

WELCOME TO THE MUSEUM OF RESISTANCE AND DEPORTATION OF THE DEPARTEMENT DU CHER



• Introduction

As we move further from the events of World War II, we feel the need to revive their memory.

After all those who have been busy transmitting the recollections, and writing history, the Museum of Resistance and Deportation of the Département du Cher invites us to rediscover the fate of these men and women who stood up, since 1940, against the occupation of their country by Nazi Germany.

Thanks to the objects, photographs, archive documents, testimonies and films, the Museum describes the events which took place in the Département du Cher and replaces them in their context, particularly marked by the political and territorial fracture of the Démarcation Line.

The situation of the new Museum within the departmental Archives gives a renewed interest to the display of these documents. It aims at helping historical knowledge to progress far from disembodied speeches : the struggle for Liberty and Democracy led by the Resistance still means something and stirs up the question of individual engagement.

• Why a new museum ?

In the Département du Cher, the first Museum of the Resistance and Deportation was inaugurated for the 50th anniversary of the Normandy Landing, on July 6th 1944. Based in Bourges, in the Halles Saint-Bonnet, its foundation was initiated by Pierre Jacquet and Maurice Renaudat, a former member of the FTPF Resistance movement, injured in the battle of Saint-Hilaire-de-Court in 1944. They succeeded in federating several associations for the same purpose. The Museum is part of a network of Museums of the national Résistance headed by the Museum of Champigny-sur-Marne.

A second Museum on the same theme opened in Fussy the same year, for Bourges Liberation Day on September 6th 1944, thanks to the will and work of Alain Rafesthain, mayor and author of many books on World War II, who collected a great number of items, photographs and documents, through personal purchases, as well as donations from witnesses.

The Département du Cher gathered and classified these two collections, intending to ensure their future and modernize their presentation. With the help of the departmental Archives and especially their pedagogical service, the new Museum invites all those interested in historical research to investigate and ensure the transmission of the Résistance message.

- **From one war to another**

After World War I, new frontiers are created in Europe, within a new international order.

Based on the respect of Law, the new League of Nations born after the Versailles treaty guarantees peace and safety for everybody. These hopes quickly vanish under the frustration and tension undermining the states, shortly after the peace treaty is signed. Public opinions tend to become more receptive to extremist speeches, favoring access to power for political movements hostile to democracy and authoritarian or totalitarian regimes.

On September 3rd 1939, France and Great Britain declare war on Germany. On May 10th 1940, Germany launches its general offensive. The german commander carries on the initiative during a six weeks campaign combining land operation and aerial combat with terrible efficiency.

- **Two speeches**

On June 17th 1940, Marshal Pétain, elected french chief of government the day before, announces on the radio his wish to cease the battle and start discussing the terms of an armistice with the Germans.

General De Gaulle, War secretary of State, is the only member of the previous government to join London. As an answer to Pétain's speech, on June 18th, he issues his call to the french nation to carry on the fight with the Allies.



Marshal Pétain



General De Gaulle

• The Cher in June 1940

From mid May, many refugees begin to cross the Département du Cher going south. At first come Belgians and inhabitants of northern and eastern France, fleeing the battle.

Then, once the Somme and Aisne fronts are crushed, vehicles from Paris and its region, create a large traffic jam on the main roads (national 7 and 20).



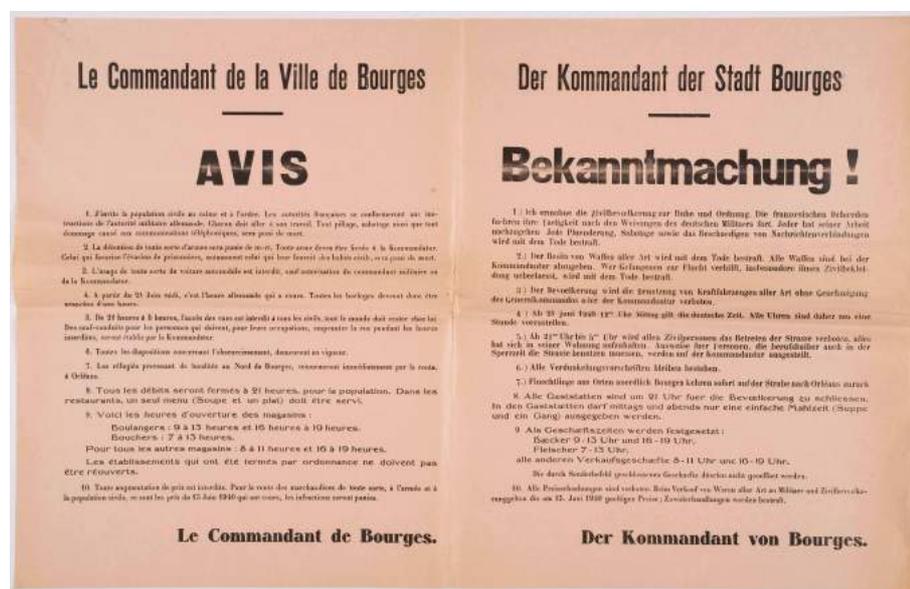
Refugees in Vierzon

• The German occupation

Since June 1940, the inhabitants of the occupied areas have to adopt a German lifestyle. If the Vichy government has authority over the Prefecture of the Cher Département, the French administration as a whole is under the strict control of the Feldkommandantur.

The population undergoes many daily restrictions : curfew, requisitions, food rationing, etc.

Public opinion remains doubtful but resigned. Despite the disastrous conditions of the Armistice imposed by Germany, many people trust in Marshal Pétain.



Poster showing the civic duties imposed on the population in Bourges

• The Armistice of June 22nd 1940 : France under the german law

The severe conditions of the Armistice imposed by Germany are proportional to the victory gained in six weeks only over one of the Great Powers. Pétain's government accepts them. The French keep their fleet and their sovereignty over their colonial Empire as a part of the french territory. They believe these conditions may improve, but on the contrary, the german requirements will be worse and worse throughout the war.

One of the immediate consequences of the Armistice for France is the loss of its territorial unity, since it is divided into unoccupied and variously occupied zones according to the strategic interest of the Axis.

A Demarcation Line divides France : a northern area which is occupied and a southern area which is called « free ».

The Line separates the Département du Cher in two, which determines the inhabitants' daily life as well as the economic and administrative organization.

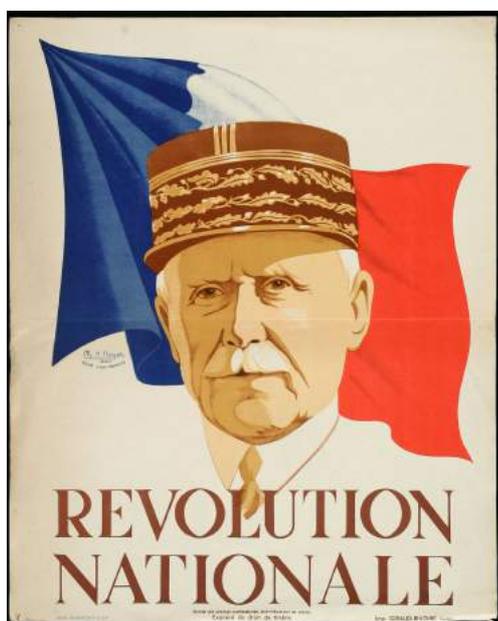


- **The Vichy regime**

On July 10th 1940, a majority of the MPs gathered in Vichy give all powers to Philippe Pétain, chief of the government. These votes and constitutional acts put an end to the Third Republic and bring in a new regime : the French State.

Until 1944, Vichy is the headquarter of an authoritarian government based on the cult of personality and the reactionary values inspired by the National Revolution. This new power intends to create a new France, based on a devoted administration and a strong social administrative hierarchy.

Supporting xenophobia and antisemitism, it moves to a closer and closer collaboration with the german Nazis.



•Daily life constraints

Material and moral constraints are forced upon the population by « the new order » imposed both by the occupants and by Vichy during these darkest years of the war.



A child's ration card

•The Demarcation Line

From June 1940 to March 1943, a real frontier cuts the Département du Cher in two sections. It materializes the separation between the occupied territory in the north and the so called « free » territory in the south.

Many people try to cross the Line clandestinely : breakaway prisoners of war, RAF airmen, Resistants, refugees, persecuted Jews...

The population living near the border often helps them, mostly out of solidarity, rather than an intent to resist.



• The beginnings of the Resistance

The men and women who refuse the regime of Vichy, the submission to the occupant and the collaboration with the Germans, are first isolated but gradually tend to organize movements. It is the beginning of internal Resistance.

As early as summer 1940, this point of view is developed and spread, especially by Edmond Michelet, the french Communist Party, generals Cochet and Delestraint, Henry Frenay, the Musée de l'Homme network, Christian Pineau... Some of these documents are edited and distributed in the Département du Cher.

A typewriter which help the resistance to spread their message



• The resistance networks

For the Resistance, it is essential to keep contact with the countries which carry on the fight against Germany. Initiated with the support of Free France and the american and british secret services, these networks collect information on the enemy, organize sabotage, take care of breakaway prisoners of war or prepare aerial operations in relation with the Allies.

Pilots of the RAF



- **The marking of the clandestine landing field**

After receiving a message on the english radio, the team of Resistants of the operative network prepares to welcome the Lysander and its passengers.

They form a triangle with three flashlights, so that the pilot can spot the landing area.

When the airplane is identified, thanks to the noise of the motors, the chief of the group sends a luminous message in Morse to confirm the arrival of the pilot.

The flashlights are the only landmarks that allow the RAF pilots who carry on these pick up missions to land on grounds surveyed by Resistants who are often without any weapon.

The landing and boarding must take only a few minutes.



Honour degree conferred to Yvonne Gerbeau, agent of the « réseau Pourpre », a clandestine radio operator in the Cher

• Intelligence war

In wartime, intelligence becomes an essential source of information. At the beginning of the conflict, all the European armies have their own intelligence services. Nazi Germany has many secret services : secret state police, SD of the SS, intelligence service of the Wehrmacht (Abwehr). The « fifth column » includes infiltrated Reich agents in French factories.

After the military disaster of May-June 1940, France and other countries in western Europe are occupied by the Reich's troops. To carry on the war from Great Britain, the British forces and Free France must have precise knowledge of the infrastructures and conditions of the occupied countries and the position of the German army.

This unprecedented situation leads to the creation of new secret services in London. Moreover it is absolutely necessary to establish a contact with those on the continent who are determined to fight occupation. They are a minority, but as early as the summer of 1940, they start organizing.



Translation : Silence, the enemy
keep an eye on you

- **The Département du Cher, a strategic place**

The first clandestine networks are set up in the Département du Cher in Autumn 1940. The Département is particularly important for the Allies' services and for Free France, because of the Démarcation Line. Intelligence agents, pilots whose planes have been shot down, leaders of the Resistance, have to cross the Line and therefore need to contact smugglers. Vierzon, on the border Line, becomes a key place for agents and the recruitment of new members. It is an important railway junction through which raw materials, military materials and occupation troops transit.

The airfields of Avord and Bourges are used by German flights, fuel reserves, crews and technicians.

The important airplane factory of the SNCAC in Bourges makes jet fighters and spare parts for the Germans.

Moreover, many factories are requisitioned to produce weapons and munitions, especially in Bourges, Vierzon and La Guerche-sur-l'Aubois.



- **Pick up operations**

In these aerial operations, a Lysander carries out the flights to and from London to France of the leaders of the Resistance movements and intelligence officers. These night missions are organized by the SOE, BCRA (Free french secret services) and the Royal Air Force.

Three hundred and twenty three landings are organized in France, among which thirteen in the south of the Département du Cher, close to the Demarcation Line.



Lysander aircraft

- **Famous passengers transit through the Département du Cher**

Pierre **Brossolette**, political adviser of general De Gaulle

André **Manuel**, deputy of colonel Passy, chief of the BCRA

René **Massigli**, commissioner of foreign affairs in the French National Committee

Louis **Marin**, former minister

Gaston **Defferre**, leader of the Brutus network

Claude **Bouchinet-Serreulles**, delegate of general De Gaulle

Maurice **Duclos**, leader of the Saint-Jacques network

Jean **Moulin** should have landed in the Département du Cher for one of his missions but his airplane had to turn back because of the fog over the airstrip



Pierre Brossolette

• **Networks and secret services**

The main networks operating in France are attached :

- either to the British service : Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or IS) or Special Operation Executive (SOE), services of special operations assigned to organizing subversion, sabotage and air drops in western Europe

- or to France Libre : the BCRA (Central Office of Information and Action), created in 1941, assigned to maintaining relations between the internal Resistance and France Libre

In 1944, a network depends on american secret services, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which becomes after the war the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

Other allied nations maintain active services in France (Poland, USSR and Belgium).

- **Who are the agents of these networks ?**

Permanent or occasional agents form a shadow army which includes soldiers sent on secret missions but also civilians recruited on the spot and eager to act for the Liberation of the country.



Flight-Commander Ratcliff,
Lysander aircraft pilot



Lieutenant-colonel Buckmaster,
chief of the SOE France Sector

- **Persecutions : Vichy, an agent and an associate of the Nazis**

The government of Marshal Pétain accuses communists, free masons, and especially Jews of being « anti-France ».

The Gypsies, another unwanted community, are strictly tracked down and forbidden to move.

The collaboration between the Vichy government and the german secret services increases persecutions.



- **The Resistance movements**

Unlike the network, the movement is not focused on a precise and limited military objective. Its members are linked by their political engagements or unions, but also by friendship and a common desire to serve a cause.

Their purpose is to warn and organize the population and recruit members in order to liberate France. As time goes on, some movements are initiated by members of the secret services or the army able to carry out military operations.



• **History or Memory**

Since the end of World War II, the Occupation, the Resistance and the Deportation have been the subject of numerous researches and writings. Many of them are true historical works, based on serious studies and analyses after authentic sources, while others are more subjective with the purpose of conveying Memory.

The first generation of historians interested in the period had been directly involved. At a time, when national reconciliation around the heritage of the Resistance was necessary, their interest focused on the soldiers. Testimonies were collected to retrace the history of clandestine organizations when public archives were hardly accessible to researches.

A new era opened in the seventies with a greater number of documents and a new outlook on cultural, economic and social life under the Occupation. The american historian Robert Paxton closely studied collaboration and the Vichy regime. The result of these investigations are well known through films and best sellers, and also through the trials of Barbie (1987), Touvier (1994) and Papon (1997).

This review of collective conscience highlights the victims and especially the deported Jews. It also involves highly respected personalities of the Resistance, asked to explain their actions.

Today, most witnesses have disappeared and researchers have a key role in the transmission of the Resistance message.

- **How to write the history of the Resistance in the Département du Cher ?**

As early as May 1945, is created a departmental committee of history of the Occupation and the Liberation of France. The members are close to the Resistance and to the witnesses, which sometimes may distort the conclusions of the surveys.

At the same time, the local souvenir and gratitude committee is assigned by the Ministry of Justice to investigate on the war crimes in the Département.

Later on, the World War II History committee, under the supervision of Henri Michel, historian and Resistant, works with a local correspondent, who is the director of the departmental Archives.

Since the seventies, the work of university and amateur historians, based on the local archives and testimonies, focus on some aspects of the repression, collaboration and the activity of the Resistance in the Département du Cher, particularly along the Demarcation Line.

Former deportees and Resistants' associations support these researches, as well as collect objets and documents in support of their testimonies.



The Souvenir and Gratitude Committee Berrichon

• The German repression

From 1940 to 1944, the french people live in a terror of the police. The repression strikes all those who are opposed to the german authority.

Since the beginning of the Occupation, crossing over the Line of Demarcation has been forbidden and punished. From the summer of 1941, the Germans pursue communists, shoot hostages, and start the political deportations.

The result is particularly dreadful for the Resistance at the end of 1943 and beginning of 1944. Many movements lose their leaders. Torture is practised daily at the headquarters of the SD (Gestapo of Bourges). Dozens of patriots are shot. Hundreds are deported to concentration camps.

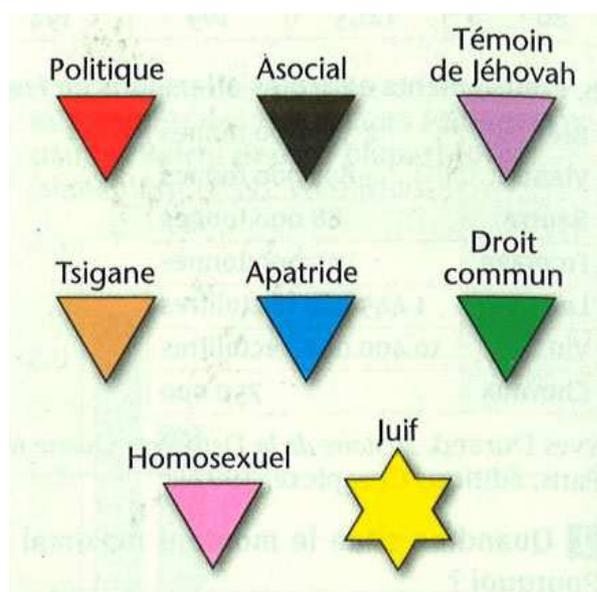
Throughout the summer of 1944, the unities of the Wehrmacht and the Militia are responsible for summary executions and reprisals following attacks by the Resistance.



Uniform of Gestapo agent

• Genocide and crimes against Humanity

The system of concentration camps, ghettos, euthanasia centers, massacres by the Einsatzgruppen and extermination camps are not a consequence of the defeat of Germany during World War I. These camps, these sites of final barbarism are inherent to Nazism. Their creation issues from an ideological program which plans the elimination of groups or individuals likely to interfere with the expansionist aims and racist ideology of the Reich. The extent and industrial methods employed make the genocide of the Jews an unprecedented crime in the history of Humanity.



Translation From the left to the right

Politics-Asocial, Jehovah's Witnesses, Gypsies, Stateless, Common law, Homosexual, Jews

- **The requisitions of the working forces : exploitation, collaboration, repression**

At the end of 1942, war becomes global and Germany begins to feel the need of new working forces. The Reich recruits them in the occupied countries.

In France, there are few volunteers. Neither the promise of decent salaries nor that of liberating prisoners in compensation for workers in Germany have no real success.

Workers are requisited on their working place (STO).

In 1943, public opinion, until then favorable to Marshal Pétain, changes.

The STO as well as Militia appear as the symbols of servitude.



A propaganda poster about the STO
in Châteauroux

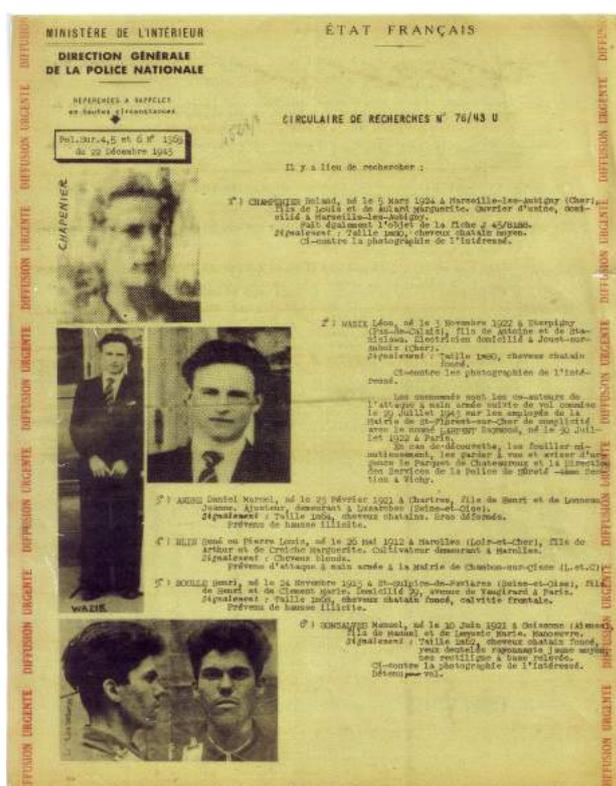
Poster against the STO

Translation: Don't work
for Hitler, this is what will
happen

• Vichy's repression of the Resistance

The french State claims legitimacy to repress all that it considers as « anti France », including the communist party and gaullists. The elected representatives suspected of untrusting Marshal Pétain are removed from office. After 1941, repression becomes radical in accordance with the occupant's policy. René Bousquet, general secretary of the police in 1942, then Joseph Darnand in 1944, collaborate fully with the nazi repressive armies. The police, special courts and internment camps are their main instruments while the Militia specializes in tracking resistants.

Wanted Notice
under the French
State



• The Maquis

Maquis are isolated sites where groups of Resistants shelter. The forest and rural areas of the Département du Cher harbour the first Maquis in the second half of 1943 and it becomes more important and durable in 1944. Made up of a majority of rebellious young men, many of them refusing to go to Germany with the STO, the Maquis are supported by Resistance movements and often get help from the population.

In December 1943, the Secret Army, French National Liberation Committee, and the FTPF sign a deal organizing the Maquis under a unified command. They become the FFI, French Forces of the Interior. The Allies do not wish these volunteers to start the fights before the Landing. The FTPF which contains most of Communist fighters, keeps a certain autonomy, prepare the uprising through permanent guerilla actions led by small mobile groups.

In the Département du Cher, in 1944, the French National Liberation Committee (CFLN) of general de Gaulle asks senator Marcel Plaisant to join representatives of the local Resistance. A committee of the Resistance of Cher, future departmental committee of the Liberation, is formed. It recognizes the authority of general de Gaulle and of the CFLN. This doesn't go without some tensions on the military plan, with the creation of the French Forces of the Interior under the command of Arnaud de Vogüë, regional military delegate. His authority is limited to the north of the Département du Cher, the Maquis of southern Cher, FTPF, keeping their operational autonomy.

• The equipment of Maquis

The equipment of the Maquis becomes a major concern for the Resistance because of the shortage of weapons and explosives. The Allies' airdrops become significant only after the Landing on June 6th 1944. In order to organize and coordinate the Maquis, agents from the allied secret services or army special forces are dropped on the ground.



At the left:
Parachute

At the right:
Medical Material
for the Maquis
and Flag
representing the
Maquis



• Lieutenant « Pauline »

Born in France from British parents, Pearl Witherington decides to go to England at the beginning of the war in order to become an officer of the women's auxiliary airforce. Recruited by the SOE and parachuted in France, she is active in conveying military armament for the Maquis in the north of Indre and Cher valley. Thanks to the trickery of Edmond Ferragu, some FTPF of the Cher département get weapons from airdrops organized by London. Edmond Ferragu, some FTPF of Cher, who did not benefit from organised parachutes by London.



• The dreams become true... Liberation

On June 6th 1944, hearing of the Landing in Normandy, some groups of the Resistance attack the Germans and the Militia.

Like Tulle and Guéret, Saint-Amand-Montrond is occupied by the Resistants. On the dawn of June 7th, led by Blanchard, Van Gaver and the FTPFs of Marcel Lalonnier, they take the Militia activists as prisoners. However, under threat of an attack of the German special forces, the Resistants must leave Saint-Amand-Montrond and find shelter in the Creuse Department, which is more suitable for guerilla fights. The city of Saint-Amand-Montrond is the victim of a terrible repression from the Germans and the Militia.

The commandment of the Resistance Forces of the Interior give up this insurrectional strategy in urban areas, which is too dangerous for the citizens as well as for the FFI as the enemy's position is still strong.

From June 6th to August 15th, the Resistance of the Département du Cher prepares liberation. The main concerns are now weapons and the coordination of fighting forces. Weapons airdropped by the Allies and target actions of sabotage (factories, train tracks, telephone and electrical wires) are meant to disorganize the enemy.

News from USA
for French population



• General offensive

On August 12th 1944, general Koenig, military chief of the FFI, goes over to the general offensive.

On August 15th, the Allied forces land in Provence and make their way up to the north along the river Rhône.

Fearing the german troops of the west and southwest might be encircled, Hitler gives the order to retreat in the east on August 16th.

The Département du Cher becomes the inevitable path between Massif Central held by the Resistance and the north of the river Loire held by the american troops. One hundred thousand Germans will go through the Département in four weeks times. Six thousand maquisards are opposed to the enemy in a hundred of ambushes, sabotages and important fights, as in Saint-Hilaire-de-Court where three hundred FTPF hold on for many hours in front of two thousand Germans. The german forces are harassed by the allied airforce and the Maquis. They undergo terrible losses. General Elster, commander of the last german column, is forced to surrender. On September 13th 1944, the whole Département du Cher is free.

French poster called
To the army revolt



• SAS Missions and RTF Jedburghs

Throughout August 1944, the Resistance of the Département du Cher receives from the Allies reinforcements composed of SAS (Special air service) detachment air troops in order to realize sabotage and ambushes against the German forces. A first group, led by Major Lepine, joins the FFI of north Cher. A second group led by lieutenants Davidson and Shlee support the operations of the Maquis of eastern Cher.

A Jedburgh team issued by the allied special forces is parachuted especially towards the group of Bertrand. Its essential mission of liaison permits to keep close contact with London so as to improve the rhythm of airdrops and inform the commandment about the movements of the enemy and the targets that should be bombed by the allied airforce.

A Jedburgh team is a special force unit composed of three men (two officers and one radio operator) whose purpose is to be dropped in the enemy territory and get in contact with the local Resistance groups.

The Jedburgh depends on the SFHQ (Special Force Headquarters, composed of SOE officers and the OSS). But, unlike the spying activities of the SOE agents, it only has a paramilitary role. The Jedburgh teams are dropped wearing their military uniforms but if they are captured by the Germans, they are considered as spies.



At the left : 1st Squadron of the SAS

At the right : Jedburgh team "Ivor"



- **Deportations : repressions and persecutions**

As time goes, the Third Reich spreads its system of imprisonment and destruction over a large part of Europe.

In occupied countries, the opponents and Resistants are tracked and deported in the prisons and fortresses of the Reich and especially in concentration camps.

These camps are built and organized on the model of Dachau in Bavaria, which was opened as early as March 31st 1933, to gather the Nazis' opponents such as communists and socialists. France and the Département du Cher are particularly concerned by this type of Deportation which targets the Resistance members. The ultimate purpose is to exterminate those that the Nazis consider as subhumans and more especially the Jews. In Poland, Ukrain, Belarus, Rumania and the Baltic states, the Nazis and their accomplices start putting in place the « final solution » as early as 1941, this means the genocide of all the Jewish communities. At first, the Einsatzgruppen and some units of the Wehrmacht carry out mass executions, then gassing is used in extermination camps.

Auschwitz-Birkenau has become the symbol of this horror : more than one million Jews are gassed there from 1942 to January 1945.

- **The Deportation of Jews in the Département du Cher**

1942 is the period of massive deportations. The Vichy government, to led lot of arrests, becomes the accomplice of the genocide scientifically organized by the Nazis in the concentration camps in occupied Poland.

- **The massacre of the Puits de Guerry**

In the night of July 21st 1944, the Gestapo of Bourges and the local Militia round up seventy-two Jews : children, men, women, old men. Thirty three of them and three other prisoners detained in Bourges are slaughtered and thrown in the Puits de Guerry (wells in the military Polygon of Bourges) on the 24th, 26th of July and 8th of August.



Few months after the Liberation,
corpses release of wells

• After the Liberation, the heritage of the resistance

France goes on fighting and becomes one of the winners of the war. As such, it takes part in the capitulation of Germany on May 8th 1945 and of Japan on September 2nd 1945. France becomes a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and occupies one of the four zones in Germany.

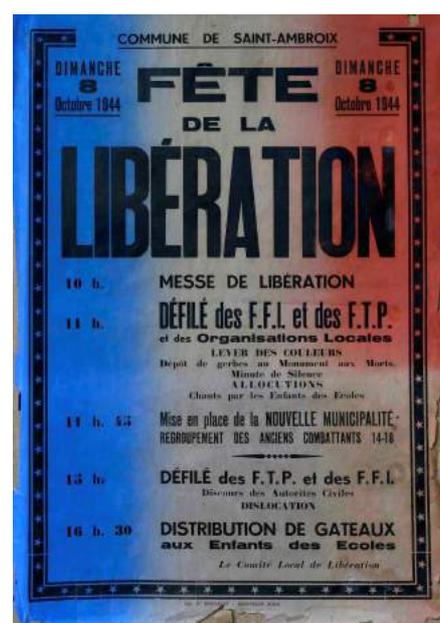
The Republic replaces the French State. The Resistance spirit inspires important social reforms. For the first time, women take part in the local elections in Spring 1945.

After the election of two constituent assemblies and two referendums, the Fourth Republic is settled in October 1946.

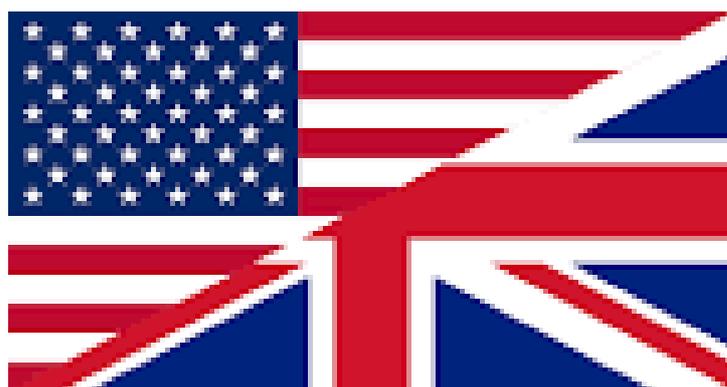
From March to September 1945, in the Département du Cher as everywhere in France, freed prisoners of war, deportees and workers of the STO come back from Germany, while well known collaborators are judged and sentenced. The reconstruction starts. The population gets out of a dark period of history.



Poster for the Liberation



Thanks for your visit



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