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"My parents had a good deal of influence on what I did during the war. A young girl of fifteen is influenced much more by the milieu in which she lives than by her own ideas. My parents were both Christians--and socialists. My mother, in particular, held strong political convictions; she was very concerned. For example, regarding the Popular Front and the Spanish Civil War. She was concerned--but she didn't have the right to vote. As a child I remember my mother listening to the radio; boiling with indignation, pounding on the tables and saying: 'And to think I can't vote.' I had an early political education, especially at the time of the Popular Front. My father had been a minister in the French Calvinist church, a minority group if there ever was one. Then he studied medicine for nine years and became a psychiatrist. He became mayor of the village where he directed a clinic for those with 'nervous' disorders. (He didn't own the clinic: my parents were not well off). As mayor of the village he was very involved with Popular Front [projects]. He tried to find work for the unemployed, for example. All of this explains how I was constantly aware of what was going on in the world because of my parents.

The Spanish Civil War upset them terribly. My mother felt France had to send planes to help the Spanish Republicans. She talked all the time about seeing Leon Blum and telling him her views. In addition, I think I lived in one of the few families

which knew what was happening to the Jews in Germany. From 1934 on we had German Jews at our home: this was rather early I believe. My father was in charge of a Protestant health clinic. The Protestant pastors, the evangelicals, were quite active in Germany trying to combat Nazism. Already, before the war, they had set up a sort of network to help Jews flee Germany. When I was little I saw and heard them when they were at our house. When I was twelve or thirteen I even read some books about Nazism and the persecution of Jews before the war. What I remember is important, for it shows that the spirit of resistance was inculcated in me in my home.

Even my maternal grandmother who lived with us was deeply committed to social causes. She always insisted that my mother's birth came about because she had been hit [by the police] while demonstrating in the streets in favor of Dreyfus. The somewhat avant-garde milieu that used to come to our house included pacifists and conscientious objectors. But mother and father--especially my mother--viewed the war in Spain as a dress rehearsal of what was going to happen.

Each summer we took our vacations at a beach resort on the mouth of the Gironde river (near the Spanish border). From that spot we could hear the guns of the war in Spain. And then there were the Spanish refugees who fled to France en masse. Remember, over a million of them came to France. A million is not a small

number. My parents helped take care of them. I remember hearing my family saying that if it had been recognized that the totalitarian empires, as they were then called--that is, Italy and Germany-- were staging a dress rehearsal in Spain there would not have been a Second World War. They would have been stopped. As my mother always put it: 'The monster would have been killed in the egg.'

When war came my mother was no longer a pacifist; not at all. The First World War had effected our family profoundly. My father lost two brothers: my mother, one. We children were given the names of the dead. My generation was brought up with an immense black veil over it. There were so many women wearing black. All those widows. And all those brother and uncles who had died. We had their names. After all, we were born a year, two years after they died. They died at twenty-one or twenty-two. It was understandable that people--Christians, and very religious at that, like my parents--were pacifists. But the Spanish Civil War changed their viewpoint. My mother dropped her her pacifist views overnight. She became very determined, very patriotic. France had to fight. France hadn't lost almost two million youths in the last war to become enslaved to the Nazis.

The war was divided into two periods. I don't want to talk much about the 'phony war' which lasted nine months, (from September 1939 to May 1940), except to note that my mother wasn't

with us when the Germans suddenly invaded France. She had gone to see my twenty-year old brother who had been mobilized. Do you have any idea of what that means? Only twenty years between the two wars and we had lost an entire generation [of young men]. My brother was born in 1919; one year after the war ended. He had the name of a dead uncle. And now he was being called to fight [in another world war]. We, the younger children, had been left with our grandmother and were now separated from our mother. We were waiting for her in the southwest, near the Gironde river, when the Germans arrived. They came at night. We heard strange noises and voices. It was the Germans installing guns to prevent members of the French government from leaving Bordeaux by boat for North Africa. (The 'Massilia' did get away with Mendes-France, some of the Deputies and a lot of Jews). They set up guns in our garden. So it was that one night I heard that language which I came to hate to such an extent I find it hard to express. My grandmother, who knew German, told us: 'Those are the Germans.' It was extraordinary. They entered our garden just like that. They seemed to belong to another race. It was a Panzer division. The soldiers were very tall, almost six feet, and dressed from head to toe in black with skull and crossbone insignias. They were superb, like angels of death, completely different from our friends, our comrades, from all that we knew.

My mother managed to join us a few days later. This was in June 1940. She was so anxious to rejoin us in the southwest that

she travelled from the port of La Rochelle inside a hearse under all the flowers (a Protestant pastor arranged it) and then came the rest of the way on foot. She arrived on June 16th. De Gaulle made his famous speech two days later but we didn't hear it. But we did hear Petain the day before say: 'I have asked the enemy about conditions for surrender, etc.' My mother pounded the table and told us: 'Children, from now on we must not listen to that man, we must resist.' So the first time I heard the word 'resist' was on June 17, 1940. She told us: 'Petain is a fascist. He himself asked to be appointed ambassador to Franco. He cannot be trusted.' She realized that he was already seeking an armistice while the troops were still fighting. He abandoned them to the enemy. I wonder if you have any idea of the unbelievable situation in France at that moment. Ninety-nine out of every hundred French citizens were relieved that an armistice had been sought. It was frightening. Everyone had taken to the roads. We saw thousands fleeing; unbelievable scenes. All the Belgians, all of northern France had come to the southwest because they never dreamed that the Germans would penetrate that far. They had all streamed down. Food was scarce. A tomato was worth a fortune. It is hard to imagine. People slept outdoors, on the beach. The beach was covered with families all in black. The old women were dressed in black. The peasants came with some of their livestock, with their carts, their wheelbarrows. The country was thrown into total confusion like an anthill that had been knocked over.

My mother's political observations were unusually lucid. Few people I have spoken with since that time realized that Petain voluntarily chose to be appointed ambassador to Franco, that he was certainly sympathetic to fascism. (Perhaps not for Nazism but certainly for fascism). Moreover, to ask the enemy about conditions for ending hostilities when the troops were still fighting the enemy was to truly to abandon them. The result was that almost two million were taken prisoner. So much for the beginnings. Our family was never for Petain because my mother was anti-Petain from the time he first spoke.

Our family left during the summer of 1940 and settled in the town of Uzes (in the south west Midi). Everyone there was for Petain so we found ourselves quite isolated. We thought it normal to hate all that he did and to suspect what he said. France in July 1940 was cut in two. My mother had decided to go to wherever there was a spot of French soil that wasn't occupied by the Germans. It didn't matter what the conditions were. She just didn't want to see Germans. So we went toward the Unoccupied Zone where there were no Germans. It was crazy because we had to live in complete poverty. We were cut off from my father. The country was divided and there was no communication. We had no news of the others in our family. And we had no more money. To give you an idea. There we were, my grandmother who was seventy-six years old, my mother, who was not in good health, the other three children and me. We had no blankets, no sheets, no books, nothing, absolutely

nothing. When I went to school I was told I needed a Latin dictionary. Since we didn't have money to buy one I asked people around us if someone could lend me one. But for the people in the village we were 'those people from the North.' 'Those people from the North who had come to eat all their food,' as they put it. We were blue-eyed and blond, as foreign to those in the south of France as foreigners from other countries. France was a rural country at that time. The regions were very distinct. We, we came with all those of the North of France, occupied France, where we lived. The inhabitants of the Midi really treated us like foreigners. I should add that my mother and grandmother spoke English to one and other. My grandmother was French but had been brought up in England. They spoke English among themselves to keep in practice. Once someone overheard them speaking English and there was quite an incident. They were 'spies.' France was very anti-British at that time. Petain had led the French astray by referring to: 'Those evil English allies who have harmed us so.' It is true that the British had killed over three thousand French sailors when they attacked Mers-el-Kebir, had turned in our diplomats, had done other things which have been forgotten. But at the time news of these events were orchestrated by Vichy propaganda [to cause resentment against the British].

So there we were, totally isolated in a village where almost everyone was hostile to what we represented. We started listening to the BBC at once. My mother and grandmother listened to the

broadcasts in English. Then we listened to their broadcasts in French all the time even though it was forbidden. I remember that in the fall of 1940 I fell in love with Pierre Bourdan who was the announcer for the program from London: 'The French Speak to the French.' But we were the only ones who listened. It took us several months to find someone else in the village who shared our sentiments.

In town there were all sorts of ceremonies honoring Petain. A sort of celebratory 'fever' reigned. This was the supposedly red (Communist) Midi and yet here were the veterans--this group or that--all holding ceremonies. One could say that people there were enchanted and delighted yet on the other hand one could also say they were extremely masochistic. The predominating theme of this strange period was: 'We French have indulged ourselves, we were venal and materialist. We forgot our moral values. What happened was our fault; mea culpa, mea culpa.' That was the tonality. A lot of priests contributed to these sentiments and military men, who now found themselves useless. There were pictures of Petain everywhere. 'Back to the Earth' was one of Vichy's major themes. To such an extent that now when I listen to the Ecologists I am shocked because I associate them with the reactionary Vichy government. Regionalism was also stressed at that time: the Land, the Region; all that is now on the agenda of the Left was then advocated by the extreme Right. There was a reactionary fervor worthy of the Middle Ages.

In my family we opposed all that, as socialists opposed to Nazism. And as Protestants from four or five regions we weren't regionalist either. We married among Protestants, not among members of the same region so we didn't associate with a particular region. My father came from Alsace: my mother was half bourgignonne and half langdocienne. My other grandmother was from Normandy. You see, there was a little of everything because Protestants in France marry among themselves without regard to the region. And so there we were in a region where everyone subscribed to the notion of the region that Petain's National Government promoted.

In the fifteenth century houses in the Midi the toilets were in the rear of the courtyard. They were shared with the neighbors. My sister and I used to draw the Cross of Lorraine (symbol of de Gaulle) on the toilet walls. The neighbors who shared the toilets with us were furious and erased them each time. They finally came and threatened to denounce us. My mother worried about what would happen to us. She was right. It wasn't a laughing matter. When I was arrested they denounced me.

My second brother was arrested in 1941 for the first time in Grenoble, where he was studying, on ridiculous charges. He circulated photographs of the 'V's for victory written on the city walls. Grenoble was occupied by the Italians. For the French there was no greater shame than to be occupied by the Italians--who

hadn't fought in the war. Everything the students could do to make fun of the Italian occupiers they did. My brother was nineteen when he was arrested and put in prison with hardened criminals. Soon our entire village knew my brother was in prison. In school this was held against me. This made me proud, rather than humiliated. I was proud and 'not like the others.' I argued a lot with everyone; my classmates, my history professor, etc.

Under Petain a 'patriotism in defeat' developed that was constant, stupid. We sang all the time. We were obliged to march in ranks and sing. Up until then Saturday had been a school day like the others. Now with Petain it became a day of outdoor exercise. We had to exercise our bodies [as well as our minds] and march. It was all of a piece. Young girls should remain in the countryside (the cities were viewed as sources of corruption). Too much studying could harm young girls. Yes, yes. All that. So on Saturdays we went off on marches and sang songs to Marshal Petain. 'Marshal, here we are, before you, the savior of France/ In your shining (Marshal) stars we see the heavens shining.' I still remember the words. Finally, I don't want to be vulgar but there is a good adjective to qualify that. Needless to say my sister and I had made up other words for that tune.

One Monday. I was asked to raise the flag in the middle of the high school courtyard before all the assembled students. This hadn't been done before but now that the enemy was in our country

patriotism was emphasized. That day there was something special relating to Joan of Arc. And since I came from Compiègne, a town in the north where Joan of Arc had been imprisoned, I was asked: 'Mademoiselle Hammel, would you please raise the flag in honor of Joan of Arc and Marshal Petain, our new Joan of Arc?' I went to the flagpole in the center of the schoolyard before all the students and teachers and shouted: 'Joan of Arc drove the enemy from France. When Marshal Petain does as much I will raise the flag but not before that.' I deliberately phrased it the way they did in the Middle Ages. Then I returned to my place.

Two hours later the gendarmes came and arrested me.

The charges against me were unpatriotic remarks and listening to the BBC. They arrested me at home. I was barely sixteen. They questioned my classmates, my professors. Most said nothing but two related that I held subversive ideas, that I listened to the British radio. Even though it was forbidden we always listened and I told my classmates what I had heard. So you see how a young girl's life was completely changed. And my mother had been charged as well; listening to an anti-national radio and making anti-patriotic remarks in a queue while waiting for a quarter of a liter of milk! She was not well at all and in bed when the gendarmes came. They were so stupid. They made her get up and emptied out the stuffing of her mattress to make certain nothing was hidden there. They emptied the stove and dumped the contents all over the floor. (At that moment we were badly heated. Our

family had only one room with this little stove). This was the time when we couldn't buy anything. Since we were a big family--five children--my mother spent her time undoing old sweaters and using the yarn to knit new ones. We were all growing. After my arrest my mother devoted much time going from one prison to another to see my brother and then me. After all that we wanted to leave that town.

When I was arrested I saw my first corpse. The gendarmes who arrested me took me by bus to a prison that was fifteen miles. One of them sat on each side. On the way the driver stopped. 'I saw that man when we came this way earlier. I can't just leave him there' he said. So he picked up the corpse by the roadside and put it at my feet. It was a Spanish refugee who had died of hunger. When we arrived at the prison the only thing I had on my mind was that corpse, at my feet.

I don't want to say much about prison because those are not happy memories. People who speak of common criminals don't really know them. I had been brought up in a milieu where people were kind, open, intelligent. Now I found myself among women who were evil and perverse, I thought. It was very difficult. They rarely let me eat: they robbed me. Because I was in protective detention, awaiting trial, I was entitled to a few extra cabbage leaves. (It must be noted that everyone in those days was obsessed with food. There was little enough to eat and even less in prison). Whatever,

it doesn't matter. They stole from me. I was trying to prepare my bachot exam. They ridiculed me for studying. The important thing was to subsist. Since I had so little to eat I soon became ill. There was a German doctor who came to the prison from time to time. One of my cellmates warned me that if I went to the infirmary I would 'pass with the nark.' I didn't know what that meant and she explained it to me. I was horrified with the idea. So she said: 'Here's a good trick. You bite yourself inside your mouth so that there is always a little blood. You are coughing a lot as it is.' (I was developing pleurisy). 'If he touches you, spit some blood and that will frighten him.' And that is what I did. He is probably still running. It was a good trick.

During this time I passed the bachot. My philosophy professor was admirable. He came to prison with my assignments and corrected my work. That took courage. I passed the bachot exam while I was in prison. There are two parts; the written and the oral. For the oral, the government appointed examiner asked me to discuss 'liberty,' the problem of liberty. Only when I hesitated and told him that would be very difficult as I was not myself free did he realize that I was with two gendarmes. The gendarme uniforms were dark green--and not widely recognized at the time, at least not by a philosophy professor. Then he looked at my school report. There my philosophy professor had written: 'I would have presented Mademoiselle Hammel at the General Examination if events hadn't dictated otherwise.' So he understood [what I meant] and asked me

to discuss 'lying.' At my trial the judge dropped the accusation. He warned me that: 'Since you are studying philosophy, Mademoiselle, learn the virtues of silence. You must learn when not to speak out.' Later I learned that at that very time when he was sentencing me, his son was on his way to England [to serve]. All things considered the judge was very understanding: he had acted like a father.

When I was released from prison and returned to the village something extraordinary happened. There was an elderly woman of staunch republican convictions, Madame Palanque. She was the only one at Uzes my mother and grandmother could discuss politics with. She walked across the entire town to embrace me. After the armistice Mme Palanque had assembled all her friends and told them: 'Now that France is no longer a republic I won't leave my house. Come to see me if you want.' So everyone knew she had voluntarily shut herself in until the Republic was reestablished. At the Liberation seventy-three year old Mme Palanque became mayor of the town. Her visit to me was widely noticed. It was the only time in four years that she left her house. While she crossed the town ten or twelve young boys ran and shouted--with their terrible accent: 'Mme Palanque left her house. She's coming. Here comes Mme Palanque.' I can still see her walking with her cane. If General de Gaulle had come to congratulate me I could not have been more proud. I waited at the doorstep and she came and embraced me. I had the impression that I had been decorated with the Legion of

Honor.

Accompanying Mme Palanque was another older woman dressed all in black I did not recognize. It turned out she was a widow of the First War, a saleswoman in the dry good store. She spoke to me in a mysterious, surrealistic way. 'Mademoiselle, my dear departed (she spoke of her deceased husband), my dear departed was republican. When you are born upright, your remain upright. When you are born pointed (pointu) you remain pointed. Congratulations!' Only these two women had the courage to come and see me when I was released from prison. Uzes was then a little town of about nine thousand. When I think of it my mother, my grandmother, elderly Mme Palanque who became mayor at 73 after the Liberation--who spent four years shut up--and the saleswoman dressed in black, were the conscience of the town. The only man of conviction in all this was the judge.

The first judge at Uzes I appeared before was quite different. At that time several of the boys in my class were sending me love letters. After the police searched our place he had read all these letters. He held up some of the letters and asked me who had wrtten them. Proud as ever, to defy him, I said: 'They're from the mayor's son.' (In 1942 the mayor was petainist, to be sure. I thought he would be impressed. All he said, somewhat paternally (I was only sixteen), was: 'Watch out for that one.'

After my release our family went to Paris. We had had enough of Vichy's 'National Revolution', as it was called. It was suffocating. And I have to say that when we returned to the Occupied Zone we discovered that there, everywhere, there was resistance to the Nazis. We immediately found ourselves involved in it. My brother was released from prison as well and went underground to avoid being sent to Germany. He lived clandestinely for three years. He lived with false papers and all that. That was another reason why my mother wanted to return to our home in the Occupied Zone. My brother was there. And then it was easier to resist there. The Germans were there. There was so much to be done, like blowing up trains. People were so much more understanding and opposed to the enemy. The atmosphere was completely different. I have to say that when I returned to Compiègne, the village of my childhood, I found everyone was against the Germans. It was completely different from the Midi. In Uzes there were pictures of Petain in all the classrooms and public places. It was unbelievable. In the Occupied Zone you didn't see any.

My mother died in 1943. She died while visiting one of my brothers. It was terrible. My father stayed in the clinic which he had taken over again after the Germans left after occupying it for a year. That left me alone in our apartment with my younger brother and sister. I was seventeen and a half. I became involved in a resistance network through childhood friends. It was headed by a twenty-year old chum who was in charge of over a thousand. He

was horribly tortured later, when he was captured. I did liaison; transporting packages to addresses I was given. I was asked to hide arms and supplies in our apartment. No one would suspect a place where a young girl was in charge of two younger children. My teenage dresser was filled with grenades and plastic explosives. I was afraid only once--no, twice. Once because a package had fallen to the ground and there were Germans in the street. It contained grenades but fortunately the pins hadn't been taken out. But I was frightened. I can't walk down that street today without remembering that moment. I see myself picking up my bundle. Another time I was carrying plastic explosives in the Metro. Plastic explosives were used to blow up bridges and train tracks. It smelled like cheese. Now at that time everyone was involved in black market dealings. It was the only way to get enough to eat. There was a special police force to combat the black market. They often arrested traffickers in the Metro. (There were no more cars or buses; only the Metro and not regular at that. Every other station was closed, if not more. Consequently the Metro was always jammed with people. It was the only way to transport things. The problem was that from time to time a train was stopped and these police seized all the food). Since I was carrying plastic explosives which smelled like cheese I was very frightened. But they got tired of searching before they got to me. I never had my bags or packages searched. If they had been, I don't know what would have happened to me. I don't have any idea. Either they would have closed their eyes and said: 'Beat it, kid.' That was

one possibility. Or they might have been in agreement with the German police. You never knew because some of the French police were resisters and protected people. So it was a question of whom you were dealing with, particularly with the 'Economic' police, those who were checking on black market dealings. If they were resisters they would have closed their eyes--unless they were working with a German beside them. Often there was a German with them. They were searching everyone at that time.

Then I became seriously ill; I developed pleurisy again. I joined my father at the psychiatric clinic, in the forest. There were twelve patients at the clinic along with eleven Jews in hiding. We had to find food for everybody. It was a real tour de force. We had two sheep and a cow. But there were always problems. In those days the animals always had some sort of illness. And we didn't have fertilizer, insecticides, machines--nothing. Today people don't know what a cow with tuberculosis is. You'd find the cow bloated, the rabbits dead. We spent a great deal of time caring for the livestock; the cow, the chickens, the rabbits, etc. We had to grow vegetables. Each day we had to pick off insects like potato bugs. And then there was all the everyday work in the clinic.

Because of the Jews we had hidden we couldn't hire just anyone to help us. Some of the Jews gave us a lot of trouble because they weren't prudent. They did incredible things like go to the

village, etc. A couple didn't want to give us their ration cards marked 'Jewish' because that gave them fifteen more grams of fat. Others were very understanding. They realized we risked our lives for them. My father asked my sister and me to help him. We were 'all-purpose' help. There were some very sick patients. That is, we didn't have a single nervous depression at the clinic during the war. The patients had serious illnesses--schizophrenia and psychosis. At times when my sister and I brought them breakfast trays some of our Jewish 'patients' would complain. Then we would remind them that they were better off than the patients--who really were sick. When the Germans came from time to time we had to put the Jews and others hiding with us in straightjackets and tell them to shriek and howl. Since the Germans were afraid of mental illnesses they didn't stay long.

In the midst of all that my father belonged to a resistance group in the area. Once we hid an English aviator a forester found hanging by his parachute from a tree. He was sent to peasants in the village nearby but we had to see him from time to time and serve as interpreters. He didn't know a word of French. My father would bring people we hid, like a Polish Jewish doctor who spent two years with us. He spoke French with a pronounced Polish accent so we couldn't let anyone hear him speak. We had to be very careful with the people we hid and hide them from one and other. Some of them were quite talkative in spite of everything. At the Liberation those we had hidden were astonished to discover who was

a real mental patient and who wasn't.

All errands were done by bicycle as we didn't own a car. This is in 1944 now. My father's clinic was six miles from the village and he did all the errands by bike. He brought all the medicines and supplies by bike, with a trailer behind. I was too ill to bike that far pulling a trailer. Bicycles were a precious commodity. To prevent them from being stolen we had to take them up to our rooms and lock them inside. A bicycle was a most precious possession then.

My brother continued to do active resistance work. When I say active I mean he was condemned to death six times--under various names. He was the first French officer to arrive at Compiègne when it was liberated. He was the one who opened the detention/concentration camp at Compiègne. In the course of the war 80, 000 deportees stayed there before being deported to Germany. Then my brother went to the clinic. My father went and got the identity cards of the Jews [who were staying there] and returned them. The Occupation was over. They were saved.

We also had a few youths who simulated mental illness so they would not have to work in Germany under the forced labor laws. This was very difficult for us because we wondered if the Germans had sent them to us with supposed illness just to observe us. Should we pity this or that one, or be suspicious? Life was

complicated.

Eventually I had to leave as I quite ill with tuberculosis. My godfather (who was also a doctor) felt I was too weak to be taking on all that I did. (I continued to carry documents and arms from one place to another, from one person to another). He insisted that I come to his home at Montarges, near Orleans. It was close to the countryside. He said: 'I have eggs; from time to time I can get a little butter. I am going to nourish her a bit.' And he took me to Montargis. I was there when that childhood friend I mentioned was arrested and tortured. It was horrible. He had set up a maquis near Orleans. (Orleans is close to Montargis). His men were waiting for him to come with arms and money when he was arrested.

We took what turned out to be the last train. We were shelled when we arrived at Aubrais, near Orleans. An incredible bombardment. After that I had to make the last part of the trip on foot. Going across a cemetery I saw skeletons in the trees. The tombs had been blown up! Finally I found the maquis. All I had taken for the two day trip was a skirt (made from a bedspread), a blouse, sandals and a spare pair of underpants. You couldn't find underpants so my sister and I used to knit them. We took apart some wonderful bed protectors women in the family knitted long ago. I ended up living two months with this bare wardrobe. The maquis was hemmed in. There were two other young girls in the group; one seventeen, the other eighteen. We did liaison; trying

to find medicine and food. Nothing very dangerous. And we waited for parachute drops. Truly, it was like a game; the 'great' games we played as scouts. This was in an area south of Orleans known as the Solonge. There are forests and many springs. First the British planes would shoot off a flare before dropping containers, arms and munitions by parachute. Then it was a question of who would get the supplies first, the Germans or us. That was the game. It took place at night, in the forest. It was a game of cops and robbers. The boys liked that. Generally we girls were in a boat out on the water because you could see better that way. You had a better view; more open, with more horizon so you could see the flares.

This maquis was made up mainly of students. They were preparing entry into the Polytechnique (like M. I. T.). Fifty-one were shot. At the entrance to the town of La Ferte St. Aubin there is a monument dedicated to them. The students for the most part came from educated families. One of them, a true aristocrat, taught me Oscar Wilde's 'Ballad of Reading Goal'--verse by verse--while we waited for parachute drops. He knew it by heart. Then he taught me the opening section of Descartes' Discourse. This was a very cultivated maquis. We also sang a lot, including English songs. Since the Germans had forbidden English we loved that. I also remember reading Malraux's La Condition Humaine there.

The maquis was not there in those woods just to hide. They were trying to save the Brandt armaments factory nearby for the Allies. One part of it was powder-magazine; the other part had quite a number of explosives: nitrolite, mercury fulminate and so on. Our role was to try and hold it until the Allies arrived. The Germans wanted to blow it up. So it was another sort of 'great' game. The Germans had installed a system of Bickford cords so that they could blow everything up if they were forced to leave. They knew they were surrounded. Our boys tried to disrupt the Bickford cord system. Finally the Germans blew it up. What a fantastic firework display that was. Thirteen tons of nitrolite! All the chimneys for fifteen miles around dropped their soot into the family's pots and pans. Windows were broken everywhere.

At that moment we thought we were free. People said: 'Orleans has been liberated.' We were only ten miles from Orleans. Ten miles is nothing. Unfortunately we didn't know that all the bridges over the Loire had been cut. The Loire river is very wide. And the Germans were on our side of the river. The Americans were north of the Loire. In the south, the French army was approaching, the 2nd DB. The Germans were trapped. There were about 18,000 Germans trapped in this pocket but we were with them! That was when there were more [of our maquis] shot. We remained trapped with the enemy. Paris was liberated but not us. The fighting continued because the Germans didn't want to surrender to the 'terrorists,' that is, the maquis. So a 'professional'

French soldier was sent. We called him the 'mothball' general, a career general who had just come out of the cupboard, so to speak. He told all kinds of stories; about when he had been our Military Attache at Bucarest; how pretty Rumanian women were and so forth. He taught me one useful thing which is to open your mouth when there are strong explosions so that your eardrums don't burst. That was fortunate because there were explosions all the time. Without our 'mothball' general I would probably have had my eardrums split. But we made fun of him. He kept explaining that he had forgotten his uniform. The Germans didn't want to surrender either to him or to us. They killed I don't know how many people during that siege.

One day I was burying two maquisards with the help of the daughter of the forest ranger with whom I lived. The Germans came. They took us and kept us under guard for twenty-four hours at the Kommandantur. Something unusual happened. Because the other girl was younger than I was I wasn't afraid. I tried to reassure her. There were also two other people there who had been arrested. It was the same thing. I was only concerned about reassuring them and making a good impression. The Germans were in full retreat. At one point a young German soldier (barely sixteen or seventeen) took his gun and put me up against the wall. I kept yelling at him that the Germans were 'kaput.' He answered me solemnly in German. I didn't understand a word. Then he grabbed his gun again. So I kept saying all sorts of things in French. I

had the impression that if I kept talking he wouldn't shoot. So I kept talking. I said anything that came to mind like: 'That really bugs me to die a virgin.' It was a monologue. I wanted to impress him. And as I kept looking at him while I spoke he answered me from time to time in German. Actually he didn't answer me. He certainly said other things. He didn't understand a word of what I said: I didn't understand anything that he said. Finally he was called away. Then we realized we were free. The doors weren't closed. We all left, the couple and my young friend. We went back to her parents' house where I was staying. It was only then that I developed the colic. I was really sick. When all danger had passed and I was in a bed I broke down.

One day we saw some Americans come in a Jeep. We had heard so much about those Jeeps. We had sent I don't know how many of the boys from the maquis to Orleans. They were all killed trying to cross the Loire. Visibility was good. The moon was shining. They were picked off like ducks [in a shooting gallery]. But one managed to come over, in the opposite direction, from Orleans. He told us about the extraordinary vehicles the Americans had that could turn in all directions and so forth. So I imagined some very modern, streamlined vehicle. When I saw this old, odd looking thing it was very amusing. This was freedom however. Freedom at last.

Then I realized that I had to get to my godfather in Montargis

because I had been there [with the maquis] for a month and a half instead of two days and hadn't had any news about my family all this time. The last days I was asked to guard German prisoners with a machine gun. I didn't know how to use the machine gun though. In any event my prisoners were not eager to escape. They were either older men or kids of fourteen. They were exhausted. To be on the safe side I decided to take their weapons. I collected some belts with 'Gott mit uns' written on them, one or two revolvers and even a red kepi. When I went to join my godfather I had all that gathered up in my skirt. I stood by the road and stopped some Americans. I didn't have a penny. Not a penny. But I said to them (in English): 'Would you like a war souvenir for your wife back home?' I had my revolver in my hand because I was afraid of being raped while I showed them the belts and asked them for a lift. The American military were forbidden to take civilians in their vehicles. But finally they took me. They said something to me that I didn't understand at all. I didn't understand their accent at all. I was used to the 'King's English' of my grandmother.

This was a mobile kitchen. When they learned that I hadn't eaten white bread for four years they said: 'We'll make her some doughnuts.' They stopped on the roadside and made me doughnuts with sugar on them. As I started to eat the doughnuts I broke into tears. I sobbed. They tasted so good. They took my picture and I tell myself that somewhere in the United States there is a photo

of a young girl with bare feet crying and eating doughnuts. I gave them a couple of my German belts and made my way to my godfather, like that.

* * *

Being in the Resistance changed the lives of French women, especially because it wasn't political life in the pejorative sense of 'politics.' It was easier for women to enter the Resistance because they generally led obscure lives. They didn't lead public, political lives before the cameras and television. I think that is important. When the Liberation came, the grab for power began to choose among the brave and courageous men who had fought in the Resistance, those who were going to lead France. At this point the women withdrew. It is important to understand that they were very much involved in the Resistance but in obscurity, discreet and clandestine.

On the other hand, there were roles to play that were easier for women to undertake than men. For example, all the liaison work. Women certainly got about more readily than men. They were searched and arrested less frequently. A young man was more suspect; women less so. And that is why the women were able to play such an important role.

Nevertheless it is regrettable that having played important roles they didn't know how to take advantage of this first 'trial' (as they say in rugby) after the Liberation. Women were represented in the 1945-46 elections because France started to have proportional

representation; a system of voting by party lists. Women who had been in the Resistance were included as candidates on these lists. At the Liberation women were represented everywhere, particularly Communist women. This was not because there were more women in the Communist resistance but because they wanted it that way. The Communists celebrated their heroines, like Danielle Casanova. There was this immense cult of Communist heroines with the Liberation.

I was twenty when the Liberation came and remember well how important these heroines were for us. I knew a young Communist girl who killed a German soldier on the Solferino bridge. Her dream was--like certain Christians who aspire to martyrdom--her dream was to be a sort of Communist martyr and a heroine. Later she wrote poetry and recited it in factories and workplaces. There was a mythology of the woman resister which developed but which is completely forgotten now. Danielle Casanova is dead but there is a street in Paris that bears her name. She is a sort of heroine no doubt like Charolotte Cordet. And these great ladies (grandes dames) of the Resistance--I say great ladies but in reality they were often working class women--had exceptional appeal for us.

But apart from those figures who were carefully cultivated (if not in some cases fabricated by Communist propaganda), women let themselves be supplanted very quickly. They were on the voting lists because they had been in the Resistance, but very quickly

they were in third or fourth position. It is very striking that there were quite a number of women deputies in the First Assembly. After that there were fewer and fewer of them. I think I can say that women were true patriots [during the war]. But after that, what counted was no longer France, but political questions. The Communists led people to think that they were the Resistance, which is completely false. But they orchestrated their propaganda. Women resisters who had really important roles went back into obscurity. What they did, they did for France, for their native land rather than for political reasons, as the Communists falsely led people to think.

Just talk to the many women who were in prison and deported. When I was in prison there was a woman political prisoner there, a niece of d'Astier de la Vigerie (founder of the movement 'Liberation-Sud') but I never had the chance to talk with her. They kept us apart deliberately. The experience of the women who were in the prisons, and above all, in Ravensbruck, the concentration camp, is very different from that of the men resisters. There was some absolutely extraordinary heroism. At the same time, the mystery remains. Why was it forbidden for women in the camps to wear make-up even among themselves. The Kapos were women (and I must say with horror that most of them were Polish women). Still, make-up was forbidden. Yet women did everything to wear make-up. Some have told me that they scraped bricks to make rouge. They crushed little pieces of charcoal for eyeshadow. One

of them admitted to me that she wondered why she did it. She decided it was an effort to attain dignity. I think that is perhaps an extreme expression of what is called feminine narcissism, but it is also something else. These women prisoners couldn't even see themselves. (Mirrors were forbidden). I think one must ask what that represented. Undoubtedly it was an effort for physical dignity in an abject universe.

There were also feminist demands in the Resistance. My generation--which was fortunate enough to be able to vote when it came of age--sought that right. I remember saying to myself when I was an adolescent: 'If I do this, if I risk my life, why shouldn't I have the right to vote?' At that time we couldn't vote at all, under Petain, but that was something that bothered me.

The last war was a war with civilians. In the 1914-18 war the men were at the front and the women were in the rear. It wasn't easy to be in the rearguard but being at the front was atrocious. But that was not true in 1940-45. Civilians were the first to be attacked. Who were the resisters? Civilians--not the army. Consequently I think women quite naturally found their place in that combat because they were threatened like every one else. It is difficult to speak of patriotism today because people don't know what patriotism once was. I mean that young people today can't understand how one can die for one's country.

But for those women who became involved in the Resistance it was generally for two reasons. We had not only an enemy that had invaded our country twice, but we also had the Nazis. Those were the two reasons. The Germans and Nazism. It is horrible to see your country invaded. You can't imagine what it is like to see your own town covered with street signs in another language. For example, the Mining School in Paris was full of Germans. Every day, four times a day, the Germans left the school singing German war songs. I seem to hear them still. So firstly there was that presence. Then from time to time we were completely humiliated. Certain days you couldn't leave your house. In Compiègne, which I mentioned earlier, when the deportees left the camp for the train station (where they were to leave for the German concentration camps), the entire village had to remain inside with all shutters closed. It was forbidden to open the window-shutters. It was forbidden to leave the house. That is very, very difficult to endure. We detested them as occupiers but beyond that, they were Nazis. They held a sort of philosophy which clashed with the Christians, the Communists, with everyone. It was truly the Anti-Christ; everything at once.

I have difficulty explaining to young people that I never spoke to a German until I was arrested in the summer of 1944. (It was that German who put me up against the prison wall). We never spoke to them. We had no contact with them; none, none, none, of any sort. I don't understand why there is so much emphasis in

movies on the women who had their heads shaved at the Liberation. Personally, I approve. There were women who betrayed young men. Firstly, because while we were dying of hunger we nevertheless maintained a certain dignity before the enemy. These women collaborators, they slept with the enemy. They let themselves be fed and dressed. In exchange, they furnished names. Many young men died because of what they did. They wallowed in luxury at a time when everyone else was deprived of everything. It's not the same thing when you don't have food and you see a woman on the enemy's arm covered in furs. So they had their heads shaved. I don't think that is anything in comparison to the fate of the people they betrayed. The majority were betrayers, prostitutes. Day after day, month after month they scorned us, denounced our fathers, our children. It's strange. For them, those shameful women, Eluard wrote a poem. And then there was the film of Resnais, 'Hiroshima Mon Amour.' The heroine has her head shaved because she was in love with a German soldier. But that was not how it was. Not at all. Those who had their heads shaved were prostitutes who spent their days in the cafes, the restaurants, at the black market with the Germans. They were sluts, absolute sluts. It just so happens that I did a detailed statistical study of the films of the sixties. During that period the war was depicted like that in the movies. Each time it was the 'poor girl' with her head shaved who represented the villain, the hatred of the world. She was spat upon. There were perhaps ten films like that, and more--even recently. But there has never been a film about a

heroine of the Resistance. Perhaps those women have been too silent.

The Resistance was a thousand and one things. There were women in the networks. There were the liaison agents; so many. Now liaison work is incredibly tiring, apart from the danger. You spent all your time going from one place to another carrying documents or arms. Or taking someone from one spot to another. It was always very dangerous. Then there were the many women who hid someone. In those cases maternal feelings could be brought into play. There were elderly women who were absolutely extraordinary. There were certainly many women whose husband asked them [to hide someone]. They came home saying: 'Fix a bed for so and so. Remember, you didn't see him.' But there were also many women who took that upon themselves and helped for long periods. When you hid someone you risked your life, your very life. You can't imagine what that entailed and how exhausting it was.

You can't imagine today what transportation was like then. In the trains, instead of eight people in a compartment there could easily have been fifteen seated on top of one another, heaped together. You couldn't go to the toilets because four people would be standing in them. Everyone was jammed in the corridors. And you had to travel everywhere with false papers [if you were doing resistance work]. It was exhausting for women. And then there were the babies. I think, for example, of a woman I knew. The

Germans took her month old infant and fractured its skull before her eyes in the hopes that she would reveal where her husband was. Those are unthinkable things.

Truly, if I wanted to underline something it would be that there has been virtually nothing written about these women in the Resistance. There have been some novels and stories, no films eventhough there have been about the women who collaborated. I don't understand why but the prostitute seems to evoke men's pity. As I mentioned, we analyzed all those French films for the years 1960-63. Three of us analyzed all the films that had been produced during that period, even the most mediocre. We were astonished to find that it was always the woman collaborator who appeared as a victim of something one might call 'resistant conformism.' She was presented as 'sympathique.' There has never been a major film on the Resistance. Never. There was the 'Bataille du Rail' which was a major episode. A woman wrote the dialogue, Colette Audry. Ask her about it. I have the impression that she was badly treated because she really did the scenario, I believe, and then was supplanted. Besides that? 'Le Pere Tranquille.' A minor film though the atmosphere is good, accurate. But not a major film. Then you have a quantity of films where the atmosphere is false. Like Costa Gavras' 'Z' which is false, false, from A to Z. The atmosphere is false. So what is most dramatic is this oblivion [about the women of the French Resistance].

Certainly there were some fine books where there are some women characters. It couldn't have been otherwise. There wasn't a network that didn't have almost as many women as men. For my part I think that our children didn't want to hear about the Resistance. Just as we didn't want to hear our parents talk about the war of 1914-18 after it was over. We, their children, found their war stories incredibly boring. That is a factor. And then values changed so after the last war. When you try to explain that we did what we did so that our country would 'live' that means nothing to young people. 'Our country.' They don't even know what that means. They couldn't care less. Then there were the wars over France's colonies that tarnished the image of the country. The Indo-China war started soon afterwards. The idea that one could have done what we did for a collectivity called a 'country' had no meaning for the young. I personally think that in the Resistance, all the women I knew acted for France. There were some, to be sure, who did it for a political ideal--the Communists certainly--but they were few indeed.

On the other hand, there are periods where life counts less than in others. I've read a lot on the French Revolution. There was certainly a sort of indifference to death in the prisons then. You can't understand those periods without having lived through them. I am not speaking about 1940, or 1941, or even 1942, but towards the end of 1943 and particularly in 1944 there was that sort of atmosphere. One had the impression that life was less

important than the sense of life. It's curious that history can be more important than your private life. You can't convey that experience to your children. I remember that my children began to breathe a little during the 'events' of 1968. They were aware of being carried along by events. I told them that those were not really major events. Nevertheless they had some idea of what it is like to be carried along in some public event. Now in 1944, that was certainly the case. You were no longer anything in regard to the major events. There was also a playful side to the Resistance. You had to be daring, you had to hide, you had to know things. A 'great game.' That's an expression that is used often in scouting. 'We are going to play a great game, a trail game.' That was more or less what it was like because after the war I found myself in a sanitarium for students who had been in the Resistance.

(Evelyne [Hammel] Sullerot interview, June 14, 1983).