re-presentation we call history'.⁶ Only the defendants and former prisoners could understand what was being said as the prosecutors and public had never entered the *univers concentrationnaire*. 'During the war crimes trials I attended in 1946 and 1947, I made the striking discovery that both witnesses and defendants, using the same esoteric language, were at first understood only among themselves, excluding the judges and the public'.⁷ The judicial system proved so inadequate to deal with the camps that, wrote Tillion:

for the first time in my life, I asked herself if the beautiful fascinating mirages for which we died were truly worth having one poor human so painfully sacrifice her unique little life. In captivity we never doubted that we were in the straight line of truth, and each new horror confirmed us in our certainty that we were not wrong in choosing to fight against such horrors. But what a setback it is to say, when we have already wagered all and lost, that in the face of such horrors [*monstruosités constructives*], seen from our eyes, weighed and measured with all our suffering, there are only velleities....⁸

⁴ Germaine Tillion, *À la recherche du vrai et du juste*, ed. Tzvetan Todorov (Paris: Seuil, 2001), 34 [1978]. The original publication date for materials from this collection is given here in brackets.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 48 [1991].

⁶ Germaine Tillion, *Ravensbrück* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), 142.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁸ Tillion, *À la recherche*, 155-184 (p. 172 quoted) [1946-1949]. Tillion criticized British judicial practice, which had no place for the extensive *instruction* that preceded a French trial. One reading of Tillion's historical work is as the *instruction* she saw lacking at Hamburg. For fellow Ravensbrück deportee Geneviève de Gaulle [Anthonioz]'s critique of the British trial and praise of the *instruction* and trial of a Ravensbrück commandant done in the French zone, see her *L'Allemagne jugée par Ravensbrück* (Paris: Les Grandes Éditions Françaises, 1947) and Olivier Laliou, *La Déportation fragmentée: les anciens déportés parlent de politique 1945-1980* (Paris: Boutique de l'Histoire, 1994), 105.

Trials examine criminal aberrations in a normal world, but Tillion found them inadequate to understand a world in which the criminal act was not an aberration.

But did this normal world really want to know about the camps? Many French, though feeling no responsibility for deportation of their countrymen, sought to avoid dealing with deportees' experiences, which they could understand only as a challenge to appreciation of their own personal suffering during the war.⁹ Tillion's friend, Ravensbrück deportee Geneviève de Gaulle [Anthonioz], wrote of the deep hurt caused by the 'general indifference' to camps manifested at the time of the trials: 'this indifference affected us more than [testimony about] any of the atrocities'.¹⁰ The incomprehension with which camp survivors were met contributed to their retrospective relationship to those they saw die—a relationship which psychiatrists speak of as burdened by 'impaired mourning'.¹¹ Certainly one source of the concept of 'unfinished mourning' which informs Rousso's *The Vichy Syndrome* is camp survivors' effort to come to terms with their experience; the 'duty to remember' which they pledged to one another in the camps evolved into a mantra for a succeeding generation of French men and women. Later, Tillion would be representative of deportees who resisted the shift of the 'duty to remember' from memory of Frenchmen who had suffered and died in the camps to memory of the French collectivity accused of facilitating their deportation.

Conflicts over how the French in the camps were to be remembered had roots in the postwar delineation of categories like *déporté(e)*. Only a minority of those sent to camps had been resisters¹²; the designation deportee was hotly debated after the war. The postwar memoirs of resisters who had returned from Ravensbrück brought out the high moral qualities *resisters* had revealed in the camp—they remained true to what had brought them to Ravensbrück. Deported resisters presented this memory as answering the needs of a demoralized postwar France embarked on reconstruction.¹³ While

⁹ Germaine Tillion, 'À la recherche de la vérité', in *Ravensbrück* (Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1946), 192.

¹⁰ de Gaulle [Anthonioz], *L'Allemagne jugée par Ravensbrück*, 23. De Gaulle Anthonioz is the name she took when she married after the war.

¹¹ Richard Raskin, *Nuit et brouillard* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), 167.

¹² Tillion estimated that among the French at Ravensbrück one-third were resisters; one-third common law prisoners; and one-third hostages and innocent people rounded up by the Germans. *À la recherche*, 98n1 [1958].

¹³ Nelly Gorce, *Journal de Ravensbrück* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1995), 43, 65, 89-90; Simone Lahaye, *Libre parmi les morts* (Paris: Berg, 1983), 60; Micheline Maurel, *Un camp très ordinaire* (Paris: Éditions du Minuit, 1957), 83; Tillion, 'À la recherche', 38; and M.-C. Vaillant-Couturier, *Mes 27 mois entre Auschwitz et Ravensbrück* (Paris: Éditions du Mail, 1946), 32-33.

Communist deportee organizations favored a broad designation of deportees as all those deported except common law prisoners, Tillion's Association nationale des anciennes déportées et internées de la Résistance (ADIR)¹⁴, the organization of female deported resisters, almost all of whom had been in Ravensbrück, sought a special status for deported resisters. The ADIR did not join other deportee associations in protesting the establishment in 1948 of two statutes of deportees: resisters—those who had chosen; and a clearly less prestigious catchall 'political', which embraced non-convicts deported for other reasons, including race (Jews), as well as those arrested erroneously in round-ups.¹⁵ Resisters at Ravensbrück had resented the Germans' designation of all French prisoners as 'political', whether they were resisters, black marketers, or prostitutes who had given German soldiers syphilis—a lack of professional conscience, not 'sabotage', Tillion commented.¹⁶ 'Oh! The horror of the miserable promiscuity', wrote Simone Saint-Clair in 1945. 'It was that, I believe, from which we suffered the most'.¹⁷ Those who had not chosen to take the risks resisters had taken were unlikely to do so when deported for some other reason. They were, Tillion wrote, 'often a dead weight to drag' for resisters at Ravensbrück.¹⁸ After the war, resisters championed the division not made by camp administrators. In 1955-56, when it appeared that parliament would grant the title 'deportee' to conscripted Frenchmen sent to work in German factories (Service du Travail Obligatoire (STO)), but who had not been subject to the horrors of the camps, the ADIR voiced its shock: 'Our efforts will therefore have been in vain. As in the time of the Resistance, we find ourselves more and more isolated in a country which is letting itself give way to mediocrity'.¹⁹ 'What can appear as an anodyne grammarian's quarrel', the

¹⁴ Dominique Veillon, 'L'Association nationale des anciennes déportées et internées de la Résistance', in Alfred Wahl, ed., *Mémoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Metz: Centre de recherche histoire et civilisation/Université de Metz, 1984), 161-179.

¹⁵ Lalieu, *La Déportation fragmentée*, 77.

¹⁶ 'Some of my comrades tried to elevate and evangelize them; the results were null... waste irremediably lost for society', wrote Tillion in 1946. 'À la recherche', 35, 40-42.

¹⁷ Simone Saint-Clair, *Ravensbrück. L'Enfer des femmes* (Paris: Tallandier, 1945), 71. See also Yvonne Pagniez, *Scènes de la baigne* (Paris: Flammarion, 1947), 68-69; and Denise Dufournier, *La Maison des mortes* (Paris: Hachette, 1945), 89.

¹⁸ Tillion, 'À la recherche', 41. However, when historians and deported resisters met in 1951 to map out a projet for collecting documentation on the camps, Tillion objected when the historian Henri Michel said that they should not solicit the testimony of deported criminals as this might seem to offer them 'a sort of rehabilitation'. Tillion responded that everyone's testimony should be collected. Sylvie Lindeperg, *"Nuit et Brouillard": Un film dans l'histoire* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2007), 28.

¹⁹ 'L'ADIR s'oppose à l'attribution du titre de "Déporté" aux STO', *Voix et Visages* 47 (October 1955): 3. This designation was blocked after further parliamentary debate in

ADIR opined, 'in fact hides an attempt at the rehabilitation of *vichysme* to the detriment of the Resistance'.²⁰ The ADIR hoped that Alain Resnais' documentary film, *Night and Fog*, commissioned to mark the tenth anniversary of the liberation of the camps, would 'contribute strongly to give an exact and full meaning to the word "deportee" that STO conscripts have claimed for their use'.²¹

Night and Fog refers to a decree of 7 December 1941, which mandated that resisters in western occupied territories, whose cases could not be resolved immediately, would be deported. The designation *Nacht und Nebel* (NN) was taken from Richard Wagner's *Rheingeld*, where Alberich recites a magical incantation to render himself invisible to his slaves in order to torment them. The German decree was intended to avoid trials and make resisters in occupied territories in the West disappear: all requests for information on NN prisoners' location or survival were rejected.²² Keeping populations in occupied nations uninformed as to the fate of NN prisoners was seen as a way of controlling them. The very nebulous nature of the decree, the fact that NN prisoners often did not learn of their designation for some time and did not understand what NN meant, made it the site of morbid fantasizing during and after the war. Unlike most other non-racial deportees, NN prisoners were not assigned to contract labor outside the camps. A French NN prisoner at Ravensbrück, Paulette Don Zimmet, evoked the mystery the term held for the NN prisoners themselves: 'We never knew exactly if this term applied to the prisoner who, before being executed, had for a time to be plunged into the night, or to those cases incomprehensible to the interrogators—cases for which the interrogators' tortures had not cleared things and remained for them "night and fog"'.²³ Tillion did not learn of her NN status until her arrival at Ravensbrück. She saw NN designating those 'who were not supposed to survive'.²⁴ Catherine Roux, a fellow Ravensbrück inmate, but not NN, looked upon the NN block as 'that disquieting forbidden vessel where the passengers had already broken their bonds to the Earth... living exiles of life'.²⁵

1957. Annette Wiewiorka, *Déportation et génocide. Entre le mémoire et l'oubli* (Paris: Plon, 1992), 27-29.

²⁰ Veillon, 'L'Association', 175.

²¹ 'Nuit et Brouillard', *Voix et Visages* 49 (January-February 1956): 7.

²² 'Note inédite de Mme. Germaine Tillion', in Pierre Sudreau, *Au-delà de toutes les frontières* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1991), 88-89.

²³ Paulette Don Zimmet, *Les Conditions d'existence et l'état sanitaire des femmes déportées en Allemagne* (Ambilly-Annemasse: Imprimerie Franco-Suisse, 1947), 16n1.

²⁴ Germaine Tillion, *La Traversée du mal. Entretiens avec Jean Lacouture* (Paris: Arléa, 1997), 72.

²⁵ Catherine Roux, *Triangle rouge* (Lyon: M. Audin, 1946), 86.