



CLONGOWES

CLONGOWES WOOD COLLEGE SJ

THE FLAME OF THE FRENCH RESISTANCE IN WW2

I remember the story my grandfather told me, about how one night on their family farm French Resistance members had hidden in the barn attempting to hide from German soldiers pursuing them. The Germans knew where these Resistance men were hiding and shot them in the barn. My grandfather's mother was punished, without warning the Germans had opened fire into her house with a machine gun, fearing for her life and of those of her children they all hid under the kitchen table waiting for the carnage happening around them to stop. This story is one of many my grandfather told me is what inspired me to do this Academy.

On the 22nd of June 1940 near the town of Compiègne, representatives of Marshal Philippe Pétain signed the armistice between France and Germany effectively ending hostilities between the 2 nations. In a month and a half, most of France had fallen due to Germany's latest tactic in modern warfare: Blitzkrieg. France who hadn't prepared for this new tactic quickly fell to the German panzers. Its ally Britain had evacuated most of its forces at the French coastal town of Dunkirk, in the North of France. Along with 100,000 French soldiers, many high-ranking members of the French army and members of the French government had fled to England. One of these men was General DeGaulle, who would later become France's leader in exile, setting up in London a government in exile.

De Gaulle was a little known General pre-1940, in WW1 he served as a Captain in the French army, but was captured by the Germans in March 1916. During his captivity he had made numerous unsuccessful escape attempts, giving him a thing for escaping. At the outbreak of World War 2, DeGaulle was given command of the 4th Armored Division. In the field, DeGaulle had proven himself as a potent leader, his aggressive techniques in armored warfare became a trait he carried for the duration of his military career as well as political career. When the newly appointed Philippe Pétain, who was acting as the President of France at this point, concluded that France was lost and the only sane action to do was sign an armistice, DeGaulle in true fashion fled to England on June 17. Once in France, he quickly gained support and was widely seen by Churchill and other members of the British government as the leader of French forces in exile. On June 18, he made his speech that became symbolic and is seen as the speech that sparked the Resistance in France. This speech is known today in France as 'L'appel du 18 Juin' or the Appeal of 18 June. In this speech, DeGaulle called for the citizens of France and of its overseas colonies to not accept defeat, his famous quote being 'France has lost a battle, but France has not lost the war'. His closing statement became famous throughout France and even to this day is seen as one of the most influential statements in all of French history 'The Flame of the French resistance must not be extinguished, and it must never be extinguished!' This statement

marked the birth of the French Resistance.

1940

During mid to late 1940, there was very little armed resistance in France as many French citizens were still feeling the shock of the Armistice. Yet the first signs of a prolonged resistance against the German occupiers began to appear. The first signs of this were seen very early on when French citizens jeered and insulted German soldiers. Underground newspapers were published, their aims were to speak out against German occupation and appeal to the population of France to take up arms. One of the first public acts of Resistance was from a man called Robert Desnos, he published a poem titled 'I'll go tell the Germans about it'. This poem called for an end to french citizens renouncing their brothers, fathers, neighbors and comrades. Robert survived the war but died in June 1945 due to his weakened state.

In the city of Bordeaux, a Polish-Jewish man became the first resistance fighter executed after he was arrested for jeering at a German military parade, he was executed on the 28th of August. The first french citizen to be executed for resistance fighter Pierre Roche, he was executed on the 7 September 1940 for cutting telephone lines between the towns of Royan and LaRochele, he was 19 years old at the time of his death. 2 more men were executed in September 1940, one man executed in October and 3 more in November. One of the first massive acts of Resistance was in Paris on the 11 November when university students took to the streets to celebrate the signing of the Armistice of 1918 and victory over the Central Powers. The gendarmerie of Paris assisted the German garrison in dispersing the crowd of students.

For the year 1940, the Resistance had begun to see its roots, there was very little armed action and very few people were executed due to resistance actions. Yet the growing sentiment of an armed struggle against the occupying German forces grew from being grand words on paper and thoughts to a reality.

1941

The year 1941 marked the beginning of organized Resistance, the 2 main reasons for this were the diversion of German garrison troops who were desperately needed in Germany's war against the Soviet Union, and an increase in direct support from the United Kingdom. The UK also began parachuting SOE agents who provided essential military training in guerilla warfare as well as coordinating weapon drops to supply resistance cells with sabotage weapons and guns.

In May, the first Special Operations Executive agent, Georges Bélégué. The SOE was a branch of Britain's military which had been formed in the wake of the Fall of France, their objective as Churchill put it was to 'Set Europe ablaze'. In reality their mission was to perform reconnaissance, espionage, sabotage and enter contact with resistance groups and aid them in every way possible. The SOE preferred to recruit French locals who had fled to Britain since they knew it was easier for them to blend in and minimized the risk of being caught. George Bélégué was one of these locals who joined the SOE in 1940.

Georges Bélégué was born in 1911, he married an English woman during the 1930's. At the outbreak of World

War 2, he had been recalled to the French army and served as a liaison to the British Expeditionary Forces. His connection to the BEF allowed him to escape at Dunkirk. He was recruited into the SOE in September 1940 and was trained as a wireless operator (someone who specializes in wireless communications with radios). On 5 May 1941, he became the first SOE operator to be parachuted into the Indres Department near the town of Chateauroux. He came into contact with local socialists who had been performing passive resistance such as; distributing leaflets and organizing protests. Over the following days, Bélégué was joined by 2 more SOE agents: Pierre de Vomécourt and Roger Cottin. The group organized the first weapon supply drop for the night of 13 June 1941, these canisters were filled with sub machine guns, ammunition and explosives. The group also set up the first Resistance network, known as the Autogiro network. Bélégué was captured on October 24 after the Gestapo, the German secret police, arrested a colleague who, under torture, exposed Bélégués network. He ultimately escaped in July 1942 and returned to England where he became a radio operator, receiving and transmitting secret codes between SOE headquarters and the various Resistance networks.

The first German soldier to be killed by the Resistance was Anton Moser, who was killed in Paris. This marked the bloody beginning of the armed campaign of the French resistance. The assassination was carried out by a French communist, Pierre George in retaliation for the execution of a friend of his who had been executed on the premise of an anti-German protest. This assassination marked the first time the Resistance had authorised the execution of a German occupier and marked the beginning of the French Resistance's guerilla campaign. In response to the assassination, the military governor of occupied France Otto Von Stulpnagel executed 3 random french civilians and soon announced that for every German soldier killed by the Resistance, 10 French Civilians were to be randomly selected and executed. This announcement was enforced, and the thousands of French civilians were randomly executed throughout the war in retaliation for actions carried out by the Resistance. An example of this was the slaughter of 642 men, women and children who were brutally murdered by the SS at Oradour-sur-Glane in 1944 in response to the allied landings and several Resistance actions carried out in the surrounding regions. The Oradour-sur-Glane massacre was one of many reprisals carried out by German authorities in response to actions carried out by the French resistance; they randomly selected civilians and executed them, disregarding age and sexe. The first assassination of a high-ranking German soldier carried out by the French resistance was Karl Hotz, the military governor of Nantes, the German authorities in response executed 50 civilians from Nantes and 50 more later on after the culprit did not reveal himself as the authorities had demanded.

The BBC played a crucial role in transmitting secret messages to the resistance groups, beginning in 1941 at 9:15 Pm every evening, they played the first four notes of Bethoven's fifth symphony which in morse sounded like a V (V for victory). The BBC then read out a series of lines from various poems, each of which was a secret message targeted at specific resistance groups. An example of poem used was 'Chanson d'Automne' The first three lines of the poem, "Les sanglots longs / des violons / de l'automne" ("Long sobs of autumn violins"), would mean that Operation Overlord was to start within two weeks. These lines were broadcast on 1 June 1944. The next set of lines, "Blessent mon coeur / d'une langueur / monotone" ("wound my heart with a monotonous languor"), meant that the invasion would start within 48 hours and that the resistance should begin sabotage operations, especially on the French railroad system; these lines were

broadcast on 5 June at 23:15, 6 hours before the Allies began their assault on the beaches of Normandy.

In 1941, the PCF (Parti Communiste Français; French Communist Party) became the first properly organized and armed Resistance group in France. They had widespread support amongst the French population but also had a great amount of enemies. French communists had begun to take more violent resistant actions against Germany when Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Contrary to belief, the PCF acted on their own orders and from the instructions of the Soviet Union, most of the weapons and ammunition they used were stolen from the German occupiers and very few weapons used by the PCF were delivered from the Allies. In 1942, the PCF grew rapidly as many French communists had joined their cause after anti-communist laws were established by the German authorities as well as in Vichy France, many men were also motivated to go fight after witnessing the holocaust spreading into France. By 1944, they were the largest Resistance organization in France, numbering some 100,000 men. Post-WW2, the PCF were highly motivated to launch a revolution against the French government, an action which was forbidden by the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the PCF remained one of the most influential and important Resistance groups in occupied France

In September 1941, Jean Moulin (more on him later) traveled to Britain. Jean Moulin convinced DeGaulle that the French Resistance movement was growing but lacked the necessary organization to be a potent threat to the German occupiers, he convinced DeGaulle to allow him to travel to France and set up an organization of united Resistance groups that was to be led by DeGaulle himself. Moulin presented himself to be DeGaulle's voice.

In December 1941, Hitler issued the Nacht und Nebel decree, this decree authorizing the German occupying forces to make anyone suspected of Resistant activities to be arrested and deported to Germany. This decree was used on approximately 200,000 French civilians, 75,000 of whom were actually connected with the Resistance. The Germans believed this decree would dissuade many people from joining the Resistance, it in fact had the opposite effect as this decree which was widely seen as a show of strength and an instrument of fear employed by Germany convinced many Frenchmen and women to join the Resistance. On 11 December 1941, Germany supporting its ally Japan after it attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, declared war on the United States, this declaration of war began to shift the tide of the war in favor of the Allies as the industrial powerhouse that the United States possessed allowed the Allies and the French Resistance to greatly increase their activities as many of the weapons necessary to carry out these Resistant activities were to be provided in abundance.

1942

In January 1942, Jean Moulin was parachuted into France his orders from DeGaulle was to: unify the French Resistance under DeGaulle's leadership. Jean Moulin was one of the most influential people of the French Resistance. Jean Moulin was born on the 20 June 1899 in the town of Béziers, he had served in WW1 and during the interwar years he had worked as a lawyer and worked in many minor government positions. At the outbreak of WW2, Moulin evaded military service, he opted to join the French Resistance after France fell and using his connections, managed to get aboard a boat to Britain. He used his connections from working

in several offices of the pre-war French government to set himself up a private meeting with DeGaulle. In this meeting, Moulin outlined the necessary unity for the growing Resistance movement and believed that he was able to achieve that unity if DeGaulle allowed him to. With DeGaulles blessing, Moulin entered France and met 5 leaders of some of the resistance groups:

Henri Frenay, from the Resistance group Combat who operated in Vichy France and fought against the Vichy regime

- Emmanuel d'Astier, from the Resistance group Libération sud who also operated in Vichy France
- Jean-Pierre Levy, from the Resistance group Francs-tireurs who operated in both Vichy France and Occupied France
- Pierre Villon, from the Resistance group Front National who was at the time the largest Resistance group and operated in Occupied France and Vichy France
- Pierre Brossolette, from the Resistance group Comité d'Action Socialiste who operated in Vichy France and Italian-occupied France

Jean Moulin's meeting with these 5 leaders laid the groundwork for a much bigger Resistance movement, unified under the leadership of Moulin and subsequently DeGaulle achieved his vision of France's Army of the Interior, yet it wouldn't be for another year, in January 1943, that of a united Resistance.

Women also gradually became more involved in the Resistance movement, when France capitulated 1.8 million men in uniform were interned as Prisoners of War. This led to a shortage of men of fighting age, women therefore represented a large portion of the Resistance total fighting capabilities, and it wasn't uncommon for them to take part in operations seen at the time as 'unsuitable' for women. They became the backbone of the Resistance doing all sorts of jobs from leading missions to handling radio contact with Britain, as Germaine Tillion wrote in her diary 'It was women who kickstarted the Resistance'. Another woman, Marguerite Gonnet, when asked why she picked up a weapon to fight the German occupier her answer was 'Quite simply, colonel, because the men have dropped it'. Women became a key component in the Resistance and without their support the Resistance would have never functioned as effectively as it had. In the months following the liberation of Paris, the participation of women in the Resistance was recognised by the French government as well as by foreign governments, in France the vote was finally granted to women in 1944.

1942 also marked the beginning of the deportation of people of the jewish faith to concentration and extermination camps. On 29 May 1942, all jews living in the occupied zone of France were forced into wearing the Star of David. In the spring of 1942, the idea of a roundup was suggested. In France these were known as 'raffles'. 'Raffle' was conducted in Paris on 16 July, 12,762 jews were rounded up at the Velodrome d'Hiver sports arena. These men, women and children were subsequently deported to various concentration camps around Europe including the infamous Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland to be killed en masse. The first general roundup in France caused outrage in the French population and further encouraged many men and women to join the cause. A great number of jewish people who feared for their lives also joined the Resistance as they saw it as their only means of safety, as a jewish man interviewed after the war put it 'I would rather die fighting the Germans, than be gassed not fighting them'. The increased deportation and mass executions of jewish people from France greatly swayed the opinion of the civilian population living in

occupied and Vichy France. Further outrage was caused when the Vichy government agreed to hand over the Jewish community living in the Vichy administered zone to German authorities.

German authorities also began using torture as a method of interrogation. Anyone in custody was subject to torture and many were forced to sign false confessions. Torture methods included beating, cutting off limbs (fingers and toes), removal of nails, the infamous *baignoire* (a victim head was forced in a tub of water to the point of drowning, and the cycle was repeated until either the victim had provided information or had died). An estimated 40,000 French civilians and resisters were killed in prisons where torture was employed, a great number of these deaths were also due to starvation and disease as prisoners were fed little food and disease quickly spread due to lice and rats.

A new Resistance group was also formed in 1942; the ORA, *Organization de résistance de l'armée* (Army Resistance Organization), was founded. The ORA was headed by General Aubert Frère and recognized General Henri Giraud as France's leader for a time in 1942–1943, there were two rival leaders of the Free French movement in exile: General Giraud, backed by the United States, and General de Gaulle, backed by Great Britain. For these reasons, the ORA had bad relations with the Gaullist resistance while being favored by the OSS (Office of Strategic Services, the American SOE), as the Americans did not want de Gaulle as France's postwar leader. By the end of 1942, there were 278 sabotage actions in France vs. 168 Anglo-American bombings.

1942 was an important year for the Resistance in France as many new groups were formed, these groups swore allegiance one of the 3 main contenders for power: the communists who swore allegiance to the workers, the Gaullists who swore allegiance to General DeGaulle and recognised him as France's leader. Finally, the ORA swore allegiance to General Henri Giraud and recognised him as their leader. A power struggle quickly emerged as the Resistance groups who swore allegiance to either DeGaulle or General Giraud often came into arguments and very rarely helped one another out. With America's entry into the war, there was a significant increase in weapon drops supplying the Resistance with much of the necessary equipment and weapons needed to carry out sabotage operations.

1943

1943 marked the year where the Resistance was finally unified under direct command of DeGaulle. 1943 also marked the formation of the Milice, an organization of French policemen commanded by German officers. 1943 marked the beginning of the STO an organisation whose aim was to build up Germany's military strength by using the populations of conquered nations as a slave labour.

Jean Moulin had spent much of 1942 meeting the leaders of various groups that were fighting against the German occupiers. In 1942, after the invasion of North Africa by the Americans and British, Hitler authorized the military takeover of Vichy France as he felt they were too weak and posed a threat to him. With all of France now under German occupation, the Resistance groups in southern France who had been fighting

against the Vichy government were now fighting the German occupiers. On January 26, the leaders of Combats, Libération, Francs-Tirailleurs met with Jean Moulin and they agreed to the creation of a single group which would merge these 3 Resistance groups together. The organization elected Jean Moulin as their first president, and he named this organization Mouvements Unis de Résistance; the group recognised Charles De Gaulle as France's legitimate leader in exile. Moulin followed this success by contracting resistance groups in the north such as Ceux de la Résistance, Ceux de la Libération, Comité de Coordination de Zone Nord, and Libération Nord to ask to join. On 26 May 1943, in Paris, Moulin chaired a secret meeting attended by representatives of the main resistance groups to form the CNR (Conseil National de la Résistance-National Council of the Resistance). With the National Council of the Resistance, resistance activities started to become more coordinated. In June 1943, a sabotage campaign began against the French rail system. Between June 1943 – May 1944, the Resistance damaged 1,822 trains, destroyed 200 passenger cars, damaged about 1,500 passenger cars, destroyed about 2,500 freight cars and damaged about 8,000 freight cars. On June 7, 1943, a resister René Hardi was arrested by the Gestapo, Hardi was extensively tortured over the coming hours and under the threat of being sent to a concentration camp, Hardi denounced Moulin and several other key leaders of the Resistance. On June 9, General Delestraint was arrested, he was a friend of Moulin and a member of Moulin's CNR. On 21 June, Moulin called for a meeting in which he wanted to learn how the Germans got wind of Delestraint whereabouts, during the meeting Gestapo and Wehrmacht officers stormed the meeting and arrested Moulin. Moulin was tortured but he never talked or gave up the names of his fellow Resistant members, due to the injuries Moulin had sustained during his imprisonment he died in prison on July 8, 1943. He left behind him a unified Resistance, what was thought to be impossible due to political rivalries and differences, Moulin had managed to convince these groups of Resistances to unify and with this unification came only trouble for the German occupiers.

Germany noticed the increasing levels of Resistance activity in France, they weren't able to properly deal with this issue because all soldiers were needed to fight against the Soviet Union. Germany resorted to setting up the Milice to hunt down the résistants, although initially that was only one of the Milice's tasks; it was first presented as an organization to crack down on the black market. The Milice, commanded by Joseph Darnand, was a mixture of fascists, gangsters, and adventurers with a "sprinkling of the respectable bourgeoisie and even the disaffected aristocracy" committed to fight to the death against the "Jews, Communists and Gaullists"; the oath of those who joined required to them to commit to work for the destruction in France of the "Jewish leprosy", the Gaullists and the Communists. The Milice had 29,000 members, of whom 1,000 belonged to the Francs-Guards regiment and wore a uniform of khaki shirts, black berets, black ties, blue trousers and blue jackets. Their symbol was the white gamma, the zodiacal sign of the Ram, symbolizing renewal and power. The Germans did not want any of the French to be armed, even collaborators, and initially refused to provide the Milice with weapons, later on as the Resistance began to target German key infrastructure Germany allowed the milice to be armed with pistols and light machine guns.

In October 1943, following a meeting between General Giraud and General de Gaulle and their staff in Algiers, orders went out for the AS and ORA to coordinate in Resistance operations with the aim of destroying their infrastructure and communications. One of the most well-known Resistance activities occurred on 11

November 1943 in the town of Oyonnax in the Jura Mountains, where around 300 maquisards lead by the local Resistant leader Henri Romans-Petit showed up to celebrate the 25th anniversary of France's triumph over Germany in 1918, wearing ad libbed regalia. There were no Germans in Oyonnax that day and the gendarmes made no attempt to go against the Resistance, who paraded through the streets and laid a Cross of Lorraine at memorial bearing the message "Les vainqueurs de demain à ceux de 14-18" ("From the upcoming victors to those of 14-18").

A while later, civilians of Oyonnax joined the maquisards in singing 'La Marseillaise' as they paraded, an occurrence given a lot of play on the BBC's French language administration regarding how one town had been "freed" for a day. The following month, the SS captured 130 Oyonnax inhabitants and sent them to the concentration camps, shot the town's main physician, and tormented and extradited two others, including the gendarme Captain who disobeyed orders opposed the maquis on 11 November. On 29 December 1943, the AS and the Communist FTP agreed to coordinate; their activities were managed by the COMAC (Comité Militaire d'Action-Committee for Military Action), which took its orders from the CNR. The Communists agreed to solidarity to a great extent in the conviction that they would get additional provisions from Britain, and practically speaking the FTP kept on working freely. The SOE provided aid in the form of training on demolition to the Resistance; as the SOE specialist Roger Miller noted after making a visit to a hastily set up school in making bombs in late 1943:

'If the instructors from the training schools in England could have seen those Frenchmen making up charges the cellar would have looked to them like Dante's Inferno. Every conceivable school "don't" was being done.'

1944

1944 was the year the Resistance was at its largest, 1944 also became an important year for the Second World War, in June the Allies landed in Normandy and within 3 months most of France was liberated. The Resistance played a crucial role in the liberation of France as well as on D-Day, they blew up railways preventing German reinforcements from being able to organize a proper defense and attempt to drive the Allies back into the sea.

In early 1944, the SOE and the OSS (the American version of the SOE) increased weapons delivery to the Resistance. Compared to the number of weapon supply drops from the year 1943, the number of weapon supply drops of the year 1944 had increased by 173%. In February, all Resistance movements (except the PCF) accepted the authority of the Free French government in exile and they all unanimously agreed that De Gaulle should be their leader. The Resistance then adopted a new name, the French Forces of the Interior (FFI). By 1944, the FFI was mainly armed with American and British weapons (sten-gun, M1 Rifle, PIAT, bazooka), munitions used were from looting the German munitions depots (bullets were of same caliber).

The Resistance played a key part in Operation Overlord (also known as D-day), in the months preceding D-Day, the Resistance was actively involved in blowing up railways in Northern France. Resistance attacks on

the rail system increased with the Resistance in the first three months of 1944 damaging 808 locomotives compared to 387 damaged by Allied air attacks. The resistance's participation in Overlord itself was to be split into 7 separate operations:

- *Plan Vert: a systematic sabotage campaign to destroy the French railroad system*
- *Plan Rouge: to attack and destroy all German ammunition dumps across France*
- *Plan Bleu: to attack and destroy all power lines across France*
- *Plan Violet: to attack and destroy phone lines in France*
- *Plan Jaune: to attack German command posts*
- *Plan Noir: to attack German fuel depots*
- *Plan Tortue: to sabotage the roads of France*

On June 5, Plan Vert and Plan Violet were ordered by the Free French government to be executed, both plans were a massive undertaking as they happened all over northern France. Plan Violet was successful and attributed to the success of the D-Day invasions, as the German garrison weren't able to communicate with each other over the telephone. Instead they were forced into transmitting messages with their radios which could easily be intercepted by Allied codebreakers. Plan Vert was also very successful, by June 7 the Resistance had blown up railroads at 486 separate points all over northern France. This forced the Germans into employing the muddy roads of northern France which delayed the German reinforcements who were sent to Normandy in response to the Allied landings. In the immediate aftermath of D-Day, a statement was issued by de Gaulle declaring the FFI was part of the French Army and resistance leaders were now all Army officers.

In the weeks following D-Day, many Resistants members joined the Free French Army, leaving their typical civilian clothing and lives and exchanging them with military clothes. After the breakout of Normandy in August 1944, the Supreme-Allied commander, General Eisenhower, had decided to bypass Paris as he wanted to avoid large-scale urban fighting. The FFI in Paris led by Alexandre Parodi and Jacques Chaban-Delmas wanted to start a revolt, being deterred only by the fact that the Resistance in Paris had about 15,000 men, but only 600 guns, mostly rifles and machine guns. On 19 August 1944, the Gendarmerie, until then still loyal to the Germans, switched sides and joined the Resistance as a group of policemen hosted the *tricolore* over the Préfecture de Police on the Ile de la Cité, which was the first time the tricolor had flown in Paris since June 1940. All over Paris, the outlawed *tricolore* started to fly over schools, *mairies* and police stations, an open challenge to German power, and a sign that the French civil service was shifting its loyalty. Emboldened, Tanguy and his men started to attack German forces on the Boulevard Saint-Michel and Boulevard Saint-Germain, leading to a mass insurrection as Parisians started to build barricades in the streets. By the end of the day, about 50 Germans and 150 résistants had been killed. On August 22, De Gaulle, defying the orders of Eisenhower, ordered the 2nd Free French Armored Division under the command of General Leclerc to liberate Paris. On August 24, the Leclerc's Division entered Paris accompanied by British and American troops, the battle itself was short as most of the German garrison had fled Paris by the time the Allies entered Paris. During the liberation of Paris, 1600 resistant soldiers had died giving their lives to ensure that their city which had been under German military occupation since 1940 finally being set free.

My grandmother was living in Paris when it was liberated, she recalls that day that she had gone down and handed out flowers to the American soldiers who were walking down her street being greeted by jubilant French civilians. For the past 4 years she had endured occupation and suppression of her national identity, she told me that day was her proudest day of being French. Though there was another, more darker side to her story, her father was of Italian descent and had emigrated from Arnad, a town in Northern Italy, to Paris, where he met my great-grandmother who was French and they got married in 1927, my grandmother was born in 1936. Italy had been up until 1943 an ally of Germany and had occupied Savoy and Provence bringing French citizens under an Italian military occupation. My great-grandfather was therefore largely discriminated against during the war, he was well treated by the Germans as he was from a nation that was Germany's ally. When Italy surrendered to the Allied powers in 1943, his situation overturned on itself overnight, he was seen as a citizen of an allied country to one that became its enemy. The German's withdrew all support and even began discriminating against him due to what Germany saw: Italian betrayal. For the next year they endured the hardship of occupation like so many other French people living in Paris. When Paris was liberated, it was not uncommon for German prisoners captured by the Resistance to be executed, this was due to the fact that the Resistance was not formally a military power and therefore did not have to abide by the rules of war. My great-grandfather was hunted down by the Resistance, they wanted their pound of flesh simply because he was Italian, during the war he hadn't fought the Allies and in fact he was a French citizen. My great-grandmother hid him in a small kitchen cabinet where he remained for almost 2 hours while the Resistance were looking for him. He was lucky because he wasn't found, though he didn't leave his apartment until a few weeks later when the Resistance had been disarmed in Paris. His story is one of many, there were many families who weren't as lucky as him and suffered humiliation and public beatings, some women had their heads shaved and men were often shot.

By November 1944, when most of France had been liberated, many Resistance fighters joined the Free French army and by November 1944, there were 75000 resistant fighters in the French Army, by May 8 1945 that number had increased to 135000. Throughout World War 2, between 280,000-400,000 French civilians who had served in the Resistance movement, with 24,000 dead. 350,000 French civilians had also died throughout the occupation. Today in France the French Resistance has not been forgotten as those who had been in the Resistance have been awarded medals and are allowed to take their rightful place in the military parades of Bastille Day.

The Resistance movement in France showed how a politically divided country could come together when faced with a common enemy. Today, the fighting men, women and even children are commemorated in art, books, poems. Jean Moulin's body was exhumed, and he was buried at the Pantheon, a resting place for French citizens who had achieved great things. Though the French Resistance was one of many Resistance movements that were set-up in Europe after many other countries were invaded by the German war machine, these countries include Poland, Yugoslavia, Denmark etc... Today, Ukraine is facing an invasion by Russia, as history taught us, when a country is occupied, the local population will always fight back for their freedom. In the parts of Ukraine that are occupied, we can see protests by locals who march towards the Russians demanding they leave ignoring the warning shots. We can't forget what a tremendous part the Resistance played in the Second World War, most of the information for D-Day was provided by the Resistance. It is imperative that we cannot and shall not forget the sacrifices they made.